FRANK ANSTIEY:
A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY.

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STATEMENT

This thesis is my own work which contains no material published elsewhere, except where due reference is made in the text. It contains no other person's work which has not been acknowledged and has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution. No other person has collaborated in the writing of this thesis.

Peter Love

February 1990.
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Many theses suffer their share of minor disasters, but in this case I must pay special tribute to Mr John Arnold of the National Centre for Research and Development in Australian Studies at Monash University and Dr Andrew Moore of the University of Western Sydney. Both came to my aid in the labourous task of re-assembling research material after my house was flooded.

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Finally, I must thank Ms Beverley Anstey who has been both encouraging and helpful in my attempt to understand her great-grandfather.
This biography of Francis George Anstey (1865-1940) is a study of a radical in Labor politics. Although he did not achieve fame through high office, Anstey was one of the most prominent and influential Labor politicians of his generation. He was a flamboyant and witty orator who could enthral and delight his audiences on an impressive range of subjects. He was a prolific journalist and occasional editor of a labour weekly he helped establish. His stirring account of the Russian revolution and civil war was received enthusiastically by radicals in Australia and abroad. But his greatest influence was as a popular theorist. It was he more than anyone else who defined and elaborated a radical political economy of finance capital which not only helped sustain pressure for public control over the monetary system, but was at the centre of a tradition which inspired the Chifley government's attempt to nationalize the private banks. He was a publicist, a theorist and, on matters of loyalty to its working class origins, a conscience of the Labor party.

Anstey, however, could be a difficult colleague. He was a man of prodigious, if erratic, energy whose extravagant moods could change quickly from elation to despondency. His gently ironic wit could switch suddenly to savage satire and, occasionally, vitriolic abuse. He was also a man of strong principles which often brought him into conflict with his party colleagues who were more willing to accept the limitations which parliamentary politics imposed on the exercise of power, and to make the necessary compromises. Anstey had no taste nor talent for that. He was impatient for Labor to implement its policies and advance the cause of working class emancipation.

The thesis argues that the very qualities which brought him to prominence as a romantic, populist radical were ill-suited to the steady, cautious reform which has characterized the work of the parliamentary Labor party. It suggests that the tension between his ideas, principles and personality, and the constraints imposed by liberal
parliamentary democracy in a capitalist economy finally condemned him to failure. It further argues that his somewhat romantic vision of the potential for the working class to transform society, in the end, turned his disappointment into an embittered fatalism. The tragedy of Anstey's career, it is suggested, was not just the destruction of his faith, but its apparent inevitability.
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INTRODUCTION

Frank Anstey was not an ordinary politician. By the usual measures of political accomplishment, his career was certainly not a conspicuous success. He served for thirty-two years in the Victorian and Commonwealth parliaments but the highest position he ever attained in the Labor party was as assistant leader in the House of Representatives during the mid-1920s. At the age of sixty-four he held two minor portfolios in the Scullin government, but only for seventeen months until he was dumped from the ministry. He was a member of the Victorian ALP central executive for a short time during the First World War. At different times he held elected office in the Seamens' and the Tramways unions. By these standards, his career might seem little different from that of any party hack who occupied a safe seat and swelled the parliamentary numbers.

Anstey, however, was not a politician to be judged by these standards, and he was anything but a party hack. During his thirty-two years in parliament he was one of the most tempestuous, controversial and, within his chosen field, influential Labor men of his generation. He became one of the party's most respected orators, journalists and theorists. It was he, more than anyone else, who defined and elaborated Labor's radical view on the political economy of finance capital. In so doing, he helped sustain pressure for public control of the monetary system and stood at the centre of a radical tradition which, seven years after his death, inspired the Chifley government's attempt to nationalise the private banks. After a trip to Europe in 1918-19 he published an account of the Russian Revolution and the civil war which became the standard work for many Australian radicals. He was a founder, occasional editor and frequent contributor to the labour weekly Tocsin/Labor Call. In parliament and on the public platform he was one of the most effective and witty
exponents of Labor policy and a vigorous defender of working people's interests, be they political, industrial or recreational. But he was more than just a publicist in the normal sense. He argued and fought for the workers' rights to liberty, justice and equity with such passionate conviction that John Curtin, who had been one of his protegés, rightly described him as a 'Labor warrior'.

If he was such a prominent and influential figure, then why, it might be asked, did he not rise to more responsible positions in the Labor party and the movement? Why are there no enduring legislative or institutional expressions of his influence? In its most general sense, that is what this thesis is about. It is an attempt to understand Frank Anstey the politician of ideas, theories and principles and, by implication, the obstacles confronting radicals in the parliamentary Labor party. There are, however, some unavoidable limitations on the extent of that understanding.

The Anstey papers held in the National Library of Australia are a small collection. They contain research notes and copies of some published work, typescript memoirs of his childhood, youth at sea and experience during the Scullin government, a few largely inconsequential letters, a commonplace book and some cuttings.\(^1\) There is some additional private material scattered throughout other collections,\(^2\) but apart from these, his memoirs and commonplace book, there is almost nothing on his family life, personal relationships or private dealing with friends and colleagues. This, combined with the fact that most of Anstey's close acquaintances had died before this project began, meant that it was not possible to even contemplate accepting the challenge of psycho-biography.\(^3\) Although it has been explored as best

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1. See National Library of Australia (NLA) MS 512, 579, 966 and 4636.

2. The Lloyd Ross papers, NLA MS 3939 contain a folder of correspondence with John Curtin which is more extensive than any in the Anstey papers.

3. For a discussion of the state of play in this field and its relation to Australian studies see J.Rickard, 'Psychohistory in Australia: The Next Assignment'; R Ely, 'Psychohistory, and the Man who could not ride horses'; and G Cope, 'Chaps and Challenges: Some Thoughts on 'Psychohistory in Australia', all in *Journal of Australian Studies* no.8, June 1981. For an example of the difficulties involved in this kind of enterprise without the active co-operation of the subject see James Walter, *The Leader: A Political Biography of Gough Whitlam*, St Lucia, University of
the sources would permit, there could be no systematic study of his family life.* Nor was it possible to examine his close personal relationships with his wife Kate and his lady friend Harriet Middlecoat. Even those people who could be interviewed were of a generation and persuasion which regarded such matters as private and not to be discussed in any detail.5 For the simple lack of sources, these dimensions of Anstey's life, and their possible relationship with both his private and public politics are beyond recall.

This has meant that the search for the 'inner man' has had to rely very heavily on the limited range of private material. There are attempts at different stages in the biography to evoke something of his imaginative life or his state of mind at significant points in his career, but they must remain speculations based on a close reading of the available documents and the exercise of an historical imagination informed by the circumstances surrounding him at the time.

But all this is not meant as an apology for what follows. It is merely an explanation of why it cannot have the same breadth and penetration as the exemplars of Australian political biography.6 It is, of necessity, a biography of Anstey the public man, based substantially on published sources, in an effort to explain his outward political behaviour. In this, at least, the sources are adequate. In addition to his books

Queensland Press, 1980. For a more modest, though more successful attempt to integrate psycho-analytical material, willingly given by the subject, with more conventional public sources see Paul Ormonde, A Foolish Passionate Man: A Biography of Jim Cairns, Ringwood, Penguin, 1981.

4. It was not possible to provide the kind of insights into the relationship between Anstey and his family which John Rickard, H.B. Higgins: The Rebel as Judge, Sydney, George Allen and Unwin, 1984, esp. chapter 9; and Penelope Hetherington, The Making of a Labor Politician: Family and Politics in South Australia, 1900-1980, Perth, the author, 1982 were able to offer.


and pamphlets, he was a prolific writer for *Tocsin/Labor Call.* He was, as well, a very active public speaker on the platform and in parliament. There is, therefore, no shortage of Anstey's own words, even though they were spoken or written for public consumption. The party, parliamentary and government records were, for the most part, readily accessible. There is a substantial body of supporting scholarly literature on the political individuals, institutions and issues with which Anstey was associated. There is also a long and detailed thesis by Brian Nugent on his career in Victorian politics. Although I have differed from Nugent in some of my judgements about Anstey, I acknowledge with gratitude my debt to him in directing attention to several sources which might otherwise have been more difficult to locate.

The biography is organised in an entirely conventional manner. I have preferred the chronological narrative to other forms because it seems best suited to explain how Anstey's ideas unfolded in their historical context, how his talents and skills were developed over time, how his influence grew and, towards the end, how his failure seemed to assume the inevitability of classical tragedy. Accordingly, the chapters are arranged in the following manner.

Chapter one explores the interplay between the life of the little boy in England and the romanticism of the old man in Australia who reconstructed his childhood some seventy years later.

Chapter two attempts to chart some of the outlines of Anstey's imaginative life during his adolescence as a seaman in the Pacific.

Chapter three covers Anstey's early adult years from his period in Sale during the late 1880s when he met his wife, to the end of the century, by which he had established himself in Melbourne as one of labour's most promising young radicals. It

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9. For the reasons given above, there was not a sufficient variety of material to permit the thematic approach which Rickard employs so successfully with Higgins.
concentrates on his role in the establishment of the Tocsin co-operative and the Victorian Labour Federation to show how he developed ideas on class and social transformation which reflected his experience of the depression and the utopian stream in contemporary radical thought.

Chapter four deals with his first four years in the Victorian parliament. It examines a series of debates and campaigns concerning freedom of the press, the right to strike and the 'closer settlement' of rural Victoria as the expression of a yeoman ideal. In doing so, it notes his preoccupation with the related themes of political liberty and economic democracy.

Chapter five, on his last four years in the Victorian parliament, emphasises two main events; Anstey's role in opposing the wowser campaign to restrict drinking and gambling, and his visit to England in 1907 where he observed the condition of the British labour movement and the debates within the Second International. His responses to these illustrate how he was beginning to make connections between his assured sense of Australian working class culture and the less familiar European debates over socialist theory.

Chapter six covers the period from 1910 when he shifted to the Commonwealth parliament, to the 1914 election at the outbreak of World War One. It surveys the range of his activities as a politician; his election campaigns, his indifferent performances in some parliamentary debates, his involvement with the Tramways union, his journalism and his attitude to the Fisher ministry. In several of these areas a distinctive element in his political style was beginning to emerge. He was volatile, occasionally vindictive and increasingly impatient with the speed at which the Fisher government was implementing Labor policy.

Chapter seven suspends the narrative to describe and analyse the development of Anstey's Money Power thesis. It shows how he drew together the threads of radical ideas from Britain, America and Australia to formulate an elaborate theory about the rise of finance capital to a dominant position in the modern world, how it used that position to foster international tensions so that it could profit from wars, and why
'Shylock' had to be dethroned if nations and their people were ever to be safe again. The chapter argues that his thesis was more than a political economy of finance capital, it was also an argument which appealed to a popular moral economy.

Chapter eight charts Anstey's rise to the front rank of Labor radicals during the war years, from his early tussles with Hughes over the War Precautions Act, to the party split and the subsequent conscription referenda. It emphasises not just his principled stand against conscription of men without conscription of wealth, but also his acrimonious relationship with Hughes, his threat to resign and the difficulties with his more pacifist colleagues after the split. From this, it was apparent that his uncompromising adherence to principle repeatedly led to tension between him and his colleagues, even after a successful campaign.

Chapter nine gives an account of his 1918-19 trip to Europe and the book on the Russian Revolution which he wrote after his return. It examines not just what he did and wrote, but how the book represented a revival of his heroic and somewhat romantic conception of the working class as an agent of social change and moral regeneration.

Chapter ten spans most of the 1920s when Anstey saw the 'red dawn' of 1919-21 peter out into sporadic industrial militancy and hollow resolutions. It assesses his relationship with Bruce and his reactions to the coalition's enthusiasm for empire and its hostility to state intervention. It reviews his term as assistant leader of the party and shows how, in disillusionment, he resigned and prepared for retirement by accepting a partnership with John Wren in a speculative gold mining venture. Its main theme is Anstey's progressive disenchantment with the Labor party and parliamentary politics.

Chapter eleven considers his role as a minister in the Scullin government. It shows how he understood from the beginning the obstacles they would encounter and urged decisive action. It explains how he took an increasingly radical position on financial policy as the economic crisis deepened and finally invited dismissal from cabinet by associating himself with the Lang plan. It was a period when all the
dilemmas for a parliamentary radical became most acute. The chapter argues that, in the end, Anstey resolved them in an entirely characteristic manner.

Chapter twelve deals with his last term in parliament, his retirement and death. It suggests that his final retreat into an embittered fatalism was a corollary of the romanticism that had for so long been a central theme in his political philosophy.
Chapter One

**MAN & BOY**

When Frank Anstey was an old man he wrote his memoirs. He reflected upon the Scullin Government, E. G. Theodore, S. M. Bruce, his youth at sea and his childhood in England. They were written when ‘the worldly hopes I had set my heart upon had turned to ashes and everything was sour in the mouth’. They convey the sense of a man profoundly saddened by the condition of a world he had once struggled mightily to change, but who now understood its dumb indifference to all his exertions. Although coloured by a sorrow occasionally tinged with bitterness, they are not a picture of unrelieved gloom. In parts they are lightened by a generosity of spirit towards old adversaries, and at times display the remnants of a romantic imagination nourished in his roaring days. There are also brief flashes of a passionate fire that had once placed him foremost among radical publicists in the Australian labour movement. Yet the knowledge that he was not always heard gave them a hard edge, dulled by a tragic sense of unfulfilled hopes. This mood weighed heavily when he tried to make some sense of it all by reconstructing the fragments of a long and active life.

Unfortunately, only sections of those memoirs now survive, but despite their brevity they are revealing; not merely for their contents, more for how they can be interpreted in the light of external evidence about the period they describe and his personal circumstances at the time they were written. It might thus be possible to go beyond what they say to what they mean. Inevitably, it is a speculative exercise but

1. Although they are not dated, internal evidence indicates that they were written between 1937 and his death on 31 October 1940; most likely during 1939-1940.

2. The memoirs are in the Anstey papers, National Library of Australia (NLA), MS 4636 and have been published as 'Frank Anstey: Memoirs of the Scullin Labor Government, 1929-1932', edited and with an introduction by Peter Cook, *Historical Studies* vol 18, no 72, April 1979, p 391.
nevertheless one that promises some reward. His recollections of childhood are a case in point. In them, the interplay between the worlds of the little boy and the old man can be explored.

It is significant that, towards the end of his life, he should give the title ‘Now I am dead’ to a re-creation of childhood experience. In addressing himself to posterity rather than a contemporary audience he is, perhaps, suggesting that this is how he would like to be remembered; that his life had unrecognised meanings and associations.

The memoir begins by locating his ancestral home:

On the Devon side of Exmoor is the site of the Roman ‘Anestiga’ and it was so inscribed in the Doomsday Book. Today there are two dots of human existence known as east and west Anstey.

By tracing the family name back to Roman times he gave it the weight of antiquity much beyond the importance attaching to one small boy or a disillusioned old man. Doomsday mentioned three small manors with land, woods, villeins, serfs, ploughs, pigs, pastures and meadows. Those two ‘dots’ were testimony to an association that stretched back nearly two thousand years to an heroic age. There was something enduring attached to the name of Anstey, for no matter how history might judge him, nor he judge himself, there remained at least the aura of a name etched in the long and romantic history of a beautiful English county. Moreover, it was a history replete with Roman legions, medieval knights, yeomen farmers and poachers. It echoed with

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3. Anstey papers, NLA, MS 4636, since published as Frank Anstey, ‘Now I am dead’, edited and with an introduction by David Potts, Overland no 31, March 1965, pp.31-33.


5. See Hope L Bourne A Little History of Exmoor, London, Dent, 1968, p.159. The best source for the history of the Anstey villages is Edward T MacDermot, The History of the Forest of Exmoor, Newton Abbot, David and Charles Reprints, 1973 (originally published in 1911). The two ‘dots’ lie in north Devon near the Somerset border. West Anstey has no village centre, its only public building being St Petrock’s church. East Anstey is a small village of some twenty dwellings, a primary school, an inn and the church of St Michael. Farming is the district’s major source of income, just as it was when Anstey was a little boy. I am indebted to members of the Exmoor Society, Parish Rooms, Dulverton, Somerset for kind assistance and free access to their library. I am also indebted to the landlord and patrons of the Froude Arms, East Anstey, Devon for giving so generously of their local knowledge and hospitality.
the cadences of the Devonshire dialect and carried resonances from the tragic tales of Thomas Hardy's Wessex. Without the solace of religious belief he faced life's only inevitability by casting his mind back to the land of his fathers where time stretched back endlessly in a long procession that made one death seem less important. He might have drawn strength from the thought that his life had some place in this great chain of being. There might have been a little comfort in assigning his own life some small significance in the vast indifference of a secular universe, to give it meaning without metaphysics.

The attachment that he felt to the area was not simply a flight of fancy by an old man bent over his atlas. He was able to trace his father's family to the village of Witheridge, some nine miles south of East Anstey. It was from there, he claimed, that his great-grandmother Mary Anstey, had written to a friend in 1858 that:

She had reached seventy-eight years, her husband dead, her sons scattered, her daughters married and far away, her home too large, her lonesomeness excessive - would her dear friend come and stay with her to the end.6

It is not known if Anstey was quoting from an old family letter, but the rhythmic pathos of the lines suggest an empathy beyond the normal concern for an ageing widow he never knew. It is possible that they contain a hint of his own condition at the time of writing. The last few years of his life, when he wrote these memoirs, were touched with a similar sadness. His wife Kate had died during 1937 in unhappy circumstances.7 By then his own sons were scattered. He was estranged from Ward, the elder of the two.8 The other son, Daron, occupied the family home in Brunswick, but when he came back from Sydney after Kate's death Anstey did not go to live in the house that he and Kate had built in 1909. Instead, he went to live with

6. Potts, op. cit.

7. Catherine Anstey died, aged seventy-three, in the Gladesville Mental Hospital, Sydney, on 21 November 1937 of old age and 'exhaustion of acute mania'.

8. Interview with Beverley Anstey, great-grand-daughter of Frank Anstey, at 22 Howard Street, Brunswick, Victoria on 3 February 1982.
Harriet Middlecoat, a friend who stayed with him to the end. Although this may have coloured the narrative, his overt intention was to establish that his ancestors were of ancient yeoman stock.

He said that when Mary Anstey died in 1860 her three 'farmlets' went under the auctioneer's hammer at Witheridge. Each consisted of 'house, barn, coppice, close, orchard, meadowland and croppage of potatoes, oats and dredge corn'. Anstey's earliest memories were of one of these farmlets acquired by a niece of the dead Mary. However, his parents were not living in the area. He had been born in London, but does not explain his father's relationship to Mary, nor how he came from London to the Witheridge district.

It is not clear why Mary's property was sold at auction after her death. There are many possible reasons, but the most likely appear to be either debt or disputed inheritance, probably the former. But whatever the reasons for the sale it seems probable that, like so many rural families of the period, their fecundity exceeded the productivity of their farms, with the result that the children were forced to seek better prospects elsewhere. It is likely that William Anstey, Frank's grandfather, was one of the scattered sons who had left the farm to become a bootmaker. At the time, there would have been nothing remarkable about the son of a small yeoman farmer leaving the land to take up a craft. Nor would it have necessarily involved a move down the social scale. It might well be seen as a move sideways in one of those grey areas of early-Victorian status where the distinctions between small yeoman farmers

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9 Anstey died of cancer in her home at 46 Park Street, West Brunswick, on 31 October 1940. She had been his electorate secretary for some years.

10 Mary Anstey, widow of William Anstey, farmer, died at Witheridge, Devon, on 31 July 1860 of 'apoplectic seizure'. All the English certificates of birth, death and marriage were obtained at the General Register Office, St Catherine's House, Kingsway. London. Copies have been deposited with the Anstey papers in the National Library of Australia.

11 Potts, op. cit.

and working class aristocrats were often blurred. William's son Samuel followed his father into the craft and must have learned it well, possibly from William, for by the time he was twenty-seven he had risen to the status of master craftsman.

Samuel was working in London when he met and subsequently married Caroline Martha Gamble, the daughter of Francis Gamble, a foreman at a distillery. He was twenty-five and she was twenty-three when they swore solemn vows according to the rites and ceremonies of the Established Church in the London borough of Southwark on 25 August 1863. They did not realise the significance of their vow to honour each other until death did them part. Only seven months after their wedding Samuel contracted tuberculosis. The realisation that he was suffering from 'consumption' must have cast a terrible pall over the young couple. In London's damp, foul air it was a common cause of death and they would have understood only too well Samuel's grim prospects. In the following twelve months Caroline would come to know her husband's hacking cough as she watched him steadily wasting away, knowing all the while that there was little or nothing she could do to help him. During this distressing period they conceived a child, but Samuel did not survive to see it. He died five months before the birth of his son.

It is not clear whether the Gamble or Anstey families were able to support Caroline, but irrespective of her material circumstances, she had suffered a devastating series of traumas. In the second year of her marriage she had watched her husband die a lingering death, compounded in the latter stages by the anxiety of wondering how she was to raise their child. In the midst of her grief, she had given

13. The shoemakers were, as always, the typical artisan intellectuals: often we find them doubling as parish clerks because of their superior education.' See E. J. Hobsbawm and George Rude, Captain Swing, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973, p. 41. For an interesting and detailed discussion of an artisan elite in London during this period see Geoffrey Crossick. An Artisan Elite in Victorian Society: Kentish London, 1840-1880, London, Croom Helm, 1978.

14. In terms of social status there was nothing unusual in this marriage. Both families were from the working class elite. Crossick's table showing marriage and social distance for the years 1851-53 would tend to confirm this. Ibid, p. 124.

15. Samuel Anstey, master boot and shoemaker, died, aged twenty-seven, on 21 March 1865 at 1 New Park Street, Southwark, London. The cause of death was listed as phthisis.
birth to a son in the York Road hospital, Lambeth on 18 August 1865. She named him Francis George after her father and brother respectively. There is no evidence to show how well she coped with her circumstances, but if Anstey's account of his later childhood and the testimony of other family members is reliable, she probably showed considerable courage fortified by a quiet determination. Although he may have been lucky in his mother, it was a less than auspicious beginning for young Frank.

Caroline's main problem was to build a new life for herself and her son. As soon as he was old enough she made arrangements for him to stay with his father's relations in Devon while she set about reorganising her life so that they might have a future together. It is at this point that Anstey's recollections begin.

His earliest memories were not of his mother. They were of Devon where he had gone to live with 'Auntie' on one of the farmlets that had been auctioned after Mary Anstey's death. The impressions he recalled had the random yet highly specific quality of authentic childhood perception. He remembered outings in a light, four-wheeled open carriage drawn by a pair of Cymon ponies, particularly the day they drove onto the moor to see the hounds in their 'palatial' kennels. On the return journey 'Auntie' pointed out ancient burial places known as the Anstey 'barrows'. While this exciting day full of animals and local sites bearing his name lodged in his memory, there were others that lingered as general impressions without the same clarity. His memory of visits to Witheridge and Dulverton on market days may not have been so clear, but he did recall the Witheridge churchyard where all the stones bore 'Anstey' or 'Edworthy'. Although there are only a few headstones marking

16. She gave her address as 1 Union Road, Trinity Square.

17. Interview with Mrs Doris Leigh, 'Angorfa', Broyan Lane, Pen-y-Bryn, Cardigan, Dyfed, Wales on 27 August 1981. I am deeply indebted to Mrs Leigh for gracious hospitality, for sharing her memories of Caroline Anstey (later Lank), Frank Anstey, the Lank family and for a discussion of Anstey's memoirs which greatly enriched my reading of them. A copy of the interview has been deposited with the Anstey papers in the National Library of Australia. Mrs Leigh is a relative from the Lank side of the family who, as a child, knew Caroline and John Lank.

18. Potts, op. cit.
Anstey graves in that churchyard today, it is not difficult to imagine how a little boy might have been impressed by his name carved in stone. Nor is it surprising that through the mists of an old man's memory they might have multiplied.19

There may have been a purpose in this beyond the simple pleasures of reviving childhood memories. Perhaps he was explaining his own attachment to the area by making direct connection between himself and ancient barrows, Roman sites, Doomsday Devon, the family property and gravestones in the Witheridge churchyard. It is almost as if he entertained for just a moment the thought that if, when he was dead, he could be returned to the land of his yeoman ancestors where he might have a stone of his own. He had not, however, acquired this attachment to north Devon in his old age, even though he did find a purpose in it then. As a younger man he had unashamedly confessed his love for the area and a pride in his family's association with it. With embellishments appropriate to the rhetorical purposes of parliamentary debate he declared:

I do love it ... The little village in which I was born is there. I went home to see it, and the last remnant of my home had disappeared. My ancestors had lived there for centuries, and had fought and died for their country. It was this old-established yeomanry who had an interest in the soil for which they fought and bled who made England. They fought for it, and maintained its traditions, and were respected in the land.20

19 The graves are on the right just inside the main entrance to St John the Baptist churchyard, Witheridge, Devon. Some have the inscriptions have been badly weathered but it is possible to decipher that Stephen Anstey, aged sixty-one is there, as is his wife who died at sixty-six in December 1860. William Anstey, aged forty-six, died on 5 October 1866. It is possible that this could be Frank's grand-father. There is also a stone for Samuel Anstey (not Frank's father) who died on 27 November 1836, aged twenty-two. Photographs of these have been deposited with the Anstey papers in the National Library of Australia.

20 Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (CPD) vol 83, 17 January 1918, p 3171. He was provoked to this outburst by the jibe, 'They prate of their British blood and associations, but they have done more than the Germans to undermine the stability of the British Empire.' See ibid. The broad thrust of his reply, in which this passage appears, was that he was proud to be Australian and he was proud of his British heritage but did not want to see his adopted country brought to the 'horrible circumstances' that capitalism had wrought on the people of England. Of course, he was not born in a Devon village. This is either a lapse of memory or, more likely, the determination of an orator not to let inconvenient facts spoil a debating point. If he did return to a Devon village, it was probably to Witheridge during his first trip back to England in 1907.
To the end, Anstey nurtured a romantic vision of the yeomen of England as the great bulwark of British liberty. Their's was a proud tradition in which his ancestors had played a part. Although it is not clear how long his forebears had been in north Devon, it is almost certain that William and Mary Anstey did not purchase the farmlets during their lifetime. Traditionally, such holdings were built up by a process of gradual purchase and judicious marriage. However, his recollection of visits to relatives in Exeter, Barnstaple, Chudleigh, Chumleigh, Rackenford and Dulverton does tend to support his claim to yeoman ancestry. But even if they were not 'old-established yeomanry', the family and its name had left a mark on Devon. This was at least sufficient for an old man to comfort himself with the thought that in some way he was part of it all. There was a sense of place and tradition behind it that his adopted country did not provide. Its green, well-tended landscape could rest easily upon an imagination weared of harsh facts and dismal prospects. Although his residence there was temporary, his attachment was enduring.

He was probably no more than five or six years old when his mother returned to him. He thought that she must have stayed some months in Devon because he remembered her presence during the visits to relatives in all those towns and villages. At first, it seems, he did not know her. She was a strange lady and he was told to call her 'mother'. It must have been a bewildering experience for a little boy, to be claimed by a stranger for whom he was expected to develop a special affection. She had come to reclaim her son and they would start a new life together. But for Caroline it might not have held the same bright hopes she felt when she married Samuel, for while young Frank was in Devon she had commenced a new life with another man, one whose prospects must have seemed less promising than a master craftsman's. On 25 September 1869 she had married John Lank, an illiterate labourer. According to Anstey the marriage began with misfortune. 'Long sickness and loss of occupation

21 Caroline Anstey, widow, married John Lank, labourer, on 25 September 1869 at St Matthew's church, Newington, Surrey. His father, Isaac Lank was a farmer. It can be assumed that John Lank was illiterate because he signed the parish register in the traditional manner of the uneducated, with a cross.
had followed the marriage until the only father I knew found work on the railway extension from Settle to Carlisle. In spite of his warnings his wife decided to join him. \(^{22}\) She and her son were going to the other end of England to make their family complete.

Anstey recalled the day when 'there was much crying and kissing and many farewells and the mother and I were driven to a large town' where they boarded a 'puff puff'. His impressions were of passing villages, towns, cities, rivers and fields; of changing trains; of Devon's warmth turning to an icy coldness; and of day changing into 'an almost untouchable blackness'. At the end of their railway journey he remembered that a man had met them and taken them in a dray to the railway camp where John Lank was 'stable boss' of some eighty horses. This second part of the journey remained vivid in his memory. 'We jolted over tracks that seemed all ruts, drove over ridges where the freezing wind caught us, and through gorges filled with goblins, ghosts and devils. Distance seemed never ending and time an eternity.'\(^ {23}\) Their trek finally brought them to a construction camp in the Cumbrian Hills.\(^ {24}\)

On their arrival they were greeted by Frank's 'second father' who was living in a barn where the horse feed was stored. It was the only accommodation he could offer them. He had warned Caroline that the place was too rough for her and the boy. According to Anstey, the conditions were indeed a shock to both mother and son. He remembered seeing 'little squeaking animals, with glittering eyes' scampering over a stack of bags. Caroline, it seems, was so alarmed at the thought of what the rats might do to her little boy that she lay him on the table to sleep while she and John kept watch until daylight. Not long after, several men came and began to transform the barn into a suitable dwelling for the first woman to arrive at the camp. Anstey recalled how windows and a fireplace were improvised, how a make-shift bedroom

\(^{22}\) Potts, \textit{op. cit.} p.32. The published memoir refers to Pettle but it was, in fact, Settle. See NLA, MS 4636.

\(^{23}\) \textit{Ibid.} pp.31-32.

\(^{24}\) \textit{Ibid.} p.32.
was constructed, furniture built and a carpet of sacks sewn together. When the family chattels arrived from London - crockery, candlesticks, glassware and linen - the barn began to seem like home. All this was supervised by the resourceful Caroline in a determined effort to civilise her surroundings, despite the 'toughness' that 'staggered her'.

Anstey's memories of this period were still those of a child's sensations; light and dark, warmth and cold, animals, journeys and those little terrors of the imagination with which children torment themselves. They tend to remember individuals and seemingly unrelated events. Only later in life do they begin to develop a sense of how events might be connected in narrative form. They have little idea of context and the ordering of experience that comes with it. In these memoirs Anstey succeeded in recapturing some of his childhood in this form, but the recollection of what the little boy saw and felt is held in tension with the old man's concern to give them new significances. As the reminiscences develop more of a narrative flow, the hand of the old radical becomes more intrusive.

But before exploring that, it would be helpful to look at the more general background of railway construction work as a context for the events he described at the camp where his step-father was employed. Fortunately, there are several accounts of how the Settle to Carlisle line was built. From these it is possible to sketch an outline of the world in which young Frank found himself, and in so doing, assess the probability of his memories. It then becomes possible to speculate about the old man who wrote the memoirs.

In 1866 the Midland Railway Company obtained an Act of Parliament for the construction of a railway line between Settle and Carlisle so that they might have a direct route to Scotland. But after they had surveyed the proposed route they became discouraged by the difficulties and the expense. However, other companies forced

25. Ibid.

them to proceed with the project and work began in May 1869.\textsuperscript{27} It was 'the last great work executed in Britain by navvies working in the classical way', which meant men and horses, picks, shovels and tip trucks.\textsuperscript{28}

It may have been one of the last projects of that kind, but it was also one of the most arduous. From the beginning it seemed that nature opposed the scheme. There was very little level land to speed progress. The route passed through hills and moors in which the soil changed suddenly from boulder clay to boggy swamp. The weather also seemed to conspire against them. In 1872, for example, there were ninety-two inches of rain at Dent Head, compared with twenty-five in London. This turned the clay into an uncontrollable mass of rolling slurry that often required the same work to be repeated several times. The swamps were equally treacherous. Bog carts with barrels in place of the ordinary narrow-rimmed wheels were used, but even then the horses that pulled them would frequently sink up to their stomachs in the morass and have to be drawn out by their necks, one at a time.\textsuperscript{29} It was work for tough men, and John Lank's job with the horses must have been just as frustrating as that of his navvy workmates.

In the seven years that it took them to cover seventy miles the men laboured mightily against all odds to lay the line over boggy moors; to build embankments and viaducts across gorges; and to hew tunnels through rock. During construction many navvies came, stayed for a while to earn the high piece-work wages and then left in disgust at the conditions. In the seven years more than 33,000 men worked on the line but the turnover must have been very high because there were never more than 2,000 working on it at any one time. Navvies were, as one engineer remarked, 'a class of men very fond of change'.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{29} Ibid

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, p.193.
But despite the transient nature of their work, they occasionally displayed a solidarity born of mutual hardship. With a fierce independence they resisted cursing and bullying foremen whose presence was made redundant by the incentive of piecework.31 There were many reports of heroic deeds performed in rescuing trapped workmates from cave-ins or land-slides. Other observers remarked upon the sombre self-discipline evident in the large funeral processions held to honour accident victims.32

The recreations of the navvies on the Settle to Carlisle line were those traditionally associated with men of their calling. Despite occasional visits from zealous clergymen, they pursued their pleasures uninhibited by the stern injunctions of moral reformers. They ate and drank prodigiously. They gambled and fought with a vigor equal to their labours. They compromised the farmers’ daughters and poached the squire’s game with an abandon that provoked the Westmorland magistrates to pronounce exemplary sentences upon offenders.33 They were, if nothing else, a tough and colourful group of men.

Anstey remembered his step-father as a similarly colourful character:

He was five feet nine inches, had a clean shaved face, kindly grey eyes and a whimsical half smile on his lips. If he had anything to say he said it quietly. If he was ever angry he successfully hid the fact. He had a mass of jet black hair, glistening from natural lustre. He combed it straight back and seldom wore a hat. On Sundays and holidays he wore a suit of dark, rich cloth, white shirt upturned collar, and round it a knotted shimmering silk handkerchief. On those days he wore a broad rimmed felt hat and gave it a rakish tilt. I never heard him talk about himself but I heard mother say he had been in Africa and ‘somewhere in America’. Somewhere he had lost a leg and wore a wooden substitute.34

32. F.R. Head, Stokers and Pokers, or the London and North Western Railway, the Electrical Telegraph and the Railway Clearing-House Newton Abbot, David and Charles Reprints, 1968 (originally published in 1849 by John Murray), p.24. This is a very rich contemporary sources on the folklore of the navvy. Although it was published some twenty years before the Settle to Carlisle line was commenced, there seems little reason to suppose that the traditions has died out by then.
33. Coleman, op. cit, pp.197-198.
34. Potts, op cit, p.32. Of course, on Anstey’s own evidence, he was not always successful in hiding his anger.
The 'father' that Anstey recalled was a man of striking appearance and quiet determination who carried with him an aura of adventure with a hint of flamboyance. It was a collection of images that might easily capture a young boy's imagination, and lead to emulation.

Anstey recounted two examples of Lank's part in the traditional navvy sports of 'man fighting' and 'cock fighting' to illustrate the more colourful aspects of his step-father's character. He began with a description of the rough and tumble activities that the men engaged in by way of amusement at the construction camp. 'Men bet on whose dog could kill a specified number of rats in a pit in the quickest time, whose steel-spurred rooster was best warrior, and father's hobby was the game cock business.'

The first of the two incidents concerned a fight between Lank and another man. 'It was the all-in game - head, feet, knees, elbows, rassling, butting, gouging - anything to win the war, and nothing above the ground was below the belt.' He claimed that Lank did not start the fight but had been provoked by the other man who had counted on his step-father's apparent mild manner and wooden leg as handicaps that would ensure an easy victory. There is an obvious pride in Anstey's account of how the aggressor came to regret his miscalculation.

The stump of dad's leg fitted into a steel rimmed wooden cup. The offside of the cup extended up the lower side of the body, the cup was held in place with a harness of belts and braces. Into the bottom of the cup was screwed the hardwood, steel-shod leg. When dad dragged his man to the ground civilisation was on its way out. The cup, with its steel buckles, used with body pressure, was a rib cracker; between the legs it was war beyond words, and on shins and ankles the steel-shod leg played like a pick-handle.

35. Ibid. The old radical then intruded into the narrative: 'Mother said it was a brutal, debasing sport, made more so by the use of steel spurs. Dad said it occupied the same lofty plane as the Christians who poked steel into the bowels of other men to make the Empire safe - he was making his contribution with roosters.'

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid. In the following line he allowed himself another political swipe: 'In the maintenance of law and order it was as effective as a machine gun on a mob of low class malcontents.'
This was the stuff of outright hero worship. The allegedly mild-mannered victim had turned his handicap into a devastating weapon to satisfy honour and justice.

The second incident involved his step-father’s champion game cock which had 'augmented the wage fund and multiplied the savings of a frugal wife'. However, the Superintendent of Construction bought a bird of very high reputation and challenged all comers. Lank accepted and there was 'much wagering' on the result. When it was all over the Superintendent lost 'much money' as well as his new rooster which had been killed in the contest.

Early one Sunday morning some weeks later the Superintendent sought his revenge. At his bidding, one of the men released Lank's bird and set it against a new steel-spurred cock belonging to the Superintendent. When told of the situation, Lank 'donned his armour' and hurried to the scene with young Frank in close attendance. On arrival at the scene of battle they found that their bird had been seriously wounded. Lank rescued his rooster, handed it to Frank and began to remonstrate with the Superintendent. In the altercation that followed Lank felled both the Superintendent and the man who had released the family's supplementary income. But although honour and justice were again satisfied, 'misconduct to the Higher Up undid the family fortune'.

Then we went home and told mother, and because it meant no more work, and once more a broken home, she cried bitterly. Next day we sold some of our household goods to neighbouring families and the balance we packed up and sent to Appleby. Then we walked away.

Of course, the background to these two incidents is not clear. Lank may have been unpopular with the other men, or Anstey may have been right in thinking that his step-father's handicap made him a target for bullies. It might also have been frustration at the difficult conditions on the job that made the men so quarrelsome. Whatever the reasons, Anstey's account of the fights is consistent with what is known.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.
about life at railway construction camps in this period. There was nothing gentlemanly about the process of negotiation between navvies. Queensberry's rules were only observed when the local champion was matched against a professional from outside the camp.\footnote{Coleman, \textit{op. cit.}, p.195.} Even then, the rules were not always scrupulously applied. In trial by combat between two workers there were no constraints. As Anstey said, 'It was Rafferty's rules.'

His memory seems to have served him well in recapturing this aspect of navvy life, but his way of telling the story hints at his purpose in recounting it later in life. As in the case of Devon, he was doing several things. There he was attaching himself to a place and a tradition to give his life a wider significance. In this instance there was something of himself in the portrait of his step-father. Lank was presented as a colourful figure who did not hesitate to defend his rights. He was not a man to be taken lightly. He had an acute sense of justice and a healthy cynicism about Christianity and the Empire. Nor was he a man to be cowered by deference to his 'betters'. Despite his disability, he was skilled in the manly art of self-defence, and imaginatively unorthodox in his methods. He was not only a 'father' whom a little boy could admire, but also, to a degree, the creation of a master raconteur who would like to infer that something of Lank's vigor and flamboyance had rubbed off.\footnote{This technique of projecting onto the characters in his stories the qualities he liked to think he possessed was a recurring theme in the many yarns that Anstey told over the years. It was one of the many small ways in which he built up his public personna.}

He recalled that when the family left the railway camp they 'walked for many days and passed many places. The ground was hard, with a cruel frost; the days were raw, the nights bitter, and nobody wanted a one-legged man.'\footnote{Potts, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.32-33.} In the search for work Lank took them south towards Leeds. On the way Anstey remembered that they walked:

along wide, clean streets with pretty cottages, garden plots and playgrounds, and a large building surrounded by lawns and flower
beds. Father said the building was a factory and the place Saltaire - a model village established by Titus Salt, one of the few employers who thought that their factory cattle should be housed better than their pigs.\footnote{Ibid., p 33.}

They were invited into the dining hall and shown around the factory but there was no work.

In Leeds, Anstey was struck by the poverty, the narrow lanes and hovels. There he said that they saw a procession of unemployed labourers begging money from bystanders almost as poor as themselves. He observed that, 'These were the days when Britain was the unchallenged mistress of the world.'\footnote{Ibid.} From Leeds they went east towards York. On the way there were fields with 'sleek horses and fat cows - on the roads half-starved humans'.\footnote{Ibid.} He recalled that his family were not as badly off as some. 'We must have had money. We always had food and shelter and I am sure we never begged.'\footnote{Ibid.}

From York they went north to Ripon and then north-east to Middlesborough where Lank secured employment for a few weeks. When that job finished they moved down the coast to Scarborough where they shared a fisherman's house. Anstey remembered with joy the beauty of the English landscape in summer, particularly the day they left. There were fishing boats, sea birds and the cliffs. As they climbed to the uplands he recalled glorious weather, singing birds, flowers and 'a panorama of country England in the most gorgeous garb'.\footnote{Ibid. Mrs Leigh, \textit{op. cit.}, thought this quite likely since the Gamble family would, by this stage, have been able to assist Caroline and her family, if needed.} But these gentle memories of rural splendour gave way to thoughts of the next workplace - an ironstone mine where Lank was employed to look after the pit ponies.

\footnote{Ibid., p 33.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{Ibid. Mrs Leigh, \textit{op. cit.}, thought this quite likely since the Gamble family would, by this stage, have been able to assist Caroline and her family, if needed.}
\footnote{Potts, \textit{op. cit.}, p 33.}
Anstey thought that the mining village was 'a bright contrast to the camp in the Cumbrian Hills'.\(^{48}\) It was a company town where the workers had the rent for their spartan accommodation deducted from their wages. If they lost their job they lost their homes. But he did think that they were happy there, at least for a while. There were no rat pits, dog fights, cock fights or brawling men. His step-father had a garden allotment and they kept pigs. Food was plentiful and good. He basked in memories of a settled family life with its daily and seasonal rhythms.

'But upon the peace and content of the little community fell the blow of the Master of Destiny'.\(^{49}\) The company had notified a cut in wages, 'the rations for the two legged cattle had to be reduced'. However, the men refused to accept the cut and stopped work. During the strike the vicar came and 'reproved the men for their folly'. Anstey recalled that 'hot words passed' and in reply to the vicar's advice the following verse was recited:

\[
\text{The parson he preach, and tell me to pray,} \\
\text{To think of my work, and not ask for more pay,} \\
\text{If I haven't got meat, to be thankful for bread,} \\
\text{And thank the good God it ain't turnips instead.}
\]

Later a Methodist minister arrived but did not take sides. He merely expressed regret at the situation. However, according to Anstey, 'the wicked said he was a silent worker for the largest contributor'.\(^{50}\)

He said that his step-father left the town to find work elsewhere, leaving him and his mother behind. Shortly after, the company evicted her as there was no longer a wage from which the rent could be deducted. She was taken in by a neighbouring family while Frank was cared for by another. In his memory of that hospitable family he hints obliquely at the beginnings of his sexual education.

\(^{48}\) Ibid. He gives no information about the name of the village or the company.

\(^{49}\) Ibid. The reference to 'Master of Destiny' is an echo from Thomas Hardy's novels which he read avidly.

\(^{50}\) Ibid. This comparison between the two clergymen reflected the popular view that the Anglican church was a Tory institution, while the non-conformist denominations were more sympathetic to the working class, if not always its champions.
There were eight boys and girls between nine and nineteen, and we all slept in the one room. The beds of straw were spread on the floor at night and stacked against the wall in the daytime. That room opened to me a new page in the book of knowledge.\textsuperscript{51}

The company, he claimed, brought this interlude to an end. It told the workers to resume work by a given date or they would be turned out of the houses. It was at this point that he and his mother took a wagon to York. From there they went down to Nottingham where his step-father had found work.

Although he could not recall where the family lived in Nottingham, he did remember two impressions of the area.

The river Trent rolled by near where we lived. It was broad, shallow, sparkling. I was so enamoured of that clear, sweet river Trent, its clean beaches and its fishing ... There was an orchard near the river, and in it luscious, green skinned, almost egg shaped-apples, and never, wherever in the world I travelled, did I taste apple but my mind reverted in comparison with the flavour of those apples bonused from the orchard by the river Trent.\textsuperscript{52}

While young Frank was enjoying pastoral delights, his step-father was working 'in a palace for horses'. Anstey thought it must have been a club or riding school where members came to ride in style. It seemed strange to him that they should drive or ride to the school, change their clothes, ride off on another horse, come back, shower, put their suits back on again and leave. He recalled one day when a gentleman complained to his step-father that a horse had not been properly groomed. Lank apparently replied that the horse and its gear were without blemish and beyond reasonable criticism.

So the gentleman struck him for his impudence. Dad kicked his feet from under him, fell on him, picked him up, threw him into the manure box, rubbed his face in the filth, came home and packed a few things and departed. When the police arrived the bird had flown.\textsuperscript{53}

Yet again, Lank's volatile temper and want of deference had uprooted the family.

Although in old age Anstey may have thought him an engaging character, he must

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid
have been a very difficult man as far as Caroline was concerned at the time. On several occasions she had to pack up the family chatties and follow a husband whose behaviour made itinerant work a more than usually precarious existence. Indeed, his behaviour in circumstances like these might also provide a hint as to why Frank later ran away to sea.

Anstey's next memory was of life in Silvertown, an industrial and dockside suburb of London. 'In proximity to the factories were long, drab lines of jerry-built tenements in which were domiciled the cattle of the factories.' In the nearby Essex Marshes work had begun on scooping out the Royal Albert Docks and it was there that John Lank had taken another job. The family lived on 'the corner of a street abutting on the marsh'.

At this time his mother, a woman of quiet, assured faith, sent him to 'Board school, Sunday school and Church'. However, he did not remember them as his most cherished experiences, but did claim that they could be turned to profit.

In Sunday school they gave a ticket for a recitation of three Bible verses and a larger ticket, worth a penny, for ten small tickets. I selected the Songs of Solomon, Ecclesiastes and the Psalms because the verses were the shortest and easier to memorise.

Whatever his motives at the time, he appears to have been good at it. In July 1878 he was presented with a book about *Remarkable Men* at St. Mark's Sunday School, Silvertown, 'for obtaining the highest number of marks'. The inscription exhorted young Frank to persevere 'whenever you find your heart despair of doing some goodly thing'. Presumably, it was also hoped that the lives of men like Wilberforce,

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54. *Ibid.*, p.34. Mrs Leigh, *op. cit.*, recalled that it was in this place that Caroline Lank ran a boarding house in later years.

55. Potts, *op. cit.*, p.34.

56. *Ibid.* There may also, if the claim is true, have been some impish daring in his choice. The Songs of Solomon contain verses that might well set young boys sniggering, while the uncompromising tone of Ecclesiastes might have seemed a little too hard-boiled for a child's recitation.

57. The book, published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, is in the E.W.Peters papers, University of Melbourne Archives.
Faraday, Scott, Arnold and Bunyan would inspire the young scholar to self-improvement and worthy deeds. But although he later showed a passion for self-education he did not, on reflection, think much of his formal religious education.

The Board school taught more Bible than grammar, more fear of hell than earthly geography, more crawlsome obedience to one's 'betters' than knowledge of how to fight the battle of life. The Church and the Vicar were over it all, and the objective was to make worms, not men. These views on the uselessness and conservatism of religious teaching belonged more to the mature radical and rationalist than they did to the Sunday school scholar in 1878. However, they might also suggest that he was becoming a troublesome youth at school and at home. It may have been more than just an impulse for adventure that caused him to run away to sea.

He made two attempts to stow away aboard ships moored at the nearby docks. The first failed. He hid in the forecastle of a barque-rigged vessel in the East India Docks but when it was off Deal he became sea-sick and rushed up on deck. Being discovered in the process, he was put off with the pilot and sent back to London. At the end of his long trip back to Silvertown he claimed that he climbed over the side wall of the back yard and peered through the kitchen window. In a style that probably owed more to his later reading of Dickens than to accurate memory, he recalled the scene. His mother was crying and his step-father was trying to re-assure her, 'Carrie, there's no need to worry - he'll come home when he is hungry'. He remembered that he was indeed tired and hungry but nevertheless went back over the wall and resumed his wanderings around the docks. He said that he did not know why he did it but the incident does suggest that there was some sort of trouble at home. It is not clear whether it was related to school, youthful rebellion, sibling rivalry with his half-brothers, Lank's volatile temper or some combination of these.

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58. Potts, op. cit.
59. Ibid
60. The first of his two half-brothers, Thomas Gamble Lank, was born in Settle on 10 January 1871; the second, William Wallace Lank, was born in London on 27 April 1877. Significantly, Anstey did not mention them in his memoir of childhood.
On his second attempt, either immediately following the first as indicated in the memoir or after a brief return home, he remembered going to the Victoria Docks where he fell asleep on a stack of wheat bags, only to be woken in fright by rats biting him. For several nights after that, it seems, he stayed aboard a moored steamer under the benevolent care of a watchman. At the East India Dock he found another ship, full-rigged, iron-hulled, the latest creation.\textsuperscript{61} It was about to make its second voyage with a full compliment of passengers. Anstey claimed that a sympathetic steward listened to 'another tale of woe and wishes' and arranged for a seaman to stow him away. He was assigned to a snug corner and told not to emerge until given the word. When he did show himself the ship was well down the Channel 'with a running sea and a spread of canvas reaching, it seemed, to the sky'.\textsuperscript{62} He was questioned and cursed and given over to the boatswain who taught him the ropes. During the long voyage he also found his 'sea legs'.

Eventually, the clipper arrived in Melbourne, which he found to be a place of 'low lying dismal flats, with the city in the distance'.\textsuperscript{63} Although the passengers took up a small collection for him, the captain insisted that he be returned to London. However, during their stay at Melbourne he became friendly with some firemen on a coastal collier who agreed to take him to Sydney. Just as the collier was about to leave he slipped aboard and lived in their quarters during the voyage up the coast. When they reached Sydney one of the firemen gave him 'to the care of his cousin, a

\textsuperscript{61} According to Herbert Burton 'he obtained employment in the Blackwall clipper \textit{Melbourne}, running to Australia'. See L.C. Wickham Legg (ed.), \textit{The Dictionary of National Biography, 1931-1940} London, Oxford University Press, 1949, p.15. The \textit{Melbourne} was built in 1875 at Blackwall. She was 1,857 tons and registered in the name of Henry Green, Blackwall, Middlesex. See R Jackson (ed.), \textit{The Mercantile Navy List and Maritime Directory for 1879} London, Spottiswoode and Co., 1879, p.415. An extensive search conducted with the aid of Public Record Office staff at Kew, London, only succeeded in establishing that the log book of the \textit{Melbourne} was not preserved under their policy of keeping records only for ships registered during one of each five years. It is thus not possible to confirm Anstey's claim that he stowed away, nor Burton's that 'he obtained employment'.

\textsuperscript{62} Potts, \textit{op. cit.}, p.35.

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Ibid}
boarding house keeper in Harrington Street, Millers Point'. Behind him, he claimed, 'was the crammed history of eleven years of life'.

What, then, is to be made of these memoirs of childhood written by an old man? On many of the matters that he wrote about, there is only his testimony unsupported by external evidence. Nevertheless, there was much which appeared to fit the general historical context. His account of conditions at the railway construction camp is a case in point. But although there is little about the boy and his family that is beyond all doubt, it is possible to speculate about the old man who constructed the memoirs.

As seen at the beginning of the chapter, he drew on his associations with Devon to provide a sense of place and tradition that gave his life some meaning as it was coming to an end. This seemed to be compounded by a desire to recapture the simple pleasures of childhood innocence by reliving some of the direct sensory experiences that were part of it.

He remembered his step-father as a vigorous, flamboyant character who appears to have been an amalgam of the man he knew and the one he liked to think that he himself had become. In retelling Lank's battles against his bullies and 'betters' there was childish adulation in its purest form. But he was also the character whom Anstey chose to express in word and deed a working class resistance to injustice coupled with an abiding distrust of established religion. In this it is impossible to tell whether Anstey took these views from Lank or whether he projected them back onto his step-father as a means of explaining himself. It is a common enough device in memoirs to simplify the complex business of how attitudes are formed by ascribing them to an influential person in the writer's early life. It is quite possible that Anstey was following this convention.

It is also possible to infer something about the old Anstey from the way he constructed his story of the family's travels, and the significances he attached to various places and events. At several points in the narrative he savoured memories of

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64. *Ibid.* He was mistaken about his age. He was only one month away from his thirteenth birthday when he was awarded the Sunday School prize in July 1878.
rural England, the historic associations of Devon, the splendor of the countryside in summer, the river Trent, birds, flowers and delicious apples. Yet when he recalled the railway camp, Leeds, the mining village and Silvertown his language changed. There he spoke of factory cattle, of narrow lanes and hovels, poverty and begging, of venal clergy and drab lines of jerry-built tenements. All this in the country for which he professed such love and deep attachment. In thinking about his origins as he neared his end he thought of England in all its gentle beauty, and its squalid misery; of a 'green and pleasant land' and of 'dark Satanic mills'. His memoirs of childhood were, in short, the work of a romantic imagination.
Chapter Two

AN IMAGINATIVE SEAMAN

Reconstructing Anstey's life at sea presents the same difficulties as his childhood. Again, his memoirs are the principal source. Here, however, the problems are compounded by the fact that he made his seafaring years part of his political persona and as such gave several different versions of what he saw and did during that period. Each account was tailored to his audience at the time with the result that no two versions agree in every respect. Most are contradictory in one way or another, several are improbable and at least one is impossible. But although his claims about an adventurous life in the Pacific cannot be verified, they can be explored to try and see how he used them to build on his reputation as a flamboyant character. Like many a sailor before him, Anstey knew how to trim his sails to catch the breeze. As Sinclair has said of Jack London, 'He was not so much a liar as an improver on the truth'.

The most probable of the several stories about how he began life as a sailor is found in his memoir of 'A Life on the Ocean Wave'. He says there that he became a cabin boy in a barquentine bound for the Pacific islands. Presumably, this was after his stay at the boarding house in Sydney. The ship was owned by a syndicate of island traders and had its home port in Noumea, New Caledonia. From there it worked the

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2. Andrew Sinclair, Jack: A Biography of Jack London, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976, p. 12. I am grateful to Dr Peter Cook of La Trobe University for bringing this book to my attention, particularly because so much of what Sinclair says about how London re-worked his seafaring years into fiction applies to Anstey.

3. Potts, op. cit., p. 36.
trading stations in the New Hebrides, the Loyalty Islands and occasionally sailed as far east as Tahiti. He also claimed that they were involved in the Pacific island labour trade as a way to keep the ship profitable on each leg of its journey. After discharging cargo in the New Hebrides he said that they then recruited Kanaka labourers to work in the Queensland cane fields. He recalled that the ship would take its human cargo to Mackay where men were replaced with a cargo of sugar produced by the sweated labour of fellow islanders. This was then carried to a Sydney refinery where it was replaced, in turn, by coal or general cargo bound for their home port of Noumea. He implied that this was a typical voyage during his service as a cabin boy.

For me the ship was a home and the skipper all that a good father could be. He was an Australian; his kindly wife French, and in their house I was their boy. I stayed with them three years and then came the yearning for something new ... To the captain and his lady the mere indication of my desire for change was an expression of ingratitude, so they let me go. Years later, when I returned, they were very nice, but from their scheme of life I had passed out. I did not blame them.

This was an example of a recurring restlessness that became an established part of his later life. During his childhood he certainly had little opportunity to acquire a taste for the settled life. Reflecting on this occasion he observed:

Wanderlust affects not only silly boys, but full grown men. They throw security and comfort to the winds for an uncertain future and their folly, or their wisdom, is measured by their luck.

This time, his whim appears to have taken him back to Sydney where, as he approached his seventeenth birthday, he began to keep a commonplace book.

The commonplace book is the only major document that survives from this period of his life. It begins in August 1882 and finishes in February 1887. In it he pasted press cuttings, copied verse, stories and political writings. It does not, however, tell anything about adventure on the high seas. That came later. It only records some

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4. Commonplace book, p.42, Anstey Papers, NLA MS 512/3. On 16 March 1884, when he was 18 years old, he noted his presence in Noumea. That may have been the occasion of his return.

5. Potts, op. cit.

6. Ibid.
of his movements during those four and a half years; along the eastern coast of Australia between Sydney and north Queensland, and across to New Caledonia. He made no entries about his own activities during the period. He only noted the date and place of writing beneath several pieces of transcription. But although it is not a diary of his actions, it provides an absorbing chronicle of his imaginative life.

This is unusual. Most biographies are able to record more about the subject’s actions than his thoughts. However, in this period of Anstey’s life the position is reversed. There is very little reliable information about where he went and what happened to him along the way, but the commonplace book offers glimpses of the beginnings of a young man’s radical and romantic imagination. Although the entries appear to be only transcriptions, not his own compositions, the fact that he kept such a book is important, as is the fact of its survival. The purpose of keeping such a book is to record items considered important, enjoyable or generally worthy of remark. For a young seaman unable to carry a library about, it represented a selection from his reading. The process of reading, transcribing, perhaps re-reading, maybe even reciting the material, suggests a lively mind at work. Moreover, the fact that he continued adding to it for so long implies a certain determination to educate himself beyond the boundaries of his formal schooling. It was an act of self-discipline and enlightenment; a deliberate, sustained attempt to improve himself and understand the world about him. It was knowledge to be preserved, pondered over, memorised. It was hard-won, untutored knowledge; not the stuff of ‘crawlsome obedience’ inflicted on him at board school.

His first entry was made during August 1882 in Sydney; a verse entitled ‘The Awakening’.

Long have the nations slept. Hark to that sound,  
The sleep is ended and the world awakes.  
Man rises in his strength and looks around,  
While on his sight the dawn of reason breaks.  
Lo, knowledge draws the curtain from his mind,  
Quells fancy’s vision and his vision tames

7. Although he burned some memoirs towards the end of his life, he kept the commonplace book.
Deep in his breast that law to seek and find,
Which kings would write in blood and priests in flames.
Shout Earth, the creature man, till now the foe
Of thee, and all who tread thy parent breast.
Henceforth shall learn himself and thee to know,
And in that knowledge shall be wise and blest.8

At the beginning of an exercise in self-education, it seems entirely appropriate that a seventeen year old youth should copy a verse in praise of humanity rising from the slumber of ignorance to 'the dawn of reason'. Nor is it surprising that in a period of burgeoning democratic nationalism, a young Bulletin reader might believe that kings and priests were capable of suppressing the quest for knowledge in blood and flames.9 They and all their works were part of a corrupt old order that had no place in a young, vigorous country. To draw the 'curtain from his mind' might well have symbolised Anstey's own determination to shrug off the dead hand of the past at the dawning of a new age, just as his youthful imagination might have responded to the romantic idea that wisdom consisted in man's harmony with himself and the earth, not in the dictates of spiritual and temporal tyrants.

But not all his entries in the commonplace book bore the mark of such earnest endeavour. Like many young men, his thoughts often turned to women. The second item was a brief account of 'Lais and the Philisopher, a triumph of 'love' over 'extreme austerity'.10 In the story Lais tempts the philosopher with 'her naked form' and ardent declarations:

Love is the soul of the universe. It reduced chaos to order, animated all Nature and is the fire which Prometheus stole from heaven. Its sacred influence pervades the waters, peoples the air and each moment gives life to a million beings and sets even the gods on fire.

In the end the tale moves from the sublime to the salacious:

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9. On p.2 of the commonplace book he pasted an item from the 'Bully' of November 1885 about the Victorian Workingman's Political Reform Association. On p.23 he copied a humorous par from the 'Sydney Bulletin' about a clergyman and a child. On p.99 he transcribed 'The Pauper', a verse 'from the Bulletin'. In addition, several other pieces bear the hallmark of the Bulletin style, although they are not directly attributed to it.

10. Commonplace book, op. cit. p.4. He did not cite the source of this piece.
She pressed his hand to her beautifully exposed bosom. 'You have a raging fever,' said the philosopher. 'Yes,' she cried, 'The raging fever of love.' And accompanying the word with action, she threw her snowy arms around him, drew him down upon her bosom pressing burning kisses on his lips. And so the Statue was changed into the Man - and Lais conquered.\textsuperscript{11}

It was certainly not great or improving literature but during Anstey's long nights at sea it might, at least, have inspired a certain stirring in the loins.

His next selection was an abbreviated version of Shakespeare's long poem 'Venus and Adonis'.\textsuperscript{12} Although it is not clear whether he made his own selections from the complete text or simply copied an already edited version, the effect of the shortening was to emphasise Venus's lust for the beautiful youth. Most of the stanzas describing courtly preliminaries were omitted, but the following remained:

\begin{quote}
'Foundling', she saith, 'since I have hemm'd thee here
Within the circuit of this ivory pale,
I'll be a park, and thou shalt be my deer;
Feed where thou wilt, on mountain or in dale:
Graze on my lips; and if those hills be dry,
Stray lower, where the pleasant fountains lie.'\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

In similar manner, the abridged version foreshortens the passages describing equine frolics but lingers over the stanzas where Adonis is unequal to Venus's ardour:

\begin{quote}
The boar (said she) whereat a sudden pale
Like dawn being spread upon the blushing rose
Usurps her cheeks, she trembles at his tale
And on his neck her yoking arms she throws
She sinketh down still hanging on his neck
He on her belly falls, she on her back.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{11} This appears to be loosely based on the story of Lais, a courtesan of the fifth century B.C. who counted the philosopher Aristippus among her lovers. Aristippus had been a pupil of Socrates, after whose death he went to Cyrene and founded a school of philosophy which anticipated the Hedonists in regarding pleasure as the sovereign good.


\textsuperscript{13} See p.7 of commonplace book and pp.689-90 of Rowse.

\textsuperscript{14} The differences between this and the original text (Rowse, p.696) tend to suggest that Anstey was copying an abridged version, not selecting from the original. 'The boar' refers to Venus's prophesy that if Adonis goes boar hunting the following day he will be killed in the process.
That worse than Tautalus is her annoy
To clip Elysium and to lack her joy.

This is followed by a couple of stanzas in which Venus prophesies Adonis's fate. The next seventy-seven are omitted from Anstey's version which concludes with a section of her speech after Adonis's death. There she foresees the perversity of love. 'It shall be fickle, false and full of fraud...It shall suspect where is no cause of fear...It shall be cause of war and dire events.' There is no way of knowing whether our young sailor had yet savoured the pleasures of the flesh or felt the pangs of disappointment in love, but whether or not it reflected his own experience it was certainly nourishment for a rich imaginative life.

A year later he returned to the subject of women via the generous spirit of Robbie Burns. He transcribed 'Ye Virtuous Dames', exhorting stern moralists to a charitable view on human frailty:

Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman.
Though they may go a little wrong,
To step aside is human.

Later, he was attracted by 'Good as Gold', a piece of jaunty doggerel comparing different types of women from a practical point of view. It concluded:

But the girl that beats them all
Is the girl that's got the tin.

His thoughts on women, however, soon took a less charitable turn. Having apparently forgotten Burns's advice, he wrote in an unsteady hand:

Away, away, you're all the same.
A fluttering, smiling, jilting throng.
Oh, by my soul, I burn with shame.

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16. It also suggests a level of literacy well above many of his contemporaries. He may not have enjoyed his schooling, but somewhere along the way he had learned to read and write rather better than most other working class youths of the period. There were also relatively few spelling errors in his transcription.

17. Ibid, p.38.

To think I've been your slave so long.  

Early in 1887 the twenty-one year old seaman would appear to have been unlucky in love, for he was again railing against 'destructive, damnable, deceitful woman.'  

In the five years covered by the commonplace book Anstey's attitude to women changed. He began with a celebration of joyous carnality and concluded with bad-tempered abuse. Somewhere along the way he seems to have been unlucky in love. Although he was never engaged in the sentimental moonings of an adolescent fop, he does appear to have entertained illusions. His early visions of women as lascivious creatures bent upon pleasure turned into sour reflections on the perfidy of their nature. Nevertheless, trying to understand women and sex must have been difficult for a young seaman working in a world of men whose trade inclined them to shallow, fleeting encounters. It would not be surprising if he developed that cynical, hard-bitten view to which sailors are prey on the subject of women. But while he may have considered them alternatively as objects of desire and abuse, there was nothing ambivalent in his attitude to Christianity.  

Assuming that he approved the views expressed in the pieces he transcribed, it is clear that he did not have much regard for organised religion, particularly the Christian Church. According to those transcriptions, its doctrines were false, its preachers pompous humbugs and its influence on society pernicious. He appeared to take pleasure in copying short paragraphs from the Bulletin which lampooned the clergy. One such item concerned divine guidance.  

A minister was writing a sermon when his little four year old said to him, 'Father, does God tell you what to write?' 'Yes my child.' Then what makes you scratch it out again?' 'You mustn't talk when I'm writing,' was the reply.  

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19. Ibid. p. 91.

20. Ibid. p. 112. On the same page he copied three more bitter aphorisms about women.

21. Ibid. p. 25.
It was not that he rejected systematic morality. He often copied passages expressing secular humanist ethics. One such item praising Gambetta's rejection of theology ended with the declaration:

Shall anyone say after this that theology is still a living thing? Shall anyone doubt but that the religion of Humanity is at hand?22

The very idea of faith seemed to irritate him. Like many other heirs to the Enlightenment, Anstey saw the power of reason as the highest expression of human endeavour, and the instrument of its ultimate salvation. He noted how an old woman had testified at a meeting that she had read the Bible through and what she could not understand she believed. He followed with the wry observation that she did not say whether she believed what she understood.

She had got religion solid,
That fair ancient maiden stolid,
She believes in what she cannot understand.
After Satan's patient waiting,
Down the narrow way she's skating
And banging on a cymbal with her hand.23

Accordingly, prayer, as an expression of faith, was the subject of derision. He entered a verse into his book entitled 'Heaven Cannot Save', the first stanza of which described a ship without a rudder floundering in a storm. The captain and crew, in wild despair, appealed for providential intervention to save them from a watery grave but, 'A crash and gulping wave alone were the answers of the Omnipotent One.'24

Even worse was the stiff-necked presumption of canon law, with its stern injunctions against actions that the common sense of ordinary people told them would lead to greater happiness. The matter of divorce was a case in point.

'What, part the husband from the wife?
Fie, that would never do.
No matter what the cause of strife,
Once one, you'll never make two.
You're tied for life, who e're you marry.'
This is God's law' - thus Bishop Barry.

The verse continued by mocking the Bishop's insistence that marriage was indissoluble in the eyes of God, and so would permit lechers to defile maidens, drunks beat their wives and slovenly spouses ruin their families rather than allow divorce. As if to trivialise both the issue and the Bishop, the motive was said to be venal rather than doctrinal.

'Fees drop in the legal pot,
Of those from wedlock flying.
The Church is paid to tie the knot,
The law for the untying.
And as we're only paid to marry,
Divorce you shan't,' shrieks Bishop Barry.25

Bishops, with all the pomp and authority that surrounded them, were a popular target in the items that Anstey transcribed. He copied a story about Bishop Webber's visit to North Queensland. During a thanksgiving service to mark the end of a drought, the Bishop told his congregation of weary farmers that they ought to show their gratitude to God by donating to the missionary box. As he had said nothing about what caused the drought but was content to claim that his God had ended it, the appeal, like most Church fund-raising, was said to be nothing but rank hypocrisy.

His mission was not to deal with facts but to voice clap-trap. The curse of Christ fall on the missionary box. It has been the greatest fraud and delusion of the age. It has given meanness an excuse, indolence a fad, cold-hearted charity a reason for shirking the debt of a pound by contribution of a farthing dole.26

But perhaps the most irreverent of all the verses that Anstey consigned to his commonplace was one entitled 'A Salvationist Lay'.27 In the accustomed manner of bawdy, music hall entertainment, it lampooned the Salvation Army as a refuge for degenerate self-seekers. It proclaimed that recruits did not need qualifications for entry or promotion, although ex-criminals might begin as majors while tone deaf musicians could start as colonels. The whole point of the ballad was that wayward souls


26 Ibid, pp.54-55.

27 Ibid, pp.33-35.
could do well in an organisation that sanctified rather than cured sin. The second last stanza exemplified the tone of the whole ballad.

There are one or two of our actions  
That possess great attractions  
For the true 'Salvation' warrior, I remark.  
Namely, saving souls from Hades  
(If they happen to be ladies)  
With a pious course of 'knee drill' in the dark.

Although Anstey delighted in this ribald mockery, he was nevertheless serious in the belief that what he saw as the irrationality, pomposity and humbug in organised religion only served to obscure the underlying causes of human misery. During his career as a politician he consistently argued that the answer to most of humanity’s problems lay not in the redemption of sin through prayer, but in the reform of those societies which produced evil conditions. Preachers had no answers to such questions, they were part of the problem.

Lay not up riches here on earth where must and rust destroy,  
But let your riches be in heaven, such is the parson’s cry.  
Are they content with such a creed and spurn with pious face,  
The lavished wealth, bestowed by dupes, on all their favoured race.  
Oh ye who toil at loom and soil, condemn such cant and drivel,  
While ye the priests curse thinkers free as children of the Devil,  
Who spurn your dogmas and your creeds as doctrines made to cheat,  
And you, the followers of the Lamb, the preachers of deceit.

Anstey’s was a more temporal faith, expressed in 'The Voice of Toil' with its romantic longing for an age long lost in the ruins of grinding hopelessness.

I heard men saying leave hope and praying,  
All days shall be as all have been.  
Today and tomorrow living fear and sorrow,  
The never ending toil between.

When earth was younger, midst toil and hunger,  
In hope we strove and our heads were strong.  
Then great men led us, with words they fed us,

28. See F. Anstey, Labor's Bible Lessons, Melbourne, Tocsin Office Print, n.d. (1906). On p.1 of that pamphlet he argued, 'We [the Labor Party] hold fast to the belief that the social problem is the real moral problem; and that in grappling with the one we shall find the key to the other; that in striving to improve the material basis of human existence we shall find the open door to a higher life and a purer morality.' For a more detailed exposition of his views on the subject, see chapter 5 below.

And bade us right the earthly wrong.\textsuperscript{30}

But for want of leaders there was no choice but for the toilers to lead themselves and 'bring the bright new world to birth'.

\begin{verbatim}
Come shoulder to shoulder 'ere the world grows older
The cause spread over land and sea.
Now the world shaketh and fear awaketh
And there's joy at last for thee and me.
\end{verbatim}

Many of Anstey's selections dwelt on the theme of heroic struggle to throw off the yoke of tyranny, misery and hunger. When the great mass of humanity finally understood the power of common identity, it could become an irresistible force.

\begin{verbatim}
Kingcraft, priestcraft, black oppression
Cannot bear our scrutiny.
We have learned this startling lesson
If we will - we can be free.\textsuperscript{31}
\end{verbatim}

In copying Shelley's 'Song to the Men of England' he was embracing an ancient and enduring proposition; that ordinary working people were the real producers of a nation's wealth and, as such, had no need of tyrants who would steal the fruits of their labour.\textsuperscript{32}

\begin{verbatim}
Men of England, wherefore plough
For the Lords who lay ye low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care
The rich robes your tyrants wear?\textsuperscript{33}
\end{verbatim}

Emboldened by the knowledge of their worth, they might presume to make their own history.

\begin{verbatim}
With plough and spade and hoe and loom,
Trace your grave and build your tomb,
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, p.18.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, p.61. However, Anstey did not totally reject the teachings of Christ. He often commended those parts of the Gospel dealing with social justice to emphasise how far he believed the Church had strayed from Christ. See, for example, ibid, pp 54-55 & 99-100.

\textsuperscript{32} This was an idea that found expression in the old notion of 'The Norman Yoke'. The view that society was composed of those who worked and those who preyed upon them was current in the radical thought of Anstey's time. See, for example, Ghita Ionescu (ed.), The Political Thought of Saint Simon, London, Oxford University Press, 1976, pp.99-100. Anstey transcribed a similar idea on p.116 of his commonplace book. In his later writings it underlay his conception of capitalism which consisted of an interlocked set of predatory monopolies hostile to the interests of the common people.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, p.24.
And weave your winding-sheet, till fair,  
England is your sepulchre.  

Although men were mostly what society made them, they could resist oppression in all its forms, but in so doing must prepare themselves for the task. They should educate themselves intellectually and morally so that they might become citizens worthy of assuming the heavy responsibility for the welfare of all. As humanity had been brutalised by poverty and oppression for so long, it was necessary that people be transformed before it would be possible to transform society. The most urgent topics on this curriculum for revolution were the 'Social Problems'. These could only be tackled when people realised that unless they acted in unison as a class, the aggressive development of capitalism would 'lead to the pauperisation and hopeless degradation of the toiling masses'.

Although he toyed with the idea of revolution, Anstey seems to have been more interested in one of the more popular contemporary solutions to social injustice; land for all who could work it. Referring to the vast tracts of unused land controlled by a few rich men, he noted the view that:

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34. Ibid. p.25.
35. Ibid. p.66. 'What is the tramp'. See also p.127 where he pasted drawings of 'The Melbourne Larrikin', 'The Sydney Larrikin', 'The London Rough', and 'The Yankee Hoodlum'. Between them he wrote, 'The Larrikin. The question is, how to abolish larrikinism, prisons won't do it. That is quite evident.'
36. Ibid. p.125. 'Duties of Man' by Mazzini.
37. Ibid. p.117.
38. Ibid. p.78. 'Manifesto of the Knights of Labour'.
39. Ibid. p.122.
40. This was a long-standing radical view that had become entrenched in Australian popular politics. It was argued, in the first instance, that land for the people was a matter of 'natural justice'. This derived, in part, from the romantic notion of the independent yeoman farmer as the ideal typification of an honest, industrious citizen who was ever ready to defend traditional liberties against the encroachments of plutocratic thieves and political tyrants. In the Australian context this became part of a populist mythology that grew out of the Land Convention in the late 1830s and lay behind the Selection Acts in the 1860s. The objective was to wrest productive land from the hands of large pastoralists whose tenure could not be justified on either economic or moral grounds. In the late 1880s and early 1890s that view was given added force by the popularity of Henry George's writings. See, for example, Henry George, Progress and Poverty: An inquiry into the cause of industrial depressions, and of increase of want with increase of wealth - the remedy. London, Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1883, pp.282-286. For a
Tis a curse that burns and blights,
And 'twill burn and blight till the People rise,
And swear while they break their hands,
That the hands shall henceforth have acres,
And the acres henceforth have hands.41

He observed, in a manner that presaged his 1906 book on the land question in Victoria, 'Land is the source of all wealth. Labour is the creator of all wealth.'42 But no matter whether the masses found their social and moral regeneration on the land or in the cities, the enemy was the same. 'We must combine and make war upon our common enemies: the monopolists, the politicians, the usurers, the legal spongers of society.'43 And with that ringing declaration, he concluded his commonplace book.

During these four and a half years of intermittent transcription it is clear that Anstey's interests gradually changed. Many of his earlier entries were concerned with women and sexual passion. Later, his preoccupation shifted to religion. Towards the end of the book he copied material of a more explicitly political kind. There is, of course, nothing particularly remarkable about this progression of interests during his transition from late adolescence to early manhood. The significance lies in the way he expressed them. His early, idealised images of women switched dramatically to bitter rejection. It was also evident that the prize-winning Sunday school scholar had turned into a young man who denounced organised Christianity as hypocritical cant. Such dramatic changes of attitude were part of a recurring pattern. He often displayed idealistic enthusiasm for particular issues, only to retreat into cynicism after it became apparent that the cause was lost. This pattern extended beyond ideas into his behaviour. He commonly displayed a degree of petulance at minor irritations, petty insults or small reverses in his political fortunes. On numerous occasions he set

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43. Ibid, p.126. This populist demonology was a recurring theme in his later writings.
off on journeys at very short notice, with little apparent regard for existing obligations. This volatile element in his character that was matched by a tendency to extravagance in word and deed. Some early signs of this can be seen in the commonplace book where heroic figures and stirring actions were celebrated in dramatic prose and verse. In a sense, it represents an adolescent phase in the development of his romantic imagination which saw Promethean heroes defy the gods, and struggling masses cast off the yoke of tyranny. Perhaps, when re-reading the commonplace book in later life he was able to recapture this spirit, and retouch the canvas of his seafaring years with a broader brush and more vivid palette.

In one sense, Anstey's stories of his adventures at sea had the makings of epic drama. They were, at least in part, exciting tales of larger-than-life characters, of perilous voyages and derring-do. He claimed to have sailed with Bully Hayes, the infamous South Seas rogue. He said that he worked as a 'blackbirder' in the Pacific islands labour trade, recalled the brutality of life on some of those ships and recounted thrilling yarns of crippled ships in stormy seas. However, they were not vainglorious accounts of his part in it all. Indeed, in most cases he was either an observer or a victim, rarely did he assign himself the heroic role. His feel for popular tastes was too finely tuned to play the braggart. It was sufficient to be the self-deprecating narrator and allow an aura of adventure to surround his public image. That way, the didactic intentions of his stories were realised in a more subtle manner. His tales of pious captains busily 'blackbirding' were not simple self-aggrandizement; they were vindications of his views on White Australia and religious humbug. They were both ripping yarns and political parables compounded in the correct proportions for his audience of the moment. Over the years they became such a central part of his public persona as to encourage the popular belief that, 'Anstey and adventure can't be kept apart.'

Nor, it would seem, could fact and fiction.

44 Labor Call 10 July 1919, p.7.
In fact, one of his favourite stories was entirely fictitious. Always loath to disappoint an audience, Anstey provided A. T. Saunders, an Adelaide journalist, with one of his most imaginative creations. In December 1913 Saunders went to the Parliamentary Library in Melbourne to research a series of articles on Bully Hayes for the *Adelaide Mail* 45 While there he spoke with Anstey who spun him a yarn about working on the *Lotus* during Hayes' last voyage.

He told Saunders that after arriving in Melbourne as a stowaway he sailed to China in the *Meg Merilles* 46 From there he shipped on the *Ajax* 47 carrying 'coolies' to Singapore, where he was put ashore on suspicion that he had smallpox.48 After a period of 'beachcombing' he was picked up by Hayes who took him on as a cabin boy 'out of kindness'. The *Lotus* was a 'yacht-like' craft of some twenty tons with a small crew consisting of Hayes as master, Peters as mate, two 'natives' and himself. Hayes' 'companion' Mrs Ford was also aboard.49 He saw no signs of brutality in Hayes. It was only after the captain's death that he learned of his reputation. After leaving Singapore they sailed around the Phillipines, calling at Manila, and proceeded to the Carolines, trading as they went. Finally, they arrived at Jaluit in the Marshall Islands where Hayes was killed. Taking care not to claim that he actually witnessed the death, he told Saunders:

The *Lotus* anchored, and I was sent ashore with one of the coloured crew in the only boat the *Lotus* had, leaving Hayes, Peters and Mrs Ford aboard. This was the day Hayes was killed; but I did not see him killed. The first I knew about it was hearing Mrs Ford screaming after

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45 Two instalments had already appeared on 27 September and 4 October 1913.
47 According to his Seamen's Union booklet he worked on the *Ajax* during November 1883. See NLA MS 512/7. However, at that time he was working the Queensland coast around Port Douglas, Bloomfield River and Mackay. See commonplace book, pp.37, 38 and 41.
48 In two other references to a 'beachcombing' period in Singapore, Anstey said that he jumped ship because of cruel treatment. See *Labor Call* 19 December 1912, p.5 and 'A Life on the Ocean Wave', *op. cit*.
49 A year earlier he had claimed that Hayes took him on as 'cupbearer and punkah wallah to his last love Jennie Ford'. See *Labor Call* 19 December 1912, p.5.
we had arrived a couple of hours. Then the *Lotus* drifted on the reef at Jaluit, and was wrecked.\(^5\)

He did not see the body of Hayes or Peters again, although Mrs Ford was brought ashore from the wreck. Contrary to popular opinion, he did not think that Peters could have killed Hayes with the tiller of the *Lotus* because it was too heavy. Anstey reckoned that Peters must have used an iron belaying pin. He did not know what became of Mrs Ford.

After the incident he made his way to Samoa in the *Black Hawk*. From there he worked around the islands for some years in different vessels. It was during this period, he claimed, that he first met the writer Louis Becke who was also sailing out of Samoa.\(^5\) Perhaps it is significant that he ended his tale by referring to Louis Becke since the story was very like those that Becke had been writing since the early 1890s. Anstey was an avid reader and admirer of Becke's work.\(^5\) In 1912 he wrote a long appreciation of Becke for *Labor Call* which ended with the ringing peroration:

Hail! to those who don't grow old till death comes, who carry joy in their hearts, laughter in their voices, and help in every action. Hail! to the man whose grip is a hook of steel, whose word is a bond, whose friendship, if needs be spells sacrifice. Hail! to the men who personify the powers by which men emerge from the rut, and new nations rise out of the dust of things that are narrow and sordid and mean. Hail! to Australian Louis Becke.\(^5\)

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5. Saunders, *op. cit.* Anstey had taken an interest in Hayes for some time before his interview with Saunders. On Sunday 3 July 1910 he gave a lecture at the Gaiety Theatre in Melbourne for the Victorian Socialist Party on 'The Last of the Pirates'. See *Socialist* (Melbourne), 8 July 1910, p.1. The sketchy report of his lecture does not say whether he claimed on that occasion to have sailed with Hayes. Anstey also appears to have been wrong about the rest of the *Lotus* crew on that final voyage. According to James Lyle Young's diary, 'There were several natives on board, as well as Hayes, Charles Elson, mate, Pieter Rietlyk, and Mrs Hecker.' See Frank Clune, *Captain Bully Hayes: Blackbirder and Bigamist*, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1970, p.146.

51. He claimed elsewhere that Becke too, had sailed with Hayes. See *Labor Call*, 19 December 1912, p.5.

52. Anstey's papers in the National Library contain articles by Becke. See, for example, Louis Becke, 'Old Time Australian Shipping', *Lone Hand* 1 July 1913 in NLA MS 512/5. The remnants of Anstey's library, now in the possession of Beverley Anstey [great-grand-daughter], contain the following well-thumbed books by Becke: *The Adventures of Louis Blake: By Reef and Palm and the Ebbing of the Tide; The Call of the South: Edward Barry (South Seas Pearler); The Pearl Divers of Roncador Reef and Other Stories; Ridan and the Devil and Other Stories; The Strange Adventures of James Serviton and Other Stories; Tom Gerrard, and with Walter Jeffrey, *The Tapu of Banderah*.

It was a characteristically generous tribute from Anstey to a man who had provided him with entertainment and, probably, inspiration.

As Nugent has shown, his story about sailing in the *Lotus* was not only improbable, but utterly impossible. Hayes was killed on or about 2 April 1877, sixteen months before Anstey received an inscribed book as his Sunday school prize in London. At that stage he was an eleven year old schoolboy for whom South Seas pirates, if he thought about them at all, would have been no more than book characters or imaginary figures aboard ships moored at the docks near his home in Silvertown.

While it is useful to know that the story is untrue, the fact that most people tell lies, and that public figures occasionally find compelling reasons to do so, is hardly a matter of great remark. Like many good story-tellers, Anstey never kept a particularly tight rein on the truth. Given the choice, he preferred galloping hyperbole to pedestrian veracity. Indeed, the significance of the Hayes story is not so much that it was a complete fabrication; rather, it is important for what it suggests about how Anstey had come to see himself. Beginning with the heroic romanticism of some material in his commonplace book, supplemented by the reading of numerous adventure yarns, his rich imagination combined them with direct experience in such a way as to blur the edges of fact and fiction. By this process he gradually reshaped his seafaring years into increasingly exciting stories that gathered momentum as they became more and more part of his public persona. His extravagant praise for Louis Becke showed how sea stories, and those who wrote them, acquired heroic, almost epic stature. Through the distorting mirrors of memory and self-deception some of that glory was reflected on to his own experience so that stories like the Hayes killing were conceived and allowed to take on a life of their own. They were certainly untrue, but the intention behind them was not entirely cynical. They were more the


55. Clune, *op. cit.*
product of a rich imaginative life where his past was constantly recreated over the years, and in the process, transformed.

But not all his stories about the sea were like that. Some were simple political parables. In May 1909 Norman McLeod, the editor of *Labor Call*, asked Anstey if he would take over for a week. His request was simple: that Anstey fill the paper with interesting material, but not commit libel in the process. Accordingly, he wrote a story about Joseph Mitchell, a Sydney ship owner whom Anstey alleged was famous among sailors for sending unsafe but fully insured ships to sea. Apparently, Mitchell was a particularly tough businessman. His ships were so renowned for their unseaworthiness that he could often count on the crew deserting without collecting their pay or, as regularly happened, the ships would sink and he would collect the insurance. In either case he showed a profit. Anstey claimed that he first encountered one of Mitchell's ships after he had escaped from the wreck of the *Frederick Wilheimina*, which had been a 'blackbirder'. Stranded by the wreck, he was obliged to take work on Mitchell's *Prairie Queen* which was returning a cargo of condemned flour to Auckland from Noumea where the French authorities had declared it unfit, even for the convicts. The captain, anxious to please his mean employer, kept the men on inadequate rations. Poor food was compounded by foul weather in which the ship was dismasted in towering seas that terrified even the most hardened sailors. Crippled by the disaster, they had to limp slowly towards Auckland, eating the condemned flour on the way. It was a desperate affair that illustrated the grim choice confronting the skipper in such circumstances. He had to make 'a port or perish'. When they finally docked in Auckland the skipper and the crew were so unsettled by the experience of weathering a storm in such a decrepit vessel that they all deserted.

56. *Labor Call* 20 May 1909, p.3. The second part of the request might have been a reference to *Tocsin* 's alleged 'libel on the King'. For discussion of that issue see chapter 4 below.

57. He gave a somewhat different version of this story in his memoir of 'A life on the ocean wave'. There, he claimed that he was left on the ship at Auckland with only the second mate, a brutal man who bashed him unconscious. However, somebody caught the mate when he was ashore and avenged Anstey. He claimed that years later the same man became the public hangman in Melbourne, a supposed connection which formed the basis of another entertaining story. See *Labor Call* 23 November 1913, p.3.
In describing Mitchell's avaricious disregard for the safety of his crews, Anstey was certainly making a point about freebooting capitalists, but his parable addressed a more general issue. He said that he met the captain again in later years and discovered that he was no longer a 'port or perish' man. He had left the sea for a safer job where he could nurse a growing bank balance in comfort and security. That, said Anstey, was one of the troubles with the labour movement. There were too many men who had got into Parliament or the leadership of unions and then lost the will to fight for those who put them there. They preferred the comfortable role of 'statesmen' to that of class warriors. What was needed were younger, more vigorous 'port or perish' men to lead the movement. Finally, lest anyone should take his story too literally, Anstey recalled McLeod's warning and remarked, 'This cannot be libel. It is a dream.'

This was another of the many uses which Anstey made of his life at sea. The ability to combine a racy narrative with political comment became one of his hallmarks as a labour publicist. That skill can be seen in one of the many accounts he gave of his experiences in the Pacific island labour trade. The tale concerned a voyage from Noumea via the Carolines to Japan, from where they entered the 'coolie carrier trade between Amoy and Singapore'. He began with a description of the ship, followed by an account of the sadistic behaviour of the skipper and mate, from which he was protected by the boatswain. However,

one day when a sailor was working aloft a lanyard of a marling spike he was using broke, and the spike plunged to the deck through the heart of the boatswain. He was buried at sea and, after that, I was everyone's kick.

He then went on to enumerate the ship's store of cannon, guns, bayonets and cutlasses; its cargo of 800 to 1,000 'coolies'; and his job of tossing the dead overboard. All this took place on a ship where the skipper strictly enforced attendance at Sunday prayers and the mate indulged a penchant for wanton violence.

58. 'A life on the ocean wave', op. cit.
When the mate was not flogging or slapping, he was kicking. One day he was kicking me through the alleyway and on a block near the galley was a pie, ready for the oven. I threw it into his face and the pie broke, the paste clung to his beard, red fruit ran down his white suit and hundreds of coolies roared with glee. He swung me over his head and dashed me into the scuppers. When I came to life again I was in one of the bridge boats and the ship was running out of Hong Kong. I was bruised and matted with blood - nobody was troubled, or dared to wash it off. He came to look at me and said, 'You little bastard, I'll throw you overboard.' I said something rude so he squeezed my throat and I again went to sleep.

After an interlude in which he gave another version of how he came to land in Singapore, and compared the life of derelicts there with those in Paris, he turned his attention to the trade in Kanaka labour.

Anstey said that Bobbie Towns, 'owner of ships and wharves and plantations, director of the Bank of NSW and financial rock of the Methodist Church', had originated the trade. He gave his chief recruiter, Ross Lewin, letters to missionaries asking if they would assist Lewin in his 'truly Christian mission' of taking islanders to work on plantations owned by Towns, where they might enjoy the blessings of Christian civilization. Anstey went on to detail stories of rape, 'deceit, cruel treachery and cold blooded murders', and concluded with the ironic observation:

The Kanaka trade of girls and boys, with its Christian impetus and civilizing tendencies, was an easy and pleasant life as sailor's life went in those days.

This had all the major elements of a typical Anstey sea story: a melodramatic death; slapstick humour; the brutality of a sailor's life; and Christianity serving avarice, cruelty, rape and murder. Stories such as this were standard fare in the Anstey theatre that sustained his reputation as a man of action and adventure.

59 The detailed research notes for this and his pamphlet, In the Good Old Days, Melbourne, Fraser and Jenkinson, n.d., are contained in NLA MS 512/7. The notes suggest that this story was yet another of his imaginative exercises. For a scholarly glimpse of how the Pacific island labour trade operated see Deryck Scarr, 'Recruits and Recruiters: A portrait of the labour trade' in J.W.Davidson and Deryck Scarr (eds.), Pacific Island Portraits, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1976. For a profile of Towns, who was not a 'financial rock of the Methodist Church', see D. Shineberg's entry on him in Bede Nairn (ed.), Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol.6, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1976, pp 294-296. Lewin is mentioned briefly in H.J.Gibney and Ann G Smith (comp. & eds.), A Biographical Register, 1788-1939: Notes from the name index of the Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol. II, Canberra, Australian National University, 1987, p 23.

60 The theatrical elements in Anstey's public style are considered more fully in later chapters.
The contemporary evidence, however, tends to suggest that his life at sea was somewhat less exciting. As noted earlier, he probably arrived in Sydney for the first time somewhere around the middle of 1879, as he approached his fourteenth birthday. From there, his memoirs allege, he joined the fatherly captain from Noumea as cabin boy. Three years later he was back in Sydney where he commenced the commonplace book.

The following month he was aboard the *Iluka* at Clarence River Heads on the north coast of New South Wales. It is not clear what the ship was doing at that time. He made entries in the commonplace book while there during September, on 1 October and 29 December 1882. The *Iluka* may have been in port for that period, or it may have been working along the coast using Clarence River Heads as its base. A month later he changed ships, joining a government steamer, the *Nell Lawrence*, in the same port. During these five months he seems to have had ample leisure because he found time enough to fill twenty-one pages with reflections on the vagaries of love and sex, the eternal questions surrounding age and youth, the failings of the clergy and the oppression of toiling humanity.

There is no evidence of where he went in the next eight months until September 1883 when he was again in Sydney. Two months later he was aboard the *S.S.Ajax* along the north Queensland coast. The ship called at Port Douglas on 8

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61. The main items of contemporary material are the commonplace book, his Seamen's Union membership book in NLA MS 512/7 and a discharge certificate from the *Speedwell* in the Anstey file of the Merrifield Collection, La Trobe Library.


65. Anstey seems to have had easy access to the works of Shakespeare since many of the items copied were by the bard. They included 'Venus and Adonis', the 'Seven Ages of Man' and the sonnet, 'Crabbed Age and Youth'.


67. According to his Seamen's Union membership book, he joined the union aboard the *S.S.Ajax* on 23 November 1883.
November, Bloomfield River on 26 November and Mackay on 19 December 1883. It is quite likely that on this voyage he saw again the grim facts of the Pacific island labour trade, particularly at Mackay, assuming that his stories of an earlier role in it were at least partly true. When he returned there some forty years later as a member of the Royal Commission into the Navigation Act he was reminded 'of his life on a schooner trading in the Pacific Islands and bringing back kanakas for the sugar plantations'. Frank Green recalled Anstey's reaction to the place:

It all came back to his memory when he saw a pub facing on what was known at Mackay as 'the creek' - a small tidal stream. In his time the schooner on which he worked was owned by the proprietor of this pub, under the roof of which was a brothel. When the crew came ashore they received their pay on these premises, so that most of the wages eventually came back to the owner through the good offices of Bacchus and Venus.

If the pub did contain a brothel when he was first there, his earlier literary interest in Venus might have found a more tangible expression.

On 1 February 1884, six weeks after making a note in Mackay, he was aboard the SS Kiama. A further six weeks later he was in Noumea where he probably renewed his acquaintance with his mentor. Although there is no direct evidence to suggest that he did so, it is possible that he worked on a 'blackbirder' during this period. The claim in his memoirs about working on 'a Queensland-registered and Kanaka licensed schooner' from which he earned 'a nice little banking account' might refer to this time. There is then a gap in the contemporary record of some

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68. Commonplace book, pp. 37, 38 and 41 respectively.

69. F.C. Green, 'Frank Anstey - the man I knew', Overland no. 32, August 1965, p. 18.

70. Ibid.

71. According to his union book, he paid six shillings membership dues on that day.

72. Commonplace book, p. 42. He copied a passage about Gambetta while there on 16 March 1884.

73. 'A life on the ocean wave', op. cit.
four months before he appeared at the Sydney office of the Seamen’s Union to pay his
dues.74

At this point his memoirs and the external evidence begin to agree. He said
that times were bad in Sydney where his reckless spending combined with the failure
to find work reduced him to destitution. He recalled life among the ‘down and out’:

I pawned my clothes, piece by piece, and drifted to a threepenny doss
house in Sussex Street - a gloomy ‘thieves kitchen’ of desperate and
despairing derelicts. Then I had nothing - not even a threepence - so I
moved to the open sky and from a corner of Observatory Hill - down
near the rails - I watched the beauties of the night and the glories of
the moon.75

He remembered a brief period of work as a dock labourer at Pyrmont Wharf where the
combination of hunger and summer heat weakened him.76 That memory provided the
occasion for one of his usual swipes at employers.

I manned one end of a string of timber, trotted to a stack to get rid of it,
trotted back for more, and the man who did not trot fast enough trotted
off the job. I trotted until the last stick was out, but only my needs kept
me going. Those were the days when employers paid every man
according to his worth and seldom found a man worth anything they
could avoid paying.77

After thirty-two years of representing the working people of Australia it is not
surprising that Anstey should want to dwell on the monotony of grinding toil under
the watchful gaze of grudging employers. Such stories demonstrated to his audience
that through personal experience he understood those conditions and why they must
be changed. Referring to his employment in 1885 on the Speedwell 78 he gave a
detailed description of similarly arduous work on a coastal collier.

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74. His union book shows that he paid sixteen shillings on 4 July 1884.

75. ‘A life on the ocean wave’, op. cit.

76. This was probably ‘near Christmas’ in 1884.

77. ‘A life on the ocean wave’, op. cit.

78. Anstey joined the Speedwell on 18 February 1885. See certificate of discharge, Anstey file,
Merrifield Collection, La Trobe Library. According to Nugent, op. cit., p. 39, he left it on 28 August
1885. The date of discharge is illegible on the certificate. He was employed as an ‘A.B.’, meaning
an able-bodied ordinary seaman. There is no evidence that he ever rose above that rank.
I joined a fore-and-aft coal schooner in the trade and went to Newcastle. We put the vessel under a chute, coal poured in, and the crew of two went below to trim it. When full we went on deck, let go, drifted down stream, put on hatches, up canvas, and to sea. When loaded any sort of sea swept over us, the chance of cooking food was mostly nil, and the trip might occupy a few hours or days according to wind and weather. In Sydney it was off hatches, shovel coal or man a winch. To turn a handle with 150 lbs of coal on the end of a rope, raise it 20 or 30 feet to a wharf, do it for ten hours a day, and when finished put to sea for more coal and be perpetually wet with sweat, or rain, or sea, and sleep in a dismal hole in the forepeak - that's the sort of job to hold down. The man who vacates a good position makes room for another. Only the pegs in the holes are changed. Some wise guy had left this hole for me and with equal generosity it passed it to someone else.

Six months of this exhausting tedium seem to have left an enduring impression on him. The work probably restored his solvency for a while. It is also likely to have hardened both his muscles and his views on wage labour.

For the next year and a half he led a much more settled life in Sydney. Most of this time he lived at the same address, 37 Merriman Street, Millers Point. A fixed address over such a long period suggests that he found regular employment, though not necessarily the same job, perhaps steady casual work. Not surprisingly, he made no entries in his commonplace book while working on the Speedwell, but in the more leisurely conditions of Merriman Street he resumed his self-education with renewed enthusiasm. Apart from a short illness in 1886, his lively, enquiring mind did not seem to have been dulled by the remorseless labour he endured on the Speedwell. It is not clear whether he was discouraged by that experience, but he does not appear to have returned to the sea after August 1885, even though he continued his Seamen's Union membership up to December 1887. If he was not working at his trade, this

79 'A life on the ocean wave', *op. cit.*

80 He retained a lasting sympathy with those who lived by manual labour. See, for example, *CPD* vol 116, 26 October 1927, p.769.


82 Two thirds of the book was written during this period.


84 *Seamen's Union book*, *op. cit.* He resumed membership at the Melbourne office on 23 March 1889.
suggests that, in addition to keeping his options open, he was moving closer to the
union as something more than a purely occupational organisation. It may well have
marked a growing attachment to political labour.

It was during this period that the concerns in his commonplace book became
more explicitly political and more inclined towards specifically Australian issues.
Before this, his selections bore the mark of his British heritage, but in Sydney they
gradually turned towards the leading questions of the day in the Australian colonies.
There was more of the Bulletin's truculent nationalism and anti-imperialism. There
was the land question, Sir Graham Berry as the modern Judas, the Knights of Labor,
impatience with clerical humbug, and the vague stirrings of a sense that a revolution
of some kind must come to sweep away the dead hand of Old World corruption that lay
so heavily on the New Land. Like many other labour men of his generation, Anstey
began his political education at a time when some would sing 'A Song of the
Republic'. 85 He reflected on the spectre of Robespierre 86 and toyed with the idea that,
'The tree of liberty only grows when watered by the blood of tyrants.' 87 A little steel
had begun to temper the romantic and heroic turn of his imagination.

Carrying his commonplace book and all that it represented with him, Anstey
left Sydney early in 1887 and headed south.

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85. Lawson captured this mood of radical nationalism that the Bulletin sought to propagate
    when it published the verse on 1 October 1887. See Colin Roderick (ed.), Henry Lawson: Collected


87. Ibid, p.123.
Chapter Three

THE YOUNG PROMETHEAN

In the middle of 1887, while the *Bulletin* was celebrating myths about bush workers, Anstey was carrying his swag overland between Sydney and the eastern Victorian town of Sale. He later recalled that during this period he turned his hand to chaff-cutting, droving and other unskilled seasonal jobs that were the staple of itinerant rural labour.¹ 'Jack Hardgraft', a resident of the Sale district, remembered meeting the 'young swagman' and telling him where a few days work could be found.² To Anstey it probably appeared to be a relatively congenial place. As far as country towns went, Sale provided a range of amusements sufficient to meet the needs of most young men. There were several hotels, a number of sporting clubs, a school of arts, choral and amateur dramatic societies, an ANA library, two bands and no particular shortage of young women. It was also on the normal itinerary of touring concert parties and theatrical companies. Perhaps more importantly, work was plentiful. When he arrived, there were several public works projects under way including a new gaol, municipal water works and port facilities.³ Amid all the activity that this generated he soon found work, first as a bottle washer at Pettit's brewery and later as a lorry driver for a ironmonger. When the occasion demanded, the lorry doubled as the local hearse. According to 'Hardgraft', Anstey held the job for 'a couple of years'.⁴

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¹ Preston Leader, 31 May 1913, p.2.

² Labor Call 13 February 1930, p.10.


⁴ Green, *op. cit.*, p.147 refers to his work as a bottle washer and Hardgraft in Labor Call 13 February 1930, p.10 to his job with the ironmonger. The only business in Sale at that time which provided the unusual combination of hardware and funerals was L. Jensen and Co. Enquiries in Sale failed to locate any company records which might have confirmed these accounts. The companies no longer exist.
A settled existence again allowed him time to exercise his impulse for self-expression. In one of his earlier efforts, he apparently offered the *Bulletin* the benefit of his views on the political situation in New South Wales. However, it was not published. Along with the manuscripts of many other aspiring writers, the only trace of its existence was a terse acknowledgement in the 'Correspondence' column:

'T-F-A-y' (Sale): See *Bulletin* of 23rd July last, 'Sir Henry Parkes - Imperialist and Republican'. Your letter is as long as a rabbi's curse, but we will endeavour to struggle through it 'ere next Jubilee.

It is not clear whether this temporarily discouraged his literary ambitions, but it did not appear to dull his passion for self-improvement.

On this occasion it took a more outgoing form than his commonplace book. He began to attend a Young Men's Literary and Debating Society, established earlier that year by the local Presbyterian Minister, the Rev. George Connor. It was a small group in the mould of many similar mutual improvement societies which provided both education and respectable entertainment for serious-minded young men. In an era when self-help and improvement were as much a mark of social virtue as of individual inclination, these societies played an important role in communities like Sale. In the absence of any other form of adult education, their meetings were occasions for earnest endeavour rather than idle amusement. They were places where young men could develop their skills and display their worthiness to assume community leadership. In its earliest years the Sale Young Men's Literary and Debating Society nurtured two future parliamentarians, James McLachlan and Anstey. McLachlan, who was secretary of the Society when Anstey joined, was the Member of the Legislative Assembly for North Gippsland between 1908 and 1937. It is indicative

5. *Bulletin*, 1 October 1887, p.6. This was an unequivocal rejection since Queen Victoria's jubilee had been celebrated only four months earlier.

6. 'Our Church in Gippsland', section headed '1880-1892', typescript MS in historical records held at St. Columba's Uniting Church, Sale. I am indebted to Helen and Rob Cowie for hospitality and kindness in allowing me to see these records.

7. McLachlan did not display the same unshakeable attachment to the labour movement as Anstey. In the elections of 1897 and 1900 he stood, unsuccessfully, as a Ministerialist candidate. At his third attempt in 1908 he won as a Labor candidate and repeated the performance in 1911 and 1914. However, by 1917 he had turned Nationalist but retained the seat at that and the
of the Society's importance that these two men, who were to be colleagues in the State Labor Caucus between 1908 and 1910, began to develop their public speaking skills in the same group. Although accounts of Anstey's role in the Society tended to expand over the years in proportion to his political fortunes, it does seem to have been influential in at least two respects: he began to acquire oratorical skills so important in politicians at the time; and in Connor he found a mentor who encouraged his restless, inquiring mind.

In 1930, exercising a memory coloured by Anstey's recent elevation to the ranks of Federal Cabinet, 'Hardgraft' recalled a young Promethean.

He proved a regular hair-raiser at the Debating Society by his fiery professions of democracy and his fierier protests against social injustice. When the young sailor handled the subject of man's inhumanity to man his tense, ringing voice, pulsing with words of eloquence, electrified his audience. His clean-cut features aglow, and eyes burning with the fire of genius, he set out period after period thrilling with the magnetic power of oratory, and the dour Presbyterians of Sale (it was in kirk) sat back and gazed in amazement at the oratorical power of the young Laborite, and in horror at his impiety in assailing the cant and callousness of the powers that be, or were.8

The evidence of his commonplace book lends weight to the claim about his passion for social justice. He may even have quoted passages from it during his 'fiery professions of democracy'. As to his 'magnetic power of oratory', the evidence is less clear. With the benefit of hindsight, 'Hardgraft' may well have accelerated the development of his platform skills. Anstey certainly made no such claim. With characteristic self-deprecating humour, he reconstructed a much less auspicious beginning. In later years he was fond of telling audiences about his first attempt at public speaking.

He dropped one evening into the meeting of the local Mutual Improvement Society. It was the night for 'impromptu speaking', and when it came to his turn the subject he drew out of the hat was 'spring subsequent election in 1920. In 1921 and 1924 he again survived, then as Independent Labour. As if to confirm his role as Gippsland's own Vicar of Bray, he held the seat as an Independent from 1927 to 1937. See Colin A Hughes and B D Graham, Voting for the Victoria Legislative Assembly, 1890-1964, Canberra, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1975 and Geoff Browne, Biographical Register of the Victorian Parliament, 1900-84, Melbourne, Library Committee, Parliament of Victoria, 1985, p.144.

fashions'. Nothing could have been further outside his sphere of knowledge, and after trying hard to say something about the advisability or otherwise of having springs in hats or bonnets he found that everybody was laughing and so sat down.9

But this story may also have been tailored for an audience who could be expected to approve but not believe self-deprecating modesty. It is quite possible that the beginnings of his public oratory were much less impressive or amusing. The church records make no mention of such a flamboyant character.

Irrespective of the impression he may have left on the Debating Society, its founder appears to have had a profound influence on Anstey's development. He often spoke of Connor as a 'sincere and valued friend' who invited him 'down to the manse, lent him educational books, and did everything he could to keep him on the upward path'. His gratitude was such 'that words could not express how much he felt he owed to that Presbyterian minister'.10 In many respects, the friendship might appear unusual given the difference in their backgrounds. Although Connor was probably only about ten years older than Anstey, he came from a comfortable New South Wales family. They sent him to school in Glasgow, from where he went on to the universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, taking an M.A. from the latter in 1878. After a period of study in Europe, he was licensed by the Presbytery of Edinburgh and commissioned to return to Australia, arriving at Melbourne in 1882. He worked in Geelong and Bendigo, where he was ordained the following year. From there he went to Brunswick and then to Sale in September 1886.11 Compared to Anstey's determined but undisciplined efforts, Connor had the benefit of an excellent formal education, even by the standards of his clerical colleagues. But despite the differences in their class, education and religious views, they began to develop a lasting friendship. Perhaps Connor was impressed by Anstey's lively, natural intelligence and his resolute self-improvement. Anstey, in turn, may well have found Connor encouraging, patient of

10. *Ibid*
11. 'Fifty years of Presbyterianism in Sale', p.11. Typescript in historical records, St Columba's Uniting Church, Sale.
his untutored learning and indulgent, perhaps even sympathetic, towards his views on religious hypocrisy. Indeed, there are some hints in the church records that Connor may have harboured a certain sympathy with Anstey's opinions on that particular matter. He certainly did not match the stereotype of clerical humbug that Anstey had transcribed from the *Bulletin*. But whatever the precise nature of their relationship, it remained warm for many years after Anstey had left the area. Some twenty years later he attended a Presbyterian social given to mark the Rev. and Mrs. Connor's silver wedding anniversary. As a prominent State parliamentarian who owed a great deal to Connor and the Debating Society, he was prevailed upon to address a few appropriate words to the children present. In doing so, he acknowledged his debt with a short homily on the virtues of self-improvement and how it had transformed a penniless lad into a public figure who was about to return to his place of birth in much better circumstances than when he had left.

During his time in Sale, Anstey began an even more enduring relationship with a local woman named Catherine McColl. Very little is known about Kate - as she was called - either before or after she married Anstey. Of all the aspects to his life, his relationship with Kate remains the most conspicuously silent; testimony perhaps, to a combination of her supposedly diffident nature compared with Anstey's overpowering personality and the customary reluctance of many working class men of the period to discuss in public their private lives. Only the most sketchy details survive of the forty-eight years they spent together as husband and wife, during which they raised two sons. Her parents, like so many other residents of Gippsland, were Scots emigrants. Her father, John McColl, was born at Glengarry in about 1825 and had come to Victoria as a young man. On 10 March 1854 he married Ann McLeod, a native of Inverness, at Tarraville in South Gippsland. They had five other children.

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12 'Our church in Gippsland', section headed '1906-1913', *op. cit.*

13 *Labor Call* 11 April 1907, p.2. Although Connor, as an old friend, may well have understood Anstey's stance on the Licensing and Gaming Suppression Bills during 1906, it is not recorded what the dour Calvinists of Sale thought about his epic tussle with Judkins, the arch-typical wowser, during the recent state election. On this incident, see chapter 5 below.
before Kate, two of whom died in infancy. When Kate was born on 12 March 1865 the
gamily was living in Sale where her father worked as a carrier. However, beyond
these meagre details about her family background, there is no evidence about her
childhood, education, what she did as a young woman, or her courtship with Anstey.
The only contemporary record of the relationship is Kate's claim that they were
married in Melbourne in 1 January 1889.

Nor is it clear when or why they left Sale. But whatever private reasons they
might have had to move from Gippsland to Melbourne, they had every reason to
expect that their chances would be better in the metropolis. As Serle observed,
'Marvellous Melbourne ... was irresistibly attractive to the young men in the country
towns who could see no prospects there to fit their talents ... Melbourne had the
employment opportunities; men could earn much more there, take advantage of ever-
opening opportunities, and enjoy the wide range of cultural and recreational
pursuits.' The reports of Melbourne's prosperous, bustling energy offered exciting

14. Birth certificate for Catherine Mary Bell McColl, Government Statist, Melbourne. There is
conflicting data in the certificates relating to Kate's life. When she registered the birth of her
two sons she gave her maiden name as McCole on both occasions. All other sources give her
family name as McColl. I have preferred the latter simply because it agrees with a much wider
range of informants which include her father, the rate books for the Borough of Sale held by
the Sale Historical Society, Anstey and their elder son Ward. Although the difference may have
resulted from an error of transcription, her information was unreliable in one other respect.
She claimed that Anstey was born in Brisbane.

15. Apart from the occasional reference to her at minor public functions as an M P 's wife, there
is virtually no record of her life with Anstey. There is no picture of her in the more than one
hundred photographs that belonged to their younger son Daron Nugent, op. cit., who was able
to interview Daron and a close family friend before they died, was unable to elicit anything
more than non-committal or vaguely patronising references to her. My enquiries have met a
similar response. It is a matter for regret that for want of documentary, photographic or oral
data, Kate Anstey must be largely absent from this biography of her husband.

16. Birth certificates for Ward Eugene Anstey, born on 23 September 1889, Government Statist,
Melbourne. A search of the Statist's records for the period 1 January 1886 to 31 December 1891
revealed no record of a marriage between Francis George (Frank) Anstey and Catherine Mary
Bell McColl (McCole). There is no evidence in church records at Sale that they were married
there, nor is there any notice of their marriage in the Age, Fitzroy City Press, Gippsland
Mercury or Gippsland Times. Despite the lack of any other official evidence about the status of
the marriage, how or where it was celebrated, the fact remains that their partnership endured
until Kate's death in 1937.

17. Geoffrey Serle, The Rush to be Rich: a history of the Colony of Victoria, 1835-1882 Carlton,
prospects. There would be work amid its booming industry and commerce, and many more avenues for self-improvement than those offered by a country clergyman and his debating society. The Centennial International Exhibition had proclaimed, for all the world to see, the vigor of Melbourne's industry and culture. If that confidence was beginning to sound a little hollow, the great metropolis of the south was still the place where the colony's future was being shaped in business and banking chambers, throbbing factories and workshops, the Parliament and Trades Hall. The great issues of the day were being debated in the newspapers, at public meetings, in clubs, societies, pubs and on street corners. Anstey was familiar with the pulse of life in London and Sydney, and although cities might not provide the most salubrious conditions, they were the places where people had a more lively and challenging social existence. By comparison, Gippsland might have seemed dull and slow. To test his growing self-confidence he needed to be close to the centre of affairs, not at the fringe. If he was going to make anything of himself, Melbourne in the late 1880s was the place to do it.18

Shortly after their arrival in Melbourne the Ansteys rented a single storey terrace at 18 Newry Street, North Fitzroy. It was a modest dwelling of the type that property developers of the time deemed suitable for a workingman's family. But while it was small, it was not a slum like those that cluttered the back streets of Collingwood and Fitzroy. In Newry Street workingmen's terraces mingled with the more expensive semi-detached and free-standing homes of the lower middle class, and if the yards were small at least the streets were wide. Although noxious smells from the factories of Fitzroy and Collingwood were an occasionally intrusive reminder of their proximity, some relief could be had in the open space of the Edinburgh Gardens little more than two blocks away. There, residents could take the air and contemplate the splendor of the mansions in Alfred Crescent. It was, perhaps, symbolic of Anstey's

18 The best and most extensive account of life in Melbourne during this period is Graeme Davison, The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1978.
aspirations that their first home was a small cottage nestling between the insecurity of working class poverty and the assurance of middle class affluence.

Frank took a job as a salesman, but it is not clear what he sold, or to whom. However, his need to earn a living at it may have honed his powers of persuasion. Kate, meanwhile, awaited the birth of their first child as the young couple settled into the routines of family life. It must have been a period of adjustment for them both. For the first time, Kate was living in a large city on the edge of industrial suburbs, away from the familiar comforts of family and friends, and the quieter rhythms of country life. Learning to cope with strange surroundings, the uncertainty of a salesman’s earnings as well as pregnancy must have been difficult for her. Frank, on the other hand, had known city life before, but he had to adjust to the responsibilities of a family man which became all the more pressing with the birth of their first son, Ward Eugene, on 23 September 1889. Having to provide for a wife, house and child must have been the occasion for some sober reflection on his new circumstances compared with his vagabond past.

Some time later he found less precarious work as an attendant in the Engineering Department of the newly-established Working Men’s College in La Trobe Street. His weekly wage of £1/8/3\(^{19}\) was about half that paid to tradesmen.\(^{20}\) Nevertheless, it had the benefit of regularity even though there would have been very little left at the end of each week to save or spend on luxuries.\(^{21}\)

The College had opened in 1887 following a five year campaign instigated by the philanthropist Francis Ormond who had given £5,000 towards its foundation, contingent on an equal amount being raised by public subscription.\(^{22}\) The main

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\(^{19}\) Nugent, *op. cit.*, p.35.


\(^{21}\) See *ibid.*, chapter nine, for a discussion of ‘Making Ends Meet’ in Melbourne at the time.

objective was to promote 'general education and technological training'. It was an institutional expression of a combined liberal and utilitarian view then popular in Melbourne, that education for the working class should be both edifying for those who received it and of practical benefit to the colony's industries. The composition of its first Council reflected this view.

Although Anstey was not a student at the College, his job brought him into contact with the teaching staff, fellow workers bent on improvement and the general atmosphere of respectable working class education. Indeed, there may have been a little of Jude the Obscure in his decision to seek work in its sandstone, neo-Gothic building. They were congenial surroundings for his informal studies. It was easy to take advantage of the 'free popular lectures' provided by the College on Saturday evenings or make use of the Public Library's large collection of books just across the street. Short of enrolment and formal tuition, he now had all the advantages available to working men of the period. The conditions for private study were certainly better than those of his seafaring years and more extensive than the facilities in Sale. But, as always, he was a man of both action and reflection. An ex-student remembered him as "a little chap with a great mop of hair", who used to spend his lunch hours boxing in the upstairs lecture theatre.

There was, as well, a much wider network of information and activity available to him beyond the College and the Library. He had ready access to numerous newspapers and journals, and to the many organisations that provided opportunities.

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23 Campbell, op. cit.

24 Ormond, as founder, plus two of his nominees were entitled to seats on the Council. The Government, the University, the Public Library, the Trades Hall Council and subscribers of £1 or over (which included many businessmen) held two seats each. The more numerous subscribers of £1 or less had four representatives. See Ibid, pp.1-2.

25 Ibid, pp.4-5.

26 Murray-Smith and Dare, op. cit. p.103.
for inquiring minds to hear and discuss opinions on the great issues of the day. The Social Democratic League offered lectures on such subjects as 'Socialists, their nature and unity'. Branches of the Progressive Political League provided a focus for both political and social activity in most working class suburbs. There were lectures at the Old Trades Hall and the Gaiety Hall in Bourke Street sponsored by the Sunday Lecture and Free Discussion Society. At the Collingwood Working Man's Club there were earnest discussions on subjects affecting the interests of its members, such as the merits of co-operative farming in a period of increasing urban unemployment.

Public lecture tours by famous people like Henry George who, visited Melbourne during March-April 1890, appealed to a much wider audience and stimulated lively debate in the mass media. But there was more than just talk. Many organisations arranged activities that required some form of specific commitment to an issue or cause. The Melbourne Democratic Club held smoke nights to aid striking workers. In one of those temporary alliances that did not seem in the slightest contradictory to its members, the West Melbourne branch of the Progressive Political League joined with the North Melbourne Military Band and the West Melbourne Fire Brigade to raise money for the hospital. The Trades Hall Council organised a petition

27. Commonweal and Workers' Advocate, 8 August 1891, p.3.

28. By August 1891 there were branches in Hawthorn, Essendon, South Melbourne, East Bourke Boroughs, Richmond, North and South Carlton, Prahran and South Yarra, Fitzroy, North Melbourne, West Melbourne, Collingwood, Footscray and various regional towns. See ibid, 15 August 1891, p.3. At this time Anstey was living at 142 Macpherson Street, North Carlton, from where he had ready access to a local branch. See Sands and McDougall’s Melbourne and Suburban Directory for 1891, p.608.

29. Commonweal and Workers' Advocate, 17 October 1891, p.3.

30. Ibid, 31 October 1891, p.3.

31. It is highly likely that Anstey took an interest in the visit since he had copied a passage from George’s Social Problems onto p.117 of his commonplace book.

32. Commonweal and Workers' Advocate, 6 August 1892, p.3.

33. Ibid, 24 October 1891, p.3.
to the Queen asking that she disallow an Act that would permit the use of 'South Sea Island labour' because it amounted to slavery. In a very practical expression of working class self consciousness, the Co-operative Laundry, the People's Co-operative Clothing Company and the Victorian Co-operative Society sought to free workers from the predations of private traders in the purchase of basic necessities. There were also festive occasions involving entertainments and sports such as the 'Grand Demonstration' to benefit the 'starving and destitute unemployed', held at the Exhibition Buildings under vice-regal patronage. These various organisations and activities, despite their occasional contradictions, were part of a more general process of working class mobilisation that provided the opportunities for young men like Anstey to emerge at the forefront of political and industrial activism. The prevailing conditions in the early 1890s certainly provided a focus for his self-improving exertions. The events surrounding the maritime and shearer's strikes, the deepening depression and the floundering about for solutions to the crisis all served to give a sharper meaning to ideas about social organisation and class conflict. To Anstey, whose interests were not those of the private scholar nor the purely vocational student, these events emphasised the relationship between learning and life. For him, the over-riding object of the library, the lecture or the meeting was to absorb

34. Ibid, 11 June 1892, p.3.
35. Ibid, 16 July 1892, p.2; 29 April 1893, p.4; and 11 June 1892, p.4.
36. Ibid, 9 July 1892, p.3. For the most detailed account of radical political activity in Melbourne during this period see Verity Burgmann, 'In Our Time': Socialism and the Rise of Labor, 1885-1902, Sydney, George Allen & Unwin, 1983, chapter 7.
knowledge that would inform action. He not only wanted to understand the world, he hoped to change it.

However, this was a period of considerable ideological confusion when radical impulses could find no single theoretical or organisational repository. There was an abundance of certitudes, most of which had been formulated to explain British, European or American conditions. Like many of his contemporaries, Anstey was casting about among these for solutions to specific local problems as well as the broader questions that knew no national boundaries.

The difficulties inherent in this sort of exercise were often revealed in the extraordinary eclecticism of the platforms and manifestos published by radicals and reformers. With characteristic generality, the bewildering array of issues involved were usually subsumed under 'the social question'. But there was no agreed general theory about the structure of society and how it worked, let alone what was to be done about it. Radicals thought of themselves as democrats, socialists and anarchists, secularists, land reformers, labourites, co-operators or currency reformers; often expressing themselves in highly individual combinations of those categories to satisfy that perennial need of radicals to have a settled view on every subject of the day. If there was any common ground, it usually took the form of opposition to the institutions of the state as presently constituted. There was, however, a good deal less agreement about the nature of the social relations that they expressed, or the ideology that gave them legitimacy. Depending on the position taken, those institutions would have to be substantially reformed or abolished outright.

Democrats inclined towards a programme of careful reform as proposed in the lib.-lab. platform of the Progressive Political League. Socialists might have been persuaded to agree that the distribution of wealth in capitalist society was unjust and that some form of common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange was necessary. For anarchists, the instruments of state power were an

affront to liberty. Currency reformers saw the monetary system and the institutions that were part of it as the first targets for change. Freethinkers considered organised religion a profound insult to the power of human reason and a stubborn impediment to social progress, while land reformers believed that the answer to social problems could be found in changes to the pattern of land ownership.

Of course, none of these approaches were, of necessity, mutually exclusive. Many radicals would have happily acknowledged that they were not substantive differences, more matters of emphasis. Nevertheless, it did not prevent the occasional doctrinal or personal squabbles that characterised so much radical endeavour. In addition, these ideas were often coloured by nationalist and anti-imperialist sentiments which did more to compound the difficulties of analysis than they did to reduce them. In many respects, what Melbourne radicals of the 1890s were struggling towards was a pattern of ideas that would illuminate all these issues. If it is at all possible to determine what radicals meant by 'the social question', the answer is most likely to be found in this quest for systematic explanation. The term itself was an implied assertion that there was a body of theory capable of apprehending and unifying all the issues involved in building a more rational, just and prosperous society.

Since his years as a seaman, Anstey, in his own way, had been engaged in this same process. As his commonplace book suggests, the direction of his imaginative life steadily inclined him towards the realm of politics and outward action rather than private introspection. It was the first sign of the process that impelled him to become a political man. His brief association with the Melbourne Anarchist Club in 1890 signified the continuation of that struggle for systematic explanation. Through the club he again came into direct contact with radical ideas and the men who professed them.

39 See 'Anarchy' file, Merrifield collection, La Trobe Library (LTL). According to the Age 9 July 1890, p.1, he was one of those listed to speak at a reunion meeting. This suggests that if he had not been associated with the club before, he was at least regarded by some of the members as a suitable speaker for such an occasion.
The Anarchist Club was a radical offshoot of the Australian Secular Association. Founded on May Day 1886 after some factional bitterness within its parent organisation, it had about thirty regular members who included David and Will Andrade, J.A.Andrews, Robert Beattie, D.W.Brookhouse, 'Chummy' Fleming, S.A.Rosa and the venerable Monty Miller.  

Their manifesto denounced the evils of 'all monopolies and despotisms'. It sought to expose 'that colossal swindle, Government' and to draw the attention of working people 'to their common foes, the Priests and the Politicians'. Through 'Self Reliance, Self Help and a Spirit of Independence' the principles of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' would take practical form in voluntary co-operatives as the basis of social organisation. But despite their attempts to establish co-operatives in several fields, the club was essentially a debating society which, when Anstey associated with it, held meetings in 'Liberty Hall', a room in 213 Russell Street from where David Andrade conducted his circulating library and book store.

Nor were the members all they seemed. Although they professed anarchist principles, most could more properly be described as radicals in transition. Some of the older members had been engaged in political activity for a long time. John White had been part of Chartist agitation in England as far back as 1848. Monty Miller was widely believed to have been at the Eureka rebellion in 1854. Many of the younger men had more recently been associated with either the Secular Association or the Working Men's Political Reform Association. Nor, at the time, were their energies devoted entirely to the club. C.Drake and David Andrade were committeemen in the Free Discussion Society. S.A.Rosa and L.D.Petrie were founders of the Social Democratic

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The Young Promethean

League in 1889. It has been claimed that at about this time Anstey also played a role in building the Progressive Political League. He was now mixing with men who had seen some of the great events and movements that he had read about. There were theories to be argued over, grand schemes to be planned and the feeling that, although it might only be marginal, he was now helping to make history rather than merely reading about it. The club, denounced by the *Melbourne Punch* as a hotbed of 'loafers, drunkards and thieves', was really a small, colourful locus in the loose network of Melbourne's radical, bohemian sub-culture of the early 1890s. In many ways it was a temporary staging post in the political development of its members, most of whom moved on to found the Melbourne branch of the Australian Socialist League. Although the club was short-lived, in the way of many such groups it provided the basis for some lasting friendships, and animosities.

But the debates in clubs and societies like these, for all their earnest purpose, were mere shadow plays, distorted reflections of the harsh facts involved in the maritime and shearer's strikes of 1890. It was in these events that the great political and industrial issues of the day converged in a determined struggle where 'both employers and employed were, in their own ways, bent on survival'. As the various sectors of the precariously balanced colonial economies progressively collapsed, organised workers and owners were locked into bitter conflict over their relative shares of rapidly diminishing income and the means of its distribution. The focus of

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43. W.C. Miller, who had been a president of the Carlton branch, claimed that Anstey was one of its founders. See *Tocsin* 1 June 1905, p.8. It was later claimed that he had been the League's first assistant secretary. See *Labor Call* 31 May 1917, p.9. I have been unable to find contemporary evidence to confirm these claims.

44. The *Melbourne Punch* comment on the club is quoted in Merrifield, *op. cit.*, p.38. Their role in establishing the Melbourne branch of the ASL is described by Burgmann, *op. cit.*, pp.107-109.


46. The standard, orthodox account of the process by which the colonial economies slid into depression is F.A. Boehm, *op. cit.*
that conflict centred on a trial of strength between shearing and maritime unions on the one hand, and the unified resources of pastoralists and ship owners on the other. In the process, alliances were formed with positions being taken by individuals and organisations not initially involved in the disputes. Nevertheless, there were few people who were not touched by the consequences of the depression which, in part, determined their stance towards the disputes. The extent of the economic collapse and the bitterness of the fight impelled people to take sides in a way they had not done before. The long boom was over and a new, sharper perception of social relationships was being pressed upon peoples' minds.

There were sporadic, violent clashes as desperate strikers were confronted by the full panoply of state power applied through the parliaments, the courts, the armed forces and the police. Shearers armed themselves at Barcaldine, special constables were sworn in at Sydney, the Riot Act was read and police charged picket lines. In Melbourne and Sydney troops were made ready in their barracks, miners were locked out at Broken Hill, union leaders were gaolled for conspiracy and strikers charged under the Masters and Servants Act.

But despite the impressive financial help received by the Labour Defence Committee, the unions were no match for the employers and the state who could draw on a large pool of unemployed and non-union labour, and were able to protect them while they broke the strike. After two months of bitter struggle, what strength the unions had possessed was crushed, so the shearers and seamen returned to work on the owners' terms. To men like Anstey this was a great contest between Capital and Labour which demonstrated once and for all the brute facts of the class relations they had inherited from the Old World. It strengthened a sense of collective consciousness that was to give a measure of ideological cohesion to the labour movement they set about rebuilding. Although there is no evidence that Anstey took any direct part in the strike - he was still employed at the Working Men's College - it is almost certain

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that he followed events closely, and quite probable that the whole affair impelled him
to renew his membership of the Seamen's Union as an act of solidarity.\textsuperscript{48} In March 1891 he transferred his lapsed membership from the New South Wales to the Victorian branch of the union.\textsuperscript{49}

The early nineties were a particularly difficult period for single people and
young families, no less so for the Ansteys.\textsuperscript{50} Just as he was becoming active in the
political life of the metropolis the family was separated for the first time, only two
years after their marriage. Kate returned to her parent's home in Sale to await the
birth of their second child. On 31 May 1891, Daron Anstey was born at the McColl
house in Macarthur Street.\textsuperscript{51} Frank, meanwhile, had moved to a tiny weatherboard
cottage at 142 Macpherson Street, North Carlton.\textsuperscript{52} If he did have some part in the
early years of the Progressive Political League, it is likely that his involvement began
at this time.

While his family life was unsettled, during the next eighteen months his
hitherto steady job also began to look precarious. By mid-1892 the depression in the
city's industries and the looming financial crisis associated with it had begun to
undermine the stability of the Working Men's College. Up until early 1892 the College
had managed to provide technical education to tradesmen despite 'a tidy little
overdraft at the bank'. It was, however, in a particularly vulnerable position. The
Government had been generous enough in providing land and buildings for the
College to supplement the money donated by Ormond and the public, but it gave little
towards recurrent costs. It was expected that students' fees would meet most of those.

\textsuperscript{48} For a brief account of the Seamen's Union's role in the dispute see Brian Fitzpatrick and
Rowan J. Cahill, \textit{The Seamen's Union of Australia, 1872-1972: a history}, Sydney, the union, 1981,
pp.19-22.

\textsuperscript{49} Seamen's Union membership book, Anstey papers, NLA MS 512, folder 7.

\textsuperscript{50} Davison, \textit{op. cit.}, chapter 9, 'Making Ends Meet'.

\textsuperscript{51} Birth certificate for Daron Anstey, Government Statist, Melbourne.

\textsuperscript{52} Sands and McDougall, \textit{op. cit.}, 1891, p.608.
However, machinery, the power to run it and the need for individual instruction meant that technical education of this sort was unusually expensive. The fees that students could afford to pay only provided about ten per cent of the total cost. Then, in early 1893 the Government, hard pressed for revenue, changed the method of funding to a capitation allowance supplemented by a payment for examination results. As this was linked to student numbers, which were falling due to the depression in manufacturing, the College's finances slid into crisis. In 1893 student fees and the Government grant both fell by more than half, and the bank, itself in grave peril, called in the overdraft. Reluctantly following the lead of the city's major financial institutions, the College suspended operations. It closed its doors for three months. In the early stages of the crisis it was thought necessary to dispense with some of the non-academic staff and to reduce the salaries of those who remained. On 14 November 1892 the College Council approved the retrenchment of two attendants, Anstey and Goldsworthy. Their cleaning work was to be done by women who would be paid half the wage of the two men. Anstey was unemployed again.

However, conditions in Melbourne at the end of 1892 were much worse than those prevailing when he had sought work before. It was almost impossible to get any kind of work in the city and, as 'shipping showed an enormous decline' at this time, he could not return to the sea. Between 1891 and 1893 employment in manufacturing had fallen by about a quarter. The reduction of public works projects coupled with the Government's resolute refusal to initiate any substantial relief work


54. D F Bishop, Records Manager, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, to Peter Love, 14 July 1982. A copy of the letter has been lodged with the Anstey papers, NLA.


added to the difficulties. The projects that did continue paid only subsistence wages. Conditions were desperate among the large number of unemployed in working class suburbs. Many were reduced to thinly disguised forms of begging, scrounging or theft. Families broke up, children were neglected and an unusually high number of women resorted to prostitution. Despite the best efforts of some politicians, they could not be ignored. Tragic stories began to appear in the press, the unemployed marched through the city, deputations visited the Premier in vain and occasionally violence erupted. Age readers were provided with harrowing accounts of life 'Among the Workless' and of those who were 'Poorer than Poor'. Apart from the tender mercies of private charity, or token gestures such as labour colonies, village settlements and the Labour Bureau, there was virtually no one they could turn to for help. The Trades Hall could offer nothing more than assistance in organising demonstrations. The unions themselves were in serious trouble. Following their defeat in the strikes, combined with the level of unemployment, their membership numbers fell drastically. During 1893, for example, it was estimated that their membership went down by as much as seventy-five per cent. In that condition they were powerless to resist wage cuts. The only resort left for those who could do so was to leave Melbourne and try their luck elsewhere. In the eighteen months between the middle of 1892 and the end of 1893 some fifty thousand people left for the Western Australian goldfields, other colonies (including New Zealand), or the country, thus reducing the city's population by ten per cent.

57. Ibid
59. Coghlan, op. cit. p 2048.
61. The first series of articles began on 22 June 1892. A second series appeared a year later.
63. Ibid, 2048.
Anstey was one of them. He joined thousands of other young men who went to the country in search of the work that the good season appeared to promise. In later years he recalled carrying his swag through the area around Broadford and Yea. To emphasise the remembered injustice of the times, he recounted his difficulties in making a living.

In 1893, I think it was, when the banks broke, I, with a number of others, went up to Sunday Creek rabbit-trapping. We used to send rabbits down to the auctioneers and we would get a note back from them saying so many crates had arrived, so many were bad, the transport charge was so much, and 'You are indebted to the amount of 3/6. Please forward it at your earliest convenience.' I swagged it through Broadford and Yea that year.

These were hardly the conditions that he had in mind when he and Kate left Sale four years earlier to better themselves in 'Marvellous Melbourne'. Kate and the children were living with her parents nearly two hundred miles away, while he was reduced to virtually living off the land.

If this was the occasion for some resentment, events in Melbourne were to provide a clear focus for it. By mid-1893 there was abundant evidence, for those inclined to see it as such, that the depression was not simply due to drought and falling commodity prices on world markets, nor the vigor with which pastoralists and shipowners protected their interests, but the wanton greed of reckless speculators. During April-May the economic collapse of the colonial economies culminated in a spectacular financial bust when thirteen major banks closed their doors and suspended payment. The whole monetary and banking system was in disarray. However, it was not totally unexpected. A number of land companies and building societies had 'gone bung' in the previous five years. In the process a number of small depositors had lost their savings and many people had been forced from their homes when it became necessary to foreclose on their mortgages. During the subsequent

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64 Ibid, p.2049.
65 Victorian Parliamentary Debates [VPD], vol.114, 27 September 1906, p.1785. His claim about not living in Melbourne at that time is supported by the Sands and McDougall's directories. He is not listed in any of the three that cover 1893-95.
investigations and criminal proceedings it was revealed that leading citizens like James Mirams and Mathias Larkin had been guilty of massive fraud. Both had been respected as businessmen and prominent members of their churches. Their trials and imprisonment were evidence for those who wished to assert that the whole system, in which men like Bellin, Mirams, Larkin and Johnson could prosper, was fundamentally corrupt. The chain of events called into question the popular assumption that so-called respectable men were necessarily honest.

What was different about the bank crashes was not that they were different in kind from the earlier collapses, but rather the degree to which their effects were felt. If, by mid-1893, there was any residual trust or desperate hope in the monetary system and the men who ran it, the events of April-May swept it aside for a long time. With the closure of all the major colonial banks thousands of people, whose meagre savings were a flimsy protection against the winds of depression, were ruined. Many of those whose precarious assets had distinguished them from the 'undeserving poor' were cast, virtually overnight, into the same state of destitution. Memories of this 'terror of 1893' lingered for a generation.

Public resentment became sharper when it was revealed that some of the most prominent political men in the colony were directly implicated in the orgy of speculation that led to the crash. James Munro, Premier of Victoria between November 1890 and February 1892, was a principal figure in the Real Estate Bank and the Federal Bank, both of which collapsed ingloriously. The bankruptcy of Sir Benjamin Benjamin following the closure of his Imperial Bank called into question the probity of this Mayor of Melbourne and Member of the Legislative Council. There

66 Cannon, op. cit, chapter 10.

were many who believed that Sir Matthew Davies, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1887 to 1892, was more skilful than innocent when he was acquitted of criminal charges arising from the failure of the Mercantile Bank. There was also considerable and well-founded suspicion that Thomas Bent, who followed Davies as Speaker, had been engaged in corrupt practices. If the revelations about the activities of these men before the crash provoked some alarm and anger, the manner in which many of the banks reconstructed their affairs at the expense of their depositors encouraged a degree of popular cynicism. Thus, by the end of 1893, a whole generation of working class activists had been given a sharp lesson, not only in the realities of economic and political power through the suppression of their strikes, but also in what they saw as the wanton avarice of their conservative rulers and the instability of the system those men had manipulated with such disastrous results. It was against this background that the more reflective radicals of Anstey's generation continued their quest for answers to the 'social question'. After 1893 it is not surprising that banking and finance occupied a privileged position in most of their analyses.

While all this was going on Anstey had returned to Melbourne where he soon became involved in another dispute between seamen and shipowners. It began in June 1893 when the owners announced a £2 cut in monthly wages for sailors and firemen, an overall reduction of twenty-five per cent. Members of the union voted almost unanimously to reject the cut, but were much less resolute in their decision to strike. Memories of their humiliating defeat in 1890 were still vivid. Moreover, economic conditions three years later were, if anything, much worse. The hesitancy of those who doubted the wisdom of the decision was well founded. The same array of weapons that had defeated them in 1890 was brought to bear again. Despite the efforts of Kingston, the South Australian Premier, there was no conference of the parties in dispute because his counterparts in the other colonies refused to convene one.

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69 The following account of the strike is based on Fitzpatrick and Cahill, *op. cit.*, pp.22-26.
Thomas McIlwraith [Boodlewright in labour parlance], a pastoralist who was later implicated in the Queensland National Bank scandal, was just as determined to use his power as Premier to crush the Seamen’s Union as he had been to break the Shearer’s Union in 1891. The New South Wales Premier, Sir George Dibbs, was equally resolute. As a shipowner he had fought the union fifteen years earlier. In Victoria, Patterson was similarly inclined and staunchly refused Kingston’s suggestion. Not only did they decline to co-operate, they counter-attacked. In New South Wales the penal provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act were applied, with the result that at one point during the dispute 152 seamen were under arrest in Sydney. It was not possible for the union to give its members financial support because, by a cruel irony, their funds were locked up in one of the banks that had suspended payment after the crash. The owners, meanwhile, had no difficulty manning ships with non-union labour recruited from the large pool of unemployed. Attempts in Melbourne by union pickets to stop ‘volunteers’ going to Adelaide were defeated by the police. Appeals to other unions for supporting action were met with the sadly realistic admission that they were in no position to help themselves, let alone the seamen. All the usual weapons of resistance seemed to be exhausted. Larry Petrie, one of Anstey’s comrades from the Melbourne Anarchist Club, took direct action by exploding a bomb aboard the S.S. Aramac while it was off Moreton Bay. He was arrested but the charge was dismissed for the lack of evidence. But that was an isolated, symbolic act. There was nothing the union could do except mount ineffective picket lines and hold protest meetings.

On Sunday 16 July one such meeting was held in Melbourne. According to customary practice, it began at the union’s city office where members and their supporters assembled and then marched behind a lorry bearing the union banner to the Yarra Bank. In front of a crowd estimated at between four and five thousand, the speakers took their positions on the lorry. George Presdergast, President of the Trades Hall Council, chaired the meeting. Beside him were three members of the Legislative Assembly; Fred Bromley, Dr William Maloney and William Trenwith. They were
accompanied by John Hancock, ex-MLA and past-President of the Trades Hall Council and an honoured guest, E.J.Polkinghorne, who had recently been released from gaol after serving a sentence for his part in the Broken Hill miners' strike of 1892.

While a collection was being taken to aid the strikers, Prendergast opened proceedings. He told the crowd that the reduction in wages was the result of cut-throat competition between shipowners who wanted labour to bear the brunt of the present difficulties. The present rates, he claimed, were not sufficient to keep a man and his family. George Sangster, foundation President of the union, then moved a motion declaring that the owners were attempting to take advantage of the depression to 'lower the wage standard of Australian workers'. He argued that those who were taking the work at lower rates were not competent seamen, with the result that sea transport was now slower and more dangerous. Anstey seconded the motion with an appeal to history. He told them that the present action was really part of a campaign by the owners which had begun in 1886 when it was claimed that unless wages fell a number of ships would have to be laid up or destroyed. He reminded his listeners that the union had won on that occasion and, far from chopping up craft, the owners had actually ordered new ones from England. However, neither he nor any of the other speakers acknowledged what they all knew; that conditions in the industry were much worse in 1893 than they had been seven years earlier, and that victory was correspondingly less likely. After Anstey had finished Bromley accused the owners of bad faith in their dealings with the men and of showing a cavalier disregard for public safety aboard their ships. The motion was then put to the meeting and carried unanimously. It was followed by motions of welcome and congratulations to Polkinghorne for the part he had played in the common struggle of Australian workers against harsh times and recalcitrant employers. The meeting concluded with further declarations of support for the seamen in their campaign.70

70 A full report of the meeting appeared in the Age 17 July 1893, p.6.
But while ritualised protest and declarations of solidarity might have been good for morale, they did nothing to change the fundamental weakness of the union’s position. Attacked by hostile governments, short of funds and unable to enforce pickets against an abundance of ‘scab’ labour, they were powerless. Two days later the owners triumphantly announced that almost all ships were now manned by cut-rate crews. Within two weeks the men in Sydney had accepted a compromise reduction of £1 per month, but meetings in Brisbane, Melbourne and Adelaide on 22 August stubbornly refused to call off the strike and formally recognise defeat. It simply petered out as members returned to work on the owners’ terms when jobs became available. It was significant that the union did not strike again for twenty-four years.71 The dispute was one of several that Anstey was to witness at close quarters. The experience, reinforced ten years later by the Victorian railway workers dispute, inclined him towards a sceptical view about the effectiveness of strikes as a working class weapon under such conditions. He had not, however, abandoned his belief in unionism as such. Some three years later, when he next appears in the historical record, it is not just as an activist, but as a union leader.72

On 18 July 1896 the union appointed him as their delegate to the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, to replace Sangster.73 For the first few months he took no part in debates. No issues arose that specifically concerned seamen so he had ample time to settle into his new position, learn the ropes and acquire a feel for the council’s political nuances. His first real contribution was on the kind of issue that became a hallmark of his parliamentary career; an allegation of improper conduct. Giving expression to a widely-felt resentment at the Age’s meddling in labour affairs, he moved a motion calling on the Executive to investigate statements claiming that


72 His movements and activities for the next three years are not known. The Sands and McDougall directory for 1896 lists his address as 29 Somerset Place, Carlton.

73 Melbourne Trades Hall Council minute books, 18 July 1896, LTL, MS7825/MF6.
miners at Korumburra were compelled to buy allotments of land in the township through a Mr. Stamp who was acting as an agent for David Syme.74 The motion was carried but it is not clear what action was taken by the Executive.

However, he was not long content to play a minor role. Within five months of taking a seat on the Council he was elected to its Parliamentary Committee.75 From that position he soon became an irritant in the cosy relationship between the United Labor Party and the Council. On 22 January 1897 he objected to the manner in which the Political Committee of the Labor Party, and Trenwith in particular, had dealt with the program so recently decided at the party’s conference. He claimed that Trenwith’s committee had distorted its meaning by dividing it into a general and a fighting platform. A matter of principle was involved. The democracy was being converted into a theoracy, with Mr. Trenwith as a deity, the members of committee as high priests, and the rest of the party as dupes.76 Accordingly, he asked the Council to repudiate the committee’s action ‘... in publishing an emasculated Labor program ... that is unjustifiable, undemocratic and unreasonable’.77 Unruffled, Trenwith replied that it was essentially a matter of tactics which he, as leader of the party, was best placed to judge. It would have been injudicious to emphasise some matters because they had not been the subject of public discussion and were thus outside the realm of ‘practical politics’.78 On his motion the matter was adjourned.79 When debate resumed on 5 February, Trenwith defended himself by arguing that the parliamentary wing of the party had to tailor the platform to political necessity rather than the strict

74. His first appearance in the minutes was on 6 November when he seconded a motion concerning renovations to the Council’s building. He questioned Syme’s probity on 4 December.
75. Ibid, 11 December 1896.
77. Melbourne Trades Hall Council minute books, op. cit, 22 January 1897.
78. Argus, op. cit. See too, Age, 23 January 1897, p.7.
79. Melbourne Trades Hall Council minute books, op. cit.
instructions of a still undeveloped organisational wing. By his action, Anstey was accused of playing into the hands of the Argus which took delight in every appearance of labour disunity. He was also subjected to a little gentle mockery from Hancock and Barrett, two of Trenwith’s parliamentary colleagues. The original censure motion was then put to the vote and defeated by 23 to 9. This was to be the first of many occasions when Anstey would find himself at odds with party committees and the demands of ‘practical politics’.

While this might have been a mildly chastening experience for an exuberant young radical, he was far from discouraged. By this stage his private circumstances allowed him more time for sustained political activity. After four years of financial uncertainty he was now back in his old job at the Working Men’s College. From that more secure position he joined a number of other radical labour men in the ambitious task of transforming the working class in Victoria.

The brush with Trenwith was not merely a petulant outburst on Anstey’s part. It was symptomatic of a more general impatience at the slow progress of the labour movement in Victoria, particularly the ineffectiveness of its two leading institutions; the United Labor Party and the Trades Hall Council. Neither the unions or the Labor Party had been able to protect the working class from the lingering effects of the depression. Even by the end of 1897 unemployment remained high despite some signs of improvement. The price of staple foods had risen but average factory wages were at their lowest point for more than thirty years. Net emigration to other

80. Ibid, p 368. The entry is wrongly headed as 12 January. For detailed accounts of the debate see Age, 6 February 1897 p 10 and Argus, 6 February 1897, p 11.

81. Bishop to Love, op cit. He resumed duties as an attendant in February 1897 at a weekly wage of £1/16/-. Although there is no direct evidence of their return from Sale, it is likely that Kate and the children had rejoined him by then.

82. Coghlan, op. cit., p 2054.

83. Ibid

colonies continued at a substantial level. Many people had retreated to village settlements, labour colonies or, like Anstey four years earlier, moved about the countryside in search of work. In the city there was still a great deal of abject poverty for which the only recourse was private charity or 'scrounging'.

Those unions that had survived the worst of the depression were weak and demoralised. The Trades Hall Council - cautious in attitude, cumbersome in procedure and narrowly based on urban craft unions - seemed more interested in maintaining its own organisation than in serving the broader interests of the labour movement, let alone the working class. Its reluctance to give effective support to the unemployed reflected a view of itself as the representative of constituent unions rather than an institution of the working class. The United Labor Party, with its uneasy connection to the Trades Hall Council through the Parliamentary Committee, still appeared to be little more than a faction of the Liberals. Although it was moving slowly towards organisational independence, its platform and parliamentary behaviour remained under the umbrella of liberal-pluralist ideology. The predominant view within the Party was one that regarded labour as a legitimate, respectable interest group whose concerns might, by patient argument and astute political bargaining, be accommodated within the overall pattern of competing demands for benevolent state intervention. In many respects this attitude was in accord with the long-established


86. Ibid., p. 2048.

87. The formation of an independent and viable Labor Party in Victoria was a protracted business. After some initial struggles in the late 1880s the Trades Hall Council managed to establish the Progressive Political League in May 1891 and an associated paper, the Commonweal and Workers' Advocate three months later. Although the paper collapsed within two years, the League survived until June 1894 when it was replaced by the more accurately titled United Labour and Liberal Party. This lasted until May 1896 when it was reconstructed as the United Labor Party which, in turn, became the Political Labour Council of Victoria in February 1901. It was the immediate predecessor of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Labor Party. For a general survey of this process up to 1901 see Humphrey McQueen, 'Victoria' in D.J. Murphy (ed.), Labor in Politics: the state Labor parties in Australia, 1880-1920, St. Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1975, esp. pp. 295-308. For an account of Labor's fortunes during the reign of the Turner Liberal government see D.W. Rawson, 'Victoria' in P. Loveday, A.W. Martin and R.S. Parker (eds.), The emergence of the Australian party system, Sydney, Hale and Iremonger, 1977, pp. 76-87; and Rickard, op. cit., pp. 115-120.
but increasingly weaker relationship between Melbourne's working class aristocracy and its manufacturing petit-bourgeoisie. Indeed, the Trades Hall and the Labor Party were lagging behind the more progressive elements of Liberal-reformist opinion in some matters. As Rickard has shown, the amendments to the Factory Act on which the revival of many moribund unions was based, owed more to the Anti-Sweating League than to the work or either labour organisation. Neither body seemed able nor particularly willing to build a more broadly based political and industrial movement whose integrated strength could challenge the system that had so manifestly failed.

It was clear to radicals like Anstey that new methods of organisation, fresh institutions and a more vigorous spirit were necessary if the condition of the working class in Victoria was to be improved. His part in the founding of the Tocsin newspaper during the latter half of 1897 and the Victorian Labour Federation the following year were expressions of this restive mood.

It was George Prendergast's idea to make another attempt at establishing a labour paper in Melbourne. He was certainly well qualified to get the project going. A printer by trade, ex-President of the Trades Hall Council and, until the 1897 election, Labor MLA for North Melbourne, his experience included part ownership and work on the Melbourne Boomerang published for three months in 1894. One Sunday in

88 Davison, op. cit., chapter 2.
90 For a discussion of why political Labor in Victoria developed more slowly than its counterparts in colonies like New South Wales and Queensland see Lindsay Tanner,'A protracted evolution: Labor in Victorian politics, 1889-1903', Labour History, no 42, May 1982, pp.4-33.
91 In the immediately preceeding years there had been a number of short-lived radical or vaguely progressive papers in Melbourne. Among them were: Commonweal and Workers' Advocate; Trades Hall Gazette; Melbourne Worker; Champion; Ant; Freelance; and one of Prendergast's earlier attempts, the Melbourne Boomerang. Not all were explicitly Labor in their affiliations. H.H.Champion's Champion, for example, incurred the wrath of many in the labour movement. Nevertheless, at one time or another most addressed themselves to a labour audience.
mid-1897 he convened a meeting of like-minded activists at George Carter's cigar factory on the corner of Lonsdale and Elizabeth Streets. It was attended by Carter, who chaired the meeting, Prendergast, J.P.Jones, Tom Tunnecliffe, Anstey, Bernard O'Dowd, Jack Phillips, Hugh A.Corbet, Ted Findley and J.B.Castieau. They were, in Castieau's words, '... all discontented enthusiasts. Heart and soul for the Labor movement ... not satisfied with its snail-like progress. Only a live paper could voice our feelings'. It was certainly an occasion for Anstey to feel excited about the prospects. He was on the brink of a long-standing ambition. They were about to start a labour paper in which his literary inclinations and political ideas could find expression. Moreover, he would be working in company with radical, educated men like O'Dowd and Castieau from whom he might acquire some of the accomplished style so often sought by self-educated men of his generation.

The meeting soon came to the question of a name for the paper. After considering a number of resonant titles such as Clarionet, Foghorn and Trumpeter they finally decided on Tocsin because, 'The country was in danger. The alarm needed to be sounded. Things political and industrial were desperate almost to the stage of revolution. So the Tocsin came to toll the knoll of unchecked capitalistic sway.' It was agreed that Prendergast would undertake the task of financing and organising plant, premises, paper and compositors, while Castieau was to assemble a literary staff. At subsequent Sunday meetings they enlisted the help of others including Marshall Lyle, a solicitor, Dr. Moloney and Stephen Barker. During these sessions they hammered out a platform consisting of some seventy-four planks grouped under four headings: Constitutional, Industrial, General and Federation. It was an exhaustive catalogue of reforms designed to promote equality and justice in politics, the law, the economy and on a number of social issues. Implicit in the program was a notion of the state as a

93. Unless indicated otherwise, the following account of Tocsin's foundation relies on an article by J.B.Castieau writing as 'Jarno' in Labor Call, 23 April 1914, p.2.

94. It appeared in the first issue on 2 October 1897, p.6.
set of instrumentalities that were capable of much more benevolent action than that for which they were used in the recent strikes. Indeed, the constitutional and federation planks were specifically designed to make it easier for a democratic majority of people to elect a government that would exercise those instruments of state intervention for the benefit of the common, working class people, not their rulers. Castieau remembered the excitement of building such a visionary platform.

What a symposium it was! A veritable 'feast of reason and a flow of soul'. The Labor movement was discussed from A to Z and we all issued from these meetings wiser, worthier and more stimulated towards propadanga work than when we entered ... It was a wonder [the platform] did not consist of 740 [planks], so many different reforms were discussed.

Before long they had formed themselves into the Tocsin Printing and Publishing Co-operative Society Limited and taken over the offices of the defunct *Freelance* at 181 Little Collins Street. On the slender capital of £60 raised by selling shares in the co-operative, mostly to the promoters themselves, they prepared to rally Labor's flagging strength in Victoria. Castieau, Corbet and O'Dowd were appointed joint editors; Prendergast worked on the production arrangements; distribution was organised while others stencilled the footpaths of Melbourne and suburbs with the message, 'The Tocsin. Labor Paper. Next Week.' The first issue of their tabloid appeared on Saturday 2 October 1897 and was duly baptised at Jerry Holly's *Rose, Thistle and Shamrock* hotel.

O'Dowd's first editorial put some flesh on the bones of the platform by explaining some of the ways in which their conception of class differed from that of the more conservative Labor leaders like Trenwith. With characteristic flourish he made two important distinctions.

We do not intend to make the mistake that labour propagandists often make, to pander to a mere class of labour. We don't particularly care whether the labourer uses a shovel or a theodelite, a tape measure or a violin bow, the reins of a sanitary wagon or the pen of a poet ... And we don't think we will have an impossible task to show that the interests of

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95 *Labor Call*, 18 August 1927, p.3.
Labour are the interests of all who labour with whatever organ Nature or Fate or God has most adequately endowed them.

'A mere class of labour' referred to the tendency in Australia and Britain for specific unions or groups of them in a particular trade to isolate themselves from other workers by restricting membership, publishing their own papers, and taking independent industrial action. *Tocsin*’s concern with ‘all who labour’ was a declaration that they regarded their constituency as the whole working class rather than the ‘Lib.-Lab.’ craft unionism of the working class aristocrats who dominated the Trades Hall Council and the Labor Party.

They also had a broader, more humanist conception of what it meant to be a worker. It involved more than a simple economic role:

Nor do we intend to fall into another pitfall of similar ventures — namely the divorce of Labour from Life. The labourer loves, sorrows, aspires, sins, dreams, reveres. In a word, he lives, is living. The world is more to him than a mere ‘statement price’ or ‘union rule’, a statistical column of supply and demand figures, even more than ‘one man one vote’. The studio is for him, too, the symphony, the coster song, if he so wishes, the stage, the race, and the halls of learning, with their great alcoves stretching back to an immemorial past. He has hopes, emotions, wrestlings with faith and with reason, and, if you’re going to treat of him, we must treat of those which are part of him. He is not the sexless automaton of the political economy books or the statistician’s tables; yet if you divorce him from life, if you shut out from your editorial chambers the rose-tints of his natural atmosphere, what worth is your monograph or your leader or your[ ] essay on the Iron Law of Wages, however wise it may be from the merely academic or Labour Party point of view?

This was an important distinction with profound implications for their meaning of class. If the labourer was to be defined purely in terms of the work he performed it would be logical to suppose that the only action necessary to improve his condition was related to that economic function. In practice, this meant that the traditional labourist issues of higher wages, shorter hours, better working conditions and parliamentary representation. These alone were not the answer to ‘the social question’. In some ways they were part of the problem. To the *Tocsin* radicals ‘the

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96. *Tocsin*, op. cit.

97. Ibid.
sexless automaton' was the 'one thing needful' of the Mr. Gradgrinds from the political economy schools. By their implicit acceptance of labour as a commodity the existing labour leadership remained wedded to the 'Facts' that denied the primacy of the worker's humanity. It was important that intellectuals who presumed to lead the working class should recognise that the labourer had a social being much broader and richer than that defined by his work. Reduced to its simplest form, the argument claimed that the working class was not so much composed of workers, but rather, people who worked for a living. If the working class was to incorporate this understanding into its sense of collective identity, new ideas and institutions would be needed. From its beginning *Tocsin* was dedicated to promoting these new ideas.

The differences between the *Tocsin* group and the parliamentary leadership were apparent during the election campaign which coincided with the launching of the paper. Although the radicals were suspicious of Trenwith's reluctance to make a decisive break with the Liberals, and were dissatisfied with the Labor Party's decision not to expand its campaign beyond those relatively few seats that it felt confident of winning, they nevertheless entered the fray with considerable vigor. *Tocsin* confronted head on the moral and religious issues that were most prominent during the campaign. It took lusty swipes at the wowsers' attempts to suppress gambling and the liquor trade. The question of religious education in state schools, promoted by the Protestant clergy and advanced by the *Argus*, was dismissed as a sectarian issue that distracted attention from more important reforms. The simmering resentment against Syme was revived when the *Age* added its voice to those who were trying to unseat Prendergast because of his views on religious education and the independence of the Labor Party. Although the subsequent defeat of Prendergast, and Labor's poor showing at the polls were disappointing, the Liberal victory merely confirmed the

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Tocsin radicals in their view that the labour movement was in need of a major overhaul. 99

After the excitement of the campaign had subsided Tocsin settled down to consolidate its position in the movement and propagate its views among the Victorian working class. In addition to lively political commentary, it offered an eclectic selection of economic analysis and social theory. All manner of 'progressive' or 'democratic' opinion was noted. Land and currency reformers received a hearing; earnest improvers and eccentric cranks were acknowledged; as were anarchists, socialists, loyal labourites and co-operators. But lest this prove a little turgid for its readers, the paper served up a healthy diet of inspiring verse and prose. There were contributions from some of the better radical writers of the day, including Edward Dyson, O'Dowd, Victor J. Daley, Henry Lawson and Randolph Bedford. Most of the artwork was provided by Norman and Lionel Lindsay. As an encouragement to higher things, there were regular columns reviewing the latest theatrical shows and art exhibitions. There were also generous servings of news and gossip about labour organisations and personalities. In contrast to all the high-minded material there was the obligatory sports page which celebrated the exploits of the last week's heroes and tried to unravel the mysteries of equine form for the following week. To the members of the Tocsin Co-operative there was nothing incongruous about a polymath punter. They copied the Sydney Bulletin's successful formula of encouraging contributions from readers and replying to them in a 'Correspondence' column. They were, however, a good deal gentler. They did not dish out the kind of robust rejection that Anstey had received from the Bulletin when he wrote from Sale. Nor did the paper pander to the popular taste for lurid sensationalism that John Norton's Truth exploited so successfully, although it did occasionally launch campaigns to expose corruption and injustice. 100 In general, Tocsin's concerns were those of high-minded working

99 For a useful discussion of the campaign see Ravson, op. cit., pp.79-83.

100 For a short biography of Norton and an anthology of Truth journalism see Michael Cannon, That Damned Democrat: John Norton, an Australian populist, 1839-1916. Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1981. Among Tocsin's campaigns were the exposure of Best's nepotism in the
class improvers, without the priggish moralising of the more straight-laced Labor aristocrats. It managed to maintain a fairly happy balance between an enthusiasm for reform on political, economic and social issues, and a somewhat libertarian-humanist attitude to 'moral' questions. This was best reflected in *Tocsin*'s oft-stated view that once the common people were assured of decent material conditions of life, the solution of 'moral' problems would be greatly simplified.

In keeping with its expansive view about its role in leading the working class to a richer self-consciousness, the co-operative did not confine its activities to the weekly editions of *Tocsin*. Taking Blatchford's *Clarion* as its model, Tocsin Clubs were organised to propagate the platform and provide a focus for social activities around the paper. There were attempts to establish Tocsin Cycling Clubs, even sewing circles. In the familiar style of mutual improvement societies, various educational classes were arranged for 'Tocsinners'. However, most of the clubs' efforts were devoted to providing speakers at selected locations in working class suburbs where they would confidently address the issues of the day. Anstey was one of their most frequent speakers. For example, on Sunday 6 March 1898 he gave a speech on 'the Labour Movement and the Labor Party' at the Market Reserve, under the auspices of the Richmond Working Men's Club.\(^{101}\) Four months later he returned to speak on the subject of 'The Organisation of Labour: Old Methods and New'.\(^{102}\) In between time, he and fellow 'Tocsinners' were a regular attraction on Saturday evenings in Smith Street, Collingwood, near Johnson Street. On those occasions Anstey, Findley, Casimir (the 'socialist barber'), Mullaney, Willmott and others would take as their subject 'the Tocsin platform'.\(^{103}\) It is not clear how much interest they were able to generate

\(^{101}\) *Tocsin*, 3 March 1898, p.5.


\(^{103}\) *Ibid.*, 31 March 1898, p.5 and 7 April 1898, p.4.
among the passing public, but it is unlikely that they exhausted every plank in the platform.

One of the most prominent contemporary issues to which Tocsin and its speakers addressed themselves was the Federal Constitution Bill. The paper published numerous articles examining the Bill, its advocates and its consequences for democracy in Australia. As far as Tocsin was concerned, the proposed method of adopting the constitution, the system it sought to establish and the institutions it would create were fundamentally undemocratic. Ben Tillett, who worked closely with the Tocsin radicals during his visit to Melbourne, expressed the essence of their position to a meeting on the Yarra bank.

We shall not be prepared to hand our liberties at this stage of our development to either an irresponsible Governor General, an irresponsible, but mischievous Supreme Court, or an irresponsible and unrepresentative Senate. All the vices of class misrule are embodied in that Convention Bill.

When the issue came before the Trades Hall Council it was greeted with a similar response. On 24 March 1898 a motion was put opposing the Bill as 'undemocratic and unclear'. Anstey was one of the six speakers who opposed Trenwith's arguments in defence of the Bill when debate was resumed on 12 April. The Council then passed the motion, unanimously rejecting the proposed constitution contained in the Bill.

104 For an extensive selection of these articles see Hugh Anderson (ed.), Tocsin: radical arguments against Federation, 1897-1900, Melbourne, Drummond, 1977. For a detailed examination of the Bill, clause by clause, see a series of articles in Tocsin between 28 April and 2 June 1898.

105 Ibid, 28 April 1898, p.3. Tillett, who was staying with Dr Maloney, used the Tocsin office as his headquarters. See Labor Call, 23 April 1914, p.2. He provided the paper's promoters with a great deal of encouragement in its formative stages. They acknowledged this with a testimonial address. See J.P. Jones papers. LTL, MS 9547/1263/3. They also promoted his speeches by publishing them in full. See Tocsin, 9, 16 and 23 December 1897, p.8. They were also published as pamphlets. For an interesting discussion of Tillett's visit see K.S. Inglis, 'Ben Tillett in Australia', paper given to the Melbourne University Historical Society Conference, August 1931; copy in Tillett/Mackay papers, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MS 74/6/2/60. See too, Jonathan Schneer, Ben Tillett: Portrait of a Labour Leader, London, Croom Helm, 1982, pp.113-116 for a discussion of Tillett's attitude to industrial arbitration following his first Australian visit.

106 Council minutes, op. cit.

107 Ibid. This was Anstey's last speech as a Trades Hall Council delegate. On 11 June 1897 he was nominated for the position of Vice-President but was defeated. At the same meeting his position...
Despite Tocsin's rise to prominence in the movement, its early years were plagued with financial difficulties. The first balance sheet made that abundantly clear and was the occasion for the auditor to complain of poorly organised accounting procedures. Between February and December 1899 the Tocsin executive played a cat and mouse game with the Trades Hall Council over a loan of £22 originally provided by the Council to help the paper find permanent premises. After listening to some persuasive, and judiciously evasive arguments from Anstey, who led most of the deputations, the Council eventually capitulated by agreeing to accept shares in the co-operative. In May of that year, Marshall Lyle, who was representing J.P. Jones in an action brought against him over an article Tocsin had published, observed that it was 'appallingly mismanaged' and advised Jones to sever his connection with it. It was at about this time that Anstey became secretary of the co-operative. Although there is no reason to suppose a direct causal link, the annual reports and balance sheets, which he signed for the next seven years, showed a steady improvement in the financial position. Despite its precarious existence in the early years, the paper continued to appear every week, both reflecting and attempting to shape a consciousness of class identity and culture.

During Tocsin's first year Anstey was involved in another attempt to transform the working class in Victoria. In conjunction with George Elmslie of the Stonemason's Union, Tom Tunnecliffe of the Bootmaker's Union and several others, they established the Victorian Labour Federation as another instrument to mobilise

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108 J.P. Jones papers, *op. cit.*


110 J.P. Jones papers, *op. cit.* Jones did not take his advice.

111 See Tocsin file, Merrifield Collection.
class consciousness. The Federation was to become the vehicle by which the working class could escape the insecurity assigned to them under capitalism. It would be the means for them to unite their hitherto fragmented strength, realise their power as a class and so transform their condition. This, of course, required a theory and an organisation. The VLF offered both.

In setting up the VLF Anstey and his radical mates were not only attempting to formulate a systematic explanation of 'the social question', they were trying to do something about it. This exercise in the unity of ideas and action inevitably bore the marks of the circumstances that inspired it. In constructing a theory of capitalism they drew upon the store of ideas to which they had access, but shaped those ideas according to their experience of the last ten years and to their assessment of the practical possibilities for class action.

According to the Federation's manifesto, the process of capitalist accumulation had made labour unity not simply desirable, but imperative because the changing pattern of productive forces was developing two contending classes in society. To illustrate this proposition, they began by asserting that although the wealth of Victoria had trebled since 1871, it had gone in growing concentration to only fifteen per cent of the population. One fifth of the people owned ninety per cent of the savings bank deposits while the majority possessed only a few shillings each. Between 1881 and 1891 manufacturing production had doubled but there had been no corresponding rise in employment. Most of the increased output had been due to new machinery which required less labour. Much of this machinery simplified the productive processes with the result that low-paid women or children replaced skilled men in the workplace.\footnote{For an account of the development of manufacturing industry in Melbourne during this period see Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, chapter 2. For a detailed study of trends in the labour market, and organised labour's responses see Jenny Lee and Charles Fahey, 'A Boom for Whom? Some Developments in the Australian Labour Market, 1870-1891', *Labour History*, no 50, May 1986.} The agricultural position was no better. In the decade after 1881 cultivated land had increased by fifty per cent yet there had been only a twelve
per cent rise in rural employment. Despite this expansion in area the number of farms had fallen by about a third. The net result of these changes to the colony's major industries was the development of a 'capitalistic class' who owned and profited but did not toil, 'while the multitude eke out a mere hand-to-mouth existence'. As in the Old Country, there were already 'Two Nations' and still the process of accumulation advanced unrestrained.

The capitalist groups, in their policy of mutual extermination, became ever fewer, and the survivors more powerful. Thus capitalism proceeds to its climax in one great combine: all rivals annihilated: owning all the agencies of production: upon which all men depend for existence: into whose coffers flows the wealth poured forth by the brains and muscles of the community. 113

The only answer to this was 'the conversion of the mass to definite ideas as to what is necessary'. It would involve the evolution of an organisation to advance:

The concentration of the working class into one mighty, wealthy, widespread, all-embracing combination, so that Syndicated Labour may grapple with the evil power of Syndicated Wealth - that is the requisite of the hour. 114

The reference to 'capitalist groups' reflected the current radical view that the process of concentration produced a set of predatory monopoly interests in control of the great agencies of production. Their development produced a two-fold effect. In the first instance, they eliminated the small artisan manufacturer and trader whose backgrounds and Lib-Lab sympathies tended to produce class allies. They also preyed upon the less ruthless, more 'enlightened' capitalist who could not compete with their concentrated strength. 115 In the second instance, the monopoly interests exploited the worker by forcing down wage levels, crushing unions and maintaining artificially high prices. By this process the monopolies became increasingly interlocked until they formed 'one great combine' resolutely hostile to the only


115. See article on monetary reform by John Robertson in Tocsin, 10 February 1898.
remaining force opposing them, the working class. So long as the working class remained weak and disunited they could continue their exploitation unchallenged. For that reason the syndication of labour was not only desirable but imperative.

It was also significant that 'Syndicated Wealth' was more than an economic fact. By describing it as an 'evil power' Anstey and his comrades were adding a moral dimension to the questions surrounding social structure and process. For people whose imaginations had been shaped within the Christian moral discourse, the notion of evil implied an act of conscious will. The logical consequence from this line of reasoning was already apparent in the popularity of conspiracy theories about the 'Money Power' and its role in the bank crashes of 1893.116

With an increasingly concentrated capitalist class confronting a fragmented working class, the urgent question for the VLF became 'the organisation of labour'. These new circumstances made existing methods redundant. The introduction of machinery had aided the masters in their struggle with the workers by diminishing or abolishing skill, thus reducing labour to one common level of utility. As Davison's work has shown, there was a sound basis for this assertion about deskilling and intensification of the labour process, particularly in the boot trade where Tunnecliff worked.117 The old unions were helpless in the face of these new conditions. The distinctions in the workplace on which their existence was based were disappearing. Yet the multitude of small unions remained, with the inevitable duplication of salaries.

116 For a detailed account of this see Peter Love, Labour and the Money Power: Australian Labour Populism, 1890-1950, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1984, chapter 1. See too, the cartoon 'The Clutch of the Money Power' on p.8 of What is the Labour Federation? Anstey wrote to O'Dowd asking for 'an appropriate footing' to the picture 'The Victim and the Vampire', ibid, p.3. The letter is in the O'Dowd file, Merrifield Collection, LTL. O'Dowd obliged with the following lines:

Awake to light at last
Thy death dewed dreams are o'er:
That fiend-form of the Past
Shall suck thy blood no more.

Come forth with me, and drive
From Austral seas and soil
The parasites that thrive
Upon the blood of Toil.

117 See Davison, op. cit, pp67-71.
and operating expenses. As a result, nothing had been done to expand and unite the power of labour as each sectional interest clung tenaciously to its diminishing membership and sphere of influence. The VLF was the organisation that would provide the means of unifying labour across industrial boundaries and the whole of Victoria. While it would become 'one union' the VLF would also be a federation where each trade, so far as its identity remained, would have autonomy within its own sphere, subject to central authority in general matters. By maintaining branches in every town and suburb it would provide an umbrella organisation to which hitherto scattered, unorganised workers could belong. Thus the membership of the organised labour movement would become greater than before.

The resources derived from membership subscriptions would be used to establish distributive, and later manufacturing, co-operatives from which the trading profits of 3/- in the £ would be used to extend the organisation, support its propaganda work and offer benefits to members in the event of sickness or unemployment. It would use its strength to support parliamentary candidates who would pledge themselves to work on behalf of the VLF to 'extend working class power' but it would not permit any of its own officials to stand for parliament. This was to safeguard it against manipulation by political aspirants who, as the existing Labor leadership had shown, tended to be more interested in their own rather than the working class's advancement. The necessity for a pledge was a response to the difficulties that the United Labor Party was having in controlling the parliamentary party.

Thus, through this broad scheme of organisation the VLF would become a union, a co-operative, a friendly society and a political force:

And in this striving to secure a working class reconciled with itself - agreed as to what it wants, how to get it, united to get it - the VLF becomes something more than a mere class party. It is a unity of all those who whatever their class, or creed, or country consider the labour question the all-important question.

118 What is the Labour Federation? pp 3-7.
Workers should unite as a matter of self-interest to make themselves the strongest in society:

So that you may, by association, render your material environment more and more favourable. So that by means of Leisure, Science and Education you may develop your individual capacities, reach a higher morality, a more intellectual existence, and establish the really great nation upon the basis of a prosperous and progressive people.119

Such were the means and the purpose of social transition from the miserable and precarious position of workers under capitalism to the security and edification of life in the co-operative commonwealth.

While this was a reaction against past experience of Labor politics, inevitably it sought to build on that experience. Although Anstey and his comrades might try to make their own history they could not escape their past. There was nothing particularly original about their analysis of capitalism, nor their plan for transition. It was an amalgam of elements from the socialist, syndicalist and co-operative traditions adapted to the circumstances of Victoria in the late-1890s as they saw them. They rejected the prevailing labourist view of class with its underlying liberal pluralist assumptions about the nature of society, yet their understanding of capitalist accumulation revealed how contemporary populist ideas had coloured their reading of J.A.Hobson.120 Their scheme of organisation was self-consciously modelled on the then successful Belgian Workers Party.121 It is likely that their initial acquaintance with it was inspired by Ben Tillett who had been in Belgium shortly before his visit to New Zealand and Australia. But while they chose it as their exemplar, the inclination towards co-operative methods probably owed most to the more familiar and long English tradition of independent working class self-help. Similarly, the millenarian overtones implicit in what they imagined post-capitalist society might be like, carried

119 Ibid, p.15.

120 Their debt to J.A.Hobson's underconsumptionist writings, particularly his *Evolution of Modern Capitalism* which was first published in 1894, was acknowledged in *Tocsin* 3 November 1898, p.2.

121 *What is the Labour Federation?*, pp.9-11.
echoes of an equally long utopian tradition. Even the language revealed some of the sources of their ideas. The reference to 'Two Nations' echoed Disraeli's famous phrase. The notion of the 'evolution' of an organisation signified the contemporary practice of applying a biological metaphor, and all that it implied, to social analysis. Like many other radicals of their background and generation, there was an evangelical note in their 'gospel of unionism'.

But no matter what were the origins of the respective elements in their grand scheme, the VLF was a self-conscious assertion of working class identity and an expression of their determination to act independently as a class. Anstey, Tunnecliffe and Elmslie were working class intellectuals assured of their own and the workers' ability to change their social existence as active agents, no longer to be passive factors in capitalist production. They were not the deserving poor of middle class philanthropy, devoid of pride and initiative. Through their own efforts they were educating themselves and their class to higher things. Moreover, they were bold enough to presume that they might 'make society what we think it ought to be'.

In the light of their recent experience, it is significant that they chose to mobilise their class, not through strikes or more revolutionary methods, but with the freely subscribed shillings and pence of working people. They were concerned with


123 The origins of this probably went back to the early nineteenth century English Methodism examined by E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1968 revised edition, pp. 385-440. However, it had been transformed into more secular terms when it was employed by writers like Henry Lawson and William Lane in Australia during the 1890s. See, for example, Lawson's article in the *Albany Observer* of 15 July 1890 entitled 'The New Religion'; and William Lane's comments about the religion of socialism in the preface to his *The Workingman's Paradise*, Sydney, Edwards Dunlop, 1892.

class action, but in a manner befitting serious-minded improvers, it was peaceful, respectable class action.

It cost one shilling to join the VLF, followed by a minimum contribution of three pence per week. If members chose, they could lodge greater sums which would be credited to their accounts and was 'withdrawable at pleasure'. When sufficient members had deposited enough capital the executive would begin a 'distribution business'. The profits from it would then be used to provide unemployment or sickness benefits, additional capital to expand the Federation, or for propaganda purposes. These small individual contributions may have been modest, but during the promoter's more sanguine moments, in aggregate they represented the first stirrings of the working class' united economic power.

Since the strength of the VLF as a class organisation was directly proportional to the size of its membership, a vigorous propaganda campaign was necessary. In each aspect of this Anstey played a leading role, and in the process continued to develop the writing and platform skills he had begun to practice years earlier. His public persona was emerging. They began with weekly meetings at the Trades Hall. At this early stage they adopted three main approaches to propaganda. Regular advertisements appeared in the *Tocsin* supported by sympathetic reporting of their activities; work was begun on preparing a pamphlet explaining the Federation's objectives; and 'nights of song and speech' were planned. The first of these kept *Tocsin* readers informed of the VLF's work and provided optimistic reports of its plans for the future. On almost every occasion when an expansion of its activities was foreshadowed, *Tocsin* reported it as though success was assured. This attempt to turn puffery into self-fulfilling prophecy is not surprising since both Anstey and Tunnecliffe were founding members of the Tocsin Co-operative.

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125 See a VLF membership book in Dwyer papers, Mitchell Library, Uncat. MS Set 290, item 40, pp. 6-7.

126 *Tocsin*, 7 July 1898, p. 8 and 14 July 1898, p. 8. At these early meetings they were primarily concerned with strategies for getting the VLF established.
In the VLF's first year the strategy seemed to be working. The pamphlet *What is the Labour Federation?* appeared, after some delay, in October 1898 at one penny per copy. It appears to have been reasonably popular, running to at least four impressions in a short time, although it is not clear how large was each printing. As noted above, it provided an analysis of class relations in Victoria, a description of the Belgian Worker's Party and an outline of the Federation's objectives and organisation. It gave no indication of who wrote the pamphlet or particular sections of it. Nevertheless, it did bear some marks of Anstey's hand in the short staccato phrases, the rhetorical questions and the rolling cadences at the end of sentences and paragraphs. However, as a recruiting technique the nights of song and speech seem to have been the most effective.

They were a combination of music hall entertainment and political meeting. As an imaginative blend of familiar working class culture, they were designed to both entertain and rouse the audience. The first of these, held in the Hibernian Hall, Swanston Street on 20 September 1898, set the pattern for the many others that followed.\(^{127}\) The Federation orchestra opened proceedings with a rollicking performance of 'The Fatman's March' to the amusement of all present. The audience, having warmed to the spirit of the occasion, were then treated to a selection of light-hearted, sentimental and patriotic songs which provided neatly-judged changes of mood. After a little comic relief, the first half of the program concluded with a recitation of Byron's stirring and poignant 'Waterloo'. During the interval the orchestra provided a selection of popular tunes. The second session got off to a bouncy start with 'an acrobatic song and dance by Mr. Menzies'. After two more songs the audience was judged to be in a receptive state of mind for the real business of the evening. With the VLF banner draped behind him, Anstey strode to centre stage and delivered 'a powerful appeal for support'. Although the report does not offer a *verbatim* account of his speech, on the evidence of reports of later meetings it is

\(^{127}\) For a full report of the evening see *ibid*, 29 September 1898, p.7.
likely that he followed the pamphlet fairly closely in telling them about the parlous state of workers in Victoria, the iniquities of the capitalist system and the bright hopes for the future contained in the VLF's scheme to rejuvenate the working class. When he finished he had 'roused the audience to a pitch of enthusiasm' such that the building, which was 'packed to overflowing', resounded to a communal rendering of 'Auld Lang Syne', and the evening ended noisily with 'cheers for the Labour Federation'. It is difficult to know how much to allow for the likely hyperbole of the Tocsin reporter, but the organisers were sufficiently encouraged by the response to make such occasions the centre piece of their campaign whenever they established a new branch.

To the likes of Anstey, Elmslie and Tunnecliffe this was just as much the stuff of working class life as any statistician's table or essay on political economy. It had more life and energy than the traditionally ponderous speeches delivered to loyal but long-suffering audiences in draughty, ill-lit halls. For them the true spirit of the working class could be identified and mobilised much better through popular songs, stirring recitations, proud banners and rousing speeches. They were giving a practical application of O'Dowd's analysis of working class culture.

Nevertheless, it was the hard cash of membership contributions and profits from the trading department that would have to sustain the momentum generated by their imaginative recruiting campaign. At each meeting and concert new members were enrolled and a brisk trade was begun by selling tea. As with membership fees, the trading department began in a modest fashion. VLF tea was first sold only at meetings, but as business improved they commenced a regular delivery around the suburbs. Within a year they had taken premesis in the Market Buildings in

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128 It was sold in three blends at 1/-, 1/3 and 1/6. The occasionally uneasy relationship between the VLF and the Victorian Socialist's League was even reflected in their competition for the worker's patronage in the purchase of tea. The VSL sold its blend of 'Liberty Tea' for 1/3. The VSL also held nights of song and speech at 46 Bourke Street. See *ibid*, 12 January 1899, p.8. By December 1898 the Labour Federation had purchased 'a smart horse and trap' driven by an 'enthusiastic member'. See *ibid*, 1 December 1898, p.6.
Victoria Street and added a 'tailoring establishment' to their trading department. Not long after, they added boots and coffee to the list of items that could be purchased to support the Federation's work. They sought custom vigorously. Members could buy clothes on terms to suit themselves. There were weekly deliveries to all suburbs. All that a prospective customer needed to do was send a postcard to the Federation and a traveller would call. However, they were careful to distinguish their operation from those of private traders. They worked according to co-operative principles. All their goods were union made and sold at fair prices. There was not a whiff of sweated labour. The profits, moreover, went to establish 'a fund for out-of-work pay, sick pay, medical attendance, and the protection of the workers' interests'.

There was, of course, nothing new in this approach. Co-operatives had been established in England for more than a century. A group of workmen had opened their own corn mills at Clatham and Woolwich in 1760, the Fenwick weavers began a store in 1769 and in 1812 the Lennoxtown Co-operative Society initiated the system of paying members a dividend on purchases. By the 1890s the transplanted tradition was thriving in Victoria where there was a plethora of co-operative societies trading under an Act of Parliament specifically designed to regulate their activities. They were a practical expression of the doctrine of working class self-help. As such, they asserted class solidarity, but often saw themselves as limited in scope. At most, they were an attempt to modify the prevailing system of production and distribution in a

129 Ibid, 8 June 1899, p.1. It is not known how J.P. Jones, the workingman's tailor, regarded this competition for members' sartorial support.

130 There is, however, no evidence that they ever questioned the conditions under which their tea was produced. In keeping with prevailing ethnocentric assumptions, Asian labour exploited in its own country did not count.

131 Ibid, 12 October 1899, p.7.


133 It was titled the Provident Societies Act, 1890. Two typical examples in the period immediately before the VLF's formation were the Co-operative Bakery at 392 Bridge Road, Richmond and the Union Bootmakers' Co-operative Society Limited run by R. Solly and H. Nolan of the Bootmakers' Union, to which Tunnecliffe belonged. See Tocsin, 2 October 1897, p.11.
particular trade. They were also a proud declaration of the worker’s ability to manage the making and selling of life’s necessities free from capitalist market relations. The VLF elevated this, in theory at least, from a limited declaration of independence to a method of social transformation. Their scheme was not new, it simply intended to broaden the scope of co-operative action to the whole of society.

Confident in the correctness of their plans, the Federation proceeded to expand its organisation and activities. Executive members, Anstey and Tunnecliffe in particular, embarked on a campaign to organise branches in the suburbs and the country. During this period Anstey’s extraordinary energies were fully engaged. In addition to his job at the Working Men’s College, he was President of the Seamen’s Union and their delegate on the Trades Hall Council, an active member of the Tocsin Co-operative, as well as President of the VLF. All this probably left very little time for him to devote to family life. The nights of song and speech, the Executive meetings and the country trips to set up VLF branches absorbed a great deal of his time, without considering the demands of his other commitments. The organising trips that he and Tunnecliffe made to Bendigo and Walhalla were undertaken on weekends. During the week there were often meetings to be addressed or social functions to be attended. Political activity had become the major focus of his life. Despite the domestic cost, it appeared to be time well spent as both he and the VLF were making great progress.

Within eighteen months of the Federation’s establishment there were active branches in Brunswick, South Melbourne, Yarraville, Bendigo and Walhalla. In each case they were begun with a night of song and speech, followed by enrolment of new members and the election of an executive committee. Visits from country branches were arranged and contact was made with interested organisations in other colonies. They even began corresponding with the Belgian Worker’s Party.

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134 When they went to Walhalla, for example, they conducted two meetings; one on Saturday night and the other on Sunday afternoon. See *ibid*, 29 June 1899, p.1.

135 See, for example, *ibid*, 9 February 1899, p.3; 29 June 1899, p.1; 27 July 1899, p.6; 18 January 1900, p.8; 1 February 1900, p.8; and 5 April 1900, p.1.

extension of organisation went beyond the formation of new branches and the development of trading operations to cultural activities. In addition to the Federation orchestra, a VLF Chorus Party was established under the musical directorship of a Mr. Cambridge. A Quadrille Club was founded for those members who 'delight in the light fantastic'. Lantern lectures were held. A 'Christmas goose club' was arranged. 'Smoke nights' for male members became a regular event and picnics were held at scenic spots near Melbourne.

In recognition of the fact that the working class comprised more than just working men, the Federation made special efforts to interest women in the organisation. However, in keeping with contemporary attitudes, the appeal was directed to them in their roles as wives and mothers:

Isolated as a woman is from the sphere of political activity, with her whole thought centred upon the interests of her family and her home, it is little wonder that her vision becomes circumscribed, and her interest in the world outside grows daily less. And yet it is this very intensity of concentration which makes her in times of crises the most valuable ally of reform. To her the preservation of her home and the sanctity of her family life becomes the one absorbing purpose... And it is because of this that we appeal with more than usual confidence to the wives and mothers of Victoria to assist us in our fight for more wholesome conditions of life for the babies who are to be the heirs of the future, and who will have to bear the heat and burden of the day.

In their role as consumers of VLF commodities they could help build an organisation that would lighten their husbands' burdens and secure their children's future. There

137. *Ibid*, 15 February 1900, p.3. Frank Gossler did the necessary translation.


144. *Ibid*, 15 December 1898, p.2. From what little is known of Anstey's family life, it is quite likely that this was a fair description of Kate's role.
were some attempts to interest them in the Federation's activities, but apart from the quadrille club and the occasional lecture by Vida Goldstein on the co-operative movement, little was actually done to encourage them to assume positions of leadership. It is also significant that their efforts to cater for workers' children were directed at their sons. A boy's fife and drum band was set up, as were senior and junior cricket teams.

By the middle of 1899 the VLF gave every outward sign of robust good health. It had a membership in the vicinity of seven hundred, the trading department was expanding its range of services and volume of business, the social and cultural activities were well attended, and the Federation was becoming well-known among workers. However, there were limits to its growth. In addition to individual unions, the Trades Hall Council and the Labor Party, it had to compete with a bewildering array organisations for the support of 'labour and progressive opinion'. Relations were not always as friendly as the Federation's leaders would have liked. Anstey tried to allay suspicion in the Victorian Socialist's League that the VLF was competing directly with it by reading a paper at one of its meetings on the subject of 'Labour Federation'. There was some debate in Walhalla as to whether the miners' best


146 Mrs Violet Burt, President of the Yarraville branch, was the only woman who held an executive position in any of the Federation's branches. See Ibid, 1 February 1900, p.3.


148 Ibid, 31 August 1899, p.5.

149 The following 'progressive' organisations existed in Melbourne alongside the VLF: Victorian Socialist's League; Knights of Labor; Free Trade Democratic Association; Single Tax League of Victoria; Women's Land Reform League; Village Settler's Association; Verein Vorwärts; Unemployed Committee; Sunday Free Discussion Society; May Day Pioneers League; Women's Crusade League; Radical League; Freethought Society; Labour Church; Tocsin Clubs; Rating Reform League; Labour Exchange; Anti-Sweating League; Collingwood, Richmond and North Melbourne Working Men's Clubs; Democratic Federal Union; Worker's Hegemony Club; and the Marxian Club. See Ibid, 27 April 1899, p.5 and 29 September 1898, p.4.

150 Ibid, 21 July 1898, p.5.
interests would be served by the Amalgamated Miner's Association or the VLF.\textsuperscript{151} When Anstey sought permission to address the Trades Hall Council on the Federation's aims and objectives one delegate observed:

That Labour was broken up into too many sections already...These people say that the Council is an obsolete institution, that it is too slow, and that they are going to swallow it. It was therefore a piece of cheek on their part to come here to use the Council as an advert.\textsuperscript{152}

In June 1900 the first signs appeared that all was not well with the VLF's finances. There were angry scenes at a meeting called to discuss the management of the benefits scheme. In the heat of debate, Anstey and Gossler, who had succeeded Tunnecliffe as treasurer, resigned their positions.\textsuperscript{153} However, at the next meeting, after the accounts had been audited and certified to be correct, Anstey and Gossler were re-elected.\textsuperscript{154} J.A. Andrews, one of Anstey's old comrades from the Melbourne Anarchist Club, was elected secretary to replace Elmslie who had resigned. A few months later, however, Anstey resigned again, this time to contest the 1900 election as the Labor candidate for the Legislative Assembly seat of East Bourke Boroughs.\textsuperscript{155}

He conducted his brief campaign with characteristic energy, speaking at different locations almost every night for two weeks. But, as Rawson has observed, 'there was an air of apathy, even a suggestion of unreality, about the campaign'.\textsuperscript{156} Apart from the ritual stirrings about the need for Labor to be more independent of the Liberals both in and out of Parliament, there was little to get excited about. If Anstey did manage to generate any heat during the campaign, it went unnoticed in

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid, 20 July 1899, p.6. The VLF was also criticised in the columns of the Broken Hill \emph{Barrier Truth} See \emph{Tocsin} 8 December 1898, p.5.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid, 16 March 1899, p.5.

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid, 21 June 1900, p.5.

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid, 5 July 1900, p.7.

\textsuperscript{155} It was a two member constituency, centred around the inner suburb of Brunswick, which attracted six candidates: Methven, a sitting member and J Hume Cook for the Ministerialists; Reay, Hickford and Wales for the Liberals; and Anstey.

\textsuperscript{156} Rawson, \emph{op. cit.}, p.88.
the daily press.\textsuperscript{157} The only acknowledgement of his candidature beyond the usual listing of hopefuls was in the suburban paper covering the electorate. Although unsympathetic, there was a certain perspicacity in 'Old Sport's' preview of his form for 'The East Bourke B. Stakes of 300 Sovs. and Added Money'. 'Tea Tree' [Anstey] was:

...a cast-off of the trades hall stable, like all his breed, is a great goer, clouts hard what he can’t clear, and throws up a useless lot of mud, and would be more at home in the Yarra bank or agitation stakes.\textsuperscript{158}

While his campaign went unnoticed, his defeat attracted a good deal of attention resulting from an incident at the polling booth; the first of several in his career.\textsuperscript{159} The returning officer had refused to allow electors who were in the booth at seven o’clock when the doors were closed to cast a vote so Anstey remonstrated with him. Finding the returning officer unmoved by his arguments, Anstey interviewed a number of the aggrieved voters and returned with a strongly-worded letter of protest accusing the official of acting illegally. When the official refused to accept the letter he stormed out of the booth in anger.\textsuperscript{160}

The same volatile element in his character was involved in his breach with the VLF. At a meeting of the Federation held on the Monday after the election, Andrews, as Secretary, announced that Anstey had resigned the Presidency to become a parliamentary candidate but was now eligible for re-election.

However, Mr. Anstey had unfortunately not only alienated the sympathies of a section of members whose support was needed, but had also taken a dispondent view, where enthusiasm was necessary, and

\textsuperscript{157} None of Anstey’s speeches were reported in the \textit{Age} or the \textit{Argus}; even \textit{Tocsin} went no further than to acknowledge his candidature. This, however, was no reflection on Anstey, more a measure of the lethargy that characterised the campaign.

\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Reformer and Northern Suburbs Advertiser} (Brunswick), 27 October 1900.

\textsuperscript{159} Methven and Reay were elected with 22.62\% and 19.37\% of the vote respectively. The unsuccessful candidates scored the following results: Hickford 18.44\%; Cook 16.33\%; Anstey 15.12\%; and Wales 8.11\%. See Colin A. Hughes and B. D. Graham, \textit{Voting for the Victoria Legislative Assembly, 1890-1964} Canberra, Department of Political Science, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1975, p 55.

\textsuperscript{160} For a copy of his letter see \textit{Argus}, 2 November 1900, p 6, and, for a similar report of the incident, \textit{Age}, 2 November 1900, p 5.
therefore he hoped that for the present, to avoid friction, Mr. Anstey would not contest the position.\textsuperscript{161}

The tension had arisen largely out of the Federation’s increasing financial difficulties. At their next meeting a fortnight later the issue came to a head. Andrews presented a lengthy report 'and pointed out that while the assets exceeded the liabilities, there was an insufficiency of current cash'.\textsuperscript{162} The members decided to contribute extra money but also passed a resolution demanding that the present executive resign, with the exception of the Secretary and the Treasurer. Anstey took this to be directed at him.

Mr. Anstey said that although he had resigned as President he had not resigned as a member of the Executive and declined to do so. Mr. Claringbold pointed out that in this case Mr. Anstey was, pursuant to the declaration, automatically out of office, and perpetually excluded. Mr. Anstey said all right, he had resigned from the Executive.\textsuperscript{163}

He may have been dispondent, and was certainly short-tempered, but he also recognised failure when he saw it. The Federation was in decline, not only financially but also as the broad working class institution that he, Tunnecliffe and Elmslie had imagined it might become when they established it eighteen months earlier. This was confirmed in April 1901 when a conference of several Trades Hall Council unions and the VLF was held to resolve the tension that had existed between them, and to bail the Federation out of its financial difficulties.\textsuperscript{164} The result of their deliberations was to formally recognise that in the previous year the VLF had, \textit{de facto}, become just another struggling co-operative.

To carry on co-operative production and distribution on the most advanced Democratic principles for the purpose of providing funds for social, industrial and political reform movements, and also to provide benefits for its members.\textsuperscript{165}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[161] \textit{Tocsin}, 3 November 1900, p.3.
\item[162] \textit{Ibid.}, 22 November 1900, p.5.
\item[163] \textit{Ibid.}
\item[164] \textit{Ibid.}, 23 May 1901, p.7.
\item[165] \textit{Ibid.}, 20 June 1901, p.7.
\end{footnotes}
As such, it no longer presumed to challenge the authority of the Trades Hall Council or the Labor Party as the leading institutions of the working class. In keeping with this diminished role, its name was changed to 'The Co-operative Commonwealth'. It struggled on for another year under the less energetic leadership of Frank Tudor and finally disappeared from sight in 1902.

Reflecting on its failure, J.A. Andrews was inclined to blame specific decisions such as the appointment of a paid manager and the move to rather expensive headquarters at 288 Lonsdale Street. However, the causes were probably more basic. From the very beginning the VLF's promoters set themselves a daunting task. They held the belief common to many radicals in the 1890s, that the world could and should be changed for the better; that it was the time for building a working class movement. Although the Australian Labor Federation, the VLF and many similar grand schemes for social regeneration collapsed, they were, nevertheless, testimony to a belief that the working class could, by understanding itself, make its own history.

But in trying to do that, the radicals set their faces against capitalist social relations, the entrenched institutions of the labour movement and the accumulated loyalty they commanded among workers. Moreover, their theory of class directly confronted the liberal labourist ideology that helped sustain those institutions. Anstey and his associates failed in their professed objectives, as they were bound to do. Nevertheless, through *Tocsin* and the VLF their efforts served to hasten the development of a party that was more of the working class than its predecessor, even though it might not always have acted as staunchly for the working class as they would have liked.

In his attempts to understand and resist the social forces that made the 1890s such a distressing period for so many people, Anstey developed a conception of class and social process which, with varying emphases, shaped his political imagination for the rest of his career. The conditions in which that understanding was acquired

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165. *The title was almost certainly inspired by the works of Lawrence Gronlund.*

gave it a sharp focus, but as the world changed, it eventually served to restrict his vision.

For Anstey the nineties were years of political apprenticeship where he learned that ideas and action were part of the same process. He saw that the spark of ideas could ignite a flame which might consume centuries of accumulated rubbish and make way for a better world. From the early stirrings of a rich imagination and a lively, if untutored, intellect he had made himself, by self-improvement and tireless activity, one of the leading young radicals in the Victorian labour movement. At the end of the 1880s he was a restless young man in his mid-twenties, impatient of life in the country. By the turn of the century he had become one of labour's young Prometheans.
In the six months immediately after his split with the Labour Federation and his subsequent defeat at the 1900 State election, Anstey was relatively inactive. He seems to have been involved in little outside the routines of family life and his job at the Working Men's College. However, he did not retreat into an entirely private existence. He continued as Secretary of the Tocsin Co-operative, a position he had held since 1899. From its establishment in 1897, his commitment to the paper and all that it stood for had never diminished. Nevertheless, to a man of Anstey's restless energies it might have induced a boredom more difficult to bear than the bruises of public life. It was not long before he re-emerged in accustomed roles.

In mid-1901 the May Day Committee asked him to speak at their annual rally on the Yarra Bank where he was given the task of moving one of the usual resolutions proposed on such occasions. At about the same time he joined Frank Tudor, Martin Hannah and others in establishing a branch of the Labor Party in Preston. He also had a part in founding the Sunday Free Discussion Society.

On Sunday 19 May 1901, a group of enthusiasts met in the Co-operative Commonwealth's rooms at 288 Lonsdale Street to form a society that would provide a forum to discuss social, political and ethical subjects. At that meeting Anstey was elected President, with Messrs. Kenny, Martin and Gossler comprising the rest of the

1. Tocsin file. Merrifield Collection, La Trobe Library.
3. *Ibid.* 9 May 1901, p.5. Because of frequent changes of title, and the concurrent use of Labour and Labor in spelling the party name, I have accepted the conventional distinction between Labor for the party and labour to indicate the wider movement. Although this involves some anachronistic usage I have preferred it in the interests of clarity and consistency.
committee. In the rather effusive manner of the day, it was dedicated to 'Lovers of Australian Liberty, prepared to think, to speak and to argue on any subject freely and fearlessly according to conscience'. Like many similar organisations in Melbourne at the time, it expressed a desire for earnest and forthright discussion of contemporary issues. It was testimony to the esteem that self-improvers held for public speaking and formal debate. There were also some suggestions that the decision to hold meetings on Sunday was more than a matter of simple convenience. It probably reflected a libertarian and secularist impatience with the strict sabbatarianism to which the less pious Melburnians such as themselves were then subjected.

As the political opinions of most members fell somewhere between liberal reformism and anarchism, great care was taken to avoid sectarian squabbles. Accordingly, the Society's proceedings were conducted in an orderly and tolerant manner, with most speakers making assiduous efforts to acknowledge all shades of opinion on the questions they were addressing. The topics chosen for discussion revealed catholic interests, broadly circumscribed by a desire for social reform. There were lectures on such diverse subjects as aristocratic versus democratic government, the moral and social aspects of protection, laws of marriage - scientifically treated - and maladministration of the police force. Although the Society preferred quiet and rational discussion, there were some speakers who provoked lively debate. Mr. Paul's lecture on 'Loyalty and Disloyalty' - in which he 'took the stand of an imperialist' - caused something of a stir, largely because of Ted Findley's recent expulsion from the State Parliament over *Tocsin*'s alleged 'libel on the King'. Similarly, 'Chummy' Fleming's exposition of Anarchist theory appeared to have won few converts, but it did inspire animated discussion.

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7. *Ibid.*, 6 February 1902, p. 3. For discussion of this, see below.
Anstey was a regular speaker at these meetings. Like the Sale Debating Society, the Trades Hall Council, the Labour Federation and the Yarra Bank, it provided a platform for his ideas which he declaimed with characteristic flair. His first address was on 'Zola the revolutionist'. In much the same way as he had done in his commonplace book, he read selected passages from Zola's *Work* to illustrate 'the sufferings of the workers from social oppression'. He then proceeded to commend Zola's view of class action by emphasising the need for new working class organisation and unity among radical activists. Both, he argued, were necessary for the workers to defeat their enemies; capitalists, churches and the press. Although Anstey seems to have blurred Zola's and his own ideas, the warmth of the audience's response suggests that they neither noticed nor cared whether he gave an entirely faithful interpretation of his subject's views. They approved of both speaker and subject.

Another of his talks, entitled 'The history of the war of labour against the British Government', was equally well received. His main theme was the workers' struggle for liberty and social reform during the previous two thousand years. Taking Thorold Rogers as his main source, he argued that there had been a 'labour or humanity movement' in England since earliest times, and that the reforms it was currently seeking were 'but resurrections of old privileges of the people which had been taken from them by kings, middle and upper classes, and churches'. Turning to Australia, he eulogised George Black and Graham Berry as pioneers of liberty, fighting for the freedoms that had been lost in the old country. There was a clear implication in the drift of his remarks that he wanted to locate himself within the

8. Ibid, 28 November 1901, p.3.
9. Ibid, 10 April 1902, p.5.
10. It is almost certain that the book was James E. Thorold Rogers, *Six Centuries of Work and Wages: The History of English Labour*, London, Swan Sonnenschein, 1884 or later editions up to the sixth, published in December 1901.
same tradition. He went on to explore a similar theme some six weeks later in a lecture on 'Militant Democracy'.

These addresses gave early indications of a recurring pattern in Anstey's speeches. He was a voracious reader with a retentive memory which enabled him to quote at length from 'authorities' to support whatever proposition he was advancing. But although he was ever scrupulous in citing his sources, he was not always as careful as he might have been when handling their arguments. Indeed, on a number of occasions he was utterly cavalier about it. His tendency was to plunder them for 'facts' to support his contention of the moment. But while his methods may not have been entirely scholarly, he was nevertheless building a reputation as one of Labour's most promising young working class intellectuals who could usually be relied on to fill a hall.

He turned this talent to good use on a number of occasions to denounce the political mood spawned by the Kyabram Reform Movement, a populist reaction to rural distress that had emerged in the Goulburn Valley towards the end of 1901. Skillfully manipulated by Melbourne business interests, it had mushroomed into a conservative political movement pledged to reduce State Government activity and expenditure. In Labor circles it was seen as a direct threat to government enterprise and state intervention in the economy; the basic strategy underlying the Labor platform. In speeches to the Victorian Socialist's League and the Carlton branch of the Political Labour Council he proclaimed that 'the word reform was a false one', a deliberately misleading term designed to disguise an attack on democratic institutions. He chose to refute the Reform Movement's arguments with an elaborate defence of Victoria's state-run railways, offering detailed statistical data to show that they were

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11 *Tocsin* 29 May 1902, p.5.

more efficient than their capitalist-owned counterparts in England and the United States of America.\(^3\)

Anstey's remarks from the Sunday Free Discussion Society's platform about labour's historic struggle for liberty may have stemmed from the campaign that he and others had fought a year earlier in defending what they saw as freedom of the press. The episode began when *Tocsin* reprinted an article from the *Irish People* which depicted Edward VII as '...the old and bald-headed roué...the centre of a score of disgraceful scandals of the most contemptible type...whose latest public performance was to stigmatise on his solemn oath the whole Catholic world as "superstitious idolators"'.\(^4\) The article had been promptly suppressed by the Irish authorities without recourse to the courts. The Melbourne daily press reported the incident and expressed their approval of the action taken. This provoked *Tocsin* to a heated defence of a free press against arbitrary censorship by administrative fiat.\(^5\) In defiance, they reprinted the offending article, but were careful to separate its contents from the principle at issue.

Their action outraged loyal opinion. An *Argus* reporter took up the matter with the Premier, Sir Alexander Peacock. After consulting London and Victorian Crown Law officers, Peacock summoned Findley - who was not only the legally designated publisher of *Tocsin* but also the Labor MLA for Melbourne - and asked him to account for the paper's behaviour. As soon as the matter was drawn to his attention, Findley withdrew as many copies as he could. However, Peacock was not to be so easily placated. Although he was genuinely offended by the article, he also sensed political advantage. Accordingly, on 25 June 1901, he made a statement on the case to the Legislative Assembly and called upon Findley to explain himself. Findley stated the

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\(^3\) *Tocsin* 22 May 1902, p.6 and 10 July 1902, p.8.

\(^4\) The article originally appeared in the *Irish People* on 11 May 1901. *Tocsin* reprinted it on 20 June 1901, p.5.

\(^5\) Ibid, p.4.
facts of the matter and expressed regret that the article had distressed loyal citizens. Peacock was not convinced and promptly moved a motion to expel Findley from the House. After some debate, during which Findley's supporters argued in mitigation for a lesser penalty, the motion was put and he was duly expelled. Thus, in solemn dignity, did sixty-four loyal Victorian parliamentarians expunge the dishonour that he had brought upon the House through his association with Tocsin’s ‘libel on the King’.16

At the subsequent by-election Findley did not contest his old seat. Instead, he stood for Melbourne East at another by-election occasioned by the death of the sitting member. Not content to let the matter rest, a number of supporters established a fighting fund, hoping to vindicate both Findley and the stand that Tocsin had taken. Anstey, along with J. Carel Fitzgerald and George Carter were the principal organisers of the campaign. They appealed to ‘friends of freedom all over Australia’ to rally to the cause of ‘Findley and Freedom’.17 In addition to Tocsin’s original arguments about freedom of the press, they warned of the dangers to democracy inherent in Parliament’s action. ‘If this mode of expulsion is tolerated or condoned infinite wrong may be done by unscrupulous parties of the future to the less adequately represented sections of the people.’ Anstey also took to the hustings in support of his friend at a number of meetings during the campaign.18 However, despite their efforts, Findley was defeated by Deegan, the Liberal candidate.19 But it was not the end of his political career. In 1903 he was elected to the Senate where he served, with one interruption, for twenty-one years.20

16. Victorian Parliamentary Debates (VPD), vol 97, 25 June 1901, pp 108-134. Under the law of libel in Victoria truth was no defence. Trenwith’s vote in favour of expulsion was a further sign of the widening gap between him and the Labor Party.


18. See, for example, Age, 10 July 1901, p 3.

19. Hughes and Graham, Voting for the Victoria Legislative Assembly, p 68.

In these first two years of the new century most of Anstey's public activity was centred around the question of liberty. He spoke about the workers' struggles against economic oppression, he helped found a society to promote free speech and fought to preserve freedom of the press. The development of two related themes were implicit in this preoccupation; the meaning of liberty and the nature of the state in capitalist society. Although not yet clearly defined, they were beginning to take recognisable shape.

His earlier association with the Anarchist Club had acquainted him with the libertarian idea that the state, be it feudal, capitalist or in any other form, was a fundamental denial of pure freedom. His references to the historic role of capitalists, kings, churches, the upper and middle classes implied that view. However, in the nineties he had seen the brutal facts of class rule and the failure of utopian solutions based on romantic notions about free co-operation. As events unfolded he came closer to the view that the only path to a social reconstruction that could offer some economic security and a measure of personal liberty was through united action by the working class to capture and shape the instruments of state power. Although he was still subject to romantic impulses, the failure of the Labour Federation had encouraged a realism that inclined him more towards the union movement and the Labor Party as the most promising vehicles for change. Moreover, the Labor Party seemed the only avenue open to an energetic and talented young man to whom private ambition and class loyalty appeared inseparable. Nevertheless, his attachment to a broad sense of individual freedom remained strong, sufficiently so as to cause both he and the Party some difficulty in their relationship over the years.

But while he explored variations on a libertarian theme from any available platform, the circumstances that were to sweep him into parliament were taking shape on a wider stage. They were the same social forces that had engaged his imagination as a young seaman in the eighties and had drawn him into Melbourne's radical milieu in the nineties.
By early 1902 the class allegiances of the main political parties in Victoria were becoming clearer. The fall of the Peacock government in June marked the end of the Lib.-Lab. alliance that had muddied the waters of Victorian politics for so long. A strong anti-Labor coalition was in the making, just as the Labor Party was beginning to put its house in order. But although the Labor Party emerged with an independent organisation and identity, the conservatives were victorious in the struggle for political supremacy.

This process was first apparent in the development of extra-parliamentary organisations; specifically the National Citizens' Reform League, the Victorian Employers' Federation and the Political Labour Council of Victoria. The first of these began in Kyabram late in 1901 when a couple of local activists began to exploit rural discontent with metropolitan politics around a populist campaign to halt state government extravagance. Their professed objectives were simple and direct: a reduction in the number of parliamentarians and a cut in government expenditure.21 The Kyabram Movement, as it was first called, grew rapidly as the severe drought of 1902 decimated farm incomes.22 It had tapped a well of popular resentment which handsomely repaid the energetic work of its organisers. By the middle of 1902 it had spread far beyond the Goulburn Valley to encompass most of Victoria and could boast 210 branches and 15,555 members.23 In the process of expansion it became the National Citizens' Reform League. Within six months of its formation the League was a major force in Victorian politics.

The Reform League's astonishing growth coincided with the establishment of the Victorian Employers' Federation. For some time a number of employers had been unhappy with the Liberal government's 'interference' in various sectors of the

21 Our programme demanded a reduction of the members of the Legislative Assembly from 95 to 46; of the Council from 36 to 23; and of the Ministers from 10 to 5. George Meudell, The Pleasant Career of a Spendthrift and his Later Reflections, Melbourne, Wilke, n.d., pp.37-38.

22 Rickard, op. cit. p.179.

23 Nielsen, op. cit. p.77.
economy. They were convinced that such things as State wages boards were a form of 'class legislation' which represented an unwarranted interference in the conduct of their businesses. Following a taunt from Peacock, they soon decided that if they wanted a voice in parliament they would have to form a united organisation. In mid-1901 a meeting of employer groups formally established the VEF. Although its membership, for obvious reasons, did not equal that of the Reform League, its financial resources were considerable and its members strategically placed to exert influence on public opinion. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that it was able to manipulate the development of the Reform League and offer encouragement to other conservative organisations. But this is hardly surprising given the convergence of the VEF’s concern at the trend towards interventionist social legislation and the Reform League’s preoccupation with government extravagance. It was not that either group denied a role for government in the economy. As far as they were concerned, the State’s job was to assist private development by providing the necessary infrastructure such as irrigation and railways. They felt that the Liberals, at Labor’s behest, had directed resources too much towards unproductive social welfare measures with the consequent strain on State finances. The proposition underlying this view was a hardy perennial of Australian conservative politics; that government existed to regulate the privatisation of profits and the nationalisation of losses.

Emboldened by the success of these extra-parliamentary organisations, the emerging conservative alliance in the Legislative Assembly was soon in a position to bring down Peacock’s increasingly unpopular Liberal government. Through the Opposition leader William Irvine, they alleged that the Liberals had failed to pursue economies with sufficient vigor and duly seized on a clumsy manoeuvre involving post-dated Ministerial resignations, to force a no-confidence motion. Peacock’s Ministry was defeated in the House on 3 June 1902 and Irvine was commissioned to

form a new government. It was immediately apparent that the new Premier was determined to implement his policy of ‘cheap government’. It was also clear that his exaggerated estimate of Labor’s importance in Victorian politics had strengthened his resolve to crush it.25

In a rather belated response to this aggressive turn in conservative opinion, the Political Labour Council of Victoria convened a conference on 26 June 1902 with the expressed aim of improving its electoral organisation. It was indicative of the Party’s weakness in this respect that unions vastly outweighed party branches at the conference. In recognition of this, they agreed that the Australian Workers’ Union should nominate candidates in rural electorates and that the PLC would endorse them upon receipt of a signed pledge. They also decided to impose a small levy on all branch and union members to establish an organising fund for the PLC.26 However, before they had a chance to develop this improved party machine, they were faced with an election.

Soon after taking office, Irvine introduced a Bill to reduce the size of parliament, and to cut salaries for MPs, ministers and public servants. Following public disquiet that the lowest-paid government workers would suffer disproportionately from the cuts, the government was defeated on a motion before the committee considering the provision. Irvine chose to go to the people.27 Polling day was set for 1 October, allowing only three weeks for the campaign. This placed considerable pressure on the PLC and its executive committee. They had to decide which seats to contest, select candidates, get a pledge from each nominee and co-ordinate the party’s general campaign. Some of their early organisational weaknesses were illustrated in the progress of Anstey’s candidature.

26 McQueen, *op. cit.* p. 307.
27 Rawson, *op. cit.*
Although he had not been a delegate to the PLC conference on 26 June, he was subsequently appointed to the council by the Warracknabeal branch on 13 September. It is not clear why he was chosen by a country branch, but it seems that the nomination was organised in Melbourne as a way of giving the branch a voice on the council, and getting Anstey a seat on it. At the same meeting he was nominated to contest Melbourne, Findley’s old seat. However, on the following day the PLC changed its mind and decided to leave the nomination open for the time being. They had probably been told that he had strong support in East Bourke Boroughs, the scene of his first attempt at parliament. On 17 September he was formally nominated for that seat by the PLC Central Council as well as the Brunswick, Clifton Hill and Northcote branches, but his candidature was made ‘subject to arrival of pledge’. It was presented in due course and he was voted £10 towards expenses. Five days later he PLC executive endorsed Martin Hannah for Melbourne.28 This kind of shuffling indecision characterised the executive’s conduct of its first major election campaign.

Irvine’s Ministerialists, selected in consultation with the Reform League, went ot the electorate on a platform of ‘cheap government’. They promised fewer parliamentarians and ‘permanent economies’ in government expenditure so that a greater proportion of taxation could be spent on public works to ‘increase the wealth-producing capacity of the country’. On the Opposition side, Peacock’s Liberals were in disarray. Although he did not make a policy speech, most of his erstwhile supporters took a position not far removed from the Ministerialists. The Labor Party accepted the necessity for some constitutional reform but rejected the government’s methods of reducing costs.29

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29. For an account of the parties contesting the election, and the final result, see Colin A Hughes and B D Graham, A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics 1890-1964 Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1968, pp 472-474. For the Ministerialist manifesto see Age 16 September 1902, p 5. For the Liberals’ views see ibid, 23 September 1902, p 5 and for the Labor policy see ibid, p 4.
In the two-member seat of East Bourke Boroughs, Anstey was up against three other candidates. Methven, one of the sitting members, stood as an Independent Ministerialist. Hickford and Grundy stood as Ministerialists with Reform League endorsement. He thus not only faced three anti-Labor opponents, but also a well-organised conservative campaign supported by three branches of the Reform League.

In accordance with his pledge, he based his campaign on the Labor platform, but gave a specific emphasis to the issue of wages boards. Recognising the importance of the traditional Labor vote among the brick workers and tramwaymen in the electorate, he accused the government of bad faith in allowing the Factory Act to lapse. There was, he argued, no guarantee that Irvine or Bent, despite their promises, would re-enact the provisions that gave the boards legal status. He was encouraged in this view by financial support from the Brick, Tile and Pottery Association. On the issue of constitutional reform, he accepted that fewer members were required but thought that the Legislative Assembly should be reduced to sixty-nine, not forty-six as proposed by the Reform League. He opposed salary reductions for both MPs and public servants, and thought the suggested cut of £45,000 from the charity vote 'a miserable action'. It was the mission of the Labor Party, he declared, not to knock men down but to raise them up so they could support their wives and children decently.

Although Anstey topped the poll in East Bourke Boroughs, the election was a landslide victory for the Ministerialists and the Reform League. In the ninety-five member Legislative Assembly Irvine could claim the support of sixty-six, the Liberal Opposition fifteen and Labor twelve - with two Independent Labor men, Trenwith and Sangster. Against this conservative swing Anstey's victory was something of a


31. Nielsen, *op. cit.*, p.78. They were in Brunswick, Coburg and Northcote.


33. Hughes and Graham, *op. cit.*
personal triumph, which helped wipe out the bitter disappointment of his defeat in 1900.34 His comrades at the *Tocsin* declared it to be 'the largest vote ever recorded for a candidate in State elections in Victoria'.35 There was a hint of euphoria in his victory speech at the Labor Party celebration in the Trades Hall after the election. He admitted that he had been disillusioned with politics two years earlier, believing that it was the preserve of self-seekers. His faith was now restored since the Political Labour Council had given the Party direction and purpose. Accordingly, he pledged himself to work both in parliament and 'throughout the land to spread the gospel of Labour'.36 This fervent declaration carried a veiled rebuke of those sitting Labor members who had displayed less than missionary zeal in building the Party organisation throughout Victoria.37 Although some in the audience - such as the recently-arrived socialist, Tom Mann - may have admired his vigor, the more sceptical could have been forgiven for reflecting on the happy convergence of electoral success and his wonderous conversion to parliamentary politics. They may also have been just a little apprehensive at the extent of his enthusiasm.

That mixture of impatience and enthusiasm got the better of him after only one week in the newly-elected nineteenth Victorian parliament. Ignoring the traditional practice whereby new members quietly observed the workings of the House and then made a carefully-prepared 'maiden' speech on a pet subject, Anstey 'jumped the gun' with a hasty contribution to debate on the Members and Public Service Retrenchment Bill. His basic point, that the government was exploiting its employees by reducing their pay and their numbers so it could meet its additional responsibilities out of a lower tax revenue, was all but lost in a confused barrage of

34 Anstey won 30.54% of the vote. Hickford became the second member for the electorate with 27.45%. Methven lost his seat when he polled only 26.17%. Grundy came a bad last with 13.83%. See Hughes and Graham, *Voting for the Victoria Legislative Assembly*, p.75.

35 *Tocsin* 16 October 1902, p.3.

36 *Ibid*, 9 October 1902, p.3.

specific charges. Recognising this, he admitted that 'he had not done justice to the cause for which he was fighting', thanked honourable members for their attention, 'assured them that they would hear from him again', and sat down.\textsuperscript{35}

When, some seven weeks later, they heard his more formal 'maiden' speech on the Constitution Reform Bill they would have noticed little improvement in his ability to organise an argument, despite the sincerity of its expression. He began, not by addressing the issues under debate, but rather by taking offence at the political abuse that Irvine and other government members had heaped upon the Labor Party. In the face of hostile opponents who were resolute in their purpose and assured to the point of arrogance in their exercise of power, Anstey gave vent to deep wells of resentment against those who would belittle him and his class. During a passionate tirade against Shiels, the Treasurer, he touched on what it was that hurt - the arrogant assumption that Labor men were somehow lesser mortals.

Some of you object to us who occupy this corner; apparently some of you deny that we can be as honest as you are, some of you seem to doubt that men who hold opinions contrary to yours can even be sincere in their opinions.

Although it had no direct relevance to the first, he then turned to his second point - the proposal to reduce the number of members in the Legislative Assembly as an 'economy' measure. Greater efficiency in government, he asserted, could be had if the ceremonial trappings of parliament and the obstructionist Legislative Council were abolished. Most of the speech, however, was devoted to the infringement of democratic rights that he believed was implicit in the provision of the Bill which proposed to establish separate seats for railway workers and public servants. He saw it as an attempt by Irvine to isolate the collective vote of public employees who had campaigned so vigorously against the government's retrenchment policy, and so eliminate their influence in marginal electorates. The Premier, Anstey argued, sought revenge by effectively disenfranchising them through a cynical denial of

\textsuperscript{38.} \textit{FPD}, vol. 101, 22 October 1902, pp.168-170. He continued to argue on behalf of the lower-paid and older State employees with brief statements and questions. See \textit{ibid}, 23 October 1902, p.221; 28 October 1902, p.271; and 3 November 1902, p.401.
their right to organise and argue in defence of their collective interests. Such rights were, after all, willingly conceded to farmers and large land owners. It was only in the conflict of ideas, honestly expressed through democratic processes, that the progress of the world would be secured. Moreover, it was that same basic principle on which he and his party stood.

I have no personal or class animosities. The labour movement is not to me a mere division of this class from other classes, and in opposition to all other classes. It is only the association of men, irrespective of class or creed, who believe that certain things are advantageous and beneficial to the community as a whole, and that they are the things upon which the well-being, the stability, and the security of the State really depend.

Thus, by a circuituous route, did Anstey finally declare a political testament in his 'maiden' speech.39

It was a testament that implied a pluralist view of class shared by many of his Party colleagues who, despite their steady drift away from Peacock and his supporters, still adhered to some vestiges of Lib.-Lab. ideology. As far as they were concerned class differences could be reconciled in a manner that would ensure justice and prosperity, not only for the workers, but for all citizens. The Labor Party, representing the true interests of the 'community as a whole', was the only political agent capable of doing it. Irvine and his 'reformers', who would not even acknowledge the legitimacy of the Labor Party, were the real advocates of class enmity.

Outside the Assembly, meanwhile, Anstey gave every indication that he would honour the other half of the promise he made at the Trades Hall victory celebration. However, when he vowed to build up the Party throughout Victoria he may not have realised how much work was involved. Soon after the election he found that he was committed to a busy round of Party, constituency, propaganda and social engagements. In addition to the regular weekly Caucus meeting held while parliament was sitting, he was expected to attend the fortnightly meetings of the

39 Ibid. 3 December 1902, pp.1033-1039.
Brunswick, Coburg and Northcote branches in his electorate, and the occasional Pleasant Sunday Afternoons organised by those branches. 40 Inevitably, dates clashed and choices had to be made. For instance, he was nominated by the PLC Central Council as a Victorian delegate to the 1902 Commonwealth Political Labour Conference in Sydney but could not go because of his parliamentary duties. 41 He was also required to do his share of propaganda work which, at this early stage of his career, was mostly confined to this role as secretary of the Tocsin Co-operative, although he did attend public lectures such as the one on 'Socialism and Ethics' delivered by the PLC's newly-appointed organiser Tom Mann on 13 November 1902. 42 When particular issues arose he was often chosen to represent the parliamentary party. On 21 November 1902 he did so at a meeting of the unemployed held in the Trades Hall and, two days later, at a mass meeting of carters and drivers who were protesting about the provisions of the Factory Act. 43

Nor did he escape a part in the formation of policy. Early in the new year Caucus made him responsible for examining the question of 'closer settlement' and, in conjunction with Bromley and Prendergast, the incidence of income tax. 44 There were, however, some more enjoyable duties attached to his new role as a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). The 'instructors and staff' of the Working Men's College arranged a smoke night for him 'as a token of their esteem and regret on his severing his connection with the college'. They presented him with 'a handsome illuminated address and purse of sovereigns' which he 'highly appreciated',

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40 Australian Labor Party, Victorian Branch, State Parliamentary Party, Minutes (Victorian Caucus Minutes), LTL, MS 10914; Tocsin 24 December 1902, p. 4; 1 January 1903, p. 4; and 29 January 1903, p. 5.

41 PLC Executive Minutes, op. cit. 1 and 15 November 1902.

42 Tocsin file, Merrifield Collection and Tocsin 20 November 1902, p. 3.

43 Ibid., pp. 1 and 5.

44 Victorian Caucus Minutes, op. cit. 28 January and 10 February 1903.
particularly since he knew that 'many of those supporting the presentation were opposed to him politically'.

Although he had now achieved one of his major ambitions, this new, frenetic life would have been a sharp, if welcome, contrast to the established routines of work at the college. Nevertheless, he plunged into it with a pride and alacrity born of the knowledge that a man of his humble origins had been chosen to represent the common people in a freely-elected parliament. He had achieved something to which few young boys from London's East End dared aspire. He was the senior member for East Bourke Boroughs, determined to make his mark as a champion of the Labor cause.

He certainly made an impression with his speech on the scandal that arose from allegations against Malcolm Kenneth McKenzie, the Minister for Lands. Irvine had appointed a parliamentary select committee to investigate charges that McKenzie had improperly and knowingly profited from grazing licences while a Minister of the Crown. The committee found that he had indeed been guilty of maladministration to the point of corruption, but left it to the House to determine an appropriate penalty. However, before the report could be debated McKenzie resigned from the Ministry, relinquished his seat and declared that he would never re-enter public life. He also gave Irvine a written undertaking that he would surrender the disputed grazing licences and return to the government the profit he had made from sub-letting them.

During debate on the report government speakers accepted its findings but were inclined to the very charitable view that the whole matter had arisen from a misconception on McKenzie's part about his ministerial responsibilities. While the

45 Table Talk 13 November 1902, p.4. The illuminated address is in the possession of his great-grand daughter, Beverley Anstey. On 2 January 1903 he and Kate returned to Sale where he basked in the warm congratulations of many old friends. See Tocsin 8 January 1903, p.8.

46 See the select committee's report 'Administration of the Lands Department with Reference to Grazing Licences' in Victoria, Papers Presented to Parliament (VPP) Legislative Assembly, session 1902-3, vol.1, p.631. For commentary on the issue see leading articles in the Age 16 February 1903, p.4 and 23 February 1903, p.4. For other Labor and government views of McKenzie's resignation see speeches by Dr Maloney and Shiels in VPP vol.103, 24 February 1903, pp.2493 and 2497.
Liberal Opposition were highly critical of that view, Labor members were utterly cynical about it. Anstey took the strongest line. He began with a pointed comparison of the tender regard that the government had shown for McKenzie's rights and the summary manner in which the same members had expelled Findley for a much less serious offence. The government should not, he argued, simply allow the matter to end with McKenzie's resignation and disgrace. If the parliament had a care for its honour, if it was not to expose itself to charges of hypocrisy, it must be consistent in its judgement of errant members.

If punishment must be inflicted, then it should inflict it as lightly as possible, but I would give no man the opportunity to say of me that I meted out punishment with ferocity to one individual and with a shameless and indecent partiality to my own partners and partisans.

Shedding the verneer of his political testament as his passion rose, he turned to McKenzie's character and indulged some deeply-felt personal and class animosities.

This self-glorified and modern Pharisee was tried by his peers, and no sooner was he tried than it was shown that this sanctimonious sniveller who was always sniffing for other men's sins was the greatest liar, thief, and poltroon that ever controlled an administrative department of this State.

He then traversed, with malicious glee, the details of McKenzie's misdeeds and concluded by repeating the charge that the government's 'partner in corruption' was a totally undeserving beneficiary of hypocritical political patronage.47

The Age reviewed the debate in a leading article the next day and noted Anstey's point that other members of cabinet were accessories after the fact because they did not disclose McKenzie's actions as soon as they knew of them. The paper did not accept this and suggested that the Labor 'corner' was more concerned with revenge for Findley's expulsion than with doing justice to McKenzie.48 Tocsin, on the other hand, hailed its secretary's speech as 'among the best contributions' to the


48 *Age* 25 February 1903, p.4.
debate and reprinted it in full.\textsuperscript{49} That, however, may have been a simple case of self publicity. But it was probably one of the performances on which Frederic Eggleston based his later judgement that Anstey was 'a consumate mob orator' whose speeches in the Assembly had 'a rough force, a demoniac energy of invective that is extraordinary. In them we feel some strange force drawn from the depths of working class feeling that is primitive and elemental.'\textsuperscript{50} However, there was nothing primitive or elemental about the 'mob orator' who rose to defend justice and liberty during debate on the Railway Employees Strike Suppression Bill.

The Victorian railways strike of May 1903 was a dispute in which the issues at stake had a significance far beyond the industrial arena. To the Irvine government, and the broad coalition of conservative opinion that had grown out of the Kyabram Movement, it represented a direct challenge to constitutional authority where, as Benham and Rickard put it, '...the men were not strikers but mutineers'.\textsuperscript{51} However, like most strikes, it did not erupt out of a single issue. It resulted from a complex process which, since the 1890s, had seen a growing distrust between conservative politicians and government employees.

There was a widely-held belief in conservative circles that the votes of public servants and railway workers had been responsible for the defeat of the Patterson government when it tried to introduce economy measures in 1894. When the Irvine government began to implement its policy of retrenchment and salary reduction in mid-1902 it encountered angry opposition from the same quarters. There were protest

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Tocsin}, 3 March 1903, p.3. On 2 April, pp.5-7, it also reprinted in full his speech on the Railways Commissioners Appointment Bill where he argued a persuasive case that the government's obsession with 'economy' in public administration had been counter-productive, particularly in the case of the railways. See the original speech in \textit{VPQ}, vol.103, 26 March 1903, pp.3100-3109.


meetings, deputations and a strike ballot of railway engine drivers. In the campaign for the election of 1 October 1902 the Labor Party vigorously defended government employees, and it was this apparent alliance between the public service and the labour movement which alarmed conservatives. Irvine's victory at the election hardened his resolve to break that unholy alliance.

On the other side, the public servants had a number of long-standing grievances which centred around the erosion of their pay and conditions. Many saw themselves as sacrificial victims offered up to appease the merciless god of Kyabram 'economy'. In the railways this was compounded by government neglect and mismanagement resulting in poor maintenance of rolling stock, longer hours and loss of holidays due to understaffing. The government's withdrawal of pay increments, coming on top of all this, provoked the strike ballot taken just before the election.

Immediately after the election the position worsened. The union counted its strike ballot which showed an overwhelming majority in favour of direct action. The government put many railway workers on short time and then introduced its controversial provision for separate representation. At this point the engine drivers' executive decided to mobilise. They resolved to set up a defence fund and, after thinking about it for a while, sought to revive their lapsed affiliation to the Trades Hall Council in January 1903. In reply, Irvine insisted that they sever their connection with the Trades Hall because public service regulations explicitly forbade any association with a political body. Behind that demand lay the full weight of Reform Movement ideology which saw the Trades Hall Council as part of the urban malaise of creeping state socialism which threatened to strangle Victorian development. The affiliation of government employees to such a body was not a simple industrial issue. It was an act of political treachery.

For a while there was a stand-off. Neither side would budge. Then, at the end of April, the executive members of the engine drivers' union were instructed to resign their positions or they would be dismissed. When they failed to do so, Irvine repeated his ultimatum. In the face of such hostility, the executive decided that attack was the
only means left to them to defend their political and industrial rights. On Saturday 9 May some 1400 men struck and the railway system all but ground to a halt. The union issued a manifesto explaining how the government had forced them to take such desperate action. Pickets were set up and there was some violence. An appeal for funds went out to other unions. Tocsin printed regular strike bulletins as an antidote to the hostility of the Age and the Argus. Declarations of support from Australia and overseas unions began to arrive. At this early stage things appeared to be going well for the men. Despite a few defectors, solidarity seemed to be holding up and public opinion, while not entirely favourable, was not yet hostile. However, it soon became clear that the union leadership had seriously underestimated the determination of 'Iceberg' Irvine and the forces behind him.

Having already announced the recall of parliament for the following Wednesday, Irvine threatened severe penalties for the 'mutineers', offset by substantial increments to 'loyalist' and 'volunteer' labour. When parliament assembled he introduced the Strike Suppression Bill which made it plain that he was not interested in negotiation: he was out to crush the unionists. It was an extraordinarily punitive piece of legislation which made the strikers liable for fines and imprisonment, gave preference to 'scabs', widened the government's powers to prosecute pickets and break up meetings, prohibited the collection of defence funds and the publication of strike bulletins. Faced with this onslaught of naked state power, the union leaders began to lose their nerve as the first signs of rank and file disunity appeared among the Geelong drivers. Labor members of the Legislative Assembly, however, did not waver. Using the only tactic available to them, they spoke on the Bill for as long as their wits and stamina permitted in an effort to delay its passage through the House. Anstey's turn came towards the end of two exhausting days of 'stonewalling'.

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52 In all, twenty bulletins were issued between 11 and 18 May, eight of them between 10.00 a.m. on 13 May and 1.30 a.m. on 14 May. See Strikes file, Merrifield Collection, op. cit.
His central theme was by now a familiar one; the state and liberty. It was, in fact, the subject of one of his stock speeches that could be delivered at short notice to a Labor Party meeting, a Pleasant Sunday Afternoon or a discussion group. On this occasion, however, the theme was utterly appropriate to the intentions behind the Bill, and the draconian provisions contained in it.

Like many public speakers, he always began nervously. To overcome this, he adopted the technique of taking up the points raised by those who had preceded him. Accordingly, he began with the image that government members presented of the Trades Hall as 'a kind of Frankenstein monster'. Echoing Shakespeare's familiar discourse on prejudice, he asked the House, '...who are the men who constitute the Trades Hall and who assemble in its precincts? Are they not individuals like yourselves, with like weaknesses, like passions, and with ebbing and flowing sentiments?' In common with many other institutions, it was little more than 'a reflex of the world without, containing within itself all its goodness and its badness, its weakness and its strength'. It was not some ravenous beast intent upon devouring the body politic, but simply a place, '...to which men gather who have common sentiments and common aspirations. Many of them are probably groping in ignorance and in darkness, but they have an ideal of a better life to which they would aspire.' They had joined in common cause, not at the behest of malevolent agitators, but because the evolution of industrial forces had thrown them into a combination of mutual interests and collective action.

Replying to the government's claim that the strikers were flouting the people's will as expressed in its overwhelming parliamentary majority, Anstey drew a distinction between transient political contagions like the Reform Movement and genuine democracy where the right to dissent could be exercised 'in opposition to popular prejudice and passion'. There was a danger in supposing that an electoral landslide gave the government a mandate 'to deprive any individual of his liberty'. The present strife had resulted from its failure 'to make any clear-cut distinction between the State as an industrial organisation and the State's administration of its
The railway men were thus regarded as both strikers and rebels, and were being deprived of their rights as citizens because they were in dispute with their employer. This error of equating an industrial dispute with a direct challenge to constitutional authority had led to the 'usurpation of the rights, liberty, and privileges of the people'. The Bill before the House was a vile abuse of authority, not a defence of it. Besides, the government's parsimony and class hostility had forced the men into a position where, at great cost to themselves and their families, they had to take direct action to defend their livelihood and their liberties as common citizens. Nothing good would be achieved by the ruthless provisions contained in the Bill. As the dispute had now come to a crisis, some means must be found so that both sides could retreat with dignity because, he told the government in a ringing peroration, by brutal suppression:

You may impose the silence of peace, but beware that you do not spread abroad like a pestilence hatred and revenge, for which the country is inevitably bound to pay...Instead of promoting differences of classes, we should seek by what means the opposing forces may be brought together, and the agencies of government may be used for the common well-being. There is a curse upon the legislation that breeds hatred. Every man worthy to be a representative of the people, and who loves his country, will use every legitimate means to prevent that hatred from becoming part and parcel of the politics of this sunny south.33

Such eloquence, however, was to no avail.

Even while Anstey was speaking, negotiations to call off the strike were underway. On the afternoon of Friday 15 May the engine drivers' executive informed its rank and file of the humiliating terms on which they had agreed to return to work. During the negotiations, if they could be called that, Irvine had refused to compromise. The strike leaders would forfeit pension and compensation rights, each worker's role in the strike would be investigated before they would be considered for re-employment, four hundred jobs would be cut from the railways, and the union would disaffiliate from the Trades Hall Council. Although some of those terms were

33. _FP2_ vol. 104, 14 May 1903, pp. 126-139.
later eased, the settlement represented a total capitulation by the union. They came out of the strike in a much worse position than when they went into it.

The dispute left a number of legacies. The *Age*'s hostility to the strikers put an end to the lingering attachment that some workers had to the paper that had once seemed their only champion among the press. Divorce proceedings had been under way for some time, and Anstey pronounced the decree absolute some five months after the strike. Referring to David Syme, he told *Tocsin* readers, 'In him the qualities which are the proper subjects of hatred, and the objects which are the proper subjects of contempt, preserve an exquisite and absolute harmony.' 54 Labor's relationship with the Liberals suffered a like fate. Although there were some, including Peacock, who had voted against sections of the Bill, their general attitude towards the strike provided further evidence that the old alliance was moribund. But these were merely symptoms of a wider process that had been under way since the 1890s. The mobilisation of conservatives around the Citizens' Reform League which found such a resolute champion in Irvine, the hostility of the daily press, the attitude of the Liberals and the government's determination to humiliate the men rather than simply win the dispute, all signified that the process was complete. The class basis of Victorian party politics was now clear for all to see. The strike's most enduring legacy was precisely that which Anstey had predicted. Class hatred had indeed become 'part and parcel of the politics of this sunny south'. It seemed that the Labor Party was, at last, the worker's only true champion. It was also significant that Anstey, who during the 1890s had argued for more effective working class organisation, should rise to prominence as a Labor parliamentarian just as that process reached its climax.

His performance certainly earned him respect well beyond the ranks of the labour movement. Reporting on his speech to the House, the Melbourne *Punch* observed, 'There was a rude eloquence, a depth of pathos in it, which called from Mr.

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54 *Tocsin* 26 November 1903, p.1.
Shiels the comment "a wonderfully effective speech". The *Bulletin*, which had begun to take a close interest in his career, went even further.

Nobody's reputation was more enhanced by Vic. railway men's strike than that of Frank Anstey, Labor M.P. for East Bourke Boroughs. Unlike Dr. Maloney, he didn't stonewall Irvine's Bill; he analysed it - and that was the cruellest thing that anybody could do to it. His speech then got very close to oratory. In some respects he showed to even better advantage at the meeting where the news of surrender was given to the men. White and quivering with emotion, he sprang to the platform when a hostile demonstration against the two leaders had begun. He frankly declared that he believed they had made a mistake; but with a fine burst of rugged eloquence he pleaded with them not to be disloyal to their leaders...with brains apparently as well as a tongue, he seems marked out to take a leading place in a party not too conspicuously well-led hitherto.

The *Arena-Sun* was more succinct, 'Mr. F. Anstey threatens to become leader of the Victorian Labour Party.'

Nevertheless, the fact remained that his personal reputation had been advanced in the course of a crushing defeat for the labour movement. It was small consolation that the extraordinarily punitive Bill never entered the statute books. Its purpose had been achieved long before a final vote could be taken. Besides, the government did not need additional legislation to punish the strike leaders. It simply refused to re-employ them.

This whole sorry affair gave an added urgency to a lesson that the Labor Party already understood. They would have to increase their parliamentary strength and improve their party organisation before they could offer their supporters any real protection against the belligerence of people like Irvine. To do so they would have to meet the enemy on his home ground in the country electorates. Accordingly, Anstey and a number of his Caucus colleagues supplemented Tom Mann's rural organising tours with renewed commitment.

55. *Punch* (Melbourne), 21 May 1903, p.637.


57. *Arena-Sun* 4 June 1903, p.6.

58. For a list of the thirty-two men who were blacklisted see *Age*, 16 May 1903, p.10.
The Political Labour Council Executive recognised that they could not rely on the work of Mann alone. Reporting on a visit to Seymour, Stephen Barker told the Executive that there was widespread prejudice against Labor in the country and that organising work was necessary to improve its standing. Referring to one of Mann's regular reports on his activities, Anstey suggested that follow-up speakers be sent to the areas recently visited by their professional organiser. There was certainly ample evidence of the need for more rural work, particularly in the wake of the Reform League's spectacularly successful anti-urban campaign. League members were, with some justice, able to point out that the Labor Party was an almost exclusively metropolitan organisation with only one seat outside the Melbourne area. Even that seat, Sandhurst, was attached to the regional city of Bendigo. It was, therefore, relatively easy to depict Labor as nothing more than the voice of narrow, sectional interests centring around the Trades Hall. There was also, as McQueen has suggested, another compelling reason why Labor needed to court country votes. The success of the Federal Labor Party in the Senate rested on a state-wide constituency and if the party was to capture its maximum potential vote an extensive network of country branches would have to be established. Anstey was a prime candidate to undertake such work. He had, after all, lived and worked in the country. In his Labour Federation days he had done similar work establishing branches outside the metropolitan area. His restless 'wanderlust', theatrical platform style and determination to do well within the party presented him with a happy convergence of private inclination and political duty.

Soon after the special parliamentary session was over he set off for Geelong to join Mann on a tour of the western district. He arrived on Tuesday 2 June and

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61. McQueen, 'Victoria', op. cit., pp.308-309.
commenced work immediately. Together they addressed a crowd of more than a
thousand people that night at the Geelong skating rink. The following afternoon
Anstey spoke to a group of shop stewards on industrial issues. After another large
meeting on Wednesday evening, they left for Camperdown where they enrolled
twenty-five new members and established a branch of the Political Labour Council
(PLC). From there they moved on to Warrnambool, held a meeting in the town hall and
set up another branch. At Hamilton they conducted another meeting, but by then
Anstey had become ill after a long, wet drive from Warrnambool and had to return
home. Although it was cut short, the tour gave him his first opportunity for
sustained propaganda work alongside an acknowledged master in the art of public
speaking. It also allowed him to begin compiling notes on the question of 'closer
settlement', a policy issue for which Caucus had given him responsibility a year
earlier.

During the second half of 1903 Anstey spent considerable time on organising
tours in the mining districts between Ballarat and Bendigo. At the end of June he
visited Pitfield, Hollybush and Berringa in support of the local Laborite, Charlie
McGrath. Between August and November he made regular forays into the Castlemaine-
Chewton area, venturing as far north as Maryborough, Dunnolly and St.Arnaud on
one occasion. It made good political sense to concentrate on this part of the state,
there were many miners, railway workers and small farmers who might reasonably
be expected to give Labor speakers an attentive ear, and possibly, a vote at the next
election. Anstey did his best to ensure that his speeches were attuned to each of these
audiences. Supported by colleagues such as J.B.Tucker or Miss Lillian Locke, one of the
party's leading women activists, he would often present two different lectures at each
place. At the formal evening meeting he usually delivered an impassioned sermon on
the gospel of Labor. The second was often directed at more immediate, practical issues;

62. *Tocsin*, 11 June 1903, pp.6 and 8; 18 June 1903, pp.7 and 8.

63. *Ibid*, 2 July 1903, pp. 6 and 8; 13 August 1903, p.2; 20 August 1903, p 8; 27 August 1903, pp.2 and
8; and 3 September 1903, pp.2 and 4.
something that could be declaimed before an open air meeting or from a street corner. As he moved around this area from one speaking engagement to another, he continued to amass information on the pattern of land holdings, the railway system and general economic conditions.

During the October budget session this growing interest in economic statistics was evident in his analysis of the government’s budget papers. The main point that emerged from his long and minutely detailed examination of the figures was that Treasury’s accounting system were so complex and legalistic that it tended to obscure the true condition of the State’s finances. There could be no real improvement in public administration until that antiquated system was abolished and governments, irrespective of their political persuasion, began to collect more accurate information and organise their departments according to modern business principles. The present system’s complexity only served to encourage dishonesty such as the present government’s attempt in the budget papers to describe an actual deficit as a surplus. He supported that accusation with a number of specific examples of how he believed the figures had been juggled to produce the miraculous conversion of debt into credit. The whole point of that exercise, he alleged, was to disguise the failure of the government’s policy of economy and retrenchment. According to his interpretation of the figures, that policy had failed to produce an overall reduction in government expenditure. It had simply depressed the general level of economic activity and had exposed the poor to further suffering. Labor’s vision of a benevolent, interventionist state provided the only enduring basis for the development of a secure and productive society. While the last assertion may have fallen on deaf ears in all but his own party, his basic point about the complexity of public accounts was taken more seriously on both sides of the House. In June 1904 he was appointed to the Public

64 His lecture at the Red Hill hall at Chewton on 16 August was an example of the former. See *ibid*, 20 August 1903, p.8. His spirited denunciation of Shiels’ methods as Treasurer to meetings in the same district on 8-9 August was typical of the latter. See *ibid*, 13 August 1903, p.2.

65 *VPO*, vol.103, 13-14 October 1903, pp.567-605 *passim*.
Accounts committee of the Legislative Assembly. He remained a member of the committee until his transfer to the House of Representatives in 1910. During that period he proposed a number of reforms to simplify the collection and presentation of information to the House. Although his suggestions were generally acknowledged to be constructive, he had little success in changing the system. There may well have been an element of cynicism in his appointment to the committee. It was, at least, one way of ensuring that his embarrassingly close scrutiny of government accounts was relegated to the committee stages of parliamentary work.66

In November 1903 Irvine announced his intention to retire as Premier. Although his colleagues persuaded him to remain in office for a while longer, the combination of over-work and ill health eventually forced his resignation in February 1904.67 Anstey took the opportunity to review the legacy of 'Irvineism'. Combining his talents for robust political journalism and detailed financial analysis, he wrote a series of articles to discredit the Irvine-Shiels administration of the railways, public finance and education.68 Although there was nothing new in what he had to say - mostly restating his own or his colleagues' views expressed during the preceding year - he attempted to weave specific criticisms around one central theme. The government's obsession with 'economy' and 'efficiency' had been a complete failure. It had wrought havoc upon the railways, encouraged them to 'cook' the books on State finances and led them to try to strangle the 'noble institutions' of 'national education' without any appreciable savings to the community at large. Its whole programme was thus exposed, in Anstey's view, as hollow rhetoric inspired by mean-spirited parsimony.

66 In his speech on the 1905 budget he offered several specific suggestions to improve the public accounting system. See ibid, vol 112, 15 November 1905, pp.2741-2748 and Nugent, op. cit., pp.283-285. His developing interest in financial questions was also evident in his review of J.M.Scott's The Circulating Sovereign in Tocsin 10 November 1904.


68 Tocsin 10 March 1904, p.2; 17 March 1904, p.6; and 31 March 1904, p.2.
The 'Iceberg' was replaced by Thomas Bent, a land boom speculator who had thus far survived business collapses and scandals to become one of Victoria's most extroverted rough and tumble politicians. Under his less austere leadership, the government decided to seek a renewed mandate from the people. On 10 May, Bent announced that parliament had been dissolved and an election would be held on 1 June. It would be fought on the new electoral boundaries established by Irvine's 'constitutional reform'. Although the changes had not been as extensive as those originally sought by the Reform League, the Legislative Assembly was reduced from ninety-five to sixty-eight seats. There were thirty-nine covering rural areas, five based on country towns, twenty-one in the metropolitan area, plus the controversial three seats set aside for government employees; two for railway workers and one for public servants. The re-distribution was, in fact, a massive rural malapportionment combined with a blatant gerrymander which reflected the Reform League's view that city interests stifled even economic development throughout the state. According to Eggleston's estimate, the result was that, '...about forty-four voters in the country had the same political power as one hundred in the town'.

As was intended, this put the Labor Party in a difficult position, which Bent was quick to exploit.

The Labor party, whose aims are avowedly Socialistic, assisted by Mr Mackinnon's party, are making strenuous and determined efforts to wrest from the majority of the people and transfer to the Trades Hall the power which will enable it to exploit the affairs of the State in order to aggrandise the minority at the expense of the majority. Will you tolerate the possibility of a special class obtaining the ascendency and gratifying sectional aims to the disadvantage of the general interests of the community?

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By identifying Labor with urban socialism, Bent's manifesto highlighted the intention behind the re-distribution; to isolate the party within a metropolitan enclave. The only way that Labor could fight its way out of this trap was to increase its emphasis on rural policy and present it to country voters as a realistic alternative. Anstey, who had realised this earlier than many of his party colleagues, took a leading role in that aspect of the campaign.

Even before Bent announced the election, he published a series of articles in *Tocsin* entitled 'Land and the People'. In them he argued that neither the government nor the opposition were serious about their declared policies for 'closer settlement'. He accused the government of pursuing a confused policy in which large tracts of crown land passed into private hands while, to a lesser extent in other parts of the State, pastoral leases had been resumed by the crown. That contradictory policy had, on balance, encouraged a process of monopolisation where small agricultural holdings were swallowed up by large pastoralists. Rather than encouraging closer settlement, the net result of the process was that half the alienated land in Victoria had fallen into the hands of some four hundred individuals, families and finance companies.

Steadily the fee simple of the soil becomes the property of a few families - the agriculturalist becomes a tenant - there is a transition from a position of independent self-employment upon the soil to that of nomadic wage-earner. Land previously under crop is given back to the shepherd. The farmer is pushed back from his proximity to the centre of population by the advance of the sheep-walk. It gets between him and the market. It is an inversion of the natural order of industry. Crops pass over hundreds of miles of country devoted to the goodness of sheep; the cost of transit is multiplied; the industry languishes; the actual decline of agricultural production in this state has only been prevented by the opening out of the cheap and prolific areas of the distant mallee.

Taking the western district as an example, he claimed that many miles of railway line, constructed at public expense, passed through squatters' properties yet carried very

73. *Tocsin*, 14 April 1904, p.2; 21 April 1904, p.2; and 28 April 1904, p.2.

little freight compared to those lines which served agricultural and mining communities. Thus, through the cost of maintaining uneconomic lines, the monopolistic pastoralists were a burden on the public purse. This was compounded by the fact that they paid lower municipal rates and taxes on their land compared to farmers. Indeed, much of their land was leased from the crown and as such was not taxed at all. The resulting loss of revenue to local councils forced them to approach the state government for additional funds to make up the short-fall. Thus, the government's failure to promote closer settlement in any effective way produced a result that was contrary to its objective of 'economy' in public expenditure. That failure also denied the common people their right to work the land for the good of their families and the community as a whole.

He developed this last point during his campaign against David Methven for the new seat of Brunswick which replaced the two-member East Bourke Boroughs electorate after the redistribution. Speaking to a packed audience in the Brunswick town hall on 31 May, he expounded his views on the relationship between independence and land ownership.

Seeing that Victoria had such a huge territory with only 1,000,000 of inhabitants, then, he said, it was quite possible for every father of a family to have a home with a little patch of ground around it. (Hear, hear.) Then such a man would no longer be driven by the lash of slavery and necessity, but he would have some guarantee that he might, by his industry, raise some produce from the soil to provide those dependent on him with the necessaries of existence. (Hear, hear.) Every man and father of a family should have his own homestead and little home.75

At an earlier meeting he had explained how the Labor Party intended to bring this about through a scheme 'to tax the land in such a way as to give beneficial social and industrial results. A tax that would fall lightly on small properties, but enormously heavily on the large landholders.' Extending this concern for 'the little man' to the small, independent miner, he declared:

75. *Age* 1 June 1904, p. 8.
The first thing that was necessary was to take the bloodsucker out of the industry. Men got leases, and did not do anything on them, and then compelled the working miner to pay royalty for the privilege of working on the public lands. These men got into the inner ring of the department, and levied this tribute on the working man.76

Despite this strong emphasis on rural issues in a metropolitan electorate, Anstey won the seat by the relatively comfortable margin of 249 votes, some 8.5 per cent of the valid votes cast on 1 June.77 Perhaps it worked, not as an appeal to bread and butter issues, but by touching the urban worker's dream of becoming a sturdy, independent yeoman.

Speaking at a party rally in the Trades Hall on Saturday 4 June, he repeated the view that Labor must look to the country if it was to improve its electoral performance.

The closest attention should be paid to the agriculturalist. The country people felt that they had little portion in the platform and the Party's leaders should seriously consider in how far they may have invited such an opinion. The rural producer had claims which could not be ignored, and when once convinced of the justice and equity of the cause he would be a valiant soldier in the ranks of progress.78

There was some evidence in the election result to confirm that assertion. In the reduced Legislative Assembly the government won 37 seats, the opposition 12 and Labor 19. As expected, Labor won the three seats set aside for government employees but most of the gains were made outside the metropolitan area. There were now 5 Labor seats based in regional cities or country areas, compared with only one in the previous parliament.79 Labor's status as the leading party on the opposition side was due, in substantial part, to the exhausting programme of country organising undertaken by Tom Mann, with the support of members like Anstey. Both the Political


77. For the detailed figures see Hughes and Graham, *Voting for the Victoria Legislative*, p.39.

78. *Tocsin* 9 June 1904, p.3.

79. These figures include independents on both sides. The five regional seats were: Ballarat West, Bendigo West (replacing Sandhurst in the 1902-4 parliament), Geelong, Grenville and Maryborough. See Hughes and Graham, *A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics* pp.472-475.
Labour Council Executive and state caucus recognised this and began to formulate plans for more systematic propaganda work, especially in the country.80

The need for Labor to expand its rural organisation and develop policies attractive to country people was obvious when the new parliament assembled at the end of June and the government announced its programme. It had, after all, been swept to power at the two previous elections on a carefully manipulated tide of rural populism. It had established a rural malapportionment and now proposed a legislative programme with a strong bias towards regional development. The Governor's speech promised that the crown would acquire land from private owners in areas close to centres of population as well as the more remote parts of the state to assist closer settlement. Provision would also be made for poorer people to select small holdings in irrigated areas. This would be complemented by an extended programme of water conservation and irrigation works. The production and marketing of food would be encouraged by a reorganisation of the department of agriculture and a programme of harbour works that would enable larger ships to enter Port Phillip Bay and carry the state's produce to other markets. The government claimed that it had made economies in the administration of the railways which meant that its interest bill had been reduced. This would enable it to cut income tax. The Factory Act was, at last, to become a permanent statute. The management of state forests would be changed to help develop the timber industry, Mining Bills would be presented to improve safety and give more secure tenure on leases to 'encourage the investment of capital'.81

Anstey, whose organising tours had taken him into several mining districts, was sceptical of the benevolent effects which the kind of investment that the government envisaged would have on the industry. Speaking to the Mines Acts Further Amendment Bill, he cited numerous examples where speculative capital had tied up mining leases and effectively prevented them from being worked. The


problem was that the whole system of administration only encouraged unproductive speculation by allowing companies to be floated on the London market where the promoters pocketed most of the subscribed capital and only used a small portion, if any, in developing the lease. Not content with this, many of them subdivided their leases into smaller allotments and let them out to individual miners who had to pay the promoters a tribute for the right to work on crown land. This system had a number of effects. The genuine inveser who subscribed his savings to these companies rarely got any return on his money. There was, as a result, a growing reluctance among investors to risk their capital in the industry. The government, by not enforcing the existing labour covenants which required that leases be actually worked as mines, effectively endorsed this practice and now proposed to substitute them with a money covenant. This would ensure that the 'mining shark' remained supreme and the small, independent miner continued to be locked out of the industry. If the government was serious about its policy of state development it should enforce the labour covenant and restore to the people their right to mine crown land free from the predations of speculators who had influence with the Minister of Mines. Only then would the auriferous areas of Victoria be worked, productive investment encouraged and prosperity restored to an industry which might again enrich the state and its people.\(^{82}\)

Articles on the land question in *Tocsin*, speeches to metropolitan electors about a homestead for every family and arguments in the House about the parlous state of the mining industry were all very well but they were, by and large, directed at the wrong audiences. If they were to have the desired effect of increasing Labor's rural vote, they would have to be taken directly to country people. Accordingly, Anstey and the newly-elected Member for Grenville, Charles McGrath, wrote to the Political Labour Council Executive proposing that they conduct an organising tour of north eastern Victoria. The Executive gave its approval and a rough itinerary was worked

\(^{82}\) *VPL* vol 107, 16 August 1904, pp.910-922.
out. They would begin at Rutherglen and work their way across the mountains to Bairnsdale, taking Labor's message to the isolated farming and mining communities, and establishing branches wherever possible.\(^{83}\)

With their swags and bicycles stowed in the guard's van, they caught the train to Rutherglen on 11 November. They opened their campaign the following day with a meeting of some 600 people organised by the local branch of the Political Labour Council in the Rutherglen Park. McGrath warmed up the audience with a speech exhorting the faithful to play a more active role in party work and not be content to 'let the few fight the battle of the many'. Anstey, the more seasoned campaigner, was the star attraction. However, he resisted the temptation to treat them to one of his stirring sermons on the gospel of Labor. Bearing in mind the principal objective of the tour, he confined himself to rural issues that were of immediate interest to his audience; the Mines Act and the land question. He spoke at length about the iniquities of the government's administration of mining in the state, repeating similar views to those delivered to parliament three months earlier. Mindful that the Reform Movement had been very successful in depicting the Labor Party as a threat to private property, particularly in the country, he went on the point out that, rather than confiscate private land, Labor proposed to increase substantially the number of landowners so that ever man who wished to do so might have a 'stake in the country'.

Having reassured the good citizens of Rutherglen that Labor really was on the side of the small country man, they were driven around the district by their hosts after which they rode their bikes to Chiltern and caught the train for Wodonga. From there they moved across to Tallangat...
way to make contact with friendly locals. On the stretch between Mitta Mitta and Granite Flat the going began to get tough, reminding them that they were, indeed, engaged on pioneering work in the Labor cause. The aptly named Snowy Creek, swollen by melting snow from the mountains, presented them with their first obstacle. They had to wade across its chest-high, icy water three times carrying, in turn, their swags, clothes and bicycles. Between Lightning Creek and Mount Willis their gear again became a burden. The track, rising some 3,000 feet in twelve miles, forced them to do more pushing than riding. Their exertions, however, were rewarded when they finally made it to Sunnyside and Glen Willis where the owners, managers and ‘wages men’ of both mining communities gave them a ‘right royal reception’. Well attended meetings were held in both places and two new Political Labour Council branches established. By this stage Anstey and McGrath were becoming accustomed to the rigors of mountain travel and so decided to take the cross-country route to Benambra which allowed them to marvel at the rugged beauty of the mountains, the high plains and, as they approached their destination, Lake Omeo. At Benambra they again reported a ‘splendid reception’ followed by a crowded meeting that went on late into the night. The next day they were driven to Omeo by a member of the miners’ union. The arrival of two MPs was regarded as an important occasion by the residents of Omeo. A meeting, chaired by the local Presbyterian minister, was arranged in the shire hall. A branch of the Political Labour Council was set up and, as an expression of non-partisan hospitality, Anstey and McGrath were treated to a smoke night in their honour the following evening. News of their presence spread quickly throughout the district and they were soon caught up in a hectic round of receptions and public meetings at Cassilis, Tongio, Swifts Creek, Ensay, Stirling and Tambo Crossing. However, they were not always greeted with the same warm hospitality that they had enjoyed in Omeo. At a meeting with farmers in the Ensay area McGrath locked horns with a local squatter who declined their invitation to attend the evening meeting, fearing that he might not be able to control himself and become violent. Although they offered to ‘mix it’, he did not attend and the meeting proved to be entirely
congenial. But political opponents were not the only danger, as Anstey discovered on the way to Bruthen when his 'bike got away on one of the steep grades, with the result that he was laid out for several hours'. Blazing a trail for Labor propaganda in that part of the country, it seems, was indeed a perilous task. If the squatters did not get them, the topography did. Although Anstey suffered no lasting injury, the accident, combined with a misunderstanding about the venue for their meeting in Bruthen, caused them to miss the engagement and the chance to start another branch. By that stage, however, they had run out of time and had to hurry on to Bairnsdale where they caught the train back to Melbourne.84

Despite these misfortunes in the latter stages, the tour was a remarkable effort. During their twenty-one day trek through some of the most difficult country in Victoria they had addressed fourteen meetings in isolated towns and settlements, established contact with a network of sympathisers in areas where Labor members had not been before and set up a number of party branches, even though some proved to be ephemeral.85 But beyond these more practical results, they had proved themselves true apostles of the cause, taking the gospel of Labor into new territory and giving it a voice where its opponents had previously gone unchallenged. It was both a propaganda success and yet another sign of the party's determination to broaden its electoral base.

When the Bulletin of 26 January 1905 declared that Labor was, despite its pretensions, a city party 'pure and simple', Anstey replied through the pages of Tocsin with accustomed vigor. He readily acknowledged that Labor had begun as a city party but pointed out, quite reasonably, that all parties had to begin somewhere.

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84 For reports on the tour see Tocsin, 24 November 1904, p.3; 1 December 1904, p.8; 8 December 1904, p.3; and 15 December 1904, p.6. The reports inspired one reader to propose the formation of a labourite cycling club based on the English model of the Clarion clubs. See Tocsin, 22 December 1904, p.1. Despite the apparent success of the tour, the Executive was rather tardy in granting the £8 which Anstey and McGrath claimed as expenses. See PLC Executive Minutes, op. cit., 21 January 1905; 4 February 1905; and 29 April 1905.

85. Tocsin, 15 December 1904, p.6 and 12 January 1905, p.8. One of the branches, Glen Willis, nominated Anstey as its delegate to the 1905 PLC Conference. See ibid., 27 April 1905, p.1.
However, despite the difficulties of finance, organisation and a hostile daily press, it was making significant headway in the country. At the last election it had dramatically increased its number of non-metropolitan seats. Through the 'energy of the fighting members of the party' its share of the rural vote in other seats was steadily rising. The party's platform and its performance in parliament gave ample evidence of its concern for country issues such as water conservation, rural credit and the land question. By ignoring all this, the Bulletin's 'literary Sore Head' had simply made a liar of himself.86 And, as if to emphasise the point, Anstey made two further organising trips to Gippsland in February and March 1905.87

His gradual emergence as Labor's leading spokesman on rural issues culminated in a series of articles which were provoked by a similar incident. During a speech at the 1905 Eight Hours demonstration George Prendergast, Labor's newly-elected state parliamentary leader, referred to the decline of farm holdings in Victoria. When the Age dismissed the claim as 'wholly inaccurate', Anstey sprung to his leader's defence with a series of ten articles, published intermittently in Tocsin between July 1905 and June 1906.88 Drawing on his extensive knowledge of rural Victoria built up during organising tours, an obsession with detailed statistical analysis and a relentless determination to crush his opponents beneath the weight of evidence, he wrote them to expose the ill-effects of land monopolisation which was already well advanced in Victoria. They were subsequently published as a book by Tocsin's successor Labor Call late in 1906 under the title Monopoly and Democracy: The Land Question of Victoria.89

86. Ibid, 2 February 1905, p.7.


88. The articles, many of which were accompanied by maps, appeared ibid, 13 July 1905, p.5; 20 July 1905, p.5; 27 July 1905, p.5; 3 August 1905, p.3; 10 August 1905, p.3; 17 August 1905, p.5; 24 August 1905, p.5; 3 May 1906, p.3; 10 May 1906, p.3; and 28 June 1906, p.4.

89. It was almost certainly published some time after 2 November 1906 when the paper changed names.
The short answer to his central question, 'Is it true that during the last quarter of a century farm holdings have declined in this state?', was the same as he had given in the shorter series of articles published in April 1904.

The mammoth holdings dominate the older districts. They push settlement into the back country. They are an impediment to industrial progress - raise the cost of transit upon producers and the price of commodities to consumers - retard development, limit the financial resources of municipalities, and impose in a variety of ways a heavy monetary burden upon the general community.90

Although he was willing to admit that a process of aggregation in the manufacturing or agricultural industries might lead to greater output through economies of scale, his main concern was that the resulting tendency towards monopoly would have a number of undesirable effects on the economic development and social welfare of the people of Victoria.

Beginning with the counties of Hampden, Ripon and Grenville, he argued that between 1871 and 1904 there had been a decline in population, the number of holdings and the acreage under cultivation, despite a rise in the overall area of land in private hands.91 The same was true for the counties of Bourke and Grant where declining population and farm holdings:

...present us with the spectacle of a steadily increasing area of production side by side with a diminishing number of agricultural properties, increase of casual labourers and a disappearing yeomanry. Aggregation is marching, farm is being joined to farm, and the expropriation of the small farmer may and does proceed side by side with an increase of the area utilised for the production of agricultural wealth.92

In the Western District the position was even worse. The process of monopolisation had not only led to depopulation and a reduction in the area of fertile land under cultivation, it had also produced a substantial rise in the price of land, making it all the more difficult for farmers to buy even small properties. These increased land


91 Ibid, pp.1-3.

values were largely due to the fact that large sums of public money had been spent building ports, harbours and railway lines which provided excellent transport facilities throughout the region. However, as more and more of this land was being used for sheep grazing, little use was made of the railways which ran at a loss, thus forcing taxpayers throughout the state to bear the burden of interest payments on the public loans raised to build them. This meant that:

...so long as Parliament refuses to impose a tax upon landed monopoly, so long must Railways Commissioners impose upon growers of produce throughout the agricultural regions a higher freight charge than would otherwise be necessary.93

Following an analysis of the comparative profitability of different lines in the Western District, he argued that:

Under existing conditions the man who holds the most land and puts it to the least use, contributes the least in taxation, and the least to the upkeep of the railways. The more the agriculturalist or the dairy farmer labours, the more he produces, the more he contributes to the railways and the Income Tax. High railway freight, necessitated by non-paying lines in sheep carrying country, is a land tax, imposed NOT upon the value of the land, but upon the industry of the occupier, and the wealth produced.94

Pastoral monopoly was, therefore, not only a cost to the public purse in revenue foregone but also a burden on the more productive agriculturalist. Idle capital was, in fact, being subsidised by productive labour via the agency of the state.

According to Anstey, there was another kind of monopoly which, while economically efficient, was socially damaging. The share farming system, whereby the monopolist bought up small agricultural holdings but did not want to convert them into a large sheep run and so rented them to small farmers in return for a share of their income, at least had the virtues of keeping agricultural land under cultivation and maintaining rural population. That system, however, only served to enrich the totally idle landholder who received income without either work or worry. Moreover, the high productivity of these consolidated holdings increased the value of

the land to a price which kept the small, independent farmer out of the market. The end result was a socially backward step:

It is the modernisation of the old feudal system. It is the localisation in the new world of the iniquitous land system of the old. Note then, that not only are farm holdings diminishing in number, but that there is going on a rapid transition of the agricultural producers from a freeholding Yeomanry into agricultural tributors and tenants.95

Thus were the common people denied freedom and independence on the land.

Anstey acknowledged that the existing Victorian land tax had, when first levied in 1877, been designed to break up the large estates and encourage closer settlement. He claimed, however, that for a number of reasons it had been a failure. Because it was not a graduated tax its incidence per acre was the same on both large and small properties and so did nothing to discourage aggregation. On the contrary, many large landholders had secured from successive governments a progressive reduction of the classification of their properties on the tax scale so that they paid less and less as the years passed. Others avoided liability by having their estates exempted under separate provisions of the Act. Some of those who did pay found that the financial benefits of cheap transport provided by adjacent railways offset their tax burden. Still others avoided it by letting portions of their land to share farmers whose rent covered the tax bill and, at the same time, gave the appearance of closer settlement which masked the process of monopolisation. By these and other subterfuges the business of land aggregation had gone unchecked so that '550 individuals, families, or corporations own one half of the alienated land of Victoria'.96

All of this, in Anstey's view, was compelling evidence of the need to implement Labor's rural policies which had, as their centre-piece, a graduated tax on unimproved land values.

Therefore is required taxation based upon land values, because such mode of basing contributions to the general 'exchequer' is not a tax upon industry, but upon monopoly. It brings to an end the monopolist


96. Ibid, pp.18-21.
power of exclusion, and opens the door of opportunity to other men. It replaced the sheepwalk with homesteads. It calls for the work of the artisan to develop a home market. It stimulates not the exodus, but the advent of people. With more people the tax per head is less, while the general revenue is more. It penalises idleness, and stimulates production. Multiplied production increases railway freight, piles up the iron road revenues, and, as the railways are for the public service, and not private profit, railway charges may be diminished as the volume of traffic rises. Facilities may thus be extended without extended loans. Such are some of the inevitable consequences of a contributory system, that calls upon a man to pay for the upkeep of his country in proportion as he owns it.97

This apparently simple answer to the problem of landed monopoly had a long history which stretched back, by a circuitous route, as far as the French physiocrats of the eighteenth century. In the Australian colonies the long political campaign to 'unlock the lands' had preoccupied radicals and reformers in the years following the 1850s gold rushes. It was most clearly expressed in the 1857-60 Land Convention in Melbourne.98 The Duffy and Robertson land acts, which arose from the struggle between an aristocratic conception of society based on large scale land ownership and the radical ideal of equality of opportunity, had not fulfilled their promise of 'independence on the land'.99 In the 1880s and 1890s radicals came up with a multitude of ideas, most of which centred around two main proposals; land nationalisation which involved perpetual government ownership with individuals taking out crown leases, or private ownership subjected to heavy taxation.100 During this period, 1886 in fact, Anstey copied a verse into his commonplace book which suggested an early interest in the radical ideal. The chorus was:

Yet millions of hands want acres
While millions of acres want hands.101

97 Ibid, p 35.


99 Robin Gollan, Radical and Working Class Politics chapter 2.

100 Craufurd D.W.Goodwin, Economic Enquiry in Australia chapter 4.

101 Commonplace book, op cit, pp 57-58. He quoted it again in Tocsin 13 July 1905 when the first of his 'Monopoly and Democracy' articles appeared.
Like many other radicals of the period, he had taken an interest in Henry George's writings, copying a passage from *Social Problems* into the same book. When the Labor Party, which had inherited the ideal of 'independence on the land', came to formulate a policy it found George's single tax the more congenial option. His panacea had an established and wide-spread appeal that was both simple and direct. As such it could be easily explained yet permitted an almost infinite variety of interpretations around the central theme. Moreover, it had the additional benefit of being compatible with parliamentary politics. An Act could be passed and a tax levied, but in such a way as to allow for the inevitable compromises that would be necessary to get it through. It was also, in accordance with Labor's broad strategy, a policy which gave the state an interventionist role in shaping the direction of economic development in a cautious, pragmatic way while, at the same time, keeping faith with the egalitarian ideal that lay behind it. That was the kind of policy that Anstey was arguing for in *Monopoly and Democracy*.

However, the book provided more than a simple exposition of the evidence in favour of his party's policy on land ownership, although that was its main purpose. He also offered a number of detailed proposals for the economic development of Victoria which took account of the topography and natural resources of each region within the state. In Gippsland, for example, he suggested the expansion of the railway network or, in the more difficult terrain that he and McGrath had traversed, the building of 'nationalised' roads, that is, those constructed and maintained by the state rather than local government. This would open up hitherto inaccessible areas, first to the timber industry and later to mining and homestead settlement. Taking up an idea raised by Thomas Bent some time earlier, he also suggested that the Snowy, Tambo and Bemm rivers be harnessed to produce hydro-electricity as a source of power for both industry and transport in the region. Referring to a proposed rail link between the

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port of Geelong and existing lines serving the Western District, he suggested that land on either side of the line could be resumed by the crown and sold in small holdings. In that way, the higher price that the land would bring because of its proximity to the railway could be used to defray the cost of construction. Thus fertile land would be opened up to agriculture without any detrimental effect on the carrying capacity of existing grazing properties in the area.\textsuperscript{104}

These specific proposals, however, were merely part of a more general strategy which he had in mind for how the state should be developed. He envisaged a more systematic approach to 'socialised settlement' where transport and other facilities would be properly planned and constructed, but only after careful scientific research had been conducted to establish the true potential of the area. That having been done, there would then be careful regulation of who could buy and develop land, special care being taken to prevent the entry of speculators and monopolists into the market. The primary objective remained 'closer settlement'. All this would be planned and supervised by a new form of unified regional administration, free from the inter-departmental rivalries of centralised government and tailored to the specific needs of each region. It was a practical, business-like scheme inspired by a wider vision for the future.

The old order is touched with decay, and is doomed to extinction. Ever more coherently and cohesively the democracy demands that modern Governments shall be more of industrial directorates, and less mere policemanised States, symbolising the supremacy of Money Bags and Soil Monopolists. It demands a democratised industry - a consideration of the means by which men live, upon the proper conduct of which depends social well-being and general happiness.\textsuperscript{105}

It was also a politically astute attempt to widen Labor's rural constituency. His principal theme throughout the book was an exploration of how land monopolisation had systematically dispossessed the small farmers of Victoria. It was precisely those

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid. pp.47-48.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid. pp.37-39. Although it bore no direct relevance to the rest of the book, Anstey included a chapter on the 'Decline of Drink and Crime in Victoria'. This was because of his involvement in the debate over the Licensing Bill at the time they were going to press. See \textit{FPD}, vol.113, 30 August 1906, pp.1280-1282 and chapter 5 below.
people who had to be won over to the Labor cause if the party was to break out of the metropolitan enclave in which Irvine and Bent had so neatly isolated it. The Reform Movement had succeeded in convincing country electors that the main source of their difficulties was to be found in the city where the urban malaise of ‘state socialism’ had been spawned by an unholy alliance between the Liberals, the Labor Party, the Trades Hall and the public service. Anstey’s political point in *Monopoly and Democracy* was to offer them an alternative populism with a different villain, the large landholders who had manipulated the agencies of state to expand their wealth and power at the expense of the ‘little man’. But the state need not be an enemy of country people. In the hands of the Labor Party it could become their champion in the struggle with pastoral capital for a secure future of ‘independence on the land’. The state under Labor administration would cease to be a mere ‘policemanised’ apparatus designed to maintain the ‘supremacy of Money bags and Soil Monopolists’. It would become, instead, a set of rationally organised, democratic agencies dedicated to the ‘social well-being and general happiness’ of its citizens. The principal means of achieving this would be Labor’s policy of ‘closer settlement’ which would return the land to the people and the people to the land. The great pastoral estates would be gradually replaced by small homesteads. Fertile soil would be turned from grazing to cultivation, agricultural output would rise, the rural population increase and income, along with the burden of taxation, would be spread more evenly. The common man would thus come to have ‘a stake in the country’ where, with the encouragement of a benevolent state, he might provide his family with the simple necessities of life and a certain measure of frugal comfort. Content in his pursuit of this modest ambition, the small yeoman farmer would become a bulwark of political democracy in the countryside and a tangible expression of economic equality on the land.

In placing the independent small farmer at the centre of Victorian Labor’s rural policy Anstey was drawing on an established radical populist tradition that had
worked very effectively for the party in the past and in other States. He provided an enduring ideal as the basis for country campaigning. It was a symbol, moreover, which not only carried distant echoes of his Devonish ancestry, but also encapsulated two of the main preoccupations of his political career so far: political liberty and economic democracy.

Anstey and McGrath on their organising tour of Gippsland in 1904.
By 1906 Anstey's reputation as a leading propagandist, both on the platform and in print, was well established. After his speech on the Strike Suppression Bill he was being acknowledged as one of Labor's most promising parliamentary orators. There were some, in fact, who marked him down as a future leader. Readers of *Tocsin* had come to appreciate his vigorous, combatative style of journalism. Electors throughout the State had seen and heard him during his extensive organising tours. He was one of the party's most visible members; widely recognised and much sought after. His reputation was such that, when the Tasmanian Labor Party decided to make a determined effort during the March 1906 State election, Anstey was one of the mainland politicians invited to join the campaign.¹

Like their Victorian counterparts, the Tasmanians had been isolated within a small electoral enclave; in this case the west coast mining areas around Mt. Lyell, Queenstown and Zeehan. Their poor representation in the House of Assembly reflected a weak organisational base and a lack of effective co-ordination with the unions. They had only three of the thirty-five lower house seats. Realising that a good election result could generate sufficient momentum to make the party an effective force in Tasmanian politics, they sought help from their mainland comrades who responded with an impressive array of political talent. Dr. Maloney, King O'Malley, W. G. Spence, J. C. Watson and Senator O'Keefe came from the Commonwealth Parliament. Anstey and Billson led the Victorian contingent, supported by Coneybeer and Roberts from South

¹ Although his reputation as a campaigner would have been sufficient to recommend him, he may have been suggested by Lillian Locke who, before she married the Labor MHA George Burns and moved to Queenstown and, in 1907 to Charters Towers, had worked with Anstey on organising tours in central Victoria. For a brief account of Locke's career as a champion of working women see Betty Serle, *Silk and Calico: Class, Gender and the Vote*, Sydney, Hale and Iremonger, 1988, pp. 39-38.
Australia, and Albert Wilson from Western Australia. Since Labor was contesting thirteen seats compared with only five at the 1903 election, the assistance of these 'perambulating philanthropists', as the conservative Hobart *Mercury* called them, was particularly welcome. Each was assigned to a particular electorate where it was thought that their background and special talents would be best received by the voters. Anstey and Roberts, both ex-seamen and wharf labourers, were sent to Hobart where, in conjunction with O'Keefe and Coneybeer, they embarked on a hectic programme of meetings and rallies. On each occasion the specifics of Labor policy were left to the local candidate. The visitors were expected to address themselves to the wider, more philosophical issues. Anstey did just that in a speech to a large meeting of waterside workers at the Argyle Street Pier on 26 March. Taking up a familiar theme, he told them that the Labor Party's policy was 'national in character, and not in the interests of any one class'. It aimed to legislate for the welfare of the people who, in other States, had come to appreciate its efforts on their behalf. Tasmanian workers should recognise that by making a united effort they could return Labor members who would assert the same principles here as had been found so beneficial in the other States.' He went on to point out that the Labor Party was created by the unions and 'that unionism alone had obtained better conditions for waterside workers in Australia'. As far as the workers were concerned Labor was the only political stable with any form and they would be well advised to back a winner because, 'Whenever a Labor man had gained a seat, the seat had never subsequently been lost to the party.'

Although this was not generally true, as the party's experience in New South Wales during the 1890s had shown, the Tasmanian electorate made it appear so on this occasion. Labor increased its parliamentary numbers from three to seven, with one independent labour candidate also elected. Anstey and his fellow 'perambulating

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philanthropists' had satisfied the hopes of their hosts. They had helped secure a more solid base for Labor in Tasmanian politics.4

Labor's plan to build a strong national party on sound organisational foundations in the States imposed heavy demands on the time and energy of its most effective workers. Little more than a month after the Tasmanian campaign Anstey was back on the hustings supporting John McNeill in a Victorian by-election for the Legislative Assembly seat of Glenelg. This time, however, the prospects were not so bright. The PLC sent Anstey, Elmslie, Fisher and Prendergast into the fray, more to show the flag outside the metropolitan area than in confident expectation of victory. As Mann, Anstey, McGrath and others had shown, enlarging Labor's constituency meant that they had to maintain a presence throughout the whole State whenever an opportunity presented itself. It was a long-term job that demanded a lot of hard, slogging work among largely unreceptive voters. The by-election was part of that more general strategy and so nobody was surprised when McNeill was soundly defeated by Campbell, the Ministerialist candidate.5

The hectic round of electioneering, organising, journalism, parliamentary duties and general party work seems to have taken a toll on Anstey's none-too-robust health. In the middle of June he was confined to bed for a couple of weeks. Although the exact nature of the illness is not clear, it appears to have been part of a recurring pattern for much of his life. It may have been, as Nugent has suggested, a form of 'nervous exhaustion' induced by the work load and aggravated by the frenetic pace at which he tackled all his activities. However, it is possible that his bouts of illness may have been associated with some chronic disorder such as malaria contracted while he was in the tropics.

4. For reports of Anstey's part in the campaign see ibid, 26 March 1906, p.6; 27 March 1906, p.6 and 28 March 1906, p.6. See also Tocsin 29 March 1906, p.1 and 5 April 1906, p.4. For general background on the development of the Tasmanian Labor Party at this stage see Davis, op. cit., pp. 404-407 and Patrick Weller, 'Tasmania' in Loveday, Martin and Parker (eds.), The Emergence of the Australian Party System, pp 363-371. Anstey's view on the Victorian Licensing Bill in August 1906 may have been formed in part by Tasmanian Labor's policy on the 'drink question' which proposed state ownership and the local option. See Davis, op. cit., p. 406.

5. Age 3 May 1906, p.5; Tocsin 24 May 1906, p.8; and Hughes and Graham. Voting for the Victoria Legislative Assembly, p.98.
was a seaman in the tropics. But whatever the cause, on this occasion it was sufficiently serious for him to take a trip north to convalesce. On 22 June he caught the Sydney train, supposedly to go to Queensland. Although there is no evidence that he got that far, he did spend some time 'taking the waters' at the health resort of Moree. While there he found time to write to his Tocsin colleagues in praise of the town's mineral water and suggesting that it be promoted as a resort to rival those in New Zealand where many Australians went in search of a 'cure'.

It is not clear whether taking Moree's waters had any effect, but he seems to have recovered his strength fairly quickly. By 11 July he had returned to Melbourne and was on his feet in the House calling for an enquiry into the government's administration of the Mines Department. If there were any lingering doubts about his recovery after that, they would have been dispelled two weeks later when he addressed a motion which proposed to congratulate Irvine for his service to the people of Victoria on the occasion of his retirement from the House. Anstey gave a vintage performance which opened with an amendment:

That all the words after the word 'sincere' be struck out with the view of inserting 'pleasure, and desire to notify him that it is our intention to present him with a framed copy of the Coercion Bill of 1903, and sincerely hope that when he gazes upon it, it will do him good.' Watt thought that it was in poor taste and asked the Speaker to rule it out of order. Bent thought it would be more appropriate to add a photograph of Anstey to the presentation. The Speaker allowed the amendment to stand and Anstey continued:

... however strongly I might have thought at one time, it is utterly impossible for me to be very angry at the present juncture, though I have tried to fit myself for the occasion by depriving myself of both

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6 Nugent, op. cit, pp 292-93; Tocsin 28 June 1906, p 3 and 5 July 1906, p 3.

7 VPB vol 113, 11 July 1906, pp 249-59. The speech took up many of the points he had made about the mining industry two years earlier.

8 Irvine, however, was not retiring from politics. At the December 1906 federal election he won the House of Representatives seat of Flinders.

9 VPB vol 113, 24 July 1906, p 481.
dinner and tea so as to work up a little vindictiveness if I could. But I am ... full of forgiveness and of broad Christian charity. Despite his determination to be charitable, it was not long before the want of a good meal got the better of him. He told the House that Irvine 'carried into everything he touched such bitterness, such vindictiveness, and such cruelty, that it marked him out as something different from the great bulk of his fellow members'. He recalled a number of incidents in the ex-Premier's career which, he alleged, were characterised by a singular meanness of spirit. The outstanding example was Irvine's remorseless hostility towards the railway strikers of 1903:

... and how can we be asked to be forgiving and charitable, and not bear malice, when this man, month after month, year after year, pursued with terrible vindictiveness the men he had got beneath his heel.

He went on to suggest that, as Irvine was about to enter a federal election campaign, it would be an act of cynical partisanship for the House to congratulate him on his 'public service'. It would, moreover, be rank hypocrisy because the House now proposed to repeal the Separate Representation Act, the one measure which above all others distinguished his tenure as Premier. Anstey could not bring himself to congratulate 'a bloodless wolf, whose dry throat rattles, a myriad vipers tangled into one'. But while he recalled a bitter campaign three years ago, another volatile issue was building up steam in Lonsdale Street.

On 13 May 1906 an expectant crowd gathered in the Melbourne Wesley Church to hear the prominent Methodist lay preacher William Henry Judkins declare righteous war on that embodiment of social evil, John Wren. After a preliminary

10. Ibid
11. Ibid, p. 482. He was referring to the blacklisted railway workers.
12. Ibid, p. 483. He was quoting Shelley on Lord Castlereagh. Having made his point, he withdrew the amendment.
skirmish between the Rev. Edgar and Senator Dawson, who had been accused of having a connection with Wren, Judkins opened hostilities. He took the large attendance as evidence 'of the rebellion of the people against the evils of gambling and prize fighting'. Referring to a recent bout at the Exhibition Buildings where Wren's protege Bill Squires had defeated Tim Murphy for an Australian title, Judkins deplored the spectacle of '10,000 people looking at two men trying to batter each other out of recognition'. He was not against the manly art of self-defence. What he found alarming was that Wren's gambling interests, particularly the Collingwood Tote which harboured known criminals, had entered into this and so many other popular pastimes that, 'It was one of the curses of today that they could scarcely have any sport without gambling.' Boxing, horse racing and even billiards had been corrupted. It was an iniquity which Wren had tried to disguise by making large donations to charity and so present himself as a public benefactor. In a mood of suitably righteous indignation, the meeting passed a resolution to register its protest against charitable institutions receiving money from 'any source whatever when it is clear that it is the result of anything that degrades the people'. They also urged the government to take immediate action to suppress the Collingwood Tote and make prize fighting illegal.¹⁴

There was, of course, nothing new in this. Christian social reformers, or 'wowsers' as less virtuous citizens were wont to call them, had campaigned for many years against the 'evils' inherent in sport and gambling, smoking and drinking, dancing, the theatre, 'impure thoughts' and 'demoralising literature'. Judkins was simply the latest in a long line of evangelical preachers who believed that 'clean living', as an outward sign of Christian virtue, was the community's only defence against social degeneration. There were many poor souls who, tempted by a multitude of social evils, had slid from the path of righteousness into the pit of sin and ruin. It was the duty of all true Christians to protect them from such a fate. Where evangelical

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¹⁴ *Age* 14 May 1906, p. 7.

persuasion had failed to secure religious conversion and moral regeneration, the state would have to step in to save people from their own weakness by eliminating the abundant opportunities for sin. Thus, in the last resort, the state rather than individual conscience would become the community's moral guardian.15

Nor was there anything new in attempts to close Wren's Tote. Since opening in the early 1890s it had survived attacks from several quarters. Local reformers had manned pickets. It had been denounced from numerous pulpits. Press campaigns, most notably from the Argus, were directed against 'the gambling mania - a reign of terror'. There were various attempts to legislate it out of existence, including Isaac Isaac's bill in 1898 which only failed to pass by one vote. The police had raided it on many occasions, with varying degrees of enthusiasm. They almost succeeded with their occupation of the premises in 1903-4. But despite its many assailants, the Tote survived, enduring only temporary interruptions to normal business.

Wren's detractors have attributed its survival to a combination of political influence, bribery, violence and astute manipulation by his legal adviser, David Gaunson. Wren's supporters, on the other hand, claimed that it survived because it provided working class punters, who could not get to a racecourse, the opportunity for a 'flutter', while the rich were able to bet in the sanctity of their city clubs, safe from the disapproving gaze of moral reformers and unmolested by zealous policemen. Wren's Tote, however, was only the centrepiece in an extensive network of sporting interests that touched most areas of working class recreational culture. He was a self-made man who accumulated his money among the people of his own class, and in deference to their traditions, was supposedly quick to help a distressed family or do a small favour. He was also a prominent Catholic of Irish ancestry making his fortune on the fringes of a city ruled by an Anglo-Protestant ascendancy. There was, in fact, both a class and a sectarian dimension to Judkins' attack on the 'workingman's Tote',

and its owner's support for predominantly Catholic charities. But even within his working class 'constituency', Wren's activities did not command universal approval.

There were many inner suburban people who knew only too well how drink and gambling could undermine an already precarious family economy. For many 'respectable' working class people, the wowsers had a point and deserved encouragement.

Although the Tote had survived numerous attacks in the previous decade, the campaign of 1906 was its greatest challenge. Judkins was no ordinary wowser politely deploiring the social evils to which the working class seemed congenitally prey. He was a zealot, utterly determined to root out the cancer that gnawed at the moral fibre of Victorian society. His campaign gained momentum from the existing public concern about the apparent links between drink and gambling, crime, violence and official corruption. In 1905 George Swinburne, Minister for Agriculture and Water Supply in the Bent government, had revived the long-standing wowser campaign for the reform of the liquor trade. The temperance movement followed him with alacrity. They pressed for the local option, allowing communities to petition for the closure of public houses in their area when it could be proved that particular 'pubs' were improperly conducted or that there were more than the statutory number of establishments in one district. The strength of wowserish opinion grew in January 1906 when the bombing of Detective Sergeant O'Donnell's house was widely

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16 Dunstan, *Wowsers* pp. 221-36 remains the most interesting popular account. Frank Hardy, *Power Without Glory*, Melbourne, the author, 1950 provides the most widely-read depiction of Wren's activities. Written in the genre of socialist realism, it is a fictionalised attempt to expose the degree to which the Labor Party in particular, and bourgeois democracy in general, could be corrupted by a character like 'John West'. One of the few interesting and scholarly pieces on Wren is Chris McConville, 'John Wren: Machine Boss, Irish Chieftan or Meddling Millionaire?', *Labour History*, no. 40, May 1981.

17 For a stimulating article on this point see Janet McCalman, 'Class and respectability in a working-class suburb: Richmond, Victoria, before the Great War', *Historical Studies*, vol. 20, no. 78, April 1982.


interpreted as an attempt to intimidate the incorruptible policeman who had led the occupation of Wren's Tote.\(^{20}\) Only five weeks after his initial attack on Wren, Judkins' indefatigable campaigning had generated sufficient popular support for him to muster a demonstration of some five thousand citizens to petition Bent for some decisive action on illegal gambling. Impressed by the size of the demonstration, and by the fact that it contained representatives from many respectable organisations, the Premier duly announced that a bill would be prepared to ensure 'clean sport'.\(^{21}\) With Judkins in the lead, the moral reformers were poised for their greatest victory. The state, by means of the Licensing Bill and the Gaming Suppression Bill, would soon acknowledge its role as the moral guardian of a wayward citizenry. However, before either bill was debated, an incident at Flemington racecourse prompted a series of events that brought Anstey into direct opposition to the wowsers.

On Saturday 14 July, the day of the Grand National Steeplechase, an inept bookmaker named Donald 'Big Mick' McLeod neglected to lay off his bets when there was strong backing for the favourites in the first two races. Both won and 'Big Mick' was unable to pay out. All he was able to offer the irate punters was their stake money and a promise that he would hand over their winnings on Monday, at the front of Wren's Tote. When the favourite romped home in the Grand National he made the same promise. By then, however, his clients were in no mood for such a dubious offer. In a more than usually vigorous expression of the low regard that punters have for bookmakers, a mob set upon him. While attempting to escape, he was knocked down and apparently kicked to death.\(^{22}\)

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\(^{20}\) For accounts of the incident and accusations against Wren see Dunstan, *op. cit.*, pp.229-33; Buggy, *op. cit.*, pp.71-3; and Brennan, *op. cit.*, pp.77-94.

\(^{21}\) McKernan, *op. cit.*, pp.75-6; Hyslop, *op. cit.*, p.308 and *Age*, 21 June 1906, p.4. The bodies represented included the teaching profession, the Trades Hall Council, the Chamber of Commerce, the Employer's Federation and various churches.

\(^{22}\) *Age*, 16 July 1906, p.7 and Dunstan, *op. cit.*, pp.240-43. Two men were charged with murder but were acquitted for want of evidence.
However, there was more to McLeod's death than a flurry of sensational headlines and a salutary lesson to welshing bookmakers. Coming at the height of their anti-gambling campaign, it provided the wowsers with a cause célèbre. In the ensuing chorus of outraged moralising, the voice of the Rev. Henry Worrall was the most strident. He told a packed congregation at his Methodist church in the Bendigo suburb of Golden Square that the blood of Donald McLeod was on the hands of the gambling fraternity and Members of Parliament. He then made explicit the challenge that had been implied during the whole campaign. The *Bendigo Independent* reported him as saying:

> The time had come when the men and women of Victoria and of Australia must put their Christian conscience behind their voice at the ballot box. There were men with titles of honour to their names who ought not to be our representatives. He said, ‘There is Sir Samuel Gillott, who sits in high places of authority and I impeach that man tonight in God's name with the red blood that has been flowing from the wounds of gamblers. I impeach that man tonight in God's name with the responsibility of the terrible evils that are raging about us.’

This escalation of hostilities was too much for Bent. He had already promised action to reform the liquor trade and suppress illegal gambling. This attack on his Chief Secretary was an affront to parliament. Accordingly, he took action to have Worrall called before the Bar of the House on 31 July.

Worrall, however, was unrepentant. Emboldened by numerous expressions of support, his followers hired a special train from Bendigo which proceeded in triumph to Melbourne, receiving sympathetic demonstrations at all stops along the way. A crowd of some 2,000 greeted the train at Spencer Street, while another of about 4,000 gathered at Parliament House. When Worrall was bought before the Bar late in the afternoon he was asked if the reports of his sermon were accurate. He agreed that they were substantially true and, after a brief interruption, made a formal statement

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23 Quoted, *ibid*, p.244. For Judkins' comments at his 'Pleasant Sunday Afternoon' the day after McLeod's death see *Age*, 16 July 1906, p.7. For a sketch of Gillott's career see David Dunstan, 'Sir Samuel Gillott' in Nairn and Serle (eds), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 9, pp.12-13.

24 Although Gillott survived this attack he was forced to resign in December 1906 when John Norton's Melbourne *Truth* revealed that he had lent money, albeit inadvertently, to the notorious brothel-keeper 'Madam Brussels'. See *ibid*, p.13.
that he did not mean to suggest that honourable members were responsible for physically harming McLeod, but that the murder would not have been committed had they done their moral duty to the community and suppressed gambling. The House then debated his fate for more than six hours.

Bent's motion to censure Worrall for 'uttering a false, un-Christian and malicious libel' proved to be counter-productive. Rather than uphold the dignity of parliament, the tone of his speech effectively diminished it. There was a touch of pique in his defence of the government's record in tackling the evils of gambling and drink. He accused the Methodists of ingratitude towards his government since it had done more to protect public morals than any other in the last twenty years. They should be supporting the government, not subjecting its ministers to public denunciation. As his resentment mounted, he launched a bitter personal attack on Worrall with such venom as to move one of his own ministers to complain that he was making a travesty of the proceedings. Prendergast, leading for the Labor Party, opposed the motion on the grounds of free speech. If everybody who expressed their political views strongly was to be treated in the same way as Worrall, the House would have a continuous procession of offenders before the Bar. Instead, he suggested that if Gillott felt he had been slandered then let him have recourse to the courts like any other citizen. David Gaunson, Wren's principal spokesman in the Assembly, suggested that if he were called upon to defend Worrall he would seek acquittal on the grounds of insanity. The Liberal leader, Sir Alexander Peacock, recognised that the

25. Keith Dunstan, Wowsers, pp 244-53; McKernan, op cit, pp.79-82; and Age 1 August 1906, p.7.

26. VPD vol 113, 31 July 1906, pp 561-65. For a detailed, though not entirely accurate, report of the debate see Age 1 August 1906, p.7. The Minister was James Boyd.

27. VPD vol 113, 31 July 1906, pp 565-68. Although the Labor Party had originally agreed to have Worrall brought before the Bar of the House, they changed their attitude and decided to oppose Bent. This was partly due to memories of the Findley expulsion and partly because of Judkins' reminder that they were supposed to stand for free speech.

debate could only bring discredit upon the House and supported a motion from Mackinnon, another of Bent's ministers, that Worrall be discharged without further action. Bent, however, was determined to have his revenge and persisted with his motion.

When it was Anstey's turn to speak, he chose to address the wider issues involved. Taking the Findley expulsion as his text, he read the House a lesson on the dangers to political liberty inherent in the case before them. To punish Worrall for expressing his views would involve a similar abuse of authority where, under the hypocritical guise of parliamentary privilege, the government would muzzle one of its opponents. He reminded the House that, 'Every step in favour of liberty has always been associated with either sedition or very strong language.' He found it ironic, however, that those who now looked to the Labor Party to defend free speech in their campaign for moral reform had shown Labor nothing but 'bitterest hostility' in the past when they ought to have given 'kindliest assistance'. In explaining why that was so he went to the very heart of the differences between Labor and the wowsers on the issue of social reform:

The working classes have not found in the church of their childhood the assistance they could have wished for. It is not to the portals of the churches that we can look for support. They want a moral community; but how will they get it? They will get it only by improving the material conditions of the people out of which morality can alone develop. They want sobriety; they want honesty and they want cleanliness of character; they want a lack of the gambling spirit, and yet they uphold a form of society in which the spirit of gambling and speculation is deeply rooted - man struggling with man and woman with woman ...If the Labor Party have travelled away from the church it is not because we have forgotten the faith of our childhood, but because the church, given to symbolising old conditions, has not opened its doors to the needs of modern society. We ask the church when it wants free speech to remember that the Labor Party is the party that is struggling today for the transformation of those conditions by which the church alone can create the end that it desires.


30. Ibid., p.592.

31. Ibid., p.593.
After five more members had spoken a vote was taken, the Speaker administered a formal censure, Worrall was discharged and the House concluded the whole sorry incident.32

The affair did not deter Judkins and his fellow reformers. It only encouraged them. As far as they were concerned, Bent's ineptitude had turned the privilege debate into a glorious vindication of their cause and a victory for free speech. During the long debates on the Licensing and Gaming Suppression bills they continued to harrass the government. From pulpit and press they denounced the debilitating effects of gambling and drink, of social evils large and small, of political cowardice and official corruption.33

Even though the Licensing Bill, introduced in July, went a long way towards meeting the demands of the wowsers, they were still not entirely satisfied. It contained three main provisions: clubs were to operate under the more stringent conditions required of hotels; the rules governing trading on licensed premises were to be tightened; and the local option would apply so that communities could have a direct voice in deciding how many establishments would be permitted in each district. The last provision was the most extensively debated. There were lengthy arguments about how local polls were to be conducted, the questions that were to be put to the people, who would decide which establishments should be closed, whether or not some compensation ought to be paid to licencees or owners who were to be shut down and, if so, who would pay, how much and for how long. Most parliamentary and public debate, and criticism from the more determined reformers, centred around these issues.34

32. Ibid, pp.602-3. The vote in favour of Bent's slightly amended motion was 36 to 26.

33. See, for example, articles by Judkins in Review of Reviews, 1 August 1906, pp.130-33; 1 September 1906, pp.215-18 and pp.231-34. For a broader sample see Hyslop, op. cit., pp.300-306.

34. For the most detailed account of the Licensing Bill's progress see Kay Rollison, Groups and Attitudes in the Victorian Legislative Assembly, 1900-1909, PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1972, pp.321-39.
Anstey began his contribution to the debate by addressing the same issues. The local option was 'a sham that hides itself in the garments of democracy' because it restricted the range of possibilities put to the people. They would be asked to choose whether or not establishments should be closed. They would be denied the opportunity to vote for Labor's policy of nationalisation of the liquor trade, or to choose between clubs and pubs. The Bill, moreover, would advance the trend towards monopoly by eliminating many licensed groceries, smaller hotels which had been pressed into illegal trading by the 'law of competition', and several workingmens' clubs which symbolised the virtues of co-operative endeavour. The result would be fewer hotels selling the same total quantity of liquor, from which the government would derive 'immense revenue'. It would not solve the 'drink problem'.

Rising above the specific measures in the Bill, Anstey addressed himself to the more general issues underlying the 'problem'; beginning with class. '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.' As was often the case, he took a verse as his text.

The rich man is invisible
In the crowd of his gay society;
But the poor man's delight
Is a sore in the sight,
And a stench in the nose of piety.

Just because there were fewer hotels in the wealthier suburbs did not necessarily imply greater sobriety. 'Every large domestic establishment in Toorak, with its butlers


37. *Ibid*, p.1279. A little later, in the course of questioning the assertion that drink was the cause of poverty and ruin, he told the House that his mother and brothers in the Old Country had never taken a drink, yet they lived in poverty. 'I can say that I am ... the only one that ever drained the cup of bad living to its very dregs, and I am the only one of that family who ever attained a position in life.'

38. *Ibid*
and its staff of servants, represents a vast drinking habit, which the Government makes no effort to cure. 39

Nor, despite the claims of the temperance literature, was it true that, '...as wages rise, the drinking habits of the working people increase, and that, as they have more leisure, so do they become more drunken, more criminal, and more insane.' 40 He went on to repeat the sentiments expressed in the privilege debate, accusing the wowsers of hostility towards the working class.

Therefore, the best way, according to this literature, to diminish lunacy and to diminish crime is to keep the workingmen working many hours, and give them very little for it, so that they may have very little to spend. 41

He then surveyed statistical and literary sources to show that drink was not the cause of working class poverty and destitution, it was a symptom of their social and industrial conditions. There were numerous reasons why the common people turned to drink. Irregular employment meant that a man might be working one day and be idle the next, during which he may seek consolation in his cups. There was also a link between excessive toil and immoderate drinking, just as those doing lighter work for shorter hours tended to be more temperate. 'Insanitary surroundings' were another cause.

In London today it is a well-known fact that in the summer time, from twenty to thirty people probably are herded in a small house, a place so infested with vermin that the people have to sleep out on the door-step. These are some of the conditions which drive people to the solace to be found in public houses. 42

When these conditions were combined with a 'poverty of mind', a lack of education which deprived them of the inner resources to find 'reasonable means of enjoying

39. Ibid. p.1280.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid
42. Ibid. p.1301.
themselves', they gravitated towards hotels to 'find some society'. It was not the want of moral fibre among the working class that led them to drink, crime and insanity.

The facts of history...show...that all efforts to improve the sobriety of the people by restrictions have failed so long as Governments and communities have failed to improve the social conditions of the people - the conditions under which they have worked and lived and had their being.43

These basic issues - employment, housing and education - were at the heart of Labor's programme to raise the working class to a higher level of social existence. That programme offered the only realistic hope of improving sobriety, health and morality. As such, Labor policy arose from 'an unspoken temperance movement based really upon social and political reform'.44

When addressing the churches' role in the temperance movement, he met the more belligerent wowsers head on. 'We are coming to a particular period of Puritanism where no one is to do anything but sit down and suck his thumb or go to church.'45 He warned the churches that if they wished to instruct parliament in its democratic obligations, they might well look to their own duties to the 'gospel of the living Christ' and to democracy. They could begin by abandoning the 'gospel of Mammon' and recognise, 'that the Church has not fulfilled its functions to the working classes and to the great bulk of the people'.46 While this charge of hypocrisy might have been a little severe on some of the reformers who sincerely believed that they were helping to improve the lot of working people, he nevertheless had a point. According to his analysis of the causes of excessive drinking by the working class, the churches had not been in the forefront of reform. They tended to uphold the existing order of society that produced the conditions conducive to drunkenness. In their present role, they offered no real solution: they were part of the problem. If the

43. Ibid. p.1302.
44. Ibid. p.1281.
45. Ibid. p.1278.
46. Ibid. p.1303.
modern state had failed in its obligations to its less fortunate citizens, the history of 
the churches in politics offered even less promise. Giving vent to long-held secularist 
views, he declared, 'Woe betide the democracy of any country if the Church is to once 
more rule the destinies of nations.' He concluded with a rebuke of his fellow Members 
for not resisting the churches' attempt to make the state their moral bully.

The responsibility of public men is not to shiver in their shoes, and not 
to kneel at the altar or the doorstep of any Church or any colour, but to 
recognise that they are the representatives of the people, and also to 
recognise the obligations with which the early pioneers endowed us by 
giving us a government free from the dominance of the Church, 
together with a free education and an enlightened democracy.47

While some of his parliamentary colleagues found the speech 'instructive', it did not 
endear him to the more determined wowsers, least of all Judkins who was to target 
Anstey for special attention in acknowledgement that the speech went to the heart of 
the social reform issue.

When the Chief Secretary, Sir Samuel Gillott, introduced the Gaming 
Suppression Bill to the Assembly in September, it was clear that most of its provisions 
were directed against John Wren's gambling 'empire'. It was Wren, after all, whom 
Judkins and his supporters had identified as the personification of the evils that 
gambling inflicted on the people of Victoria. However, if the Bill was to eliminate all 
vestiges of Wren's extensive network yet not appear to be aimed at one citizen, it 
would need sweeping powers. Gillott proposed to provide them.48

Henceforth, it would be much easier to have houses and clubs where gaming 
took place declared illegal. The police would have extensive powers to enter and 
search not only those places so designated, but also adjoining premises where all

47. Ibid, p.1304. He developed this point with specific reference to religious education in state 
schools in his pamphlet Labour's Bible Lessons Melbourne, Tocsin Office Print, n.d (1906). Copy 
in Anstey papers, NLA MS 4636. It was originally published as an article in Tocsin, 3 March 1904. 
p.2 and reprinted as a pamphlet in 1906.

48. For detailed discussion of the Bill and its progress, see Rollison, op cit, pp.339-354; Hystop, op. 
cit, pp.315-335; and for a summary which places the Lotteries, Gaming and Betting Act, as the 
Bill eventually became, in a wider context see John O'Hara, A Mug's Game: a History of Gaming 
and Betting in Australia, Kensington, University of New South Wales Press, 1988, chapter 3, 
money in the possession of people found in a gaming establishment could be confiscated. This was directed squarely at Wren's Tote in Collingwood, his Tattersall's Club in the city and other betting clubs run by people like Sol Green.

New rules were to be introduced to govern race courses. Each club or promoter was to be limited to sixteen race days a year, exactly the number on which the Victoria Racing Club (VRC) held meetings. Wren, who had been effectively barred from the VRC track at Flemington, had set up a number of short, pony racing tracks where meetings were conducted on one hundred and fifty-six days per year. For reasons of safety, a minimum length of six furlongs was also set for race courses. Wren's longest was five furlongs. No totalisators, either on or off course, would be allowed. The only public place where betting would be legal was at a course where an entry fee had been paid, on an official race day, with bookmakers who had been licensed by the VRC. These provisions were not only intended to shut Wren out of the racing industry, they would effectively prevent working class punters having 'a flutter' because they would have to make their way to Flemington and then pay a fee to enter the enclosure where VRC licensed bookmakers operated.

The Bill also proposed to extend the existing prohibition of gambling in public places to include most lotteries, sweepstakes, art unions and raffles. While there were many who happily supported the attack on Wren's gambling interests, it was this section which was most widely criticised as going too far in its effort to suppress relatively harmless raffles and games of chance, many of which were used to raise funds for worthy causes. As Anstey pointed out during the committee stage of the bill, it would even outlaw the traditional trade union 'Christmas Goose' club.49

The most sustained criticism of the bill centred around the accusation that it discriminated against the working class gambler by effectively closing down Wren's pony tracks, but did nothing to restrict the more wealthy punter who could continue to bet in his accustomed manner within the VRC enclosure at Flemington. This was

not an argument confined to Labor members. From the government side of the house, Boyd, Farrer and McCutcheon objected to it on the same grounds. It was, nevertheless, principally Labor members who argued that the bill was 'class legislation'. In doing so some were accused of being 'in Wren's pocket'. Despite the strength or weakness of their case, it was an accusation that could not be ignored. Some, such as Solly, openly defended Wren. Prendergast was eventually provoked to reply to the constant insinuations about 'purchased interests' and went into some detail about his dealings with Wren. The Labor Party was not Wren's hired advocate. He had been approached by Wren who offered the party various favours, including finance to establish a daily labour paper, but the offer had been refused. Anstey, however, said very little about his future business partner. When he did mention Wren, it was in an affectedly ironic way such as, 'There was the question of the Collingwood Tote, which he was informed was controlled by Mr. John Wren...'

Most of Anstey's contribution to debate focused on the class issue, arguing the same basic thesis he had advanced about the Licensing Bill.

In one week, suicides, embezzlements, murder, crime, insanity, and poverty are supposed to flow from drink; in another week the cause of all those evils is the gambling of the poor, and at another time, it is their boxing proclivities.

The causes were the same as before:

... I will affirm that the evil of gambling that you propose to cure is a partial reflex of the society to which we all belong - rotten and reeking

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51. Rollison, *op. cit.*, pp. 547-548. During the March 1907 election campaign Prendergast was again quite explicit about his discussions with Wren over the Gillott scandal. See *Age*, 9 March 1907, p. 13. Soon after the 1907 election *Lone Hand* published a detailed exposure of Wren's activities under the banner 'For the Public Good'. See 'Wren and his Ruffians. A Notorious Bird of Prey', *Lone Hand*, Sydney, May 1907, pp. 82-89.

52. In the late 1920s Anstey, Wren and others were partners in a New Guinea gold mining venture. For details see chapter 10 below.


In common with most other members, he acknowledged that gambling could be a social problem but did not agree with the wowsers that it was necessarily evil. He quoted a lengthy passage from the Bishop of Peterborough to the effect that most things in moderation were perfectly harmless, only excess led to sin. Accordingly, the proper course for the government was to ignore the clamour from the 'Church party' to suppress all betting and aim, instead, to regulate it sensibly so as to eliminate the effects of excessive gambling. The main fault in the Bill was that it proposed to suppress all forms of working class gambling but did nothing to restrain the rich, on the specious grounds that the rich could afford it whereas the poor could not. He favoured the establishment of an off course tote so that the working man could have a bet with as much ease as the more affluent punter. If the government was really serious about stamping out gambling let it outlaw all betting. To emphasise the point, he moved an amendment to that effect. The Bill was not really concerned with eliminating a social evil, it was intended '...to give a monopoly of the gambling to one particular set of institutions', meaning the VRC. As such, 'It is nothing but putrid hypocrisy and cant.'

This was the usual robust criticism that the Assembly had come to expect from Anstey. His strong materialist stance on the issue of social reform pointed to contradictions in the government's proposals. Bent had to appear to be doing something to satisfy the wowsers' clamour to suppress gambling but there were the established interests of the racing industry to be considered. Representations were

55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., 2 October 1906, pp.1818-1819.
57. Ibid., 27 September 1906, p.1782.
58. Ibid., p.1783.
59. Ibid., pp.1784-1785.
60. Ibid., p.1787.
made by owners and trainers of ponies and trotters, by fodder merchants and the more respectable bookmakers. If it was to break up Wren’s gambling 'empire', the government would not only have to harm these established interests but also invite the accusation that the Bill actively discriminated against the working class in a society where gambling and speculation was a part of everyday business life at the stock exchange. There was also, as Hyslop has shown, a sectarian undercurrent in the wowser campaign which linked Wren, the Catholic Church and the Labor Party in an alliance of corruption.61

In the end, the government worked out a practical political compromise which restricted gambling but made no real attempt to suppress it in line with the wowsers’ demands. When the bill was eventually passed as the Lotteries, Gaming and Betting Act, its practical effect was to strengthen existing restrictions. Some of the more petty prohibitions on charity raffles and guessing games were removed, and concessions were made to pony racing and trotting interests. The act was successful, however, in providing sufficient police powers to persuade Wren to close his Collingwood Tote and reduce his involvement in other kinds of gambling, but it did not put him out of business. He simply shifted the emphasis to more legitimate areas such as trotting. Judkins and his supporters had not rid Victoria of Wren’s supposedly pernicious influence, they had merely forced a change in the direction of his business activities. Besides, it was not long before he took his revenge on Sir Samuel Gillott by providing information about his inadvertent business connections with prostitution to John Norton’s Truth, which published the accusation and forced the Chief Secretary’s resignation.62

When Bent called an election for 15 March 1907, Labor was confronted with the same issues that the wowsers had been pushing for more than a year: liquor, gambling and religion. In addition to the lingering passions aroused during debate on

the licensing and gaming suppression bills, there was the contentious issue of religious instruction in state schools which compounded the sectarianism implicit in the accusations about a Labor-Wren-Catholic alliance. The Protestant Electors' Committee combined with the Scripture Instruction Election Campaign Council to press for bible teaching in government schools. They were opposed by the Catholic Voters' Registration Society and the non-Catholic, Education Defence League. On the gambling and liquor issues the Victorian Alliance and the Social Reform Movement made most of the running in support of the more wowserish Ministerialists. They, in turn, were opposed by the Licensed Victuallers' Association and the Victorian League of Sportsmen which wanted to '... prevent interference with true sport and the liberty of the subject...'.

In such an atmosphere, Anstey was a prime target for the wowsers. He had not only met them head on during the licensing and gaming debates, he had also bought into the argument about religious instruction in state schools with his pamphlet Labor's Bible Lessons. There he argued a familiar case, '...that in striving to improve the material basis of human existence we shall find the open door to a higher life and a purer morality'. In his usual way, the text was littered with references to the Bible and speeches by religious authorities. His point was that religious instruction in state schools would betray one of the fundamental principles of political liberty: a free, secular and compulsory education system which protected children from sectarian and political indoctrination.

For centuries the Tories have placed their interpretation upon the Scriptures.
'Bless the squire and his relations.
Keep the poor in their proper stations.'

63. For discussion of the campaign see D.W. Rawson, 'Victoria' in Loveday, Martin and Parker (eds.), The Emergence of the Australian Party System, pp.100-103.

64. F. Anstey, Labour's Bible Lessons, p.1.

65. Ibid., p.4.
Judkins and his supporters had decided that because of these views, and his presumed connection with the Wren machine, Anstey's proper station was not the Victorian Legislative Assembly. They turned their big guns on him, with Judkins being nominated as the Victorian Alliance candidate for Brunswick.

Realising that it would be difficult to unseat a popular local member, Judkins began campaigning well before Anstey. Beginning in a rather restrained style, he told a meeting of supporters at the Rechabite Hall that, 'It was not a fight between himself and Mr. Anstey, but it was a fight for the social reform movement.' A week later, supported by the Mayor, Cr. D. Phillips, and several other Brunswick councillors, he denounced 'gambling and other social evils in the city' at a meeting in the Salvation Army Barracks. After ranging widely over the reform movement's agenda, he turned to the League of Sportsmen and acknowledged some sound points in their circular:

> But with their definition of the liberty of the subject he disagreed entirely. It meant liberty to get drunk, liberty to thrash your wife, liberty to let your children go hungry while the state paid for them; liberty to do all kinds of things that were a disgrace to manhood.

This was one of the strongest points in his argument to an electorate where many working class families knew only too well the effects that drink and gambling could have on a family wage that was meagre at the best of times. But when he took his message beyond the respectable confines of the Rechabite Hall and the Salvation Army Barracks, Judkins began to encounter some rather boisterous opposition. He was subjected to sustained heckling when he told an outdoor meeting in Victoria Street that:

> He stood for purity. The forces of good were on his side and the forces of evil on the other. He asked the electors of Brunswick to vote for righteousness.

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68. Ibid., 2 March 1907, p.1.
The increasingly vigorous treatment he received at some meetings provoked him to the claim that if he were defeated it would only be by foul means.\textsuperscript{69} As the tempo and the temperature of the campaign increased, his early restraint gave way to a more forthright style, which was shared by his supporters. At one of the Salvation Army's regular Saturday night meetings a group of 'beery heads' offered some rather fruity suggestions on the relative merits of Anstey and Judkins. Their boisterous interjections unsettled the speaker.

The officer who was holding forth promptly darted off at a tangent and took up the theme of the gambling and the drink evils, and strongly advised all his flock to support Mr. Judkins, adding that any soldier who did not do so was a 'disgrace to Brunswick', whatever that might mean. This declaration was too much for a prominent soldier who stepped forward and made no secret of his admiration for Mr. Anstey, and even mentioned that he was on his committee.\textsuperscript{70}

The enraged officer set about abusing the apostate, threatening to report him to headquarters. Some young boys began singing irreverent songs and the meeting broke up in disorder. The 'beery heads then adjourned to the nearest bar for a fresh supply of neck-oil'. But some of Judkins' supporters were even more vigorous in defence of their beleaguered champion. When ex-publican Thomas Nelson was 'discoursing on the merits of Mr. Anstey, the workingman's friend' in the bar of the West Brunswick Hotel, some shandy drinkers took him to task. Increasingly sharp insults were traded until Nelson ended the exchange with the taunt, 'Wowsers', and walked out. When he got to the back door he was hit with a crowbar, and later attended the Melbourne Hospital where he was found to be suffering from a fractured skull and jaw.\textsuperscript{71} This atmosphere of mounting aggression was probably due, in part, to the emergence of sectarianism via the issue of Bible instruction in state schools.\textsuperscript{72}

In the view of some observers, it was a turning point in the campaign which acted

\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Age}, 1 March 1907, p.3.

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Brunswick Medium}, 16 March 1907, p.1.

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Ibid.}, p.4 and \textit{Bulletin}, 21 March 1907, p.22.

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Age}, 8 March 1907, p.7.
against Judkins' interests because many conservative electors disliked sectarianism more than they disliked Anstey.73

Although he began his campaign later than Judkins, Anstey enjoyed all the advantages of being a well-known local member who, unlike his opponent, lived in the electorate. Indeed, the Anstey home at 22 Howard Street, Brunswick, was familiar to many constituents. Individuals who came for help with a problem or deputations from specific groups were often interviewed in the front room.74 Young labour activists like Jack Curtin, Frank Hyett and Alf Wallis attended Sunday morning classes in his tiny study which was lined with books and pigeon-holes stuffed full of information on a wide variety of subjects.75 On other occasions the Ansteys entertained sporting groups at home.76 The same speeches that made him a prime target for the wowsers not only raised his existing high profile in the electorate but also attracted support from the Victorian League of Sportsmen at a meeting held in the Town Hall on 27 February.77 Despite his immediate political appeal to that particular lobby group, he was already prominent in the local sporting community. Three days before the election he presided at the annual general meeting of the Brunswick Football Club where he presented the F. Anstey gold medal to the best all

73 Ibid., 16 March 1907, p.13 and Brunswick Medium, 23 March 1907, p.1.
74 Interview with Clarrie O'Shea at 3/61 Darling Street, South Yarra, Victoria on 22 February 1982.
75 Lloyd Ross, John Curtin: A Biography, Melbourne, Macmillan, 1977, p.12. The 'Where is it' book in which he kept track of the contents of these pigeon-holes has been lodged with the Anstey papers in the NLA. He did all he could to develop in his protégés the necessary skills for a political career. It was not unusual for him to debate with them in a sympathetic public forum such as the Brunswick branch of the PLC. In February 1906 he engaged Hyett in debate on the issue of socialism and the Labor Party. See Tocsin, 22 February 1906, p.8. For a detailed life of Hyett see Alan Scarlett, Frank Hyett: A Political Biography, BA(Hons) thesis, La Trobe University, 1979.
76 For instance, the Brunswick Medium of 23 March 1907, p.3, reported that 'On Monday evening last at the private residence of Mr Frank Anstey, MLA, the successful team in the Church Football Association, the Brunswick Independents, were presented with gold medals won by them in the competition and were also entertained.'
round player; listened to speeches by Frank Hyett and Jack Curtin, two players who were also his political protégés; and was re-elected president. He also enjoyed the substantial advantage of a sympathetic local newspaper. In its last issue before the election, the Brunswick Medium compared the claims of the two candidates and reviewed Anstey's contribution to the electorate. 'In his local work as a representative of the people, he has shone where others have failed...' and went on to list the value of civic improvements he had secured for Brunswick. To an outsider from Hawthorn, Anstey's close identification with the electorate presented a considerable obstacle, no matter how serious the cause or earnest its presentation.

The very seriousness of Judkins' case was something of a disadvantage. It allowed full play to Anstey's theatrical platform style. Many of his speeches were sprinkled with jokes at Judkins' expense. At the opening of his campaign he took as one example an exhortation from Judkins for electors to, 'Buck up and vote for God.' If his opponent was to characterise himself as the Deity, Anstey admitted with ironic resignation, then he must be the Angel of Darkness and should withdraw to save his deposit. Amid laughter, he went on to tell a little parable of a Pharisee and a publican praying. While the former professed spiritual purity, the latter confessed his sins. Drawing the obvious parallel, he asked whether it was not better to trust the sinner and put up with his shortcomings. He then attacked sectarianism head on. Replying to the Rev. Pearce Carey's charge that the 'Labor party was a tool of Rome', he pointed out that there were only two Catholics in the parliamentary party, neither of whom were dominated by priests, and went on to declare Carey 'a rotten liar'. After the ensuing sensation had subsided, he ridiculed the inconsistency inherent in the...

78 Ibid, 16 March 1907, p.3. He had also made a presentation at a cricket match a week earlier. See Ibid, 9 March 1907, p.1.

79 Ibid. The list read: 'he (Mr Anstey) secured for Brunswick as a first instalment for a park £1,000, followed it with £100, and later obtained £500 for improvements in the old settlement, and £1,300 for the laying out of streets in the new Dal Campbell Settlement in addition to the obtaining of the property and also the later Fitzgibbon Estate. A sum total of about £3,000, and all within three years'. The money for the park may well have resulted from the incident involving Bent and W.A. Watt retold by F.C. Green, 'Frank Anstey - The Man I Knew', Overland, no 32, August 1965, p.18.
government's many changes to the Licensing and Gaming Suppression bills by having supporters unroll a three metre scroll of paper on which were pasted copies of all amendments to the bills. This was the kind of political music hall performance that voters had come to expect from Anstey. They packed the Town Hall to overflowing, not so much because they were avid supporters, but more in confident expectation of being entertained. They were not disappointed, and expressed their approval of the performance by a vote of acclamation. On most evenings until the election he offered variations on the speech to meetings at different locations around the electorate.

Because of the prominence of the two candidates, and the clear differences between them, the Brunswick poll was an unusually heavy one with a very high proportion of electors turning out. In fact, many Labor voters were assisted to the polls by four motor cars which were provided 'from beyond the boundaries of Brunswick' by 'forces quite outside the Labor party'. They were not wasted. When the poll was declared, Anstey had won by a decisive margin, taking 59.92 per cent of the vote to Judkins’ 40.08 per cent. Anstey declared himself well-pleased, while Judkins, when he could get a hearing from the partisan crowd, said it was only 'an incident in the course of social reform'. His later claim that Anstey had 'floated in on a sea of beer' was treated with derision in the local press. It may not, however, have been completely wide of the mark. It is quite possible that the cars were provided by the

80 Age, 1 March 1907, p. 3 and Brunswick Medium, 2 March 1907, p. 4. Jack Curtin chaired the meeting.

81 See Age, 4 March 1907, p. 8; 5 March 1907, p. 8; 6 March 1907, p. 8; 7 March 1907, p. 8, etc.

82 72.73 per cent of enrolled electors cast a vote. See Hughes and Graham, Voting for the Victoria Legislative Assembly, p. 101. It was the third highest turn-out of all electorates. This was, of course, before the introduction of compulsory voting.

83 Ibid. Anstey had increased his majority. At the 1904 election he won 54.28 per cent of the vote to Methven’s 45.72 per cent. See ibid, p. 89.

84 Age, 18 March 1907, p. 7.

85 Brunswick Medium, 23 March 1907, p. 1.
Licensed Victuallers' Association for, despite Anstey's expressed preference for a state owned liquor industry, he had stood firm against the wowsers on the Licensing Bill. Nor is it impossible that Wren sent assistance to such a stout defender of the working class punter. Nevertheless, this was a minor issue compared to his strength as a well-entrenched local member with a good personal following. His comparatively moderate views on the questions of gambling and drink, and his strong stand against sectarianism appealed to the popular common-sense of a predominantly working class electorate where a healthy majority wanted nothing to do with the extremist policies of the Victorian Alliance candidate.

It was a significant and satisfying victory for Anstey. 'He had never enjoyed a contest so much in his life.' In his nine month tussle with the wowsers he combined a penetrating materialist analysis with a broad, humanist sympathy in his diagnosis of social and moral problems, although his simple equation of material and moral progress rested on a rather sanguine assumption about the perfectibility of human nature. Nevertheless, it had been successful in exposing the wowsers' political agenda as an attempt to make moral reform compulsory for the working class and optional for the middle class. Similarly, his stout resistance to sectarianism had assisted in the defence of a secular state, even though it arose from a rather vigorous and undiscriminating anti-clericalism. The result in Brunswick had been at least a local vindication for Anstey, but the struggle had been long and intense. Again, his health began to fail and his doctor advised a long rest, preferably well away from the cut and thrust of Victorian politics.

A group of friends which included Ted Findley, George Carter and George Elmslie organised an appeal for money to send Anstey on a health trip to see his mother in England. While donations were being collected, the staff at the Labor Call

86. Labor Call. 21 March 1907, p.2.
87. Ibid. 28 March 1907, p.5.
88. Ibid.
office presented him with a 'handsome smoker's companion' in appreciation of his role in the founding of *Tocsin* and his treatment of them as co-workers rather than employees.\(^8^9\) On 8 April, the evening before his departure, a 'smoke night' was held in the Brunswick Town Hall to bid him farewell and present the proceeds of the appeal. Among the more than 500 people who attended were numerous Commonwealth and State Labor MPs, the Mayor - who had so recently supported Judkins - and many leading citizens. After a succession of speeches lauding Anstey's services to the Labor Party and the people of Victoria, Ted Findley, on behalf of the Citizens' Presentation Committee, handed over a saloon, return ticket to England and a purse containing 175 sovereigns.\(^9^0\) While the attendance was an impressive tribute to Anstey's popularity, the success of the appeal was remarkable. Only eleven days after *Labor Call* announced the idea, sufficient had been donated to purchase the ticket for a very comfortable journey to England and back, plus a sum of money equal to more than six months parliamentary salary. It is possible that the modest contributions of his many friends were supplemented by more substantial donations from the kind of supporters who had provided the cars on polling day.

The round of farewell functions gave Anstey cause to reflect on his years in Australia. He showed obvious signs of being deeply moved when he told the Town Hall audience, 'I am going to realise the dream of my life, for it will be the joy of my life to meet my mother once again, and be able to tell her that the boy who left in poverty and ignorance has, after a hard battle, obtained the position of a member of Parliament of his adopted country.'\(^9^1\) Privately, he might also have hoped that his step-father would be listening too. When he left Port Melbourne aboard the RMS *Omrah* on 9 April he was given an 'enthusiastic farewell' by a 'large assemblage of

\(^8^9\) *Ibid.* 11 April 1907, p.1. He had been an executive member, and occasional editor, of the Tocsin Co-operative from its foundation until, as *Labor Call*, it passed to a new board of directors representing the Trades Hall and the Labor Party. See *Tocsin*, 25 October 1906, p.4.

\(^9^0\) *Labor Call*, 25 April 1907, p.7.

\(^9^1\) *Ibid.*
There was no mention of Kate or the two boys. They, almost certainly, remained at home.

Anstey's voyage to England appears to have been largely uneventful, apart from a very rough passage between Melbourne and Fremantle, and having a finger savaged by a deck chair. Despite such minor irritations, he had ample time to reflect on nearly thirty years in and around Australia; to compare the conditions of a saloon passenger to those of a cabin boy or ordinary seaman; to think on a life of restless endeavour; and measure the achievements against the disappointments. At the age of forty-one, in conditions well suited to contemplation, he might well have reviewed his past and pondered on his future; as people are wont to do in middle age. Whichever way he calculated the balance sheet, he had some reason for quiet satisfaction. As he told the Brunswick audience, on the eve of his departure, he had left his family home and native land as a poor and ignorant youth. He was now returning to a country where the honour attaching to the title MP was perhaps greater than in Australia. He could also bask in the warm regard of those who had elected him and those who had paid for this voyage that was to restore his health and strength so that he might return to represent them with renewed vigor. Looking forward, he might well have contemplated the joy of seeing his mother after so many years, and felt mixed emotions at the prospect of how he would greet his step-father. Beyond the family, however, there was the pleasurable expectation of seeing again places that had begun to dim in the memory, and a professional curiosity about the people and politics he had followed only by report. He was, after all, a member, in good standing, of a fraternal labour movement and, as such, might expect a friendly

92. Ibid. He had been entertained at lunch earlier that day by his caucus colleagues at Parliament House. On Friday 4 April his own branch of the PLC had provided a social at the Town Hall to farewell him. John Curtin chaired the occasion and presented Anstey with two travelling rugs, one for himself and another to give his mother on arrival in London. For a report of that function see Brunswick Medium, 4 April 1907, p.1. It is significant that none of the reports about the various farewell functions make any mention of Kate Anstey.

reception among his British comrades. On balance, he had just cause to take a sanguine view of the coming months as he approached the old country.

Anstey's base during his visit was to be his half-brother William Lank's live-in newsagency in East Ham, not far from the family home in Plaistow that he had left almost three decades earlier. By 1907 his mother and step-father had gone to live with William and his wife Agnes, probably because of the difficulty that the sixty-eight year old Caroline had in coping with the increasingly frail John Lank on her own.94 Being with the family not only enabled him to talk over old times but also to compare the changes that had occurred in the East End of London since his youth. He later told a 'welcome home' audience in Brunswick that:

He had noticed a transformation from the London he had known some years ago. On every side were evidences of increasing corporate activity, and an enlarging of municipal life. The slum, that eyesore of civilisation, had been in great measure abolished; lungs had been provided for the more congested districts, and the foetid alley had given place to the playground and the garden.

As with all his public utterances, there was a point to the observation.

One of the lessons to be learned from the old land was the need for larger municipal life. In every English city in which the workers had arisen to their duty as citizens, progress had been made. And against what difficulties? The people had had to buy back at enormous cost the land to which their own presence had given the value. ... As a consequence, where the slums had been abolished, the people, owing to the exorbitant prices demanded for land, were congregated in what were practically municipal barracks. A thousand people lived under one roof, those in the top storey literally occupying mansions in the sky.95

When he moved further afield in search of memories he noted other changes. In the Devon of his childhood the family name survived in the villages of East and West Anstey, and on gravestones in the Witheridge churchyard, but there was no trace of the farm that figured among his earliest memories. 'I went home to see it, and the last

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94. Anstey gave his forwarding address as 'c/o Mrs Lank, 3 Henniker Gardens, Central Park Rd, East Ham'. See 1907 diary in J P Jones papers, La Trobe Library, MS 9547, box 1260. A contemporary photograph of Will Lank's newsagency in Henniker Gardens had been lodged with the Anstey papers in the NLA. The evidence for Caroline and John Lank living with their son Will is found in a letter from 'Mother' to 'My dear boy', in the Anstey papers, NLA MS 312, folder 8.

95. Labor Call, 3 October 1907, p.4.
remnant of my home had disappeared. In the north of England, however, some things had not changed since he was a child.

Many of the mining villages were still in a state little removed from savagery. People of both sexes and all ages herded together in a single room. He mentioned one case in which two rooms were occupied by three families.

After a restful month at sea, some time with the family and leisurely visits to places that echoed with memories of childhood, his health and strength seemed to be restored.

Not long after his arrival in London, Anstey made himself known to leading people in the British Labour Party and was promptly sent north to help in Pete Curran's campaign for the Jarrow by-election of July 1907. It is unlikely that his help was enlisted without some recommendation. He was familiar with at least two people who were, at various stages, prominent in the British labour movement. Ten years earlier he had met Ben Tillett in Melbourne. However, he could not renew the acquaintance on this occasion because Tillett had left London bound for Melbourne on 30 March. Tillett might, nevertheless, have mentioned to his party colleagues that Anstey was coming. Similarly, Tom Mann may have written to old comrades announcing Anstey's arrival, although it is unlikely to have been in the same approving tone of his memoirs in the early 1920s. In 1907 there was some tension between the Victorian Socialist Party and the ALP over the latter's commitment to

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97. *Labor Call*, 3 October 1907, p.4. Again, there was a point to the observation. The crowded and insanitary conditions were largely responsible for immoral behaviour by the poor who were forced to live there. Thus, he returned to the theme of his campaign against the wowsers during 1906-1907.

98. See Anstey to Arthur Henderson, 20 June 1918, British Labour Party Archives, CON/18/1/68. In renewing their acquaintance during his second return visit, Anstey reminded Henderson of their work together during the 1907 Jarrow campaign.

99. See group photograph of 'Labor Organisers of the Nineties' in NLA picture collection.


socialism and the working class.\textsuperscript{102} Despite some of this hostility being directed at Anstey during the election, Mann did not yet totally reject the Labor Party\textsuperscript{103}, and having worked with Anstey on organising tours, was well able to pass comment on his platform skills.

It is not clear whether Anstey's ability to establish a rapport with an audience was appreciated by his British comrades, but in the circumstances any competent and available platform man was welcome. The Labour Party was keen to win the Durham-based seat of Jarrow from the Liberals, whose Sir Charles Palmer had represented the area from 1874 until his death in mid-1907. Pete Curran, an official of the Gasworkers' Union and a member of the Independent Labour Party, had performed quite well against Palmer at the 1906 general elections, but this time decided to play down his socialist affiliations and emphasise his trade union connections. This, he hoped, would appeal to the many miners and ship-building workers who were traditional Liberal supporters. Realising that he would have to mount a very effective campaign if he was to persuade them to change the voting habits of a life-time, Curran began earlier than his Liberal, Unionist and Irish Nationalist opponents.\textsuperscript{104} The Labour Party, as the parliamentary members had begun to call themselves after the 1906 elections, was anxious to swell its growing numbers at Westminster and so sent as many helpers as it could muster from London.\textsuperscript{105} Towards the end of the campaign it was able to boast:

\textsuperscript{102} For a detailed discussion of this, as well as the internal differences within the VSP over the issue, see Geoffrey Hewitt, \textit{A History of the Victorian Socialist Party, 1906-1932}, MA thesis, La Trobe University, 1974, pp 53-64.

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Socialist} (Melbourne), 12 January 1907, p.3. For further discussion see Brian R. Nugent, \textit{Frank Anstey in Victorian Politics}, unpublished MA (Hons) thesis, University of New England, 1973, pp 369-370. Nugent, however, errs by identifying the views in the \textit{Socialist} article with those expressed by Mann after July 1907 and reading them backwards to March of the same year. At the time of the 1907 Victorian general election Mann still held to the view that it might be possible to convert the ALP to socialism. See \textit{Socialist}, 27 April 1907, p.2.


\textsuperscript{105} At the 1906 general elections Labour had increased its numbers in the House of Commons from the two returned in 1900 to twenty-nine. See Henry Pelling, \textit{A Short History of the Labour Party}, London, Macmillan, sixth edition, 1978, p.177.
From Parliament we have Macpherson, Richards, MacDonald, Seddon, Clynes, Wilkie, Roberts, Snowden, Crooks, Thorne, Hudson and Jenkins...Mr. Anstey, a member of the Australian Labour Group is also helping us...106

It seems that Anstey was brought in during the last week when the district was to be saturated with Labour speakers. He arrived on 1 July and began a hectic round of meetings.107 The first must have been reasonably successful because he was listed as the main attraction on a handbill advertising his second address.

11,000 miles away! The Labor Party in Australia are fighting the same political battle as the Labor Party at home. Mr. Frank Anstey (Melbourne) is a Labor MP in the Victorian Parliament, and last night roused the Palace audience to the highest pitch of enthusiasm on Pete Curran's behalf. Come and hear him tonight at the Co-operative Hall and the Palace. Other speakers will be Will Crooks, David Shackleton, and the one and only Independent Labor candidate, Pete Curran.108

His role in the campaign appears to have been the usual one for an outsider. While the candidate addresses the specific local issues, the guests are expected to talk about the wider issues. In his last contribution, at a meeting in the Circus on the Pit Heap, he told his audience that, 'The unity of Labour is the hope of the world!'109

By this stage, it is clear, his health and vigor had been restored. He was back on the hustings fighting in accustomed manner alongside an impressive array of his British counterparts. It was all the more gratifying to be doing it in support of the winning candidate.110 In the process he had occasion to meet a number of the more prominent members and began to forge those bonds of comradeship that come from struggle in a common cause. It was typical of Anstey's style as a politician that he did

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108. Quoted in *Labor Call*, 8 August 1907, p.1. With his usual instinct for the political value of such publicity, Anstey probably ensured that a copy was sent to his colleagues back home. The Australian spelling of 'labor' had presumably been changed from the English 'labour' when being typeset at the *Labor Call* office.


not simply observe the British Labour Party at work, but joined them in their labours, and was remembered for it. After his return to London he was asked by Will Thorn, one of his fellow campaigners in Jarrow, to speak at meetings in Canning Town and Upton Park. This led to further invitations to address other branches of the party.

By the end of August, when he was preparing for his return to Melbourne, he was able to look back over his home-coming with some satisfaction. Although he may have been a little disconcerted at the increasing frailty of his mother and step-father, he had been able to spend some time with the family and visit some of the places that recalled his childhood. The trip itself had helped restore his health. That, in turn, had enabled him to take part in an historic by-election on behalf of the Labour Party and, in the process, make something of a reputation for himself as an orator among his comrades in the old country. It was a satisfying reward for his years of restless endeavour, and a vindication for those who had encouraged his relentless drive for self-improvement. The penniless and ignorant stow-away had returned as a prominent citizen in his adopted country and had given public performances to display his accomplishments. The trip, however, was not simply an opportunity to make peace with his past. It was also an occasion to study and report on the condition of the British and European working class movements. As he moved around England he was, in his usual way, taking careful and detailed notes in anticipation of the speeches and articles he would be expected to present on his return to Australia.

During the last month of his stay in Britain, most of Anstey's attention to political matters was focused on the Stuttgart congress of the socialist Second International. Although he did not attend, he followed the English language

111. *Northern Democrat*, August 1908, p. 9. It is probable that he was invited to the reception for Curran and Grayson held at Caxton Hall, Westminster, on 31 July. See *Labour Leader*, 9 August 1907, p. 107.

112. *Labor Call*, 31 October 1907, p. 3. He also attended a Socialist gathering in Epping Forest to celebrate the Curran-Grayson victories where he witnessed evidence of political sectarianism on the left.

reports very closely and prepared a series of articles for Labor Call which were published soon after his return to Melbourne. Anstey’s articles would have been welcome among those professing a serious interest in socialism because the official Australian delegate, Victor Kroemer, an eccentric Theosophist from South Australia, had made a fool of himself in his address to the congress and then sent back ridiculously glowing accounts of its proceedings. As Anstey observed:

The contributions to the debates by Kroemer, the representative of Australian militant Socialism, were not favourably received by either the Conference or the press. Kroemer was apparently under the impression that clairvoyance and Socialism were synonymous terms... and it is unfortunate that nobody on the Convention seems to be able to appreciate the clairvoyant powers of the Antipodean seancer.

Having dismissed Kroemer, he proceeded to report and interpret debates on the three main issues before the congress: militarism, socialism and trade unionism, and colonialism.

The problems of ‘militarism and international conflicts’ excited the greatest interest at the congress and Anstey spent some time trying to unravel the lengthy and complex debate for his readers. He was not far wide of the mark in his characterisation of what Gustave Hervé said about the necessity for workers to greet a declaration of war with strikes and insurrection.

114. One of the English reports that he consulted was a day by day account prepared by J Bruce Glasier, editor of the ILP’s Labour Leader, and published on 23 August 1907, p 137 and 30 August 1907, pp 153-155. Anstey’s articles appeared over three issues of Labor Call under the titles ‘Socialism and War’ on 10 October 1907, pp 2-3; ‘Socialism and Trades Unionism’ on 17 October 1907, pp 2-3; and a section headed ‘Socialism and Colonial Expansion’ under the general title The British Labor Movement on 31 October 1907, p 3.


116. Labor Call, 10 October 1907, p 2.

War is one of the manifold activities of Capitalism; patriotism one of the illusions by which Capitalism seeks to blind the working class to its own interests. War is a struggle for fresh markets, and patriotism a dunghill upon which Capitalism plants its flag. There is no motherland; no nationality - only classes.¹¹⁸

Although by 1915 Anstey's views had moved closer to this position, in 1907 he thought Hervé a man of 'rigid logic and strong words' who 'fills the enemies of Socialism with joy, and its defenders with terror'.¹¹⁹ On the argument presented by Jules Guesde he offered no comment, merely reporting Guesde's insistence that a specific campaign against militarism would distract the workers' attention from the more fundamental problem of abolishing capitalism, which was the underlying cause of war.¹²⁰ There was an approving tone in the way he reported Jean Jaures' argument that 'the working class should aid a defensive war, and revolt against a war of aggression'.¹²¹ Anstey appears, however, to have misinterpreted the position of the German Social Democrats when he suggested that, 'Instead of advocating universal disarmament [they] advocate universal armament, and they object to the conscription policy simply and only because it is not universal in its application, and does not fall on all classes alike.'¹²² Although this was strictly true, he did not explain that they favoured a democratic defence system involving all citizens capable of bearing arms, thus diminishing the possibility of capitalist inspired wars of aggression. In fact, Bebel's resolution called for workers and their parliamentary representatives to fight against the production of all land and sea armaments.¹²³ Anstey went on to discuss the British Independent Labour Party's objections to any kind of standing army or militia, and their preference for the voluntary system under which workers could be

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¹¹⁸ Labor Call, 10 October 1907, p.2.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. For Anstey's views during World War One see chapter 7 below.

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ Ibid. It was, perhaps, influential in his decision to oppose conscription in 1916 on similar grounds. See chapter 8 below.

¹²² Ibid.

persuaded not to enlist.124 After reporting further debate leading up to the adoption of the lengthy compromise resolution, Anstey approved it as an example of pragmatic statesmanship. He concluded:

And so it passed, demonstrating that national characteristics and conditions are not things to be ignored or overridden. Every nationality must develop socialistically upon lines congenial to itself, and adopt methods for the realisation of its ideals suitable to the characteristics of the particular race, and not methods a la some universally-applied prescription. Principles are one thing, tactics quite another, and by the resolution at least the International Socialist Congress of 1907 was compelled to make that point clear.125

His later report on how the congress handled the issue of socialism and colonial expansion made the same point: that the views of delegates were determined by the conditions prevailing within their own countries.126

His disapproval of Hervé's 'rigid logic' and his distaste for any 'universally-applied prescription' reflected his increasing attachment to the pragmatic approach encouraged by his experience of parliamentary politics. It might also have been an oblique reference to the hostility towards the Labor Party expressed at the Interstate Socialist Conference held, during his absence, at Melbourne in the second week of June 1907.127 Similarly, his 'common sense' recognition of national differences and the 'characteristics of the particular race' signified a view of nation and class that was to prevail, with such tragic results, among members of the Second International in 1914. As a practical politician Anstey may well have disliked the 'rigid logic' of Hervé and his Australian equivalents, but the exercise of pragmatism, no matter how subtle, could not resolve the contradictions inherent in the idea of a nationalist working class, nor of socialism in one country.

124. Labor Call, 10 October 1907, p.2.
125. Ibid., p.3.
126. Ibid., 31 October 1907, p.3.
127. For a discussion of the conference and the issues surrounding it see Hewitt, op. cit., pp 58-64.
Anstey's main interest during his trip to England, however, was in the British labour movement. As far as he was concerned, the debates at Stuttgart were an extension of the problems he had observed in England. Of all the difficulties confronting socialists in Europe, Britain and Australia, the most pressing was the need for working class solidarity. Deploring Quelch's sectarian attack on MacDonald and the British Labour Party, and the differences between French anarchists and American syndicalists, he ruefully noted that, 'To disputations upon doctrinal differences and definitions, there is no end.' Taking the same line as J.B. Askew, Vandervelde and Jaures, Anstey argued that:

...the main question of the 'class war' controversy is whether the 'class war' is observed in practice, whether the workers as political bodies maintain political independence, a separate existence, as a class. If so, the 'class war' is there; it exists in practice, even if denied as a theory. You cannot deny its existence because it is not conducted on the lines you think it should be conducted.

This was not just a summary of the argument advanced by one group of protagonists at Stuttgart, it was also an attack on those Australian socialists who in June had declared the Australian Labor Party a non-socialist organisation and urged all true socialists to sever their connections with it. He was thus giving tacit support to friends and colleagues like Curtin, Hyett and Tunnecliffe against the separatist faction of the Victorian Socialist Party which wanted to ban dual affiliation. On that issue, Anstey commended the views of Keir Hardie who '...considered it fatal to push out of the working class movement those elements that are prepared to support independent class activity but cannot go so far as to support a socialist declaration.' However, he had not simply followed Hardie on the matter. At the 1905 Political Labour Council of Victoria conference Anstey had argued against a motion from

128. Labor Call, 17 October 1907, p.2.

129. Ibid.

130. Hewitt, op. cit.

Harry Scott-Bennett that "Nationalisation of all the means of production, distribution and exchange" be a plank in the State platform. It would be inadvisable, he suggested, to include such a bold but indefinite declaration which would do nothing to advance the collectivist cause. It would only make it more difficult to organise support in the country among small farmers and independent miners. In the particular circumstances confronting Victorian Labor '...a party in advance of its platform was preferable to one whose announced policy was so much verbiage used to screen indolence or incapacity'. Two years later he had not changed his views. The Labor Party had to widen its base of support beyond the rather thin ranks of avowed socialists. 'We have expended our energy in spreading the gospel of working class unity rather than tearing each other to pieces by disputation upon a doctrine.' The British experience was instructive. There, the labour movement was riven with dissent between the Socialist Labour Party, the Social Democratic Federation, the Socialist Party of Great Britain, the Independent Labour Party and the Labour Representation Committee, among others. Thus:

To divide is the policy of the enemy. To maintain the solidarity is, therefore, the fundamental policy of any working class party, no matter whether its operations be industrial or political. To capture the solidarity on behalf of an idea is the prerogative of every member. To attempt to divide, to shatter it, because of the non-acceptance of that idea, is treachery.

Fortunately, in Anstey's view, the British Labour Party had recognised this when it rejected a socialist objective. Again, he agreed with Keir Hardie that, '...the resolution would drive out of the party all men who were not Socialists. It would be a serious tactical error for the Conference to attempt to impose Socialism on men not yet

132. For a report of the PLC conference deliberations see ibid, 27 April 1905, pp 4-5 and PLC minutes, op. cit, 21 April 1905, pp 251-264. Bennett was a committed socialist for most of his career. He was a founding member of the Victorian Socialist League in 1897, a member of H.H. Champion's Social Democratic Party from 1902 and Mann's VSP from 1906. He was MLA for Ballarat West from 1904 to 1907. See Graeme Osborne, 'Henry Gilbert Bennett' in Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (eds.), Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol.7, pp 268-269.

133. Labor Call, 17 October 1907, p.3.

134. Ibid, 31 October 1907, p.3.
prepared for it.'\textsuperscript{135} To Anstey, winning converts to socialism would not be achieved by imposing bold declarations or by obscure theoretical argument. It was better to preach a simple doctrine of solidarity, linked directly to workers' collective experience.

If you cannot imbue men with the ideal of a common fellowship, and with the easily understood doctrine of unity and its possibilities, you can teach them nothing. It is because the trades unionists have had their training in this preliminary essential that they constitute the most fruitful ground for Socialist propaganda.\textsuperscript{136}

For a man committed to the parliamentary road to socialism this made sense of his observations in England and his experience as an organiser in Victoria.

Despite the handicaps imposed by socialist sectarianism, Anstey was impressed by the systematic way in which his British Labour comrades, particularly the Independent Labour Party in the north of England, went about organising support. The work of the English agitators is simply stupendous, but it has to be, in order to conquer the mass of inertia and conservative hostility of the working class of England.\textsuperscript{137} The Independent Labour Party had some six hundred registered lecturers throughout England and Scotland, 175 of them in Yorkshire alone. But it was not simply the number of lecturers that impressed him. The manner in which they prepared for an election campaign was exemplary. The British Labour Party identified the constituencies it was going to contest, mapped them out and selected candidates two or three years before the poll. That way, the candidate was able to familiarise himself with the district, and have ample time to become well-known to supporters and electors alike. Each division was then organised in expectation of a campaign, with possible speaking places noted in an orderly manner. When an election was announced specific dates were set for meetings, outside speakers

\textsuperscript{135} [Ibid.](#) 7 November 1907, p.2.

\textsuperscript{136} [Ibid.](#) 14 November 1907, p.3.

\textsuperscript{137} [Ibid.](#) 28 November 1907, p.2.
arranged and halls booked months in advance. All this was done in addition to the local labourites' normal propaganda work.  

By way of contrast, the situation in Victoria was chaotic, as Tom Mann's experience had shown during his years as the PLC's organiser. Anstey went on to list some of the worst examples that he, Mann, McGrath and Tunnecliffe had encountered. They included the failure of local labourites to advertise meetings, book suitable venues, meet visiting speakers or even answer letters. He knew only too well how the lack of reliable people and a systematic plan '...is most disheartening and tends to make men cool off'. Based on the superior English model, he proposed a number of simple changes to co-ordinate strategy and available resources in selected State and Federal seats. As far as he was concerned, the practical problems arising from sloth and maladministration in the Labor Party were just as detrimental to the working class cause as socialist sectarianism.

During 1906-7 Anstey was forced to articulate his ideas about the working class, the labour movement and socialism. He wrote and spoke in the heat of battle against the wowsers in Melbourne, from the perspective of an engaged outsider in England, and in conditions of quiet contemplation on two long ocean voyages. Despite the differing circumstances and issues involved, a pattern was beginning to emerge.

The most obvious, and perhaps most important influence in shaping his political outlook was the fact that he was a member of the working class. His experience as a child in England, as a youth at sea and a young adult in Australia had taught him a great deal about the conditions in which working class people lived. He had not only read about the effects of poor housing, he could remember sleeping in the same room with seven other children. As a wharf labourer who had worked in the


139. *Ibid.* pp 2-3. There was a hint of dissatisfaction at the PLC's efficiency in Anstey's proposal. Until mid-1907 there was no full-time secretary of the PLC. Even after the appointment of P J Heagney, at the meagre salary of £1.56 per year, there was little improvement. He was both over-worked and inefficient, with the result that he was forced to resign and eventually replaced by Arch Stewart in 1910. Thereafter, things improved markedly. See McQueen, *Victoria*, op. cit., pp 314-315.
heat of summer, he knew how arduous toil could induce a prodigious thirst which men might want to slake at public houses in the company of workmates. He also understood how a 'flutter' at the Tote could add a little excitement to the otherwise dull routine of a working week. Anstey had been part of that working class, male culture and knew it for what it was; a diversion for most, solace for some. He was able to distinguish between the many for whom moderate drinking and gambling were harmless pastimes, and the few whose excess brought destitution to themselves and their families. So when the predominantly middle class wowsers wanted to impose a strict and discriminatory morality on the working class he detected the familiar stench of 'putrid hypocrisy and cant'. He reacted so strongly not simply because it was an attack on the recreational culture of his class, but also because it seemed to him to be based on the profoundly insulting assumption that working class people were morally inferior to their social 'betters' who would save them from their inherent weaknesses. The insult was both political and personal. He knew how his mother's quiet moral strength had sustained the family through the vicissitudes of his stepfather's itinerant labour. Despite considerable material deprivation, she and many like her had displayed a steadiness of character that needed no moral instruction from those who only knew a softer life. That assumption also mocked the endeavours of earnest self-improvers like him who had struggled to reach a position in life where they could do something to transform the condition of the common people. The working class, its labour movement and its party understood better than any middle class wowser could ever hope to do the corrosive effects of poverty upon morality. An intimate knowledge of the daily struggle for existence, supplemented by extensive reading about 'social problems', had strengthened Anstey's belief in material progress as the only road to enduring social reform.

His experience had also taught him that material progress could only be won through collective struggle by the working class acting on its own behalf. In pursuit of this common cause, it was important that the working class movement understand the social structure and historical processes involved. Blind revolt was futile. A sense
of direction and purpose was essential. Much of his reading, writing and speaking was directed towards that end. The difficulty, however, was in persuading all involved to agree on common objectives, strategies and methods. Unless that were done, doctrinal squabbles would dissipate the political energy that could be better spent trying to change the system that had created the working class. For Anstey, unity of purpose and action was prized far above the righteous impotence of socialist sectarianism. If that meant accepting political compromises and theoretical contradictions then so be it. As a self-educated radical he understood the need to interpret the world, but his hard-won knowledge of the working class and its condition reminded him that, ultimately, the point was to change it. In spite of all the difficulties confronting it, as an 'organic intellectual' he knew in his heart and in his head that the working class could not transform its social conditions until it acted as a class both united in itself and resolutely for itself.140

Although Anstey had been physically and intellectually refreshed by his socialist sabbatical, after the 'welcome home' functions were over he had to return to the same mundane problems as before.141 Establishing and sustaining an organisation to capture a greater share of the country vote for Labor remained one of the most intractable of those problems. Largely because of the abolition of the special electorates for public servants and railway workers, Labor had lost four seats at the 1907 election and so emphasising, yet again, the need to make headway in the country.142 In an attempt to practise what he preached, he was instrumental in reviving the party's organising committee. At a conference held in January 1908 it was decided to publish a consolidated list of Labor literature and assign members


141 For reports of the functions see Labor Call, 3 October 1907, p.4 and Worker (Sydney), 10 October 1907, p.8.

142 For a summary of the results see Rawson, 'Victoria', op.cit, p.103.
responsibility for specific federal electorates. Anstey accepted Indi in north-eastern Victoria which included some of the areas he and McGrath had worked through in 1904. Following the broad outlines of the scheme he had recommended in his Labor Call article, he spent a good deal of his time outside parliamentary sessions trying to set up new branches and get them to co-ordinate their work in a systematic way. As always, it was difficult and often unrewarding work. In June 1908 he asked the PLC Executive to provide him with some assistance but none was forthcoming. He did, nevertheless, have some success in establishing new branches at Walwa, Corryong, Bethanga and Sandy Creek in the Benambra electorate. However, none of the four state electorates that fell within the boundaries of Indi returned a Labor member at the 1908 elections. Eventually, in February 1909, he asked to be relieved of organising duties because of the 'financial strain' involved. As he contemplated the rather poor return on his capital, he might well have reflected on how the 'inertia and conservative hostility of the working class of England' appeared to have a parallel among country voters in Australia.

There was at least some return to be had among the urban working class in his own electorate. He had a number of friends and supporters at the Melbourne Tramway Company's depot in Brunswick. On several occasions over the years he had championed their cause in the perennial struggle over wages and conditions. His contribution to debate on the Factories and Shops Acts Amendment Bill in October 1907 was a typical example. There he gave a detailed account of how all grades of men

143. Labor Call, 30 January 1908, p.8.
144. For reports of his numerous forays into the electorate see ibid., 16 April 1908, p.8; 14 May 1908, p.8; 16 July 1908, p.8; and 3 November 1908, p.8.
145. See Political Labour Council of Victoria, Executive minutes, La Trobe Library, MS 10389, 20 June 1908.
146. Labor Call, 5 November 1908, p.8.
147. The electorates were Benalla, Benambra, Ovens and Wangaratta.
148. PLC Executive minutes, op. cit., 20 February 1909. James Scullin took over his duties.
working for the company were exploited through long hours, low pay, irregular employment and the use of young 'battlers' who worked without pay in the hope of eventually getting a job.\textsuperscript{149} When five long-serving men were later dismissed on the vague grounds that they were 'dissatisfied individuals', he raised the issue in the Assembly during the adjournment debate, alleging that they had been victimised because other workers had approached the Member for Collingwood to see if he could do something to bring them under the jurisdiction of a wages board. He did not mention that they were also trying to establish a union independent of the company sponsored benefit society. Having failed in direct representations to the company and to city businessmen associated with it, he brought the matter to public attention through parliament because '...the treatment of employees by the company is brutal and outrageous, and needs the condemnation of all public men'.\textsuperscript{150} He did manage to persuade Murray, the Premier, and two other government members to intercede on the men's behalf.\textsuperscript{151} In due course they were re-instated, but only on condition that they agree to accept the company union. His persistent work on behalf of these local tramway workers was vindicated when they were finally able to join the Australian Tramway Employees' Association in 1910 and when they got their wages board in 1911. Less than two years later they elected him President of their branch of the union.\textsuperscript{152} It was campaigns such as this which earned him the respect of political opponents and made him something of a working class hero among the men at the Brunswick depot.\textsuperscript{153} Although he did not need their assistance in the 1908 election because he

\textsuperscript{149} \textit{VPD.} vol.117, 8 October 1907, pp.1486-1487.

\textsuperscript{150} \textit{Ibid.} vol.121, 29 July 1909, p.483.

\textsuperscript{151} The others were Swinburne and Weedon. See Nugent, \textit{op. cit.}, p.437.

\textsuperscript{152} \textit{Ibid.} pp.437-438.

\textsuperscript{153} Interview with Clarrie O'Shea, \textit{op. cit.}
was returned unopposed, they were to provide a solid core of support at subsequent polls.154

Compared to 1906-7, Anstey's last two years in the Victorian Legislative Assembly were relatively quiet. He appeared to be progressively disengaging himself from State politics in anticipation of a shift to the Commonwealth parliament. On the few occasions when he did rise to speak he addressed much the same issues as before. In November 1907, when the Bent government proposed to hold a referendum to ask whether the electorate favoured scripture teaching in state schools, Anstey presented his usual case in defence of the secular state, arguing that the role of government schools was to teach children how to think, not what to think.155 Some ten months later there were flashes of the old rhetorical fire when the Assembly debated accusations that George Swinburne, as Minister for Water Supply, had gained improper advantage from the letting of contracts for pumping equipment. Recalling that Swinburne had been one of the leading parliamentary advocates of the wowser cause, he set off a barrage of abuse at what he considered '...the quintessence of cant...' in a man who '...pursues, under this pious garb of his, a malignant and pernicious course, and one detrimental to the state'.156 That, however, was more a ritual assault on the wowser than an indication of renewed interest in the Assembly's proceedings.157

There were some hints of a developing interest in a federal political career when he attended the 1908 Commonwealth Political Labour Conference in Brisbane as

154. For an account of the fall of the Bent Government, the campaign and the subsequent realignment on the conservative side of parliament see Rawson, 'Victoria', op. cit. pp.103-108.


156. Ibid., vol.119, 15 September 1908, p.739. Swinburne's biographers observed that, 'Such a gift for abuse is a powerful weapon for an orator; it is cruel and elemental, its wound is deeper and more lasting than the slash of a razor...'. See E.H. Sugden and F.W. Eggleston, George Swinburne: A Biography, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1931, p.269.

157. In addition to the occasional speeches already noted, he sat as a member of the Public Accounts Committee enquiry into the Auditor General's accusation that Bent had illegally authorised expenditure during December 1908. They found the accusation proven but no action was taken, See Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1909, second session, vol.1, pp.1039-1080.
a Victorian delegate, although there was nothing in his public performance at the Conference to suggest that he was trying to impress anybody. He spoke only three times. On one of those occasions he moved a motion that the words 'Trusts and Combines' be added to the plank calling for the nationalisation of monopolies, but it was promptly defeated when Batchelor, a South Australian delegate, pointed out that '... there might be trusts and combines which were not monopolies'. Having followed the European debates, he had something more substantial to say when J.C.Watson proposed a motion to introduce compulsory military training for 'all males, irrespective of class or condition'. The object of the exercise was to establish a '...citizen force [that] was the antithesis of militarism' because of its universal application. Anstey was not impressed with the proposal. 'They all knew...how the military had been used in industrial struggles.' He did acknowledge, however, that there was '...a vast spirit abroad in favour of the necessity for some such scheme as that outlined'. If it had to be accepted, he would prefer it to be universal because '...he did not favour any hybrid system of granting exemptions'. During the debate on industrial legislation he urged the party to clarify its policy on which areas were to be within State and Commonwealth jurisdictions so that candidates would know where they stood when they went before the electors. He might have been thinking of himself. Nevertheless, the fact remains that none of these contributions were particularly important in the Conference's deliberations.

158. The other Victorian delegates were J.A Agar, Ted Findley, P. Heagney, Frank Tudor and Tom Tunnecliffe. See Australian Labour Party, *Official report of the Fourth Commonwealth Political Labour Conference*, Brisbane, the Worker, 1908.


He said nothing during the debates on the most important issue at the Conference: King O'Malley's financial scheme which included provision for 'a national postal banking system'.\textsuperscript{163} He was, however, a member of the committee which considered it and presented a report to Conference. It is not clear what role he played in the committee's discussions, but given his existing interest in public finance and his later preoccupation with banking it is likely that he expressed some opinion on the matter.\textsuperscript{164} But no matter what view he may have taken, the subject of their discussion was a reminder that the Commonwealth parliament was the place where such important issues were to be decided.

When he returned to the largely unrewarding work of organising in the Indi electorate and the leisurely deliberations of the Victorian Legislative Assembly, the House of Representatives might have seemed a more interesting place to be. In fact, there are suggestions that Anstey's own branch had cast an eye towards the federal electorate of Bourke as early as July 1907.\textsuperscript{165} By April 1909 the Political Labour Council executive had finally decided to organise itself to select candidates for metropolitan seats which Labor might have a chance of winning and in June called for nominations.\textsuperscript{166} Anstey was one of four candidates to contest the preselection ballot on 5 and 6 July. Nobody was surprised when he won, easily defeating the other hopefuls, including Randolph Bedford who had contested Bourke for Labor at the last


\textsuperscript{164} When the House of Representatives debated the Bill to establish the Commonwealth Bank Anstey did not speak. During his speech on the Australian Notes Bill he said, 'I have no hesitation in saying that I am an advocate of a National Bank to utilise our national credit, free from the limitations and restrictions of any private corporations whatsoever.' See \textit{CPD}, vol. 56, 19 August 1910, pp. 1820-1829. At the risk of reading history backwards, it is possible that he opposed the committee's report as not going far enough.

\textsuperscript{165} Nugent, \textit{op. cit.}, p 440.

\textsuperscript{166} Ibid, pp 440-441 and PLC executive minutes, \textit{op. cit.}, 25 April and 17 July 1909.
As a popular State member occupying one of the Assembly seats within the boundaries of Bourke, his chances of winning were better than most. Having formally committed himself to a federal parliamentary career, he became increasingly preoccupied with organising for the coming campaign along the lines he had suggested after his visit to England. In February 1910 he resigned from the Victorian Legislative Assembly to contest the federal election on 13 April.

His last speech in the State parliament was on the Local Government Acts Amendment Bill. It proposed to hand over control of boxing matches, most of which were staged by John Wren, to local councils in response to complaints that they were causing a nuisance to residents. Not surprisingly, Anstey detected the hands of middle class wowsers at work. The objections, he alleged, were on three grounds: that boxing had a bad effect on the morals of the working class; that the value of properties near the venues were being lowered; and that boxing matches tended to attract unsavoury characters to the areas where they were held. As far as he was concerned, it was an attempt to suppress boxing by the same effete killjoys who had tried to outlaw drinking and gambling: ‘This Bill is pandering to an effeminate class, who want to womanise the community, and to rob it of all that is manly.’ It is perhaps fitting that Anstey should conclude his career in the Victorian parliament defending masculine working class culture, and the interests of John Wren, against the reforming zeal of wowsers.

167. Ibid. Anstey received all but two of the 163 votes cast. Bedford later alleged that he was ‘...jockeyed out of nomination...’. See Randolph Bedford, Naught to Thirty-Three, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1976, p 241. [First edition published in Sydney by Currawong Publishing Company in 1944.]


169. On Wren’s control of boxing in Melbourne at this time see Niall Brennan, John Wren: Gambler, his life and times, pp 225-226.


171. Ibid., p.1917.
Anstey with rank-and-file members of the Tramways Union, c. 1910.
While Anstey had an easy victory in Labor's preselection ballot for the seat of Bourke, the task of dislodging James Hume Cook, the sitting Fusion Liberal, at the April 1910 federal election was going to be more difficult. Like Anstey, Hume Cook lived in Brunswick and was also a self-improver whose sympathies were 'entirely with the labouring classes', which gave him a certain 'popularity among small business and working-class families'. As a representative of the Liberal Protectionist tradition in Victoria, he was uncomfortable with some of the Anti-Socialist colleagues acquired when he followed Deakin into the Fusion. In many ways, his position was typical of the liberals who were jostled in a more conservative direction by the transition to a two party system in federal politics.

With the increasing polarisation of the two parties Hume Cook may have been swimming against the tide of political history, but Anstey and his supporters were careful not to underestimate the extent of his support among the voters in Bourke. Well before the election was due, they began to organise their campaign in that systematic way Anstey had outlined after his return from England in 1907. Soon after


3. Although the election was not held until 13 April 1910, Anstey's committee had begun serious organising work in late January, with weekly meetings on Saturday nights at 260 Sydney Road, Brunswick. See *Labor Call*, 3 February 1910, p.6 and 10 February 1910, inside back cover.
the date was announced, it was clear that the campaign was going to be a vigorous one. With all the resources of Labor Call at their disposal, Anstey and his colleagues ran a campaign of sustained abuse against the 'Fusees', exploiting, in particular, the discomfort of the old Liberal Protectionists on the fiscal issue. They unsettled Hume Cook early in the campaign by publishing leaked letters which allegedly showed that he had misused government resources to distribute anti-Labor propaganda and organise a band of young supporters. From his opening speech, Hume Cook's meetings were regularly interrupted by heckling and persistent interjections. In the early stages the harassment provoked him to some ill-advised comment about the unemployed which merely encouraged the 'rowdy elements' and made it difficult for him to get a fair hearing in some parts of the electorate. Despite Anstey's public denunciation of such tactics, Hume Cook did not regain his composure. He seemed to be on the defensive for most of the campaign.

It was not, however, an entirely one-sided fight. Some Fusion supporters did manage to land a few blows on Anstey. There were letters to the editor and anonymous handbills which tried to exploit the sectarian issue by alleging that Anstey was a Catholic, tainted by support from the drink and gambling interests. Although he felt obliged to reply, there is no evidence that he was in any way unsettled by the accusations. He had, after all, survived a more sustained onslaught of that kind in 1907. Confident that he had the initiative, Anstey pounded away at the instability of the Fusion, its attitude to protection and general social reform, taking numerous

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4. See, for example, *ibid*, 17 February 1910, p.3.

5. *ibid*, pp.2 and 5.

6. For a full report of the disorderly scenes at Hume Cook's campaign opening in Brunswick see *Brunswick and Coburg Star*, 4 March 1910, n.p.; and for a later incident see *Labor Call*, 24 March 1910, p.3. In the more restrained atmosphere of Coburg he was given an attentive hearing. See *Brunswick and Coburg Star*, 1 April, 1910.

7. There were letters to the editor and some discussion in the local press over the issue of disorderly meetings, but generally Anstey's protestations appeared to be accepted. See, for example, *Brunswick Medium*, 8 April 1910, n.p.

8. See, for example, *Brunswick and Coburg Star*, 8 April 1910, n.p.
swipes at Hume Cook and Deakin along the way. Unlike his opponent, Anstey was able to spend a fair amount of time advocating his party’s policy. Like most candidates, he tended to concentrate on the policies that he thought most appropriate to the particular constituency, or special interests within it. Anstey emphasised New Protection, the nationalisation of monopolies and White Australia, with little mention of the Commonwealth Bank, defence, or land tax; the other major planks in the Labor platform. He also expressed strong support for equal pay at a meeting of women electors in Coburg. In addition, his sense of timing was as good as ever. It was unlikely to have been coincidental that during the campaign he was given a social evening in appreciation of his service to the people of Brunswick in the Legislative Assembly. The same applies to his presidential address at the annual general meeting of the Brunswick Football Club in early March.

By polling day on 13 April, it was clear that Anstey’s team had run the more successful campaign. Not only did they appear to hold more meetings, their audiences had been larger and a good deal more friendly than Hume Cook’s. Anstey managed to distance himself from his more rowdy supporters and had turned the sectarian attack to his advantage, having learned in 1907 that a majority of the electors deplored religious sectarianism in politics. Even the local press were helpful. The Brunswick Medium reported the campaign in an apparently even-handed manner although it gave Anstey more extensive coverage, while the Brunswick and Coburg Star was clearly favourable to him.

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9 For detailed reports of some of his speeches see ibid, 4, 11,18 March and 8 April 1910, n.p.; and Brunswick Medium, 18 March and 8 April 1910, n.p. For the Labor manifesto see Labor Call, 7 April 1910, p.2.

10 Brunswick and Coburg Star, 8 April 1910, n.p.

11 Brunswick Medium, 4 March 1910, n.p.


Soon after the polls closed at 7 p.m. an expectant crowd of some 6,000 to 7,000 people gathered outside the Brunswick Town Hall to watch the progressive tally as it was posted on the front of the building. As the first returns came in, it was clear that Hume Cook’s comfortable majority had been wiped out in a landslide to Anstey and Labor. Each new set of figures was greeted with cheers from the largely partisan crowd until, just after midnight, the final count (minus postal and absentee votes) went up, showing that Anstey had won by a margin of more than 5,000 votes. After a short speech in which he denounced the greed of monopoly interests, and promised fidelity to the popular will until his dying day, Anstey retired to savour his victory and contemplate the future.

The _Brunswick Medium_ offered an acute summary of the reasons for Anstey’s large majority.

To return to Bourke, it must not be forgotten that it was by no means the labor vote alone which placed Mr Anstey in his proud position on Wednesday. Giving all due credit to the splendid organisation and untiring efforts of that party, it must be recognised that a large number of votes, hitherto denied absolutely to labor under any conditions, were attracted by the great popularity and undeniable personality of the representative of Labor. This fact added to the solid support of labor, rendered Mr Anstey’s victory such an overwhelming one, exceeding the most sanguine expectations of his friends and supporters.

The _Medium’s_ leader writer generously omitted another important element in the Labor win: the disunity and poor organisation of the Fusion. It was well-known that Deakin had claimed the support of ‘faked’ organisations during his negotiations with the Anti-Socialists, and the leaked letters from Hume Cook showed that he lacked any

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15. The _Brunswick Medium_, 15 April 1910, n.p.; the _Brunswick and Coburg Star_, 15 April 1910, n.p.; and the _Northcote Leader_, 16 April 1910, n.p. All give detailed reports of events on polling day. The final figures were Hume Cook, 12,660 for 41.40 per cent of the vote, to Anstey’s 17,918 for 58.59 per cent. More than 75 per cent of the electors cast a vote, making it one of the highest turn-outs in the country. See Hughes and Graham, *op. cit.*, p 38.


real organisational base in the electorate. The voters preferred Andrew Fisher's benign leadership of a seemingly united Labor Party with clear policies, which, ironically, did not differ markedly from those of the old Deakinite Liberals.

Indeed, Labor had enjoyed an historic victory. For the first time, a single party commanded an absolute majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. When Anstey attended his initial federal caucus meeting on 26 April he did so, for the first time, as a member of the governing party. As Anstey greeted his comrades, he might have taken special satisfaction in seeing P J. Moloney who had won Indi for Labor, the seat in which he had spent so much apparently unrewarding time organising party branches. Moloney's presence was, in part at least, a vindication of Anstey's insistence that Labor had to establish a branch network in the country if it was ever to govern, particularly with a Senate majority. When caucus got round to electing the ministerial team at its next meeting on 29 April, Anstey was nominated and made it to the second round in the exhaustive ballot used to fill such positions, but he was then eliminated. Despite any disappointment at not being selected, he could be satisfied that his decision to leave the Victorian parliament was justified. He had moved from the opposition benches in the state parliament to the government benches in the Commonwealth parliament, where he might entertain the hope of ministerial rank in the future. In the meantime, he would have a part in

18. *Labor Call*, 17 February 1910, p.3.

19 In the House of Representatives Labor won forty-one seats to thirty-one for the Fusion, with three Protectionist dissidents from the Fusion returned as Independents. Of those three, two usually supported Labor. In the half Senate poll Labor won all eighteen places, giving Labor twenty-two Senators to the Fusion's fourteen. See Geoffrey Sawer, *Australian Federal Politics and Law, 1901-1929*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1956, p.89.

20 This is not to say that it was an enduring advance. Moloney was defeated at the 1913 poll, won it back in 1914 but lost it again in 1917.

the deliberation of national policy. At the very least, the doubling of his salary from £300 to £600 per year was an immediate and very tangible source of gratification.

While waiting to instruct the new parliament on the weighty issues of national policy, Anstey took the opportunity to preach a provocative little sermon on 'Christ the Revolutionary' at the Congregational Church in Blyth Street, Brunswick. Returning to a familiar theme - that the contemporary churches were conservative and complacent - he declared that, 'To fill a church to overflowing ... a preacher must make his voice ring out like the prophets of old against the iniquities of our time.' He went on to remind the congregation that, 'Christ preached a revolutionary doctrine, and promulgated a doctrine distinctly antagonistic to the ruling classes of the day.' Sectarian voters who had been alarmed by the claim that he was a closet Catholic might have been reassured by a 'Roman Catholic' who wrote to the Argus deploring Anstey's views as blasphemous, suggesting that he join an '... infant preparatory catechism class in some of our schools before he intrudes again his ignorance and irreverence on ours and the public ear'.

Soon after parliament assembled on 1 July 1910 and the government announced its legislative programme, Andrew Fisher introduced the Australian Notes Bill to the House. Its purpose was to give the government, through Treasury, the sole right to issue legal tender notes within Australia. Notes issued by the private banks were to be squeezed out of circulation by a separate act that imposed a tax on them. Both measures were duly passed after only token resistance from the opposition and the first notes printed by Treasury came into circulation in 1913. It was a


23. Ibid, 12 May 1910, p.9. On 3 July he discoursed on the less controversial topic of Bully Hayes, 'The Last of the Pirates' to an audience at the Gaiety Theatre. The report in the Melbourne Socialist 8 July 1910, p.1 does not indicate whether he repeated his false claim to have sailed with Hayes.

largely uncontroversial measure designed to avoid the 'monetary confusion' that had bedevilled Australia periodically during the nineteenth century, most recently during the 1893 bank crashes.\textsuperscript{25} It also gave the government the right to the profits that accrued from the issue of currency.\textsuperscript{26} As far as Anstey and his like-minded colleagues were concerned, the significance of the Bill lay in the fact that it began the process towards what 'Iceberg' Irvine called 'O'Malley pasteurised'.\textsuperscript{27} It was the first step in the diluting of O'Malley's grand scheme for a national banking system that the radicals hoped would eventually undermine the commanding position of the private banks in the Australian monetary system. In the light of his later political career, it is significant that Anstey chose the Australian Notes Bill for his maiden speech in the House of Representatives.\textsuperscript{28}

His main point was that paper currency issued and guaranteed by governments was the safest form of money. Drawing on the wide reading for which he was well-known in the Victorian parliament, he selectively surveyed English, French and American monetary history to demonstrate the instability of the gold standard in times of crisis, how it could be manipulated by speculators, and the ultimate safety of fiduciary currency backed by a nation's productive assets. Although not all the points in his speech were strictly relevant to the Bill, he was leading up to a more general point common to Labor's monetary radicals. 'I have no hesitation in saying that I am an advocate of a National Bank to utilise our national credit, free from the limitations and restrictions of any private corporations whatsoever.'\textsuperscript{29}

\begin{itemize}
\item For an explanation of how this worked, see Butlin, \textit{op. cit}.
\item For a description of that process, see Gollan, \textit{op. cit.}, chapter 7.
\item \textit{Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (CPD)}, vol.56, 19 August 1910, pp.1820-1829.
\item \textit{Ibid.}, p.1829.
\end{itemize}
Having so clearly declared himself a member of the radical faction, it was not surprising that he was not called to speak when Fisher introduced the Commonwealth Bank Bill fifteen months later, in November 1911. The bank described in that Bill was well short of the vision which had excited O'Malley's supporters, much less radicals like Anstey who wanted an institution that would be the first step towards complete nationalisation. Not only did it lose the right to issue paper currency, it also lacked the powers of a true central bank; a crucial element in O'Malley's scheme. In its essentials, it was to operate as a normal trading and savings bank, with the additional responsibility for conducting the Commonwealth government's business. Except in matters of ownership, and management by a single governor, its appearance differed little from that of an ordinary proprietary bank. In his speech on the Australian Notes Bill, Anstey had indicated his acceptance of what was to come.

I hold strongly to the opinion that that bank should precede any note issue, but I can give the fullest measure of respect to men whose honesty of conviction has stood the storm and stress of many years. Although I disagree with the order of precedence adopted, it is sufficient for me to know that we are at least taking one step towards the realisation of the definite policy which this party has been advocating for twenty-five long years.

As a succession of Labor leaders were to discover, he was not always so acquiescent when he disagreed with party policies.

Even when he had no fundamental differences with the party, his directness could lead to embarrassment. On 21 March 1912 he told a Northcote audience that the Labor government was 'marching to its Sedan' at the next election 'because it would have to carry the referendum on its back, and seeing they were so badly defeated on

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31 CPD, vol.56, 19 August 1910, p.1829. When the Sydney Worker, 22 September 1910, pp.5-6 reported the speech, it concentrated on the positive aspects of 'Labor Member Anstey's convincing speech'. Government scheme justified by the experience of other lands', rather than his reservations about it not being part of a more radical package of measures.
the last occasion, they could not hope to be victorious on the next'.

Although he did preface his statement with the observation that the government 'would not suffer by comparison with any Government which had preceded it', the comment was sufficient for the *Argus* to give itself 'the unique pleasure of cordially agreeing with Mr. Anstey'. Of course, it did not agree with him. Anstey's statement simply provided the occasion for the paper to review the government's record and conclude that, were it not for the rigid solidarity of the pledge and caucus system, any honourable government would have resigned in the face of such an overwhelming rejection by the people, as evidenced by the referenda result. Anstey finally put an end to the little controversy with an explanation at a Labor Party meeting in Preston on 2 April. His motives were simply to warn the party that if the government persisted with the referenda, they would be defeated at the 1913 elections.

There can be no counsel of despair in drawing attention to the changing conditions of the political struggle. The men who point to the new instrumentalities of war used by the enemy are those who draw attention to the possibilities of defeat, and they are more likely to achieve victory than those who explain away the disaster of yesterday with the foolish belief that things will be different to-morrow.

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32. *Argus*, 22 March 1912, p. 8. The referenda he referred to were those which sought an extension of Commonwealth power in the areas of trade and commerce, corporations, wages and industrial disputes, and the power to nationalise monopolies. The questions were, in part, an attempt to secure the necessary constitutional power to give legislative effect to the 'new protection' which linked tariff and wages policies by an elaborate mechanism designed to protect domestic manufacturers and, at the same time, maintain workers' living standards. They were put to the people on 16 April 1911 and soundly defeated. The coming referenda he mentioned were similar questions put to the people at the 1913 federal election. That time they were defeated by a much narrower margin and even managed to win majorities in three states. See Geoffrey Sawer. *op cit.*, pp. 98-100. Shortly before the April 1911 referendum poll Anstey had argued that the questions were really designed to clarify constitutional powers. Thus, the duly elected representatives would be able to give expression to the people's will which could no longer be obstructed by Tory lawyers defending the last 'Ditch of Definitions' before the High Court. See *Labor Call*, 2 March 1911, p. 4. Although he was not explicit about it, he was referring to the constitutional challenge to 'new protection' in *R. v. Barger*.


34. *Ibid*

35. *Ibid*, 3 April 1912, p. 14. On the controversy that followed the initial statement, he said, 'I made a few remarks at Northcote recently that to my surprise have been the subject of hundreds of leading articles, have been talked of on as many platforms, referred to on trains and trams, and written about by myriads of anonymous scribblers.' This was, of course, a case of the usual Anstey irony.
This might have clarified his intentions, but it could not repair the damage already done.

In August 1912 the *Argus* gave him the same sort of treatment following a speech at the Gaiety Theatre where he told his audience that, 'Government by a trust was not a greater evil than government by a crowd of officials. They had to guard against the danger of an official bureaucracy that would be a greater curse to the people than any that had been before'. Anstey's assertion that the democratic principle of responsible parliamentary government should prevail over the actions of an unelected executive was gleefully misconstrued by the *Argus* leader writer as a repudiation of socialism.

Mr Anstey has not stated the danger of socialism a jot too strongly; the tyranny which socialism would set up would, in very truth, be the ghastliest of all tyrannies. ... Many people will also feel a certain glee - such is our fallen humanity! - in the thought of the perplexity which Mr Anstey's outspokenness will cause in the minds of his political chiefs.36

As a publicist who was adept at tearing other people's statements out of context, Anstey could hardly complain at such treatment. It was, nevertheless, a reminder to his party colleagues that his forthright political style made him a relatively easy target for witty conservatives.

After his prediction about Labor 'marching to its Sedan' had been fulfilled at the May 1913 federal election and Joseph Cook's Liberal government had assumed office, Anstey found himself at odds with his own party over a minor provision in the Electoral Bill. During debate on the bill he had suggested that the Fisher government was wrong to have abolished the postal vote for sick people and that he supported the present government's move to restore that right. He did, however, oppose giving a postal vote to people who merely declared that they would be more than five miles from a polling booth on election day.37 Government ministers and the *Argus* were


37. *CPD*, vol.70, 23 September 1913, p.1415. He later moved an amendment to allow postal votes only to the sick or invalid, but it was rejected by the Attorney-General, 'Iceberg' Irvine. See *Ibid.*, vol.71, 3 November 1913, pp.2898-2899.
delighted by this apparent crack in caucus solidarity. The Prime Minister, Mr Cook, would make no comment with regard to the development, but he smiled in a manner which showed he appreciated to the full the turn events had taken.\textsuperscript{38} Indeed, Anstey's action was more significant than a simple disagreement on a minor provision within an obscure bill. As Labor still had the numbers in the Senate, the government was determined to create the conditions for a double dissolution and had used the Electoral Bill to that end.\textsuperscript{39} Anstey's attitude to the postal vote provision was an unwelcome complication for the caucus executive which had resolved to oppose the bill in its entirety for tactical reasons.\textsuperscript{40}

A long succession of incidents such as these were part of the reason why Anstey did not find favour with the majority of caucus members who looked for disciplined, reliable men when executive or ministerial positions were being decided. He might have been right about Labor 'marching to its Sedan'. He had a point in asserting the supremacy of parliament over the executive, just as there were sound principles behind his insistence that the sick and infirm should have a vote. His sin, however, was in raising these matters in the public domain where Labor's opponents could make the most of apparent division within caucus ranks.

Doubts about his soundness as a potential member of cabinet would have been compounded by the way he pressed some ministers in the Fisher government on details concerning the administration of their portfolios. Throughout 1910-1913 he asked numerous questions about the fairness of pay increments and promotion opportunities in the public service, particularly the Post Office.\textsuperscript{41} He also wanted to know, during debate on the estimates for works and buildings, whether the proposed

\textsuperscript{38} Argus, 24 September 1913, p.16.

\textsuperscript{39} For a discussion of the Electoral Bill, the subsequent Postal Voting Restoration Bill and their role in the constitutional tussle leading up to the double dissolution see Sawer, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.114-117; 121-123.

\textsuperscript{40} For caucus debate on the issue see Weller, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.337-346 passim.

\textsuperscript{41} See, for example, \textit{CPD}, vol 57, 29 September 1910, p.3927; 5 October 1910, p.4117; vol 58, 14 October 1910, pp.4628-4629; and vol 60, 21 September 1911, p.688.
naval college would be a 'class institution', maintaining the tradition of drawing officers from the privileged classes.  

There were some occasions when he could not hide his exasperation at the Fisher government's cautious approach to the implementation of party policy and the administration of specific departments. Annoyed at the timidity of Frazer in not pursuing reform within the Postmaster-General's department, he declared, 'This Labour Government, which I have supported through thick and thin from the beginning, wobbles along behind its predecessors.'

Despite his public expressions of impatience at his party's timidity, Anstey was still a very effective voice in defence of those government policies with which he agreed. As a backbencher, he did not have the same prominence in debate that he enjoyed in the Victorian parliament, and so did not speak as often, but when called on he could still rise to the occasion. One such case was when Deakin moved a motion of no-confidence in O'Malley because he had introduced preference to unionists in his Department of Home Affairs, which controlled the public service. In reply to the argument that the practice was 'unjust and oppressive', Anstey delivered a forceful, if somewhat disorganised, speech which linked compulsory unionism to the labour movement's wider objective of social reform. As was usual, he allowed himself to be distracted from the main point of his argument in the early stages while he exchanged pleasantries with members opposite. Eventually he was brought to order by Joseph Cook's weary observation that, 'It is time that the honorable member came to

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42. Ibid., vol.56, 7 September 1910, p.2764.

43. Ibid., vol.61, 7 November 1911, pp.2295-2296.

44. His most substantial speeches in defence of Labor policy and its legislative record were delivered during Address-in-reply debates. The greater freedom allowed members during these debates suited Anstey's discursive style and allowed him to develop arguments about the general principles underlying Labor policy. See, for example, Ibid., vol.64, 11 July 1912, pp.671-682; vol.70, 2 September 1913, pp.770-783; and vol.73, 21 April 1914, pp.170-176.

45. Deakin's motion was, 'That, in the opinion of this House, the preferences in obtaining and retaining employment recently introduced into his Department by the Minister for Home Affairs are unjust and oppressive; prejudicial alike to the public interest, to the Public Service, and to the relations between Parliament and the public servants.' See Ibid., vol.60, 28 September 1911, p.877.
the question. He began the substantial part of his speech by reminding the House that it was the unions which had been in the forefront of the struggle to eliminate the most unjust and oppressive industrial conditions in Australia. Thus:

If it is obvious that organisation is essential - if we see that in every country the working classes are the better off where they are the best organised - it is the duty of the Government to assist organisation in every possible manner. There can be no objection to this policy in a country where the principle of compulsory training is laid down; indeed, there must be recognised the principle of the organisation of the working Democracy.

Replying to Opposition accusations that Labor was a 'class party', he willingly acknowledged the fact and claimed that:

The Government which legislates in the interests of the working classes is essentially a democratic Government, seeing that the working classes constitute a majority of the community. ... A Government to be truly democratic must remove the abuses of society until every man who is willing to work shall find himself free from the brute struggle for existence, and thus enabled to attain his true development on a higher intellectual and moral plane.

He had not, of course, properly addressed the question of individual liberty which so agitated Opposition Members. But despite the non sequiturs he had argued a forceful case which succeeded in deflecting debate away from the difficult liberal issue of individual rights on to the question of the collective good. In so doing, he had put the argument back onto territory which Labor felt more comfortable in defending.

In debate on the Conciliation and Arbitration Bill of 1911 he was again on familiar, not to say hallowed, ground. He rejected Opposition claims that Arbitration Court awards led to inflation. The Court had not only brought relative industrial peace to Australia, but had provided an orderly, quasi-judicial way of maintaining the living standards of ordinary working people. It was recognised, even by the London Times

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46. Ibid., p.886.

47. Ibid., p.887. He was, of course, referring to compulsory military training. For a discussion of the scheme see John Barrett, Falling In: Australians and 'Boy Conscription', 1911-1913, Sydney, Hale and Iremonger, 1979, especially chapter 2.

as a truly civilising institution. Preference to unionists, conciliation and arbitration; these were the kinds of issues on which the legitimacy of Labor governments rested. There was neither justification nor honour in the time-serving timidity of some Labor Members who preferred not to confront the Liberals directly on such issues.

Anstey's often expressed concern for the economic and moral welfare of the working class was not merely contrived for rhetorical effect in the cut and thrust of parliamentary debate. It arose from consistent and sincere beliefs which had informed much of his political work, and doubtless recommended him to the members of the Tramways Union when they were looking for a new president. He had, after all, previously defended members of the union against victimisation, and was well-remembered for his principled stand against Irvine's Coercion Bill in 1903. Moreover, he had been a delegate from the Seamen's Union to the Trades Hall Council in the 1890s and was now a member of the Commonwealth parliament, representing an electorate that covered a number of tramway depots and engine houses.

The union certainly needed someone with sufficient authority in the labour movement to exert a steadying influence after the 'picnic money' affair. Shortly before Anstey was approached to stand for the presidency, there had been a deficiency of £63/3/4 in the union balance sheet, which gave rise to suggestions that some one had 'got away' with the 'picnic money'. Although it is not clear from the management committee's minute book whether that accusation was directed at the secretary, G.L. Prendergast, or a member named Scarborough, it was Prendergast who appears to have been held responsible. He ceased to be secretary and was removed from his seat on the federal council of the union. Anstey was elected on a reform

49 Ibid., vol. 61, 18 October 1911, pp.1564-1566.

50 For the precise location of the depots and engine houses see John D. Keating, Mind the Curve! A History of the Cable Trams, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1970, pp.138-139. For a brief description of the work carried out at the depots see pp.89-90, and for a map of the lines see p.37.

51 See Australian Tramways Employees Association (Victorian Branch), minute books, committee of management, executive and general meetings, La Trobe Library, MS 7818/482/2, vol.1, 6 and 12 August 1912, 16 December 1912 and 7 February 1913.
ticket in October 1912, after which he quickly settled into the role expected of union presidents. When pressing parliamentary or other duties did not detain him, he occupied the chair at normal meetings, led deputations to management and the government, supervised the establishment of new services such as a benefit fund for members and helped settle internal disputes. At the end of his first term he was able to report that 'the officers had worked loyally together, with the happy result that the Branch was now scrupulously clean in every particular'. That did not, however, imply that relations between members were entirely harmonious. He concluded his report 'with an exhortation to members to set aside personalities and work for the common good'.

In addition to parliamentary and constituency work, one of the duties that occasionally kept him from union meetings was his increased commitment to Labor Call. During 1910 to 1914 he wrote regular and lengthy articles for the paper, and occasionally took a turn in the editorial chair. Most of his articles were concerned with immediate political issues arising out of parliamentary debates or elections. Some were addressed to the more general questions of political economy, and a few reflected his particular interests in the field of popular literature. In this last category, he allowed his fondness for a well-rounded story to extend beyond the occasional embellishment of his own seafaring years. Taking Louis Becke as his model, he wrote

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52. He chaired his first weekly committee of management meeting on 31 October 1912. See ibid.
53. See, for example, ibid., 31 October 1912 - 22 May 1913 passim.
54. Ibid., 23 October 1913. At that general meeting he was returned unopposed as president.
55. It is impossible to give a precise indication of who was the editor of Labor Call at any given moment. The paper did not publish a list of staff. It is only by occasional remarks in the text of articles that the editor for the particular edition can be identified. As H.J.Gibbney observed of its predecessor Tocsin, 'Staff arrangements were particularly loose.' Gibbney has, however, been able to identify Norman McLeod as editor to 1909, Maurice Blackburn c.1912-1920 and W. Wallis during December 1917. See H.J.Gibbney, Labor in Print: a guide to the people who created a labor press in Australia between 1850 and 1939, Canberra, Australian National University, 1975, items 181 and 402. In the lead up to the 1913 federal elections, Anstey was doing one of his periodic stints as editor. See Labor Call, 13 March 1913, pp.4-5 in the text of an article headed 'Confessions worth Recording'.

a short piece for the 1911 Christmas issue of Labor Call. 'The Wife of Pierre Lamont' was a well-crafted tale of tragic love and adventure in the South Seas, faithful to the melodramatic conventions of the 'ripping yarns' genre, with touches of authentic detail that only an old seaman could provide.\(^{56}\) In a later article, he reviewed The Conflict, an apocalyptic, populist novel by David Phillips. Written in the style popularised by Ignatius Donnelly in the 1890s, it told a story of industrial and political struggle involving ruthless plutocrats, treacherous politicians, an heroic labour leader, and a passionate woman journalist 'exuberant with the joy of life'. Anstey recommended it, not simply as a good read, but also because, 'David Hull, the "Great Liberal" leader, the chief of the "Fusion", the political instrument of the industrial plutocracy, is a facsimile of Alfred Deakin.'\(^{57}\)

According to Anstey, the commitment of conservative politicians to plutocracy was especially evident in their land policy. In 1910 the Fisher government imposed a graduated land tax on larger holdings with an unimproved valuation above £5,000. The conservative Murray government in Victoria replied by amending its Land Tax Act to cover properties valued between £250 and £5,000. Drawing on the same body of data assembled for the book Monopoly and Democracy, Anstey penned a series of articles suggesting that the Murray government's action would effectively discourage agricultural production and closer settlement by taxing the small holder. The difference between the Fisher and Murray governments was stark and clear. 'Under the Federal Land Tax no poor man is hit, and under the tax of the anti-Labor State

\(^{56}\) Labor Call, 21 December 1911, p.10. The story centred on Ruth Lamont, a neglected wife who ran away to sea with John Clapperton, the captain of an island trading schooner. While they were trying to avoid Pierre Lamont, the pursuing husband, the schooner was wrecked by a tidal wave and the lovers were cast adrift. After a desperate struggle to save her from drowning, Clapperton and his lady love were washed ashore on the island they had made their home. Just as she discovered that Clapperton had been mortally wounded during the rescue, Mrs Lamont saw her husband coming along the beach. Distraught at the death of Clapperton, and the approach of her estranged husband, she plunged a knife into her heart and fell, dead, across the body of her one true love.

Government no rich man is hit.\textsuperscript{58} When the census figures were released in early 1912, Anstey argued that they showed a marked population drift away from rural areas in Victoria, thus exposing the folly of the Murray government’s land and immigration policies.\textsuperscript{59} By comparison, the federal land tax had been an outstanding success. It had helped reduce the tendency towards monopoly in land, had increased agricultural production by opening up land to small holders, stimulated secondary industries serving the agricultural sector, and returned sufficient revenue to fund public works, as well as the expansion of government services and pensions.\textsuperscript{60}

This justification of the federal land tax was not an argument in isolation. It was entirely consistent with Anstey’s attachment to a more fundamental ideal; the belief that the principal task of the Labor party was to work for a more benevolent, interventionist state which would protect and improve the living standards of working class people. This meant a commitment to ‘White Australia’ so that Asian labour could not be used to force down wages. It meant support for unions and the arbitration system, and it meant protection for Australian industries against cheap imports. Like most Labor people, he was initially attracted to Deakin’s ‘new protection’ which, by an ingenious formula, linked tariff protection for employers with their readiness to pay ‘fair and reasonable’ wages.\textsuperscript{61} However, by the time Anstey entered federal politics, the crucial link between fiscal and wages policy had been seriously weakened. Higgins’ much vaunted Harvester judgement had come unstuck in the High Court case of \textit{R. v. Barger}.\textsuperscript{62} In the campaign for the 1911 referenda, the Fusion

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Labor Call}, 16 March 1911, p.4. Because the Murray government had effectively eliminated any state taxes on large holdings and shifted the burden on to smaller farmers, the motivation, in Anstey’s view, was not merely an attempt to recoup revenue lost to the Commonwealth, but an act of revenge against small farmers who had voted Labor.

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Ibid.}, 29 February 1912, p.4.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Ibid.}, 28 May 1912, p.4.

\textsuperscript{61} For a general background to ‘new protection’ see John Rickard, \textit{op. cit.}, chapter 7.

Liberals had successfully opposed the Fisher government's attempt to extend Commonwealth power in areas which would have made it possible to give full legislative force to 'new protection'. Accordingly, Anstey took a highly sceptical view of the Fusion attitude to protection.

Accusing the *Age* of being a Fusion mouthpiece, he quoted passages where it decried Frank Tudor's proposal for a tariff board as an unjustified policy of spying on business. Later, Anstey alleged, it championed the idea as a way to 'help the workers to higher wages', and as a means by which 'cases of excessive profit' could be exposed to the public gaze. The first statement represented the Fusion's real view, while the second was a mere 'fake' got up for the purposes of taking votes from Labor at the next election. Besides, the *Age* was not consistent in its attitude to the tariff. When the Fusion wanted to support it, the paper called it a 'protectionist' tariff, but when they opposed it, it became a 'revenue' tariff. Thus, 'No man who follows the *Age* can have a definite opinion upon any subject for any length of time.' Although he was not yet explicit about it, the drift of Anstey's argument was that the Fusion and its supporters favoured a tariff that protected employers, but showed little interest in tariff protection for workers' wages. Their attitude to Labor's referenda questions was evidence of that one-sided view.

After studying the statistical returns for manufacturing industry, Anstey argued that protection had been of great benefit to employers in allowing them to install labour-saving machinery so that when election time came round, they could dismiss workers and raise the cry, 'ruined industry'. 'Between this and the general elections the ruined industries cry will be worked for all it is worth, and after they are over we shall again be told that more immigrants are wanted to fill our factories. Thus history continues to repeat itself with monotonous reiteration.'

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65 *Ibid.*, 7 November 1912, p.4. A fortnight later he produced more detailed statistical data, industry by industry, to show that the tariff was effective and that the vast majority of imports were of goods not yet manufactured in Australia. See *Ibid.*, 21 November 1912, p.4.
He was right about the first point. In the period leading up to the 31 May 1913 election unemployment in the boot industry was a major issue in Bourke. A.F.M. Robb, the Liberal candidate, claimed that because Frank Tudor, as Minister for Customs, had refused to raise the tariff on boots there had been serious unemployment in the trade. Anstey replied that this claim was, as he had predicted, an 'election fake', a conspiracy to induce an artificial depression in the industry and defeat Labor on the issue of unemployment. The real cause of job losses, he suggested, was the introduction of new machinery which allowed employers to displace workers, pocket the 'boodle' and blame the government's administration of tariff policy. Although the campaign in Bourke was dominated by protection and unemployment, both candidates did address the other main issues such as the referenda questions, social services, the government's record and the Electoral Act. Anstey again made a direct pitch for the women's vote, telling them that they could expect neither wage justice nor support for their families from the Liberals and their monopolist friends.

When the poll was declared, his share of the vote had increased slightly to sixty per cent. The Fisher government, however, had marched 'to its Sedan', as he predicted a year earlier. All the referenda questions were defeated and Labor narrowly lost its majority in the House of Representatives, although it did retain control of the Senate. Rather than gloat, in public at least, Anstey reviewed the result with a rather hollow cheerfulness.

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66. Ibid., 13 February 1913, p.4; 27 February 1913, pp.4-5; 13 March 1913, pp.4-5; and 17 April 1913, p.11.

67. The most detailed reports of the two candidates' speeches are in Northcote Leader, 26 April 1913, n.p. As was usual in Anstey's election campaigns, personalities became an issue. It seems that Anstey had developed a tactic with a succession of opponents whereby he would hint at some flaw in the other candidate's character, provoke him to some extravagant statements and then accuse him of 'playing the man and not the ball'. It was a rather crude device, but apparently effective.

68. Argus, 23 May 1913, p.9.


70. For a concise summary of the election results, see Sawer, op. cit., pp.112-113.
There are halts, rests and breathing times in the march of nations as there are winters in the progress of the seasons. But summer comes again and the National Labor party will come again stronger and more virile than ever.

He ended with an exhortation that some of the more disconsolate Labor members might have considered a little too effusive.

*Forward - ever forward. Out of Bondage - through the Wilderness of Doubt - Onward while life is life and strength is strength, giving our best for the things we love and that are lovable. That is the Joy of Life.*

On the occasion of Deakin's retirement, however, he was neither cheerful nor effusive.

During the election campaign he published a pamphlet entitled *Thirty Years of Deakin.* It was a piece of sustained, unforgiving invective which acknowledged no achievements and left Deakin with not a shred of honour. His whole career had been one of self-seeking duplicity, back-sliding and treachery. He had begun as 'a passive instrument in the hands' of David Syme, parading as an anti-sweating Liberal yet emasculating the factory legislation designed to stop it. He had shared the responsibility for the reckless government borrowing that led to the crash of 1893, had been party to the persecution of workers during the great strikes and had revived his career through imperialist jingoism during the Boer war. He had been resolutely hostile to Labor, but had supported the Watson and Fisher governments when it suited his purposes. He had promised 'new protection' but delivered nothing. Along the way, he had left his political path strewn with the corpses of those who had trusted his word.

To be forgotten is the best that can happen to Alfred Deakin. As a public character he is best forgotten. No man can stand at his political graveside without being reminded of the pledges he has made - and broken; the parties he has led - and shattered; the friends he had kissed.

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71. *Labor Call,* 5 June 1913, p.4.

72. Frank Anstey, MHR, *Thirty Years of Deakin,* Melbourne, Labor Call Print, 1913.

73. On the basis of the pamphlet, Deakin's biographer was moved to describe Anstey as 'a vituperative Labour orator beside whom Hughes was a mealy-mouthed milksop'. See J.A La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin: A Biography,* Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1965, p.644.
- and betrayed; the principles he has supported - and deserted. He could be faithful to nobody, and towards the end nobody trusted him.\textsuperscript{74}

Anstey made not the slightest pretence at balance in his judgement. There was, for instance, hardly a sentence on Deakin's influential role in the federal movement. While he was capable of a certain generosity towards political opponents, he was utterly unforgiving of men like Deakin and Irvine whom he regarded as political enemies. Anstey was a man with an occasionally volatile personality whose extravagant enthusiasms where often matched by the intensity of his animosities. In the extremity of his moods, there was no room for subtlety, there was only right and wrong, virtue and veniality. Deakin was an apostate liberal whose silver tongue had seduced and betrayed those who trusted in his sincerity. To a 'good hater' like Anstey, it was entirely appropriate that Deakin's political epitaph should be written with a pen dipped in vitriol.\textsuperscript{75}

When the new parliament assembled in July 1913 and the opposition Labor caucus met to select an executive, it was clear that Anstey's colleagues had not been particularly impressed with his performance as a party man during the previous three years. This time, he received only two votes and was eliminated after the first ballot.\textsuperscript{76} Nobody doubted his talent as an orator. He had demonstrated that many times in both the State and Commonwealth parliaments. Nor were there any complaints about his skills as a publicist. His work in \textit{Labor Call} was well-recognised and appreciated. He seemed to have done well in helping to clean up the affairs of the Tramways Union. Moreover, he held a safe seat and appeared to be consolidating his position at each election. On these grounds, he would appear an ideal man to place in a position of responsibility. The trouble was, Anstey was a difficult, unpredictable


\textsuperscript{75} He subjected 'Iceberg' Irvine to the same treatment in the run up to the 1914 federal election. See \textit{Labor Call}, 4 June 1914, p.3.

\textsuperscript{76} Weller, \textit{op. cit.}, p.324.
character. He did not always consider fully the consequences of his actions before making public statements. When there was a clash between the literal approach to caucus solidarity and his principles, he was likely to follow his conscience more faithfully than his pledge. Nor did he suffer fools or knaves with much forbearance. He was impatient at incompetence or timidity on his own side and ruthless towards those on the other whom he thought mean spirited or mendacious. In debate he could savage his enemies with withering invective or disarm opponents with ironic wit. But he was not a man for the steady work of quiet persuasion and compromise. In the class war he was one of Labor's shock troops, but was he officer material?

77 On one occasion he had urged a more open and free debate on defence policy within the party, with the proviso that all should at least agree on basic principles. This was uncomfortable for those in the party who preferred the appearance of a united and quiet consensus in the face of their opponents in the parliament and press. See Labor Call, 22 August 1912, pp.4-5.
Chapter Seven

WAR & FINANCE

During the short-lived fifth parliament where government and opposition spent most of their time jostling for advantage in anticipation of a double dissolution, Anstey contributed little.¹ In the address-and-reply debates he delivered rambling justifications of Labor policy.² He asked a few questions, interjected occasionally, embarrassed the party on the postal votes issue and added a little levity to proceedings with some jocular banter on weighty matters such as the missing mace.³ Commenting on the resumption of parliament in May 1914, his impatience at what he called 'The National Doldrums' was obvious. 'The National Parliament is called together to do nothing, and is doing it.' The Cook government was simply trying to force Labor into a position where it would appear obstructionist in the eyes of the electors. That would allow Cook to go to the people with a negative, anti-Labor campaign and so disguise his real policy which would be to raise taxes, cut pensions and reduce government services.⁴ Anstey was anxious to get on with the inevitable election.

In the meantime, he continued his work with the Tramways Union, and maintained a steady output for Labor Call.⁵ In addition to the paper's usual discursive

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¹ For a survey of the principal issues during the fifth parliament see Souter, Acts of Parliament, pp.130-138.
² CPD, vol.70, 2 September 1913, pp.770-783; and vol.73, 21 April 1914, pp.170-176.
⁴ Labor Call, 7 May 1914, p.4.
⁵ On his union work see Australian Tramways Employees' Association, minute books, La Trobe Library, MS 7817, 2 June 1913 - 27 July 1914. During that time most meetings were concerned with routine business. After an address by J.C.Watson, Anstey did encourage them to support a proposal for a labour daily newspaper. He was presented with a gold medallion for his services to the union, and attended an interstate conference in Adelaide. He wrote about the campaign for a labour daily in Labor Call, 26 June 1913, p.2, suggesting that its advocates should talk less and achieve more. They could give an immediate indication of their sincerity by offering greater support for the existing weekly labour papers.
articles on the politics of the day, Anstey and his colleagues were turning their attention more and more to the threat of war. They published a long interview with Norman Angell, who ended on an optimistic note, urging international co-operation to prevent war because:

War has failed, and wars have been possible - nay, inevitable - only because of ignorance, misunderstanding, insane rivalries, which interested parties have exploited and played upon.

Shortly after, they began to serialise George Kirkpatrick's _War - What For?_ and reprinted Phillip Snowden's House of Commons speech which purported to expose an 'Armaments Ring'. Drawing on these and many other works from an expanding body of radical literature on the 'Armament Trust', Anstey began to develop his own variation on the same theme. He began with the newly-established Australian navy. The massive defence expenditure inspired by national anxiety about a succession of threats from Russia, Japan, and now Germany, had only served the purposes of 'The Spooks of Imperialism'. British governments had, since the Russo-Japanese war in 1905, encouraged Australia to defend itself against a possible Japanese invasion. Now that Britain had entered into a treaty with Japan, Anstey suggested, the £30,000,000 spent on defence since federation did nothing more than serve British interests in

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6 For one of Anstey's usual pieces see his assessment of the labour movement in South Africa _ibid_. 5 February 1914, pp. 4-5.

7 _Ibid_. 2 April 1914, inside front cover. Angell was the author of the best-selling _The Great Illusion_, first published in 1909.

8 The serialisation of Kirkpatrick began in _Labor Call_ on 23 April 1914, p. 8 and Snowden's speech appeared _ibid_. 28 May 1914, inside cover. George R. Kirkpatrick, _War - What For?_, La Fayette, Ohio, the author, 1910 was another anti-war best-seller. According to the title page of the copy in my possession, by August 1914, it was in its eleventh edition, with sales of one hundred and fifty thousand.

9 On the effectiveness of this literature see Clive Trebilcock, 'Radicalism and the Armament Trust' in A. J. A. Morris (ed.), _Edwardian Radicalism, 1900-1914: Some Aspects of British Radicalism_, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974. Trebilcock's argues that although there was some superficial evidence of collusion between European weapons manufacturers, the radicals overestimated the degree of cohesion and unity of purpose. By the translation of loose 'connections' into 'collusion' and finally into conspiracy, Trebilcock suggests, the radicals overstated their case so badly that it was finally counter-productive at all but the crudest levels of political propaganda.
the Pacific by taking the pressure off a hard-pressed Japanese defence budget. This was evidence that:

The jingo must fake an enemy from somewhere. They have made Australia a mere tool, an instrument to serve the ends of Imperialism and the War Trust. What will they do next?10

In April 1914, it was a rhetorical question.

A week later he turned his attention to that War Trust. Summarising some of the radical literature, Anstey published a long list of the British politicians, army and naval officers, senior clergymen and newspapers that were linked to the War Trust by a network of financial and social connections. All had a part to play in stimulating hatreds, planning and conducting hostilities, sanctifying the slaughter and maintaining jingoistic hysteria.

The moneyed capitalist class interested in the sale of material, and the military section interested in the maintenance of an exclusive caste, are astute enough to trade on the racial pride and upon the sentimental traditions of the multitude. To this pride and those traditions they address themselves, whether from press or platform, whether to German or British, and by these means nations are kept apart, industries crippled, multitudes kept poor, that a non-productive class may be created, and the makers of war material grow richer and more powerful.

The contemporary political lesson was obvious.

This is not the way to 'defend civilisation'. The Labor movement functioned to make war upon hunger, disease, dirt, destitution, ignorance, unemployment and slums, not upon imaginary enemies - enemies that no man can tell you who they are or what they are.11

In this, he was issuing Labor Call readers with the same dire warning as the tragically futile Hardie-Vaillant resolution from the Second International had done when it urged the European working class to make 'war against war'.12

10. Labor Call, 2 April 1914, p.4.

11. Ibid. 9 April 1914, pp.4-5. A slightly different version of this article appeared under the title of 'War - What For?' in Tom Mann's short-lived Syndicalist and Amalgamation News (London), July 1914, p.3.

In June, he was even more specific, alleging that there were interlocking connections between: the British firms, Cammell Laird and Co., and Vickers; Krupps of Germany; and Schneider in France. All had an interest in, or contracts with, the Russian arms manufacturer Putiloff and through that firm had access to each other's technical secrets. 'No wonder they are great patriots, and the war fakirs are great statesmen.'

In taking such an uncompromising position, he may have been at odds with the majority of the Labor party and its supporters, but he was not entirely alone. The Victorian Socialist party, with which he enjoyed warm comradely relations, endorsed the Hardie-Vaillant resolution calling for a general strike against armament manufacture. In fact, Anstey's protegé, John Curtin, was instrumental in having the Melbourne Trades Hall Council pass similar anti-war resolutions. On 8 August, the Sydney *International Socialist* took the same position on 'The Mad Drama in Europe'. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), adopted a characteristically tough stance in their denunciation of ruling class patriots, the call for a general strike and an exhortation to workers not to enlist. Although Anstey's was not the most radical voice raised against the war in its early stages, within a year he had emerged as one of the most insistent critics of war policy, in both the labour press and federal caucus.

Readers of *Labor Call* and a few radical sects, however, were a very different constituency from the one Andrew Fisher had to address when the Governor-General granted a double dissolution and an election was set down for 5 September 1914.

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17. For a clear narrative of events leading up to the double dissolution see Souter, *op. cit.*, pp.134-137.
Fisher's manifesto struck a realistic balance between the militant anti-war and pacifist views on the left of the labour movement, and the innocent enthusiasm expressed by the more patriotic sections of the electorate.

As regards the attitude of Labor towards war, that is easily stated: We deplore War! We believe war to be a crime against civilisation and against humanity. But to deplore and to denounce war is not to abolish it. War is one of the greatest realities of life, and it must be faced. Our interests and our very existence are bound up with those of the Empire. In time of war half measures are worse than none. If returned with a majority, we shall pursue with the utmost vigor and determination every course necessary for the defence of the Commonwealth and the Empire in any and every contingency.18

That is what he meant by 'the last man and the last shilling'. It was a view shared by many Labor people, from W.M. Hughes who apparently took the latter part of the declaration as his mandate, to the disproportionately high number of trade union members who volunteered for the Australian Imperial Force in the early stages of the war.19

Despite expressions of patriotic fervor in his own electorate, Anstey did not seem to be much troubled by anyone taking him to task for his views on the war.20 In his speeches he stuck to the record of the Labor party in social and industrial legislation. On those occasions where he did refer to the war it was usually to defend the Fisher government which, he claimed, had done most to build up Australia's

18. *Labor Call*, 27 August 1914, inside cover. Fisher stood on his record of legislative reform between 1910 and 1913, reminded electors of Labor policy on 'Trusts and Combines, Amendment of the Constitution, Initiative and Referendum, Tariff, Industrial and Social Legislation'. Without engaging in the usual degree of political acrimony in the interests of national unity, he claimed that Labor had prepared Australia better for the war than the Cook government.

19. Trade union members were quick to flock to the colours, however; of the 54,000 recruits who enlisted in the first five months of the war, 43 per cent were unionists - well above the proportion of unionists among adult males. See Turner, *op. cit.*, p.69. Turner's source for that claim was *Labour Bulletin*, no 8, pp.294-295.

20. For some examples of patriotic meetings and other activities in Bourke see *Brunswick and Coubrg Star*, 14 August 1914, n.p. Even the Tramways Union, in conjunction with the employers, established a 'Patriotic Fund' and Anstey found himself in the position where he presided over meetings which made decisions as to the disbursement of the patriotic pounds, shillings and pence from the fund. See Australian Tramways Employees' Association (Victorian Branch), minute book, *op. cit.*, 21 September 1914.
defences, particularly the navy. 21 The Liberal candidate, R.M. Jennings, put up a good, solid campaign, despite divisions in the conservative ranks, but he could not compete with Labor’s well-organised team which, in a national swing to the ALP, secured an increased majority, raising Anstey’s share of the vote to nearly 66 per cent. 22

After the election and the first session of the new parliament, Anstey took one of his periodic breaks from the pressure of federal politics in Melbourne. During the Christmas-New Year period Hugh Mahon, as Minister for Territories, appointed him to an official mission to report on Norfolk Island. 23 He was accompanied by his wife, Kate, and Atlee Hunt, permanent head of the department. 24 While there were probably good administrative reasons for Mahon to send a mission to Australia’s only external territory, the trip might also have been regarded as something of a ‘junket’ for Anstey and Hunt, both of whom had recently been disappointed in the progress of their respective careers. Anstey had failed, yet again, to win a ministerial or party executive position in the post-election caucus ballot. 25 A little over a year earlier, Hunt, a senior public servant since federation, had been passed over for appointment to the newly-created Prime Minister’s department. 26 Anstey certainly took his official duty less than seriously. On 3 April 1915 he wrote to Mahon:

My dear Mahon,

Re. request for report on Norfolk Island. I have nothing to say - nothing worth putting on record but I will take this opportunity of

21 See, for example, Brunswick and Coburg Star, 14 August 1914, n.p. and Labor Call, 27 August 1914, p.3.


26 See Helen M. Davies, op. cit.
thanking you for the most pleasurable period of my life. The Age people wrote to me for my ‘impressions’. I took no notice. They waited on me at my house. They were so anxious they [offered to] pay me. I didn’t want pay, but I gave them my ‘impressions’. They were horrified. Such tripe had never struck them in all their existence. They promptly conveyed it to the shit house. Thus endeth the last lesson. I’ll run no more risks of a like fate. What is not fit for publication in the Age is not good enough for a Parliamentary report.

But I enjoy the memory of delightful days and nothing matters.
So good luck, bye and the best of good wishes.
From yours,
Anstey.27

His ‘impressions’ might not have been ‘good enough’ for those two august institutions, but he did consider them worthy of publication elsewhere. He subsequently wrote a long article for Labor Call celebrating the scenic splendors and romantic simplicity of life on Norfolk Island.

On Norfolk there is no landlord, no tenant, no rent collector, no bailiff, no evictor, no one to seize your chattels and throw you out on the roadside. Everyone has got a home, a real home, not a thing rented. They have good furniture, a few acres of cultivated ground, poultry and pigs, a few sheep, a few cows and a couple of horses. Nearly everyone has got a piano or an organ, a sewing machine and a jinker.

They don’t get these things by long hours of arduous toil continued year after year, broken only by periods of anxious searching for someone to buy their labor. They get it easy, a few hours of daily labor, and even that can be postponed for a bit of fun - a picnic, a race, or a tennis match. There is no army of parasitical middlemen living on the production of others; no gambling in requisites, no dragging in and dragging out, and perpetual additions of costs and profits, that makes the consumer pay so much and gives to the producer so little. Norfolk Isle is a demonstration of the small amount of human effort necessary to secure home and clothes and food and comfort.28

A shorter and less effusive article, written jointly with Hunt, appeared in the January 1917 issue of The Mid-Pacific Magazine. Anstey’s panegyric on a Pacific paradise was hardly the usual form for a report to the minister, so it fell to Hunt to provide Mahon with an official version.29

27 Hugh Mahon papers, NLA MS 937/1/35.
28 Labor Call. 16 December 1915, p.3. The original manuscript of this article in the Anstey papers, NLA MS 512/8.
29 Helen M Davies, op. cit. Their association did not produce a lasting friendship. In the early 1920s Anstey and the Labor party severely criticised Hunt for the manner in which he allegedly failed to discharge his duties as Public Service Arbitrator. See, for example, CPD vol.101, 2 October 1922, pp.2993 and 2991-2994.
Soon after the new Fisher government took office with a comfortable majority in both Houses, Anstey was again at odds with his party, this time its leader. When Fisher moved a motion that a grant of £100,000 be paid to Belgium, Anstey opposed it on the grounds that there could be no guarantee that it would go to the truly deserving Belgians, given their government's treatment of miners during a recent strike. Their king, moreover, was a plutocratic imperialist who had amassed a fortune by ruthlessly exploiting native people in the Congo. Besides, no money should go abroad until the growing unemployment and destitution in Australia had been eliminated. On this, he was even out of step with his union executive. On 21 September, with Anstey in the chair, the Tramways Union committee of management decided to give 25 per cent of its Patriotic Fund money to the Belgian Relief Fund, 25 per cent to the Red Cross and the other 50 per cent to be lodged in a Commonwealth Bank account for the relief of distress among tramway employees' dependants who were killed or wounded in the war. In the face of many such expressions of patriotic sentiment, persuading others to a radical view of the war was not going to be easy. As far as the majority in the government were concerned, he was a nuisance and as such was not encouraged to raise his dissident voice in parliament. The only way he could reach a wider audience was through Labor Call.

From October 1914 he began to shift the focus of his analysis of monopoly from the 'Armament Ring' to the role of finance capital in the war. He began with an

30 Labor won 42 seats to the Liberals 32, with one Independent, in the House of Representatives and took 31 of the 36 Senate places. For discussion of the election results see Sawer, op. cit., pp.129-131.

31 CPD, vol 75, 14 October 1914, pp.146-149. He was right about unemployment. As Ian Turner, op. cit., p.72 observed, 'The number of unemployed trade unionists jumped, between the second and third quarters of 1914, from 16,000 to 30,000 - from 5.7 to 10.7 per cent of the membership of those unions which made unemployment returns.'

32 Australian Tramways Employees' Association (Victorian Branch), minute books, op. cit.

article reviewing the London banking crisis of August 1914 and the British government's special financial arrangements to compensate private banks for losses incurred by the declaration of hostilities. Drawing on a range of material from such diverse sources as the Daily Chronicle, the Statist, the Clarion and the Investors' Review, he constructed an elaborate explanation of how government-guaranteed notes issued to the banks meant that the British people were twice robbed. In the first instance, the fact that the notes were issued at all meant that the people, through the government, were giving the banks money that would normally have been accounted as a business loss. In the second, the banks then loaned the notes back to the government in exchange for war bonds, which returned a handsome rate of interest. There was, he argued, a cruel paradox in this when the government's tender regard for the banks was compared with the support it provided for unemployed workers.34

Anstey's commentary on the London banking crisis was an early indication of the way in which much of his subsequent writing would analyse the role of finance capital in the war. To him, it was a case of 'Governments that function in the interests of Capitalism' burdening the nation with a debt to those who 'stayed at home to organise the most gigantic robbery the world has ever seen'. To John Maynard Keynes, who was called in to advise the British Treasury during the crisis, it was more a case of 'cowardly', 'selfish' and rather stupid bankers reacting in blind panic to a crisis they did not fully understand. The government's action was more concerned with stabilising the monetary system, mobilising capital for the war effort and maintaining British credit, particularly in the United States.35 From Keynes' liberal pluralist perspective, it was a case of the government trying to impose some order and stability on the rather chaotic logic of capitalism during a crisis. From Anstey's left populist perspective, it was a case of finance capital taking advantage of its privileged position, during a national emergency, to rob the people. These two analyses of the

34. Labor Call, 29 October 1914, p.3.

crisis symbolise a fundamental difference between liberal pluralist and left populist views about the role of collective human agency in the logic of capitalism. Where a sophisticated insider like Keynes saw contending interests and individuals acting in ignorance and blundering stupidity, a distant observer like Anstey could see a highly self-conscious, manipulative class at work. The logic of Anstey's analysis inclined him to see malicious conspiracies where others saw only blind selfishness.

With the London experience in mind, Anstey then turned his attention to the problem of how Australia was to finance its war effort. Returning to the comments he had made in his maiden speech, he argued that the Commonwealth Bank's functions should be expanded to include note issue and reserve banking. Armed with those powers, it could then issue non-interest-bearing notes based on the nation's 'real wealth'. This would avoid the need to raise overseas loans with their attendant heavy interest burden. If it were also given the powers of a central bank, it would be able to control the country's gold reserves and so prevent speculative operations that would tend to undermine the stability of the monetary system.

Unless something radical was done about financing the war effort, the nation would suffer more than the futile loss of its young men on imperialist battle-fields.

This war will put a millstone of debt around the necks of the producing classes of every country. It will grind them to degrading slavery. It will make the monetary power more powerful and opulent than ever. All who remain alive from the slaughter will toil to pay the parasitical classes annual tribute for the money invested in blood. All wars - all international wars - are the instruments by which iniquities re-

36 Like all such proposals from the monetary radicals, this combination of fiduciary currency and 'barter notes', blissfully ignored the problem of inflation and the inevitable political cries of 'confiscation' and 'socialism'. The tendency to assume that socialist measures were possible without first having secured the machinery of a socialist state was a common practice among Australian radicals. Were this proposal implemented, it might have had the effect of setting in motion Gresham's Law and thus undermining the original intention.

37 Labor Call, 5 November 1914, pp.4-5. These early articles marked the beginnings of his rise to national prominence as Labor's leading critic of banking and finance. Like a good deal of his subsequent writing, they were reprinted by the labour press in other states. The Australian Worker, for example, published 'Commonwealth Bank's Operations' on 5 November 1914 and 'War and Finance' on 19 November 1914, while the Brisbane Worker printed 'Vultures of Empire' on 19 November 1914 and 'War and Finance' on 3 December 1914. Many of the points that Anstey made in these articles were taken up and developed by others such as 'R.J.Clotton' in a series for the Australian Worker on 20 January, 10 and 17 February 1916.
establish their crumbling thrones, by dissipating on battlefields the 
human virility that threatened their existence.\textsuperscript{38}

This was merely a hint of what was to come. Between 1915 and 1921 he drew together 
the threads of his ideas on monopoly, finance and war and wove them into a theory 
which provided the labour movement with its most elaborate, radical analysis of 
finance capital, popularly called the Money Power.\textsuperscript{39} As usual, he began with pieces 
in \textit{Labor Call}.\textsuperscript{40} In July-August 1915 he wrote a series of five articles under the 
collective title \textit{The Kingdom of Shylock}.\textsuperscript{41} Shortly after they were issued as a 
pamphlet with a crude anti-Semitic cartoon on the cover.\textsuperscript{42} Two years later, a revised 
and enlarged edition underwent the same process.\textsuperscript{43} The argument was again revised 
and extended into its final form in 1921 under the new title \textit{Money Power}.\textsuperscript{44}

The point from which he began his analysis was stated most clearly in the 
'Preliminary' to the 1917 edition of \textit{The Kingdom of Shylock}. Referring to the 
Australian labour movement, he wrote:

\begin{quote}
This movement of ours talks of 'The Means of Production, Distribution 
and Exchange'. Of the first two we read much, hear much – upon the last 
we are silent in speech and policy. Yet in the modern world the last is 
fundamental in industry, in statecraft, and in war. It is in coping with 
the problems of Finance that the world has got to find its 
regeneration.\textsuperscript{45}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Labor Call}, 15 April 1915, pp.4-5.

\textsuperscript{39} For a detailed discussion of the background to 'money power' ideology in the Australian 
labour movement see Love, \textit{op. cit.}, Introduction, chapters 1 and 2.

\textsuperscript{40} The first step in the process leading to the 1921 book \textit{Money Power} was a series of articles 
beginning in \textit{Labor Call}, 19 November 1914, pp.4-5, and then published as the pamphlet \textit{War and 

\textsuperscript{41} See \textit{Labor Call}, 15 July 1915, p.5; 22 July 1915, p.5; 29 July 1915, p.5; 5 August 1915, p.5; and 12 
August 1915, p.5.

\textsuperscript{42} Frank Anstey, MP, \textit{The Kingdom of Shylock: The War Loan and the War Tax}, Melbourne, 
Labor Call Print, n.d. (1915).

\textsuperscript{43} As before, it began as a series of articles in \textit{Labor Call}. This time, \textit{War and Finance} was 
combined with the original \textit{Shylock} articles, and new pieces were added to bring the story up to 
date. It appeared in nineteen instalments between 31 May 1917 and 27 September 1917. It was 
published as a 96 page booklet later in the year. See Frank Anstey, MP, \textit{The Kingdom of Shylock}, 
(revised edition), Melbourne, Labor Call Print, 1917.

\textsuperscript{44} Frank Anstey, MP, \textit{Money Power}, Melbourne, Fraser and Jenkinson, March 1921.

These 'problems of Finance', henceforth, became the *leitmotif* of his writings on political economy.

In Anstey's theory, the dominance of 'Finance' represented the highest stage in the development of monopoly capitalism. The result was that:

> The 'Money Power' is something more than Capitalism. It is its product, and yet its master. 'Capitalism', in its control of the great agencies of production, is observable and understandable. The other lurks in vaults and banking chambers, masquerading its operations in language that mystifies or dazzles. Industrial Capitalism may roll itself up into great monopolies in production and distribution. *It cannot exist for an hour apart from the powers that hold the 'Monopoly of the Instruments of Exchange'. Modern Capitalism throws ever-increasing power into the hands of men who operate the monetary machine.* These men constitute 'The Financial Oligarchy'. The key to their power is combination and concentration. They control banks, trust companies and insurance. They control the savings of the people. They say to whom the savings shall be lent and from whom withheld. They finance industries in which they are interested, and withdraw facilities from would-be rivals. *Such is the Modern Money Power.*

Of course, there was nothing particularly original in this. The idea that society was controlled by 'powers' had a long lineage in British radical political economy, and in its American populist offshoot. As one such 'power', bankers and all their works had long been the subject of distrust in that radical tradition. In eighteenth and nineteenth century England such diverse figures as Henry St John, Thomas Paine, John Cartwright and, later, William Cobbett were profoundly suspicious of financiers. Their attitude was, in part, a reaction to the wider social changes that were reflected in the growth of a more sophisticated capital market; in changes that saw a secure and familiar world being betrayed by 'stockjobbers', by corruption centred in the City of London, and political manipulation of the national debt. The emergence of capitalist social relations - or in Cobbett's words 'the Thing' - was responsible for the decline of the minor gentry, yeomen farmers and independent artisans; the quintessential 'freeborn Englishmen'. Anstey had inherited these ideas from his English ancestry.

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47. I am grateful to Dr W.D.Rubenstein of Deakin University for allowing me to read his typescript chapter 'British Radicalism and the "Dark Side" of Populism', from which I have borrowed heavily on this point.
and echoes of them could be heard in some of the passages he copied into his commonplace book.

In late nineteenth century Australia this antipathy to financiers found its way into radical circles through the works of American writers such as Henry George, Edward Bellamy and Ignatius Donnelly. Although they approached the 'problem of Finance' from different perspectives, each believed that a distorted monetary system was at least partially responsible for the difficulties that had given rise to rural and working class discontent. In one way or another, the individuals and institutions involved in banking were a threat to economic equality and political liberty. By means of the nationalist and labour press, their simple equation of private finance with economic disruption and social crises found a receptive audience among radicals of Anstey's acquaintance.48

Even more directly, there were passages in Anstey's definition of the Money Power which bore a striking resemblance to passages in J.A. Hobson's *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism*. The opening sentence of chapter 10 on 'The Financier', for instance, reads, 'The structure of modern Capitalism tends to throw an ever-increasing power into the hands of the men who operate the monetary machinery of industrial communities, the financial class'.49


49 John A Hobson, *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism: A Study of Machine Production*, London, The Walter Scott Publishing Co. Ltd., 1916 new and revised edition, p 233 [originally published 1894]. This, however, is not to suggest that he consciously plagiarised from Hobson or others whose work appears, unacknowledged, in passages of his writing. Like many a journalist before and since, Anstey wrote very quickly, drawing on hastily scribbled notes, supplemented by a retentive memory and a reasonably extensive library. A good deal of his material was written in a small room lined with pigeon-holes at his home in Brunswick. The pigeon-holes were stuffed with scraps of notepaper (often the back of *Hansard* proofs) which were indexed in a 'Where is it?' book, currently in the possession of Beverley Anstey. Material on Billy Hughes, for example, was kept in box 4. When writing at full speed, he would simply plunder his boxes for information. Neither his education nor his method of working encouraged a scrupulous observance of scholarly conventions. In most cases, however, he would note the source of his information on a particular point, not only to acknowledge the author but also because he had not entirely shed the self-educated person's respect for 'authorities'. 
According to Anstey, the essential feature of modern capitalism that had given rise to the Money Power was the emergence of the joint-stock company with the consequent 'paperisation of industry', the 'cutting up of industry and countries into stocks and bonds'. Once that process began, 'Quick rich comes no more entirely from the profits of industry, but from the market manipulation of shares.' Following this crucial step, the paper symbols of industry became the playthings of speculators and stock-market riggers who could manipulate the 'savings of the trustful'. But the process did not end there. The profits from this speculation were invested and reinvested until the fields of industrial activity were exhausted and money became 'cheap'. To prevent profits and interest rates collapsing, 'International hatreds are stimulated', which in turn led to a point where 'armaments are demanded, loans are raised, and the right to levy perpetual tribute on the nation is given in return'. The inevitable outcome was war, in which the toiling masses were slaughtered while the Money Power grew richer upon their misery and death. As a result:

To the capitalisation or paperisation of industry is added the capitalisation of the living masses. War stimulates the process. The nation sinks further and further into debt. It is mortgaged. It is cut up into stocks, bonds and debentures at so much per cent. It is sold in pieces upon the market places of the world, and the right to bleed is sold to the highest bidder - Yankee Doodle, Jap, Jew or Gentile. To carry out these vast flotations and speculations in war or in peace, it is necessary to control the banks. Whosoever controls the banks controls industry. This control is exercised in every country by a small group - the inner circle of great Capitalists. This group is designated 'the Money Power'.

Having thus established its supremacy, the 'Black Masonic Order of Plutocracy' was then able to indulge its 'power of plunder'. This exposition was one of the more succinct examples of how Anstey blended the pugnacious rhetoric of his left populism with a simplified version of Hobson's underconsumptionism.

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51. For a thorough discussion of this tradition in economic thought see M.F. Bleaney, *Underconsumption Theories: A History and Critical Analysis*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1976, especially chapter 8 on Hobson. For a brief outline of how they were understood in the Australian labour movement see Love, *Labour and the Money Power*, pp.118-120.
Although the process from which the Money Power had emerged was universal, it had distinct national characteristics. 'In the U.S. it is bold, brutal, barefaced. In other countries it is cloaked, polished, hypocritical, but everywhere an oligarchy of financiers working towards the same despotic end.'\(^{52}\) That end was to make itself 'the dominant behind the curtain power in the government of modern States'.\(^{53}\)

Anstey's exposure of 'American Money Power' was, predictably, prefaced by a passage from William Jennings Bryan's famous 'Cross of Gold' speech: 'The Money Power preys upon the Nation in times of peace and conspires against it in the hour of its calamity'. The chapter purported to show how the 'Bank Trust', under the resolute leadership of J.Pierpont Morgan, had managed to impose its will on Teddy Roosevelt in 1907 by issuing its own 'clearing house notes'; how this led to the Federal Reserve Act of 1913 which gave it effective control over the money supply; and how 'emergency' arrangements in August 1914 gave government backing to currency based on almost any liquid asset held by the banks.\(^{54}\) The conclusion was inescapable:

Thus the Yankee Trust magnates, not only during the war, but prior to the war, developed a paper currency by Capitalists, for Capitalists, buttressed by the Capitalist State.\(^{55}\)

In his discussion of 'British Money Power', Anstey developed his earlier argument about the London banking crisis of 1914. He alleged that the banks used the emergency credit issued to them by the government as capital which they subsequently rolled over in a series of highly profitable war loans.

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\(^{53}\) Ibid., p.19.

\(^{54}\) Ibid., pp 20-34. Although it is difficult to find precise evidence for Anstey's claims here, it seems that he was right in the essentials, even though he may, in his accustomed manner, have overstated the case a little. See Ida M. Tarbell, *The Life of Elbert H. Gary: The Story of Steel*, New York, 1925, p.202. Morgan's son-in-law Herbert L. Satterlee, *J. Pierpont Morgan: An Intimate Portrait*, New York, Macmillan, 1940 is not helpful, nor is Andrew Sinclair, *Corsair: The Life of J. Pierpont Morgan*, particularly explicit on the key issue. I am grateful to Dr Stephen Niblo of La Trobe University for these references.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., p.34.
Thus to the currency created by the State for the salvation of the banks, loaned back to the nation at perpetual duplicated interest, there was added the inflated cheque currency of the private corporations loaned to the State, representing nothing beyond the State securities acquired by the issue of such fraudulent currency.56

Again, it was a case of state aid to the Money Power, but this time it was all the more contemptible because it was extracted from a nation whose common people were shedding their blood on battlefields in defence of king, country and capitalism.

Naturally, the Australian position required a more systematic analysis than the rather episodic treatment accorded the American and British Money Power. Anstey began by identifying the major fractions of Australian capital, whose 'financial thuggery operates in three distinct but associated sections - the Sugar, the Metal, the Overseas.'57 Each comprised a set of monopoly interests within particular industries which were bound together by interlocking interests with 'banks, insurance companies, trustee agencies, and mortgage companies'.58 The 'Sugar, Tobacco and Gas Monopolists', dominant in New South Wales and Queensland, centred around the men who controlled firms like Burns Philp, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, the Dixon tobacco interests and North Shore Gaslight. They, in association with prominent businessmen such as Samuel Horden, were able to exercise control over the lending policies of the leading banks and other financial intermediaries. That control gave them power over other people's money which, in turn, allowed them to rig markets, stifle competition and manipulate share prices so that they became the effective owners of numerous large enterprises. The result of the process was that:

Scores of industrial and mercantile concerns running under the old titles are the exclusive property of the Money Power, the original proprietors having been bought out, crushed out, swamped, smothered, merged or amalgamated. Thus the junta of great capitalists cloak their extensive and growing ownership from the public gaze.59

56. Ibid., pp 36-50. The quote is from p.30.
57. Ibid., p.53.
58. Ibid., p.52.
59. Ibid., p.54.
The principal mechanisms for securing this degree of control were interlocking ownership and overlapping directorships.

The second of the three capitalist groups which comprised the Australian Money Power was the 'Metal Gang' who dominated the 'economic life of the States of Victoria and South Australia and the northern portion of Tasmania'. In fact, what Anstey was referring to was the Collins House group. The methods through which its members rose to power were essentially the same as the first group. In this case, however, their connections with leading finance houses were tainted with the scandals surrounding the bank crash of 1893.

Those men, their families, their progeny, are shining lights in the Austral world of finance today, and their road to fortune is part of the smothered history of the country.

As well as banks, the 'Metal Gang', in conjunction with the 'Sugar, Tobacco and Gaslight Monopolists of Sydney', controlled many of the major insurance and trustee companies. Together, these two groups comprised the core of Anstey's equivalent of a national bourgeoisie.

The third major fraction of the Australian Money Power was 'The Overseas Group':

The grip of British Capitalism upon Australia consists, not only of mortgages on Australian Governments, not only on the oversea ownership of Australian resources, but upon the control of nearly one-third of the total depository power of the Australian people per medium of the British banks and British insurances trading within Australia.

They were banks such as the English, Scottish and Australian Bank which controlled companies like the English Life, Fire and Marine Insurances. These were connected with pastoral companies such as the Van Diemen's Land Company which were, in

60. Ibid., p.55.

61. On this see Peter Richardson, 'Collins House Financiers: W.I. Baillieu, Lionel Robinson and Francis Govett' in Appleyard and Schedvin, op. cit.


63. Ibid., p.59.
turn, linked with the 'free old English gentry' who squatted upon Australian soil during the early part of last century'.

The descendants of those families are a peculiar caste. Their spiritual home is England, their outlook, their education, their adopted mannerisms, their social and business relations are all English.64

This comprador bourgeoisie operated through mercantile houses such as Dalgety, John Sanderson and Company, the Australian Mercantile and Loan Company, and numerous similar agents. Because these mercantile houses were mostly owned by the British banks, Australian producers had to pay 'Two Profits':

All these establishments advertise that they 'make advances' and 'finance meat, wheat and wool' consigned to them for sale or shipment. The money for this 'financing' is got from the banks and the loaning of bank money is mainly to these subsidiary institutions. These subsidiaries charge their customers two or three per cent. higher than they (the subsidiaries) pay the banks. The actual producer has therefore to find two interest charges - one for the loan agency and another for the bank in the background. As the directors of the banks and the loan agencies are the same people they catch two profits from the one deposit, so usury works in more ways than one - straight out and round about.65

According to Anstey, there was not, as might be expected, competition between these three groups. Each was not only content with its own 'sphere of influence', but there was a tendency towards greater concentration. By a process of 'amalgamation, fusion and absorption a compact financial oligarchy becomes more and more the dominant fact'. Thus, out of this process of monopolisation emerged an increasingly cohesive Australian Money Power.

This situation, however, was not achieved without the assistance of compliant governments. Beginning with the emergency measures implemented during the 1893 crash, Anstey argued that the private banks were always happy to accept 'state aid' when they were in trouble. Under the guise of maintaining monetary stability, their preferred strategy was to have the government act as guarantor for their notes. However, after the Australian Notes Act was passed in 1910 this was no longer

64. Ibid., p.60.
65. Ibid., p.64.
possible, but they still managed to persuade the Fisher government to provide them with legal tender notes on very favourable terms.\(^\text{66}\) This, in conjunction with the fact that it established the Commonwealth Bank as an 'ordinary trading bank' without the 'powers of Issue and Reserve', was a measure of that government's sorry record of timidity and back-sliding on policy. As far as Anstey was concerned there was only one fundamental objective in the area of finance for a Labor government; to take either direct or effective control of the monetary system. The consequences of its failure to do so, he implied, was a vindication of the views expressed in his maiden speech, and gave a clear answer to those who had accused him of disloyalty at the time.\(^\text{67}\)

At the outbreak of war it was no different. 'The political chiefs steeped in Imperialism and softened by nose-rubbing with gentry of social and financial distinction had become Liberals in action.'\(^\text{68}\) When the banks expressed concern that there might be a run on their gold reserves, and a consequent loss of public confidence, the government responded with an issue of additional notes. In Anstey's view it was a gift which the banks turned to very good account:

> In proportion as the stocks of legal tender currency accumulated in the bank vaults, so did the old-time necessity of maintaining a ratio of gold to liabilities diminish. Commonwealth Notes performed that function. They were legal tender. They met all obligations. They acted for the bank as if they were 'gold in reserve', and upon this basis - upon the paper notes of the nation - the Banks erected an additional superstructure of credit for loans and profiteering.\(^\text{69}\)

Thereafter, Anstey alleged, they took advantage of 'credit inflation' as the basis for their subscription to war loans, from which they drew handsome interest. At the same

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\(^\text{66}\) His argument was that, in a series of note issues, the proportion of gold backing progressively diminished until, effectively, only the government was required to redeem the notes in gold. See \textit{ibid.} p.72.

\(^\text{67}\) 'Yet if a movement when it gets power does not function for the purposes for which it was created, if it deserts what it was pledged to defend, if it abandons principle after principle, then unity in action is valueless, and the hopes of men are an ever retreating mirage.' \textit{Ibid.} p.74

\(^\text{68}\) \textit{Ibid.}

\(^\text{69}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p.78. What Anstey missed here was the diminishing ability of gold to cover the increasing velocity of transactions which accompanied the second industrial revolution.
time, they tightened their control over the nation’s productive assets when the war loans were made a popular, patriotic cause:

Thus the war loans were made 'popular', 'democratic', subscribed to by all classes - old maids, widows, orphans, everybody - until available savings disappeared into the pool, transformed into bonds whose future values depend upon the operations of the riggers of the market for money.70

By persuading these ordinary people to mortgage their property at 4 per cent so that they could subscribe to war loans at 5 per cent, the banks completed their plunder of the nation. Not only had they transformed an expanded government note issue into credit and then loaned it back at high interest, they had also 'made fluid' private property and, under the cloak of patriotism, extracted additional income from well-intentioned citizens.71

Anstey then turned his attention to the history of paper currency. In much the same way as he had done in his speech on the Australian Notes Bill, he selectively reviewed American, French, British and Australian monetary history to show that paper notes with government backing were the most reliable form of money. By that, he meant fiduciary currency. Any currency redeemable in gold was unstable, particularly in time of war.

In war time gold is a deserter. It is the first to get out of the war zone. It is the first to seek neutral territory or a dug-out. It can only be kept in the firing line by the strong arm of the Government, and then seeks devious ways of escape. European statistics estimate that when war broke out in 1914, over (£1100 millions of gold went into hiding. All countries in times of national stress are driven to resort to paper currency. The crime is in the fact that banking corporations are permitted to turn national issues into instruments of public robbery and bondage.72

Governments needed to be more alert and resolute than the Fisher government had been in 1914. In fact, Anstey argued, capitalists preferred government backed fiduciary currency, but were not prepared to acknowledge as much. They were happy

70. Ibid., p.80-81.
71. Ibid., p.81.
72. Ibid., p.94.
to maintain the reassuring public illusion that paper money was redeemable in gold. Besides, compared to cheques and other negotiable instruments, paper currency represented only a small proportion of the total money supply.

Under these circumstances, the role of gold had changed. In most advanced countries, central banks had been established as either private, government regulated or state owned institutions. Although there were national differences in how they performed their central banking functions, Anstey was only interested in what he saw as a recent trend: their ability to concentrate and mobilise a country's gold reserves. In some cases, such as Germany, those reserves had been directed by the government to support export industries; but in others like the United States, 'They are mobilised under capitalist control for the international economic conflict.' It was a system built, ultimately, on the soundness of government paper currency and so 'what Capitalist "High Financiers" do for their own profit should be done for the profit and progress of the nation'.

In Anstey's view, one of the main impediments to reform was the mystification that surrounded the operation of modern banking. The most obvious example was 'the gold fake' whereby people were allowed to believe that paper currency was based on gold. Quoting a series of 'authorities' drawn from finance journals and evidence to governments commissions, he argued that:

The essence of a sound currency is that every credit issued shall be based upon deposited securities, upon bills that represent products, deeds that represent property, and bonds that represent the taxable wealth of the community.

73. Ibid, pp.96-101.
74. He took the view that it was more than an esoteric, technical language that had grown out of the increasing sophistication of capital markets. It was a deliberate attempt to hide behind jargon. To that end, he quoted Denison Miller, Governor of the Commonwealth Bank, as saying in the New Zealand Evening Post, 16 March 1916, that 'Banking has its own language, not understood by the people, and not intended to be understood by them.' See Anstey, Money Power, p.103.
75. Ibid. p.106.
Cheques, as the most common form of currency in circulation, were certainly not redeemable in gold, but in the 'paper notes of the nation' which were backed by the nation's wealth.\textsuperscript{76} Gold, after all, had no more intrinsic value than anything else. As a 'standard of value' it was nothing more than a convenience, assigned an arbitrary or market-rigged figure in relation to other commodities.\textsuperscript{77} Modern banking was not based on gold. It was based on the same tangible assets that lay behind any sound currency. As financial intermediaries, what banks did with the credit attaching to those assets was to monetise it in the form of cheques and other negotiable instruments. Their ability to trade in these 'paper instrumentalities' behind a veil of mystification allowed them to increase their profit and power free from public scrutiny.\textsuperscript{78}

Foreign exchange was another of the major 'fakes' by which modern banks duped the public. The price for exports, for example, was determined by the market in which they were sold, and they were paid for in the currency of the country in which they were sold. However, 'Money does not function as money outside its own territory.'\textsuperscript{79} Thus, the exporter became the owner of foreign money in a foreign market and unless he was also an importer, he had to sell his claim upon that foreign money to a local bank for local money. The reverse applied to an importer who had to buy foreign money from a bank to pay his foreign supplier. In both cases, the value of the transaction was determined by 'the ratio of imports to exports that affect the financial relationship of nations'. Theoretically, the return to an exporter for his goods, or the cost to an importer, should depend on that ratio. The problem, as Anstey saw it, was that banks were the intermediaries in such transactions. It was they who bought and sold 'oversea credits' and set the prices of foreign currency so that they

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., p.107.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., pp.108-109.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p.109.
could extract 'a portion or the whole of the premium' arising from a favourable rate of exchange.\textsuperscript{80} On an adverse rate of exchange, they also contrived to make a profit. Again, this was cloaked in an esoteric language.

This smoke screen of senseless words and phrases is not without utility. It protects the 'Monopoly of the Instruments of Exchange' from popular comprehension and attack. Thus Labor can expend its energies upon nationalised fried fish shops and bakeries, while leaving untouched the nerve centres of capitalism, without which capitalism cannot exist, without which national reconstruction on any other than capitalist lines cannot take place.\textsuperscript{81}

However, the manipulation of exchange rates for private profit was not simply a national problem. It had grown with the expansion of an international money market centring around the 'great financial houses' in London. Those financial houses had their 'investigators, ambassadors, news gatherers in all lands'. On the basis of 'market intelligence' supplied by those agents, they were able to speculate on, and ultimately manipulate, the finance markets of the world. One of the results of all this was that the prices for exports and imports were 'not affected by the economic structure, the monetary system or the internal social relations of the exporting State'.\textsuperscript{82} By means such as this, the international Money Power not only distorted the pattern of trade between nations for its own ends, but also diminished the economic sovereignty of each individual nation in the process.

In one of the chapters written after the war, Anstey suggested that, 'The Basic Policy of a reconstructed Australia must be the transformation of all interest-bearing obligations into non-interest-bearing obligations.'\textsuperscript{83} In his view, which ignored the problem of capital flight consequent upon the effective repudiation of those war

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.109-111.

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Ibid.}, p.112. He might equally, were he more inclined to self-criticism, have remembered the Victorian Labour Federation, and mentioned boot or tailoring establishments.

\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Ibid.}, p.114.

\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Ibid.}, p.116. As noted above, Anstey's theory of the Money Power went through a series of ever-expanding revisions. The content of the final two chapters of \textit{Money Power} indicate that they were written somewhere between late-1920 and early-1921.
bonds, this was an urgent necessity, far more important than any of the then current radical proposals for public ownership and control of industry. It was only by breaking the capitalist control of finance that the huge burden of interest payments could be lifted from the back of the nation's toilers. A wealth tax would not be sufficient. It would simply be passed on to the general public. Capitalism was incapable of solving the problems it had created. Labourism could not do so either; nor could nationalised banking when it was operated simply as a buttress to the capitalist state. The only solution was a 'nationalised banking system utilised for national purposes and not for the sordid ends of stock jobbers and speculators'.

Such a system would revolve around a 'Bank of the Nation' with extensive powers to control and mobilise currency and credit. It would be a 'bank of issue' with the power to buy and sell securities as its principal method of adjusting fluctuations in the money supply. It would be a 'bank of reserve' with complete control over the nation's gold stocks which would be withdrawn from the private market and used to pay off foreign debt, or as 'an instrument of credit overseas'. Anstey's 'Bank of the Nation' would also transform internal war bonds into 'fluid forms of capital' so that credit could be extended to productive enterprises. By that means, a substantial proportion of the community's capital could be made to work for national reconstruction rather than sit, inert, as war bonds imposing an increasing interest burden on the productive sectors of the economy.

By these instrumentalities of 'Issue' and 'Reserve'; by control of foreign bills utilised for the liquidation of foreign debts; by the creation of internal credits against deposited bonds; the internal debts and annual burden of interest upon production can be lifted, and the stream of credit now bottled up in bonds can be made to flow along the channels of new production. Only upon these lines can any system of economic reconstruction be consistently and successfully developed.

With a fully nationalised monetary system, the 'capitalist nerve centre is cut' and the Commonwealth would have the power to break up anti-social monopolies, issue

84. Ibid, p.119.
85. Ibid, p.126.
private corporations with licences to operate under specified conditions and, through
the Bank of the Nation's control of credit, be able to direct their behaviour.\textsuperscript{86}

Without a systematic socialisation of the 'Means of Exchange', Australia would
be sucked into the post-war vortex of European bankruptcy:

The economic situation now commences to effect Australia. The prices
of products, by which we pay our obligations to oversea bondholders,
are falling. The metal market collapses. Mines close down, purchasing
power diminishes, unemployment increases; all the phenomena of
Europe begins to reflect itself locally. Thus Australia, in its turn, like
America, is drawn into the European vortex and the fallacy of isolated
prosperity is again exposed.\textsuperscript{87}

The only power capable of resisting that trend was a self-conscious and determined
labour movement. The signs, however, were not encouraging:

And the most astounding fact is that everywhere in Western Europe and
the United States there is a limpness, a tame submission, that arouses
the astonishment even of those who flourish on this resurrected slavery;
millions of men who fought on battlefields are tolerating in silence and
inaction the starvation of their families.\textsuperscript{88}

But even without decisive working class action, capitalism was doomed to collapse
under the weight of its underconsumptionist tendencies:

But no matter how submissive the multitude, the Master Class policy
defeats itself. It overloads the camel. It cannot reduce the standard of
existence without reducing purchasing power, reducing the
consumption of goods, choking production, reducing producers,
destroying values, and rendering its slaves more and more incapable of
earning the tax payable to the Bondholding Oligarchy.\textsuperscript{89}

Anstey's warning was not just to the 'Master Class':

It is for the great mob of reactionary workers who have no ideals, no
spiritual outlook, no conception of a higher life, no sense of social duty;
who are satisfied to be 'Bosses' Men' so long as they are well fed - and
often when they are not.\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., pp.126-130.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., p.136.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., p.137.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., pp.137-138.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., p.138.
The immediate danger was that the existing system would collapse into disorder and chaos. The tragedy was that 'dying orders rather than pass peacefully away are impelled towards catastrophes into which they drag as many men as possible'. In that event, the timorous majority in the Australian labour movement and the ALP must share some responsibility for the consequences.

No matter whether they chose to heed or ignore his warning this time, Anstey had provided his readers with an elaborate exposition on the development of monopoly capitalism to its highest stage, as exemplified in the supremacy of the 'Money Power'. He had drawn together a number of themes from the British, American and Australian radical traditions to illustrate how the dominance of finance capital was linked with economic instability and war. From there, he argued a detailed case to show how that trend could lead to the enslavement of the common people, if decisive action were not taken by the working class. The proposals he outlined were sufficiently radical to be consistent with the growing body of opinion in the labour movement that favoured a strong, interventionist state having control over the commanding heights of the economy. His proposals were also consistent with the Labor Party's objectives and policy, expressed in their most radical terms. In this broader sense, Anstey's 'Money Power' theory represented an attempt to define and mobilise the radical impulses of a labour movement that had generally favoured pragmatic reformism as the political strategy best suited to the circumstances in which it had to operate. The theory was, in short, an attempt to drag the labour movement's ideological centre of gravity to the left.

91. Ibid, p,139.

92. In early 1921, when Anstey was writing this chapter, there was a rise in industrial militancy accompanied by a flirtation with syndicalist ideas which were threatening to open a deep split in the Australian labour movement between the industrial moderates with their parliamentary allies, and the industrial radicals. In this, and his 1919 book on the aftermath of the Russian revolution Red Europe, Anstey was siding with the radicals against the moderate majority of his parliamentary colleagues. Indeed, his peroration was directed at those moderates in the party and the movement.
Of course, Anstey was not the only one trying to persuade the labour movement to adopt a more radical stance. There were others who had shared experiences similar to his since the 1890s, and had drawn like conclusions. The importance of his work rested on the fact that he offered the most detailed elaboration of the 'Money Power' thesis which encouraged many of his contemporaries to follow his lead. In 1915-1916 there was ample evidence that they were inclined to do so. The views of W.F. Finlayson and J.K. McDougall on the issue of war profiteering were very close to the substance and style of Anstey's writing.93 The same was true of many articles which appeared in the labour press criticising the increasingly favourable terms offered on war loans.94 These were early signs that Anstey's work had defined the terms within which most of labour's monetary radicals constructed their criticisms of war and finance, but his influence was probably at its highest during 1919-1921 when the labour movement changed its objective and platform in a way which assigned a privileged position to finance capital.

Anstey's *Kingdom of Shylock* and *Money Power*, however, were not simply technical treatises on the political economy of war and finance. The social consequences of war were as much a matter of morality as they were of economics. All his writings on the subject were informed by a vigorous appeal to fundamental moral principles:

> Out of this war will emerge two classes, bondholders and slaves to the bondholders. All who come alive out of the war must be bled dry that interest mongering vampires within the nation may extract from the products of toil hundreds of millions per annum. That is what they mean when they say 'the standard of life must be reduced'. Working men! You shall eat less, have poorer food, shabbier clothes, scantier

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94. See, for example, the cynicism about 'The Patriotism of Shylock' in the *Australian Worker* on 5 and 12 August 1915; 10 February and 15 June 1916. On 11 August 1916, R.J. Cassidy told readers of the Brisbane *Worker* that the third war loan would close with a shortfall of £28 million on its target of £50 million. This, he claimed, showed that the 'Money Hogs', who were only too willing to 'shriek for conscription of human life', were not prepared to offer their money to the cause of victory without a handsome profit margin.
furniture, fewer pleasures, and know more hardship than ever you knew in all your days and generation. Is it not plain? If every year Shylock is to draw hundreds of millions more in interest from investments in wasted lives and bloody slaughter you who remain alive must slave for it and pay for it. All your days shall be made bitter with hard bondage.  

This and many similar passages signified a moral view which held war to be an evil that not only brought death and destruction but also strengthened the position of those capitalists who would deny the basic principles of civilized human existence:

Thus, because the interests of rival robbers are at the base of war, human rights, social rights, the political and industrial rights of the masses are never written in the Peace terms of warring capitalist States. They are always written in terms of coal, iron, oil, steel rails, locomotives and timber concessions. Give us, sell us, or buy from us, always in terms of property and profit.  

This was the essence of the moral problem. In Anstey's 'moral economy', all citizens had a legitimate claim to the basic necessities of a civilized existence, but modern capitalism, in its ruthless pursuit of profit, cared nothing for simple human rights. The social relations of a modern market economy had displaced an ancient system of reciprocal rights and obligations that had once bound society together in a great chain of being, and reduced social relations to a simple cash nexus.  

If democracy meant government of the people for the people by the people, then hunger, discontent, unemployment and despair ought to disappear, and all the perquisites of life should not be for the few, nor all the struggles for the many. Until that was accomplished democracy existed as a name, and not as a political force.  

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96 *Ibid.*, p.17. Although he did not address the matter here, he did discuss the alternative posed by the October Revolution in his *Red Europe*.

97 For a discussion of the concept of 'moral economy' see E.P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, no 30, February 1971. There are hints of this throughout all Anstey's work, beginning with some of the entries in his commonplace book.

98 He made these remarks in the course of an address entitled 'The New Despotism' at a meeting of the Socialist League held in the Bijou Theatre on 5 September 1915. For a summary see *Argus*, 6 September 1915, p.8. He was one of the few Members of the House of Representatives who regularly drew attention to such basic issues as the rising price of food during the war years. See, for example, *CPD*, vol.76, 15 April 1915, p.2343 and vol.77, 4 June 1915, pp.3738-3739.
In accustomed manner, he went on to talk about reform in terms of the abolition of social 'evils'.

This moral discourse informed Anstey's analysis of how modern capitalism had been transformed into a cabal of financiers. With an increasing concentration of wealth and power in the hands of fewer and fewer men, the motive force of capitalist development shifted from the logic of economic interests to malicious acts of human will. What began as an amoral economic and social process ended as a conspiracy of evil. This signified a slide from materialist political economy to an ethical discourse shaped by the same Christian moral principles that Anstey and many of his fellow radicals had imbibed in their childhood. There, he had learned that the choice between good or evil required acts of free will. An analysis which focused on an increasingly small group of powerful men had an inherent tendency to explain the motivation for social behaviour in terms of conscious human agency. Accordingly, the motive force underlying the development of modern finance capitalism was derived from a darkness in the heart of a few evil men obsessed by greed and ambition. This, in turn, inclined the analysis towards a personification of plutocracy.

In his personification of the modern Money Power's ancestry, Anstey invoked a familiar stereotype:

After Medina came the Jew, Manessah Lopez. He amassed a fortune in the panic which followed the false news that Queen Anne was dead. He 'bought on the slump and sold on the rise'. Then came Samson Gideon and the Goldsmids - Abraham and Benjamin. They were succeeded by the Rothschilds.99

This was followed by a history of the Rothschild family which purported to expose their skill in financial manipulation and how it had won them a prominent place in both German and British society.100

The anti-Semitism in The Kingdom of Shylock was no abberation. It emerged from the logic of Anstey's analysis which drew its images from prejudices deeply


100. Ibid, pp 5-6.
rooted in his cultural heritage. The vulgarities of popular Christian mythology had built up an accretion of suspicion and hatred towards Jews over many centuries. The resulting stereotype of the greedy and cunning Jewish financier was a commonplace convention in the writings of British radicals and American populists. Indeed, the quotations scattered throughout *The Kingdom of Shylock* and *Money Power* illustrate his heavy reliance on British and American sources. It was also a persistent theme among Australian labour radicals.\(^{101}\) Having defined the epicentre of power within modern capitalism in terms of an evil conspiracy, it is not surprising that a man of Anstey's background should have chosen to invoke such a stereotype.

He was, however, taken to task on this matter. As a young man, Ralph Gibson, who was later to become a leading member of the Australian Communist party, remembered Anstey and reactions to his writing. Referring to *The Kingdom of Shylock*, Gibson recalled:

> Its worst fault, its branding of Jews as usurers and its anti-Semitic expressions and cartoons, was also characteristic of Anstey's circle and his period. In the later expanded version of "Money Power" the anti-Semitism vanished. I learned from the late highly respected Melbourne Jew, Alec Mushin, that he had written to Anstey as a political supporter deploring his anti-Semitism and got from him a very fine reply paying tribute to the Jewish people and promising to note his comments for the future.\(^{102}\)

E.W. Peters, a protegé in Anstey's latter years, offered a similar explanation, although he claimed that it was R.S. Ross and other friends in the Victorian Socialist Party who objected to the anti-Semitism.\(^{103}\) It is possible that both may be right about who complained to Anstey. It is also true that, with each revision and expansion, the anti-Semitic references diminished markedly. They did not, however, entirely disappear.

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101. On this point see Love, *Labour and the Money Power*, pp 37, 49, 60 and 64.


The references to the Rothschilds quoted above remained in the final edition of *Money Power.* The stereotype was so deeply embedded in the popular imagination that neither Anstey nor most of his contemporary readers would have been easily persuaded that there was anything wrong with an emphasis on the ethnic origins of a family whose fortune had been made in banking and finance. However, it was not just the Jewish community and the more advanced sections of the labour movement who objected to the *The Kingdom of Shylock.*

Soon after the revised edition of *Shylock* was published in August 1917, the Censor issued instructions that all copies be seized under the provisions of the War Precautions Act. Search warrants were issued, informations laid and detectives dispatched to numerous outlets for radical literature around the City of Melbourne. The Socialist Hall at 47 Victoria Street was searched but nothing was found. Police interviewed Joe Swebleses, Secretary of the Victorian Socialist Party in its headquarters at 184 Exhibition Street. He admitted selling some copies but denied there were any on the premises at the time. Despite the denial, a search was conducted and four copies were found and seized. At the offices of the printing company Fraser and Jenkinson, Bob Fraser, an executive member of the Victorian Socialist Party, admitted having seen copies of the book but none were found in a search. Will Andrade co-operated with the police when they went to his bookshop, asking Percy Laidler to collect a packet of ten copies, consigned to the top shelf since he had received the Censor's letter advising that the book had been banned. The detectives


105. Australian Archives MP 16/1/1917/883B, Kingdom of Shylock by Frank Anstey. On 1 October 1917 the Chief Censor wrote to the Commandant, 3rd Military District, asking that the Intelligence Section, General Staff take all necessary steps to have all copies of *The Kingdom of Shylock* seized. The Criminal Investigation Branch of the Victoria Police were issued with a list of the people and places to be visited and searched. They included the editors of *Labor Call,* *Socialist,* *Ross's Magazine* and *Tribune,* Will Andrade’s bookshop, Fraser and Jenkinson’s offices and the Socialist Hall.

106. Although he was well known to the police, no action was taken against Swebleses on that occasion. He had already been fined for publishing an anti-war pamphlet, *The Glories of War,* and was subsequently arrested on 14 October for not paying that fine. See Geoffrey Hewitt, *A History of the Victorian Socialist Party, 1906-1932,* MA thesis, La Trobe University, 1974, p 223.
sent to the *Labor Call* office were told by the manager, Henry Henkel, that the text of the book had been submitted to the Censor, that the contents had appeared in a series of articles in *Labor Call* during the past five months, that only 250 copies had been published and that he understood it was primarily intended as a handbook for platform speakers. John Ashton, printer of *Labor Call* confirmed Henkel's story, adding that the type had been broken up. The police reported that they had information suggesting that most copies had been sold at public meetings around the city. On 27 October 1917, when the Censor received the police report accompanied by the fourteen confiscated copies, he might well have pondered the wisdom of his 'instructions' to suppress a book whose contents had already reached a newspaper readership far greater than the alleged print run.107

There appears to have been little point in banning *The Kingdom of Shylock*, unless Hughes had simply become impatient with one of his government's most vexatious and uncompromising critics. The essential points of Anstey's theory had not only been published in the radical press, they had been expounded in parliament, and from numerous public platforms. Nor were they entirely new. His analysis built on a long-established tradition and, within the terms of that tradition, provided an entirely plausible explanation of what the war meant for the common people. Between 1914 and 1921 Anstey told his audience, in increasingly elaborate detail, that there was a link between war and finance; that destruction and enslavement were part of the same process. In his view, the monstrous evils which accompanied the rise of finance capital to its commanding position in modern states could only be defeated when a resolute working class finally swept aside the timorous and the treacherous who had led them to the slaughter under the banner of 'King and Country'. But perhaps Hughes and his censors had a point after all. To question the righteousness of the

107 The file gives no hint of who instructed the Censor to seize the book in the first instance. His first letter to the Intelligence Section simply states that he was 'instructed'. The action, however, does bear the hallmarks of Hughes' style of dealing with dissent.
Empire's cause in the sustained way that Anstey had done during a time of national crisis could well be seen as sedition in October 1917.
Anstey addressing the camera in the back yard at 22 Howard Street, East Brunswick.
The banning of *The Kingdom of Shylock* was not Anstey's first encounter with the Censor. As a part-owner and occasional editor of a radical weekly, he was well aware of the restrictions imposed on the press. However, his first attack on military censorship, published just six weeks after the declaration of hostilities in August 1914, did not concern *Labor Call*. It was provoked by a raid on Vida Goldstein's *Woman Voter* when the military authorities allegedly sent 'a squad of soldiers with fixed bayonets to blockade a printing office and intimidate women citizens of high repute'.¹ According to Anstey, their only crime was to draw attention to the horrors of war and urge the establishment of international courts of arbitration. The expression of those views did not provide information valuable to the enemy. They did not constitute treason, nor were they fabricated news designed to mislead or demoralise the public. None of those traditional justifications for censorship applied in this case. It was simply a heavy-handed attempt to suppress peaceful dissent which exposed the military authorities to 'laughter, derision and scorn'.

While he was prepared to accept the 'necessity for suppressing the dissemination of fabricated news', the problem was that 'in every country at war, fabrication is not only permissible by the censor, it is deliberately encouraged'. Thus:

The newspapers are permitted without restraint to shock the people with the horrors of the enemy, to set aflame the fires of hatred, to stimulate the desire for revenge, to arouse the blood lust, minimise defeats, maximise victories. Such is the uncensored programme which the press may follow with impunity.²

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¹ *Labor Call*, 24 September 1914, p.4.

If officially approved lies were encouraged, Anstey declared, there should be room for the 'truth' too.

Why should we not persistently tell the people that the real causes of modern wars are financial, not religious; are produced by Governments composed of men financially interested in war; men deriving profit from capitalist combinations manufacturing war material; more money spend in defence, more profit; war means wastage, replacement, new profits, enhanced fortunes. If it were to the interests of the capitalist system that war should cease, it would cease.

Of course, he had a point about the dangers of censorship and the right to express dissent, but it was not until he had elaborated these views on the causes of war for some time that there was any overt attempt to censor him.

From the beginning of his parliamentary career, Anstey's concern for the freedom of the press had been linked with a hypersensitivity to anything which he saw as a threat to civil liberty. At the end of April 1915 he was again engaged in a set piece battle over the issue, this time with Hughes, as Attorney-General, during debate on amendments to the War Precautions Act. The particular point around which the argument raged was the proposal to modify a provision in the original act which made civilians liable to prosecution before a military court. The object of the amendment was to give them the option of trial by a normal civil court. Although the changes were intended to lessen the severity of the 1914 act, ironically, they provided the occasion for the party dissidents to launch a sustained attack on the way the government had been conducting its war policy to the exclusion of Labor's traditional domestic concerns. The extremes of each view were personified by Hughes and Anstey.

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3 Ibid.

4 The expulsion of Findley from the Victorian Legislative Assembly over Tocsin's alleged 'libel on the king' was the first such incident that had excited Anstey to a vigorous defence of civil liberty.

5 The War Precautions Act, modelled closely on the British Defence of the Realm Act, was passed with very little debate on 28 October 1914. Neither the original Bill, nor the proposed amendments of April 1915 had been put to Caucus for approval. Resentment at this departure from Labor Party protocol underlay the substantial criticisms that were made during the debate.

6 See, for example, Edward Riley, ALP, South Sydney, CPD, vol.76, 28 April 1915, p.2656; King O'Malley, ALP, Darwin, Ibid., pp.2679-2680; and Frank Brennan, ALP, Batman, Ibid., p.2888. For a
At both the second reading and committee stages of the War Precautions Bill (No.2), Anstey denounced it as a denial of the very principles for which the war was being fought, and an abrogation of the government's responsibility to the soldiers' families. There was, he argued, nothing in the present situation confronting the Australian nation which justified powers additional to existing laws. Indeed, the only foreseeable danger was from those to whom it was proposed to give those powers.

We hear it whispered everywhere, even in this chamber, that the military can do no harm. I ask to what law is the military authority to be subject when the civil population is subject to the military. To what Court shall armed criminals amongst the chiefs of the Military Forces be brought? Who shall save the common people from their tyranny?7

With Hughes clearly in his sights, he turned to those Labor men who had forsaken their principles.

Here we have a Government composed of men called from the ranks of Labour, who are supposed to be members of the most radical organisation on earth, to be imbued with exalted ideas of human liberty, to be keen for the preservation of human rights, and to be animated by a desire to cripple all the powers that in any way impinge on our freedom.8

He was not against the military men who had gone to risk their lives in what they believed to be the interests of their country, but those 'platform patriots' and stay-at-home military officers who would usurp civil authority under the act.9

If it was sincerely concerned about treachery and danger to the welfare of the people, the government might do well to look at the activities of people other than those who cast doubt on the wisdom of the war and the way it was being conducted.


Here, in a great National emergency, where it is an absolute requisite to maintain a well-nurtured Army and Navy, whence 70,000 Australians have marched forth to battle, leaving their wives and children behind, and where men who claim to be of our race and blood are taking advantage of the opportunity to raise the price of fodder for cattle and of food for human beings, we, the members of the Labour party, talk of taking precautions against traitors!10

The people would be better served if the government used the extensive powers already available to act against profiteers.11

Hughes, who shared Anstey's talent for fighting oratory, replied in kind.

It appears to me that the trouble with the honorable member for Bourke [Anstey], and the honorable member for Batman [Brennan], is that their imagination, fecund and exuberant as it is, moves only in one direction. They see the danger of civil liberty being lost. Their minds pierce the misty past, and grope with the shadowy host of reformers who have blazed the track of liberty; but they are blind to the blood-red present. They cannot see the tens of thousands of men who die every day that civil liberty may be maintained...What we have to do as practical men is to face the facts. My friends talk about civil liberty being in danger. So it is: but who threatens it? I want to ask the honorable members for Batman and Bourke do they realise that there is at the present time in progress the greatest war of all the ages, and that if it be the destiny of our Empire that she and her allies be defeated, civil liberty will completely disappear?...The honorable member [Anstey] does not see that militarism, which has been for ages the enemy of liberty, is to-day the very sword and shield by which liberty is to be maintained...He had spoken of the grant to Belgium as if it were a reflection on the community, and an offence against its interests, that we should give £100,000 to that afflicted country. He does not realise that but for Belgium, and the deathless valor of her people, in all probability he would not be in this House tonight...But his imagination boggles when it comes to facts. He turns his head away from the stern realities of life; he turns from this war, where men are now fighting and dying for civil liberty, and pokes his head into a recess, where abstractions and figments of the imagination take the place of facts and stern realities...The honorable member has drowned his judgement in the sea of his emotions...If there be one greater reality than war it is death. Would the honorable member, seeing a man dying in the gutter, preach about civil liberty, or would he not do everything possible to render him help and succour? I know the honorable member is a thousand times better than his words; and when he is silent he is excellent. But when he speaks—- 1!12

10 Ibid., p.2760.

11 On 4 June 1915 he pointed out, in an ironic tone, that the government had the authority to confiscate food supplies from profiteering companies under the emergency powers conferred on it by the constitution. See Ibid., vol.77, pp.3738-3739.

12 Ibid., vol.76, 29 April 1915, pp.2765-2766.
But Anstey was not in the least intimidated by Hughes' belligerence:

Just a few words by way of benediction. My friend the Attorney-General, did me the honor to say a few words about me, and to refer to my marvellous imagination. What envy! What jealousy! Never was Ananias more envious of Sapphira than is the Attorney-General of the honorable member for Bourke. What is the qualification of the Attorney-General, if it is not his fertile imagination?...Can the honorable gentleman not at least admire a competitor in the art of fiction?...He says that if the enemy conquers civil liberty will disappear. Is civil liberty to be maintained in a community by a measure of this kind? Do we preserve civil liberty by providing ourselves with weapons against it?...From what sprang the civil liberties of the British race, upon which we pride ourselves?...They were born in the very blood and fibre, and were secured by the unselfish sacrifices of the great proletariat of the world. England has been made great by the struggles of the masses of the poor and obscure. It is they who made her glorious in political, religious, and civil liberty. Against whom have the English working classes warred? It has not been against the Germans or against conquerors of foreign extraction, but against tyrants of their own race and creed...From this mighty army of the unnumbered dead have come the great traditions which have made our nation what it is. Are we to sacrifice these glories, these liberties, and these traditions, when we can turn round and say to-day that under our flag there are monsters who call themselves Britishers, who enjoy civil and religious protection under the flag, and who yet, while men are drawn from the mine, the mill, and the factory to go forth to battle and die upon the fields of Belgium and of France to uphold the glory of the Empire, are making profits out of the necessities of their fellow men?

After a brief exchange with Hughes over whether profiteers should be shot and if so, how, Anstey accused the government of not having the 'guts' to seize the opportunity of eliminating such exploitation and transforming the existing order of society. He continued:

What has the Labour movement produced? Nothing. It has produced here a class of us who are drawing our salaries and are not prepared to utilise the instrumentalities of human government that we possess in order to push forward the common cause...What are we doing under this Bill, in which we take the power to suppress the rights of every individual in the community, to take any civilian and order him before a court martial? We are not prepared to use our power to regulate the prices of which we have talked so much. Let us own and acknowledge that it is all one gigantic hypocrisy; and when we talk of civil rights and the shedding of blood, I will say once more, as I said at the beginning, as one who honors and glories in the men who offer up their lives in the forefront of battle, that at least it becomes our duty and obligation to live up to our principles.13

Hughes concluded the exchange in an impatient and dismissive tone.

13. Ibid. pp 2769-2772.
Does he for one moment imagine that if his voice were silent, then freedom would die? Does he think that freedom is so frail a thing that it depends solely upon his advocacy, or that it will totter to a fall if he does not uphold it? I do not think so. Freedom existed before he lived, and will continue after he dies. The honorable member has, first of all, to recognise how utterly insignificant the individual is in the scheme of things.

It was precisely what Hughes saw as 'the scheme of things' that so worried Anstey. After losing the vote by 41 to 5, he walked away in disgust, declaring, 'I say clearly that I owe no allegiance after to-night to this government, or to the men I find associated with them. The constituency of Bourke can have my resignation tomorrow. If I have not conducted myself properly, I am no longer fit to be a member of this Parliament.' Fisher had the last word with the wry and challenging observation, 'The honourable member has made his announcement to the wrong place, though.'

The significance of the fight went far beyond the oratorical quality of the exchanges. It marked the end of the firm friendship with Hughes that had begun when Anstey entered the Commonwealth parliament in 1910, though not their mutual respect. It signified the hardening of resistance from the Victorian backbench to the government's subordination of party policy to the needs of war-time administration. As such, it highlighted the dilemma confronting a reformist Labor party in government during a period of national emergency. The sharp contrast between Hughes's loyalty to king and country, and Anstey's devotion to the party and the working people symbolised that dilemma. In the realm of practical politics, it also provided an increasingly sharp focal point for the emergence of two irreconcilable factions.


15. His only supporters were Dr. Maloney, King O'Malley, Frank Brennan and his old comrade from the Victorian parliament, Charlie McGrath. For the division list see ibid. p.2779 and his declaration p.2780. The Argus 30 April 1915, p.5 printed a full report on the debate under the heading 'Labour Members Quarrel'. The Sydney Worker, 6 May 1915, p.20 reported the incident under the headline 'Passionate Appeal by Mr Anstey. Owe No Further Allegiance to Government'. The point of Fisher's remark was to point out that if Anstey was serious about resigning, he should know that the proper way to do it was to present a written resignation to the Speaker of the House. As far as Fisher was concerned, it was a stunt contrived for maximum political effect. Anstey's subsequent strategy suggests that he was correct.
Despite his declaration of intent, Anstey did not submit his resignation to the 'constituency of Bourke' immediately after the debate. He might have made the statement in anger, but on this occasion he was not going to act in haste. Encouraged by congratulatory motions for his robust defence of civil liberty from the Melbourne Trades Hall Council on 7 May and the Victorian Branch of the Seamen's Union a little later, he prepared to attack the Fisher government on another matter.16

This time he chose the issue of rising food prices which had become the driving force behind Labor's much debated intention to resubmit its referenda proposals to the electorate during 1915. At the Commonwealth Political Labour Conference held in Adelaide during May 1915, the union delegates had urged the Fisher government to press on with the 'prices referendum', despite the reluctance of some State politicians.17 Anstey took it up because he was suspicious of the government's motives in allowing the matter to become bogged down in the morass of Commonwealth - State relations. It was the kind of bread and butter issue on which it would be easier to enlist support than the important, but more abstract, matter of civil liberty. As the representative for a working class constituency, he was well aware of popular discontent at the declining standard of living for most ordinary families.18

He began on 10 June with a typically uncompromising article in Labor Call on 'A Paralysed Party'.19 The following day, the Brunswick branch of the PLC passed the following resolution:

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16 Labor Call, 29 May 1915, p.1. Anstey, it will be recalled, had been a Seamen's Union delegate to the Trades Hall Council.

17 On this see Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics, pp.76-81.

18 From August 1914 wages had been frozen at pre-war levels. Industrial tribunals did not resume hearing claims until early 1915. Meanwhile, as Turner, ibid., p.73 notes, the food and grocery price index (1911 - 1000) rose steadily during the four quarters of 1914 and accelerated during 1915 from 1235 in the first quarter to 1364 in the second, jumping to 1534 in the third and then levelling down a little to 1512 in the final quarter. At a general meeting of the Tramways Union, chaired by Anstey, on 3 August 1915 a motion proposing 'a wage claim due to the increased cost of living' was discussed. See Australian Tramways Employees Association (Victorian Branch), minute books, La Trobe Library, MS 7818/482/2.

19 Labor Call, 10 June 1915, pp.4-5.
That this branch of [the] PLC considers the Fisher Government deserving of the utmost censure for the dilatory and unstatesmanlike manner in which they are dealing with the present economic crisis, and the meat supply especially.\(^\text{20}\)

Three days later Anstey launched his attack in caucus. During a meeting held intermittently from Monday 14 to Thursday 17 June, Anstey and J.H.Catts\(^\text{21}\) moved a motion which encapsulated the underlying principles of the radical faction.

That it be an instruction to the Government to utilise the War powers of the Commonwealth for the protection of the civilian population against the rapacity of the cornerers of food supplies and during the period of the war do all necessary acts as if the Referendum bills had been carried.\(^\text{22}\)

They had three main objectives. The first was to assert the power of caucus which had not been consulted before the amendments to the War Precautions Act were introduced. Anstey and a growing minority of more radical members were becoming alarmed at the degree to which the government was by-passing both caucus and parliament in its decision-making. In this, they were reflecting the discontent of many unionists and the party's rank-and-file supporters. The second was to force the Cabinet to address the issue of living standards, the neglect of which was seen as both electorally damaging and symptomatic of the government's preoccupation with war policy to the exclusion of the Party's traditional concerns. The third objective was to highlight the Ministry's timidity in not using the emergency powers available to it under the Constitution in time of war.

Debate on the motion appears to have been acrimonious. According to an Argus report, which was based on a detailed 'leak', there was some resentment that

\(^{20}\) Argus, 15 June 1915, p.8. He also received support from the Federated Clerks' Union. See ibid., 26 June 1915, p.16.


\(^{22}\) Patrick Weller (ed.), Caucus Minutes, 1901-1949: Minutes of the Meetings of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party; volume 1, 1901-1917, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1975, p.406. The motion was moved during the session on the afternoon of Tuesday 15 June. The referenda proposals were essentially the same as those which had sought to extend Commonwealth powers but had been defeated in April 1911 and again at the 1913 federal election.
the government's backbench critics were not giving sufficiently loyal support to the ministry. That, apparently, led to heated exchanges.

Prices of commodities were also discussed, and here again acrimonious statements were made. Ministers were charged with having neglected to use the power which it was claimed they possessed, of exercising control of the supplies of certain articles. The reply was that the control of foodstuffs was a matter for the States to deal with. The argument against this was that Parliament had endowed the Ministry with ample powers under the War Precautions Act to supersede State control.23

Debate continued throughout the afternoon and evening of Tuesday 15 June and for most of the following morning. Eventually, a similar but less provocatively worded motion from Frank Brennan was put to the meeting and defeated by 38 votes to 20.24 Although it was an encouraging sign that they were making some headway, Anstey made good his threat and submitted his resignation to the PLC Executive immediately after. At the same time, Charlie McGrath declared his intention to submit his resignation to the party branches in Ballarat.25

It was widely recognised, even by his opponents, that Anstey had the numbers in the party machine and was in no danger of ending his political career.26 In a press interview, he made it clear that he was trying to force the Central Executive to take a stand on the issues he had raised.

I was elected to the Federal Parliament pledged to certain principles, and if, in my opinion, certain fundamental principles of the party are broken by the Caucus I have a perfect right to make a practical protest.

23 Argus. 15 June 1915, p.8. At the Caucus meeting on 24 June, Findley raised the matter of leaks to the press but, after some discussion about excluding reporters from the precincts of Parliament House during Caucus meetings, no action was taken. See Weller, op. cit., pp.408-409.


25 Political Labor Council of Victoria, Central Executive, minutes, 17 June 1915, p.208 in DLP papers, La Trobe Library, MS 10389. The minutes simply note, 'A special meeting was held to consider correspondence from F. Anstey re. Federal party.' See too, Argus, 18 June 1915, p.6. For the story on how McGrath went through the motions of making a protest without having to resign see ibid., 19 June 1915, p.16; and 21 June 1915, p.8.

26 The Argus political reporter noted, on 19 June 1915, p.16, that, 'There is not the slightest doubt that amongst official Labour supporters feeling generally is strongly in favour of Mr. Anstey. This applies not only to branches in the suburbs, but to the central executive itself.'
This I have done by resigning, and if the central executive, in its wisdom, decides that my judgement was wrong, and that they approve of the actions of the Ministry, then I should not hold the place in Parliament which I have occupied.\textsuperscript{27}

While the Central Executive pondered the best way to handle the problem, Anstey took his campaign directly to the public.

With the assistance of his friends in the Victorian Socialist Party (VSP), he addressed an overflow meeting in the Bijou Theatre on Sunday 20 June.\textsuperscript{28} There, he put his position plainly to an entirely sympathetic audience. Within the broad terms of his \textit{Money Power} thesis, which he was at that stage beginning to develop, he denounced what he saw as the Labor Party's unprincipled timidity in not attacking profiteers.

But - and this is the point - every advantage that has been conferred, every increase in wages that has been given, every reduction of hours has been snatched away with the one hand while they have been given with the other. (Cheers.) The increases in the wages have been made ineffective because the price of commodities has gone up, and in every instance where an advantage has been gained it has been snatched away by some counter stroke. And by whom? By a vast organisation of capitalists, a combination of men who hold in their hands not only the instruments of production, but the very things upon which the people depend for their existence.

The Labor Party had traditionally said that when the means of production passed into the hands of the few, it was the party's duty to return control to the people.

If it does not do those things, if it does not give the people those things, then the Labour party has misled the people; it is no better than the party which preceded it. ... It is the duty of the national Government in this great crisis and under its war powers to say to the meat and sugar trusts and controllers of fodder, 'you have used your privileges in a manner inimical to the interests of the public.' There are no technical

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.} This was a matter properly within the domain of the Victorian Central Executive. A Federal Executive had only recently been established by the Commonwealth Conference in Adelaide during May 1915.

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Ibid.} 21 June 1915, p.8. The meeting was held under the auspices of the VSP. The paper, which had no inclination to flatter Anstey, estimated that 'At least 2,000 people must have been turned away, and the theatre itself was packed from floor to ceiling.' Anstey's close but informal association with the VSP was particularly convenient on occasions such as this. It was not until the 1924 Commonwealth Conference that dual membership of 'fraternal' parties was banned after the Communist Party made an audacious attempt to take over the New South Wales branch of the ALP. See Alastair Davidson, \textit{The Communist Party of Australia: A Short History}, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1969, p.31. Until then, Anstey supporters like Frank Hyett and John Curtin could move freely within both parties. This particular meeting, for example, was chaired by Hyett.
difficulties in the way; men who have the courage to act can always find ways and means. I hold these principles so strongly that hereafter I shall formulate them, as I do now, upon the floor of Parliament. The criterion and judges of my actions are the militant democracy outside Parliament.29

That last declaration made explicit a trend that was becoming increasingly obvious; the government was losing the support of a substantial part of its natural constituency. Expressed in such uncompromising terms, it was a direct challenge to the Central Executive to exert pressure on the government to bring it back into line with Labor policies and principles.

The significance of Anstey's challenge, and the apparent strength of support for it, was not lost on the government's supporters in the labour movement. On Thursday 24 June, the day before the Central Executive was to consider Anstey's resignation, the Trades Hall Council resolved, 'That this council of organised workers of Victoria has confidence in the present federal government to carry on the work of the Commonwealth during the crisis we are now passing through by the present European war.'30

Because the dispute had assumed the proportions of a full-scale factional brawl, the Central Executive invited all available Victorian members of federal caucus to a special meeting on 25 June at the Trades Hall.31 The executive met first, without the parliamentarians, and although many members sympathised with Anstey's stand, they decided it would be unwise to accept his resignation, if for no other reason than

29. Argus, 21 June 1915, p.8. It was, of course, entirely consistent with Anstey's general thesis on modern capitalism that rising commodity prices should result from the deliberate actions of profiteering monopolists. The possibility that price rises may have resulted from the impersonal workings of a capitalist market where shortages because of drought and the demands of war had intensified an inflationary spiral begun by an earlier expansion in the money supply, was not acknowledged. For a detailed case against the allegations of profiteering see Ernest Scott, Australia During the War, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1939, chapter xix. Anstey was, however, vindicated on the matter of the government's 'war powers'. In 1916 the High Court held, in Farey v Burvett, that under Section 51(6) of the constitution, the Commonwealth did have the power to control bread prices. For discussion of the case see ibid, pp.642-643.


31. The PLC Central Executive minutes, op. cit, p.211 record the following as present: Senators Barnes, Blakey, Findley, Mckissock and Russell; and MSHR Hannan, Ozanne, McGrath, Hampson, P.J.Moloney, Matthews, Brennan, Tudor, Dr Maloney, Anstey and Fenton. These were, of course, in addition to the members of the Central Executive itself.
the fact that his vote was necessary for the referendum bills to pass the third reading stage. When the executive and the MPs met there was 'plain talking on both sides'. Anstey, 'in a spirited address', explained his reasons for offering his resignation. Some of his caucus colleagues replied that they, too, did not always agree with decisions taken, but accepted the will of the majority in the interests of solidarity. In support of Anstey's view, some executive members pointed out that there was a widespread belief in 'various Labour organisations' that the government 'could act more expeditiously on behalf of the workers, who consisted of the majority of the electors'. Having made that concession, Cohen, the president of the PLC, asked Anstey to withdraw his resignation. Characteristically, he refused. Then, in what was probably a pre-arranged face-saving compromise, Cohen handed it back and Anstey accepted it 'amidst the cheers of those present'. The official statement was then given out that 'the trouble between Mr Anstey and the Federal Labor Party had been settled satisfactorily'. It is doubtful, however, if anyone believed it.

Despite some encouraging support from Labor's rank and file, and the Central Executive's acknowledgement that he had a point, Anstey's statements attracted criticism from several quarters outside caucus. The Argus dismissed him as 'a "Yarrabanker" of a specially reckless type'. J.W. Miller, secretary of the Harrietville branch of the PLC, accused him of fancying himself as 'a little tin god' whose claims had made it appear that the Fisher government was responsible for high food prices and had so jeopardised the success of the referenda. The Sydney Worker's Henry Boote saw it in clear terms. 'So when the question is put to us, "Which will you have,'

\[32\] Ibid. Argus, 26 June 1915, p.16; and Labor Call, 1 July 1915, p.1.

\[33\] Reporting an exchange in the House between Catts and Fisher on the sugar issue, the Argus, 26 June 1915, p.16, observed, 'Whatever may be the outcome of the trouble between Mr Anstey and the Labour Caucus, it would appear that further trouble is brewing with other members.'

\[34\] Ibid, 22 June 1915, p.6.

\[35\] Labor Call, 8 July 1915, p.8.
Anstey or Unity?" we hold up both hands for Unity straight away.'36 The following week Anstey replied that unity was only a means towards an end, and if that end was not Labor's objective, then 'unity can ossify a government into officialism'. Boote did not answer Anstey's point directly. Instead, he simply reiterated the original rebuke, that the case should be argued within caucus, not outside where it could only give comfort to their opponents.37

Anstey was not in the slightest deterred by these criticisms. On the contrary, he intensified his campaign against the government's war policy, particularly in matters of finance. The first instalment of his initial 'Kingdom of Shylock' series appeared in Labor Call on 15 July 1915. A week later he launched a sustained attack on the War Loan Bill (No.1.) in the House.38 His argument was an early version of the one he was developing as part of his more general 'Money Power' thesis. To the obvious irritation of Andrew Fisher, he ranged widely, and wildly, over the interlocking interests of the Melbourne banks and the Collins House group.39 He denounced the gold standard as a pernicious fiction and proposed that, to finance the war effort, the government issue the Commonwealth Bank with bonds to the same value as the proposed loan and redeem them, interest free, over a period of some twenty years.40 There were no signs of surprise when his proposal was rejected.

For some time, Anstey and several other members of the radical faction had been a source of vexation to Fisher who found the responsibilities of war-time political leadership increasingly burdensome. George Pearce, Minister for Defence and loyal supporter of Fisher, recalled a caucus meeting during this period when


37. Ibid., 1 July 1915, pp.1 and 15.

38. CPD, vols.77-78, 21 July 1915, pp.5158-5163.

39. Fisher was particularly annoyed when Anstey, taking up a point Hughes had mentioned earlier in the day, accused the principals of some Melbourne Banks of dealing with German companies, through their connections with the 'Metal Gang' [Collins House group]. Ibid., p.5162.

40. Ibid., pp.5164-5165.
Anstey delivered a thoroughly prepared, forty-five minute lecture on banking and currency to show how the government's financial policies were ill-advised.41

He finished with a wild and whirling peroration. The perspiration dropped from his forehead, he wiped it off with his fingers and made the tempo of his oration still faster. Never once did he quote from the musty tomes dug from the library. At last, exhausted and panting, he sank back in his seat.

Mr Fisher had sat looking like a graven image through it all. Then, in his blandest tone, he asked if any other member wished to make a few remarks. Nobody did, nobody could follow Anstey's oration without suffering in his reputation as a speaker. Then Mr Fisher cleared his throat and said, 'Well, Mr Secretary, and what is the next business?' Anstey sprang to his feet, his eyes blazing, and yelled, 'What, have you no reply to me?' 'Ah,' said Mr Fisher, waggling his forefinger at Mr Anstey, 'Finance, finance, finance.' For a moment Mr Anstey stood as if struck by lightning, and then, with a resounding curse, he swept his arm round the pile of volumes, bringing them with a crash to the floor, rushed from the room and did not reappear in party meetings for months.42

Although Anstey had the worst of the exchange, it was the sort of incident which Fisher, who was increasingly unwell, found so demoralising and eventually led him to seek a quieter life as Australian High Commissioner in London.43 Anstey, meanwhile, continued to argue his case to the public through the 'Kingdom of Shylock' series, and related articles, in Labor Call.

His increasingly hostile attitude to the government was confirmed in September 1915 when Tom Barker, a member of the radical syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), was arrested for publishing his soon-to-be famous ironic recruiting poster which urged, 'To Arms! Capitalists, Parsons, Politicians, Landlords, Newspaper Editors, and Other Stay-at-home Patriots. Your Country Needs You in the

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41 The minutes do not record the incident, but it might have been the meeting of 8 July when Fisher 'made a general statement as to Finance' or 15 July when Fisher explained the 'proposed loan of £20,000,000'. See Weller, op. cit., pp.412-414.


Trenches! Workers, Follow Your Masters. Anstey joined in the chorus of protest from sections of the labour movement. Commenting on the unwillingness of those who called for military conscription to support conscription of wealth, he declared:

The bloodthirsty interest mongers and profiteers present in this crisis a lovely spectacle of patriotism, but nobody puts them under arrest for 'stopping recruiting'. Put up a poster. Ask these parasites to lead the way to the trenches, and Labor Governments will lead you to the gaol. That's the world a-marching on for you in 1915.

He also wrote to Barker congratulating him on his stand and asking for a copy of the poster.

When Fisher resigned at the end of October 1915, caucus elected Hughes as parliamentary leader and thus Prime Minister. Anstey understood only too well the portents in Hughes's acceptance speech.

Not only were we in the midst of a protracted and ghastly war but had the Referenda fight in front of us which if carried would entail still more work on the party. They all knew him to be a man of strong opinions and he felt sure they would prefer him to express those opinions to the party. He would strive to do honor to the high position they had placed him in and in again thanking them felt sure of their cordial and loyal support in the fights they had before them.

Anstey did not stand for election in the consequent Cabinet reshuffle. His precise reasons are not known, but given the stand he had taken, he could hardly accept membership of a war-time cabinet led by Hughes, and he knew that he did not have the numbers anyway. There was one thing, however, that was abundantly clear. The 'fights they had before them' would often be internal ones and Anstey realised that he was going to face a tougher and much less benign opponent than Fisher. The election

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45 Labor Call, 30 September 1915, p.4. It was also published in the Sydney Worker, 30 September 1915, p.16.


of Hughes had increased his alienation from the party's 'loyal' majority, and hardened his resolve to oppose and denounce it at every turn.

Anstey's suspicions about Hughes appeared to be vindicated when the government announced that it was going to withdraw the referenda proposals and ask the State parliaments to refer the powers to the Commonwealth for the duration of the war and one year after. Although it appears that Hughes did not initiate the move, it was he who was vilified by the left as the one responsible.\(^48\) During committee discussion of the bill to withdraw the writs, Anstey directed his biting irony at Hughes.

> Why refer these measures to the mass of the people when we do not know how they are likely to vote on them, or what we are going to get, when we can be sure as to what we are going to get from the Tory Legislative Councils of the States? ... For that reason we, as good Democrats, are withdrawing the referenda writs in order that we may refer these matters to people who will not give us the powers we seek. Of course, we shall be in the same, old, happy position of being able to blame some one else, and of resting the responsibility on some one other than ourselves.\(^49\)

Although he may have been unfair to Hughes in this specific case, Anstey was right in his prediction that the States would not legislate to transfer the powers to the Commonwealth. During 1916, however, the government did make a serious attempt to control prices by regulations gazetted under the War Precautions Act, as he had urged in his original clash with Hughes over amendments to the act.\(^50\) It was one of those regulations which was tested, and upheld, by the High Court in *Farey v. Burvett* in 1916, but by then it was too late.

The strength of Anstey's feelings about the government's performance by the end of 1915 was revealed in an emotional outburst published in *Labor Call*.

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It is all one great fraud, a gigantic sham, a shameful mockery, a miserable mirage; the politicians delude with false hopes all those they profess to serve. Nothing will be done. The fact will eventually be irresistibly pressed upon the organisations of Labor that the politicians have reached the limit of their democratic performances.

It was symbolic of his alienation from the majority of caucus that he referred to politicians in the third person, as if he were no longer one of them. In January 1916 he wrote to Hugh Mahon asking if he could join an official delegation to the Northern Territory. 'I am not reaching out for a job but I would like to have an excuse to get out of Melbourne for a few months.' After his failure to submit an official report on the Norfolk Island trip, it is not surprising that no invitation was forthcoming.

Although Anstey was unable to get away for a rest, there was some relief from the intensity of the political struggle when parliament went into its seasonal recess. On this occasion, however, the break was longer than normal. His main protagonist was about to leave the country, and parliament was not to meet again for several months. On 11 November 1915 Hughes had received caucus approval for a trip to London 'to place the Australian views in connection with the war' before the British government. Just what those views were likely to be was clearly implicit in the 'Call to Arms' campaign which he led to bolster recruiting during the two months between the announcement of his trip and his departure. Amid widespread suspicion that he was actively considering the introduction of military conscription, Hughes left for England on 20 January 1916 and did not return until 31 July. During his absence Pearce acted as Prime Minister. For most of that period Cabinet was preoccupied with the administration of the war effort and was content to have parliament remain in recess until May 1916, when it was recalled to pass the budget. There were

51. Labor Call, 18 November 1915, p.4. He had already, on numerous occasions, been scathing about Fisher's concession to the Liberal Opposition in the establishment of the War Council. In Anstey's view, a government which was prepared to grant such a compromise to the Opposition while flouting its own party's policy, was beneath contempt.
52. Hugh Mahon papers, NLA MS 937/1/35. The letter had 'Recd. 21.1.16' noted in the margin.
54. Fitzhardinge, op. cit., pp 59-60 on the 'Call to Arms' campaign and chapters iv - vii on the trip to London.
nevertheless, plenty of opportunities for Anstey to continue his campaign of harassment against the government.

On 30 January 1916 he told a meeting at the Bijou Theatre that the striking miners in Broken Hill deserved congratulations for their attempt to win the forty-four hour week and regain their previous standard of living. They had been vilified as cowards by the government which was itself cowardly in not telling the mine owners, 'Gentlemen, resume work, or we will resume the mines in the interests of the nation.' During his speech, he expressed a view which was to be the cause of some difficulty later. He said that he did not object to the principle of compulsion, because he did not believe in one man reaping the benefit of another man's efforts, but the principle of compulsion was not applied equitably. Men gave their lives. Other men did not give their money. This, he told Labor Call readers two weeks later, was a 'tragic farce'. The war census of September 1915 had gathered information on both manpower and wealth but there was no provision for the data to be used to identify specific classes of wealth which might be compulsorily mobilised to sustain the war effort. There was, however, a clear intention to use the manpower statistics to identify those who might be liable for military conscription. To even suggest in public that there was profiteering in commodities and finance, was to risk being caught in the increasingly tight net of censorship regulations designed to suppress open criticism of the "patriotic" plunderbund', which was rapidly becoming a 'triumphant oligarchy' of financial plutocrats.

In the first few months of 1916 the trend of events was such that Anstey was propelled into the forefront of extra-parliamentary opposition to the government.


56 Labor Call, 3 February 1916, p.1.


58 Ibid, 3 February 1916, pp.4-5; 24 February 1916, pp.4-5; 23 March 1916, p.6; and 6 April 1916, pp.10-11.
During 1915 discontent had spread steadily throughout the labour movement making its members more susceptible to radical interpretations of what the war meant. The continuing problem of food prices and the general decline of living standards lay behind the series of strikes in the mining and maritime industries. The abandonment of the prices referendum and suspicions about the motives behind the war census gave substance to the growing popular distrust that Anstey expressed so forcefully. As the casualty lists mounted after Gallipoli, and the military’s demands for recruits grew more insistent, the volatile issue of conscription moved closer to the top of the political agenda. In September 1915 both the Melbourne Trades Hall Council and a conference of Victorian unions declared themselves opposed to conscription. At the same time, socialists of the VSP persuasion won effective control of the previously pacifist dominated No Conscription Fellowship. In January 1916, after some particularly belligerent statements from Hughes during his ‘Call to Arms’ campaign, the powerful and usually conservative Australian Worker’s Union unanimously passed an anti-conscription motion at its Annual Convention. The Queensland Labor-in-Politics Convention did the same in March. On 30 March the Melbourne Trades Hall Council endorsed a motion from Frank Hyett proposing that an anti-conscription propaganda committee be established to work among the unions in preparation for the trade union congress which, at their previous weekly meeting, they had resolved to convene in May. At the same time, there were growing signs of Irish-Catholic disaffection with the war, particularly after the ruthless suppression of the Easter Rebellion in Dublin. This helped create the conditions for another significant group

59 Turner, op. cit., pp.81-96.
60 Ibid., p.100.
61 Ibid., p.99.
of traditional Labor supporters to become suspicious about proposals to introduce conscription.64

By the end of April 1916 there was growing support in the party machine for Anstey and the position that he had adopted in June 1915 when he offered his resignation to the Central Executive. At the Victorian ALP Annual Conference which began on 21 April, he was appointed as the Kara Kara state electorate's delegate and was subsequently elected as a member of the Central Executive. His criticism of the federal government duly vindicated, he again took an uncompromising position against censorship and profiteering. It was clear that the tide of opinion was running with him when the conference passed a motion committing party members 'to oppose by all lawful means the conscription of human life for military service abroad'. He might well have rejoiced in the irony of the situation when the conference took the decisive step of calling on all unions and other affiliated organisations to actively oppose Labor candidates who supported conscription.65 Now that the tables had been turned, it remained to be seen how his opponents in the government and caucus would react when they did not have the numbers. His pleasure in the anticipation of their discomfort would have been increased when he learned that, in the first week of May, the NSW Labor conference passed a similar motion, despite opposition from a few supporters of Holman's 'loyalist' faction.66

Within three weeks Anstey attended another conference on the conscription issue. When the trade union congress, convened by the THC, met in Melbourne on 11-12 May, he was a delegate from the Tramways Union. Although not all unions participated, most of the stronger and more militant ones were represented, as were

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65 A full report of Conference proceedings is given in the PLC Central Executive minutes, *op. cit.*, 21 April 1916, p.287ff. A shorter report can be found in *Labor Call*, 4 May 1916, p.2.

the Victorian Socialist Party and the Industrial Workers of the World. Given its political complexion, there was little doubt that they would decide to oppose conscription. The only real question was, in what terms they would do so.

A pamphlet from the 'militant section' was presented to delegates on their arrival. It attempted to set the tone of the congress by urging them to adopt the Second International's policy on war and prepare for a general strike to 'render the imposition of conscription an impossibility'. Soon after proceedings began, the fundamental issue was settled, as expected. Congress expressed 'its uncompromising hostility to conscription of life and labor'. It went on to pass a series of motions which reflected the general mood of the unions represented, and the differences between them in matters of emphasis. The voluntary system, for example, was declared to have been successful, particularly as it would not leave behind after the war any laws which might be used to crush unionism. This, however, was opposed by a strong anti-war minority on the grounds that the motion did not condemn the war as such, it only addressed the conditions under which Australian men should participate. Another motion calling on the government to suppress profiteering was carried unanimously. Congress demanded a rise in pay and pensions for the common soldier and his family, coupled with the conscription of wealth and incomes above £300 per annum. This was intended to demonstrate that they drew a distinction between those who profited from war and those who were the victims of it. On the vexed matter of a general strike, delegates trod warily. As they did not represent all unions, they doubted the extent of rank-and-file support for such drastic action at that stage. Accordingly, they adopted the compromise position of calling on unions to

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68. Ibid.

69. This was the first union congress in Australia to use the 'card system' of voting whereby delegates' votes were weighted in proportion to the number of members they represented. This motion, for example, was passed by 238,018 to 753. See ibid.
take a referendum of their members 'as to the advisability of a general cessation of work in the event of the federal government introducing conscription of life and labor in Australia'. Following the lead of the Victorian and NSW Labor parties, they urged opposition to all political candidates who favoured conscription and appointed a Executive Committee, including Anstey, to co-ordinate propaganda, raise funds and reconvene the congress if necessary. They went on to deplore a pro-conscription petition circulated by the Australian Native's Association, and to protest against the imprisonment of IWW men such as Tom Barker. Although they stopped short of mass direct action, this congress of the more militant and radical unions had given a clear indication that they, too, were resolutely opposed to those in the parliamentary party who appeared to support or tolerate the government's desire for conscription. All this was entirely consistent with the views Anstey had been propounding for some time. As a leading radical publicist with access to the Labor Call presses and now a member of the Interstate Trade Union Anti-Conscription Congress Executive, Anstey seemed a natural choice to help write a manifesto, and to see that it was distributed as widely as possible. He agreed to do so, and set to work preparing it for publication.

During the brief parliamentary session called in May to pass the budget, Anstey began to rehearse the argument he had been developing for some time, and would repeat on numerous occasions over the next eighteen months. The central point of his argument was to establish a logical link between the conscription of men and the conscription of wealth, and then exploit what he saw as the government's inconsistency on the issue. In the course of debate on war loans he asked,

If it be true that the nation is fighting for its life, and we should organize all the resources and energies of the country for its defence,

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70 The members of the executive were Anstey, Frank Hyett, A D Jones, D Stobie, L Manning, John McNeill, D P Russell, G F McGowan, W Smith, B Mulvogue and J Cosgrave; with the President (C J Bennett) and the Secretary ex-officio members. See ibid.

71 The report does not mention a manifesto. It was suppressed under the War Precautions Act soon after it was printed. However, the full text was reproduced in E J Holloway, The Australian Victory over Conscription in 1916-17, Melbourne, Anti-Conscription Jubilee Committee, 1966, pp8-10. At the 1917 Victorian ALP Annual Conference Anstey claimed that he was the author of it. See ibid., 26 July 1917, p.2.
why stop short at the conscription of men? Why not organize all the necessary resources and energies of the country? Why permit one class to make enormous profits out of the war and another to make only sacrifices?

Lest he be thought a negative, carping critic, he commended a proposal from the English journal the *Nation*, which might ensure a more equitable contribution from all classes of citizens:

... any enlargement of our national forces involves taking men from productive employments, where they can earn on average not less than £100 per annum, and putting them into an unproductive occupation, where they cost some £300. The necessity for war finance evidently requires that for every man so transferred a levy should be made upon the income of the nation. Only in this way do we approach equality of sacrifice.72

To some of his party colleagues, however, this carried with it the suspicious implication that he might be prepared to accept conscription in principle if it were applied equitably. On 14 July the Central Executive asked him to explain what he meant by the speech.73 The minutes do not record him as having done so.

While there may have been a degree of uncertainty about his attitude among some Labor people, on the other side of politics there was no doubt, only hostility. Sir Robert Best, the Liberal Member for Kooyong, replied with a succinct exposition of the loyalist Opposition's view on Anstey's proposal. The conscription of wealth 'would precipitate a crash in values, destroy credit, and produce but little cash, whereas the owners would be so much the poorer'. To attempt anything 'so outrageous or unjust' would invite a disaster of equal magnitude to the war itself.74 Anstey and his comrades might have been making headway in the labour movement, but to people of

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72. *CPD*, vol.79, 18 May 1916, p.8011. During the referendum campaign in October, the daily press took some statements from this speech out of context and used them against him. See, for example, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 October 1916, p.6 and 26 October 1916, p.16.

73. *PLC* Central Executive, minutes, *op. cit.* The motion was moved by Russell and T.P.Holloway. Their unease was probably increased by an argument that had occurred between Anstey and E.J.Holloway during a meeting of the Anti-Conscription National Executive when Anstey had suggested that they consider a compromise whereby they accept conscription of men if the government accepted conscription of wealth. Holloway claims to have rejected it outright. See report of debate at 1917 Victorian ALP annual conference in *Labor Cfl*, 26 July 1917, p.2.

Best's persuasion their views were a heresy against the sanctity of property, and were to be denounced as such.

Anstey spent most of June and July 1916 elaborating his argument on the moral economy of the nexus between the conscription of men and money. Through a succession of articles in *Labor Call* he provided elaborate details on the link between capitalist avarice and militarist belligerence, between 'blood and boodle'. At the same time he was completing the trade unions' anti-conscription manifesto and steering it through the press. In the text of the manifesto he gave an implicit answer to those on the Central Executive who had wondered about his attitude to conscription. In addition to the resolutions passed by the congress in May, Anstey included the unequivocal statement, 'Under no circumstances must we agree to a compromise on the question of conscription of wealth. No amount of wealth sacrifice can be accepted as a set off against the compulsory sacrifice of human life.' It may not have been exactly his own view, but it was an indication that, in the circumstances, he would accept the majority's position.

The manifesto was issued on 18 July and distributed widely to unions and other anti-conscription organisations throughout Australia. However, when the *Argus* was about to print some passages from it, the censor referred the matter to Pearce who deleted sections from the proof and ordered the seizure of all original copies of the

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75. See, for example, 'The Loan Floaters' in *Labor Call*, 1 June 1916, p.6; 'Blood and Boodle', *ibid.*, 8 June 1916, p.4; 'Gorging the Vultures', *ibid.*, 15 June 1916, p.4; 'The Dawning Slavery', *ibid.*, 22 June 1916, p.4; 'The Slaughter Pot', *ibid.*, 29 June 1916, pp.6-7; 'Banks and the Nation', *ibid.*, 13 July 1916, p.4; and 'The Unseen Grip', *ibid.*, 20 July 1916, p.4. A long letter to Anstey from 'a well-known AWU member' who was prominent in the Mallee-Wimmera region was published in the paper on 2 March 1916, p.7. It gave details of alleged waste and mindless inefficiency in a remount unit near Cairo. The basic problem, according to the correspondent, was the rigid military caste system, compounded by nepotism among the officers.

76. Amid all this hectic activity he found time to write an encouraging letter to Curtin, who was then grappling with alcoholism in a convalescent home. 'John drunk is a damn nuisance, but he was even in that state a better man than thousands sober, and John sober is the Nestor of them all. Stand upright, proud of yourself, proud of the conquest that you are going to achieve and the good that you yet will do.' The full text of the letter is given in Ross, *op. cit.*, p.49.

77. Quoted *ibid.*, p.51. Although it was not signed, the members of the Central Executive would have been aware of who wrote it and the significance of the statement.
pamphlet. On Saturday 29 July Military Intelligence organised a late night raid on the Trades Hall Council offices and, against the protestations of E.J. Holloway, impounded all copies of the manifesto found on the premises. On the same night they also took outward possession of the *Labor Call* office and, on the following Monday morning, seized all type, partly-printed and completed pamphlets concerning the Interstate Trade Union Anti-Conscription Congress Executive. Henry Henkel, the editor of *Labor Call*, was subsequently charged and fined £5 for a breach of the Printers' Act because he had issued the pamphlet *Australian Trades Unionism and Conscription* without his name and address on the imprint.78

This was not an isolated action. Pearce and his conscriptionist colleagues at all levels of government were becoming increasingly hostile towards radicals in the labour movement, not just the IWW. Public meetings were often broken up by soldiers in uniform.79 Anti-conscription groups of all persuasions were refused the use of public halls.80 Activists were charged, and some were gaoled, for distributing prohibited literature.81 Copies of both *Labor Call* and the *Socialist* were seized during military raids.82 The net of censorship was being drawn more tightly around the activities of the government's opponents.83 All this was too much for the Victorian


79. At one stage T.J. Miller, R S Ross and the Rev. F. Sinclair went on a delegation to protest to Pearce, as Minister for Defence, about soldiers disrupting anti-conscription meetings. See Jauncey, *op. cit.*, p.138.


81. Fred Holland, Secretary of the No-Conscription Fellowship was fined; John Cain, a Northcote City Councillor and VSP member, was charged; and E.K. Thomas was gaoled for distributing handbills which did not carry the printer's name and address. See *Ibid*.


83. Press reports on meetings of the Labor or Liberal parties, other than those based on statements made by the Prime Minister or Leader of the Opposition; any resolution for or against
Central Executive. They convened a special meeting on 4-5 August to which all Victorian Labor Members of the House of Representatives were invited. Pearce was called before them to explain the raids on the Trades Hall and Labor Call office. He admitted responsibility for ordering the raids and was duly censured by the Central Executive. Although Anstey was present at that meeting, the minutes do not record whether he took part in the discussion.^{84} No further action was taken at that stage. Hughes had arrived back in Australia on 31 July and was on his way to Melbourne. It would be better to wait and see what attitude he would adopt on the conscription issue before taking matters any further. With so much at stake, it would be best to deal with the organ grinder, not his monkey.

There was not much doubt, however, about Hughes' intentions. In some quarters of the party it was known that Pearce had quietly sounded out politicians and union leaders as to their views on conscription.^{85} Nevertheless, Hughes did not declare his position immediately. He returned to Melbourne on 8 August and immersed himself in the work that awaited him. On 14 August he was given an enthusiastic public reception in the Melbourne Town Hall. A week later he was guest of honour at the Eight Hours Day dinner in Sydney. On all of these occasions he spoke with passion and conviction about the need to support the troops in the trenches and bring the war to a speedy end, but he did not openly advocate conscription.^{86} With so many party and union executives either overtly hostile to the very idea, or profoundly suspicious of it, he was still calculating the best way to approach the problem. An act of parliament was not possible because even if he could get it through cabinet and the House of Representatives with Liberal support, the Labor majority in the Senate would

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^{84} PLC Central Executive minutes, _op cit._ 4-5 August 1916, p.329.

^{85} Fitzhardinge, _op cit._ p.175.

^{86} By this stage Hughes was receiving the alarming casualty figures for the Somme offensive and the first battle at Pozieres. _Ibid._ p.173.
almost certainly defeat it. A regulation under the War Precautions Act would probably be overturned by the Executive Council, or the Senate and, besides, there were doubts about the constitutional validity of such a course. As far as he could see, a referendum was the only realistic possibility if a split in the party, and the fall of the government, was to be avoided. He finally decided to go to the caucus on 24 August and ask them to approve a referendum. If, as he expected, the people voted for conscription, all but a few of the die-hard anti-conscriptionists, like Anstey, would be forced to follow public opinion and support him. His position seemed to be vindicated when he received an urgent request from the British government for reinforcements at a much higher rate than that which could be met from existing voluntary enlistments.

The caucus meeting, held intermittently over four days, began amicably, at least on the surface. After hearing a report from Hughes on his European visit, they congratulated him on 'the valuable work he performed in Great Britain' unanimously, and with 'great enthusiasm'. On the second day, Friday 25 August, he 'made a complete statement on the position of Australia and the conduct of the War' and 'outlined a Policy for the Government in this connection'. Although the minutes do not record any particulars of the statement, Anstey made detailed notes and posted a summary on to Henry Boote, editor of the AWU's *Australian Worker*, the most widely distributed of the labour papers. Anstey sent the summary to Boote so that he would know 'what we are up against'.

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88. There was some controversy about the accuracy of the figures in the request. It was likely that they were inspired, in part, by a desire to help Hughes in his campaign for conscription. *Ibid.*, pp.182-183. The figures were widely quoted during the referendum campaign. After it had been lost, Anstey suggested that they were not merely in error, which was true, but were deliberate fakes. See *Labor Call*, 16 November 1916, p.7. In fact, Souter, *op. cit.*, p.147 suggests that Anstey may have been right and that Hughes had arranged the cable through the commandant of the AIF head-quarters in London, Brigadier-General R.M. Anderson.

89. Weller, *op. cit.*, p.434. A full account of the stormy Caucus and Cabinet meetings over this extended weekend can be found in Fitzhardinge, *op. cit.*, pp.183-188.


91. Anstey to Boote, Henry Boote papers, NLA MS 2070/1/73. The letter is dated 'Friday Night' [25 August].
According to Anstey, Hughes told caucus that they could not avoid the 'issue forced upon us'. With characteristic pugnacity Hughes then branded his opponents as disloyal, 'I know the elements that profess to be of this party whose ideals are not our ideals, implacable opponents of the views held by this great party, don't care for either Empire or country.' That, of course, was meant to include Anstey. The position was serious. The Allies were difficult to hold together. France was 'hysterical and anxious to pull out'. There had been 'awful British losses' and France had lost so many that the British had to 'occupy a longer front'. After describing the terrible AIF losses and reviewing the strength of Australian troop numbers at home and abroad, he produced the 'telegram just arrived from Lloyd George' demanding 'more men, more guns, more munitions'.

Hughes then proceeded to instruct caucus members as to their duty. They were responsible to the electors, not the 'organisations' which were only a fraction of the electors. 'Why take notice of resolutions?' Were they to be governed by men who did not know the facts? It was their 'duty to follow the light of facts'. He had always said that they should not compel men to fight overseas, but circumstances had changed and he no longer held those views. They should, 'Go for conscription'. It would be good party tactics because it would appeal to eighty per cent of the electors. The government had 'earnt the odium of the Labor journals', presumably including Labor Call, but if they depended on them they would be 'in the pit'. Warming to the task, he declared that, 'The nation was everything.' The party organisations acted in ignorance, incited by a 'section beneath contempt' who hated Britain. 'They hated everything that was clean, decent and respectable.' Members of caucus should go out into the organisations of the labour movement and sweep away the opponents of conscription 'as chaff before the wind'. Hughes would stake his life that he could go out to those organisations and carry them with him. He finished his appeal with a

92 Although the cable was effectively a request from the British Government, technically it was from the Army Council.
stirring peroration. 'Don't leave the boys in the trenches. Don't see them butchered. Don't leave them below their strength or you cover Australia with shame.'

He then outlined the proposals that had been hammered out in the Cabinet meetings which were interspersed with the caucus sessions. All single men under twenty-one should be called up before married men were conscripted. Those single men should be given the choice to volunteer for overseas service. If they refused to do so, they should be sent anyway. He asked caucus to approve a referendum on the issue in October and promised that no conscript would be sent out of the country before it was held. Any other course, he assured them, would be political suicide.

In the question time that followed, Hughes was asked repeatedly whether he would abide by the caucus decision. On each occasion he did not give a direct answer. Instead, he delivered long speeches on 'everything', including the sins of the anti-conscriptionists. Few, least of all Anstey, would have been in any doubt about what the answer was going to be; it would only be a matter of time. Anstey then tried to provoke Hughes with a question to which he already knew the real answer. If they agreed to have a referendum 'will anti-conscriptionists be permitted to put their case in manifestos, dodgers or otherwise without censorship'? According to Anstey, Hughes replied with 'ten minutes of generalities'. The question was repeated and Hughes said, 'You will have unlimited scope to say whatever you wish subject to the laws of your country.' Anstey knew exactly what that meant.

There was a succession of cabinet and caucus meetings on Saturday, followed by a marathon meeting of caucus on Monday when, in the early hours of Tuesday morning, they finally agreed, by a dubious majority of one vote, to hold a referendum.

93 Anstey's letter to Boote is by far the most complete account of what transpired at the meeting. The press reports are slight, in keeping with the new guidelines issued by the censor. See, for example, Sydney Morning Herald, 26 August 1916, p.16 and 28 August 1916, p.8.

94 Weller, op. cit., p 435; Fitzhardinge, op. cit., pp.186-187; and Jauncey, op. cit., pp.157-158. The vote was 23 yes and 21 no. Because the vote was taken so late, there is some doubt whether it would have passed if every member of Caucus had been present. The conditions under which the referendum was to be held, and a delay for one month of the planned call up of men under
As soon as he had caucus approval, Hughes moved quickly. He made a brief statement to parliament on 30 August, announcing that a referendum would be held on 28 October and warning that the country's honour and safety were at stake. The next evening he held a secret session of parliament with members of both houses in the Senate smoking room where he gave a confidential briefing on his European visit. Among other matters, he is alleged to have argued that they should help Britain by approving conscription now because after the war Japan would put pressure on Australia to relax the White Australia policy and they would need the support of the rest of the Empire when that day arrived. Although he did not attend the secret session, Anstey and other anti-conscriptionists were to use that information against Hughes in the subsequent referenda campaigns. At the time, however, the heavily censored press made no mention of the claim, it merely reported the session in suitably grave tones.

The following night, in accordance with his statement to caucus, Hughes appeared before the Victorian ALP Central Executive to argue his case for conscription. Anstey and the other members of the executive assembled in the Trades Hall at 8 o'clock and listened for an hour as Hughes tried 'every one of his many oratorical, logical and political tricks, to convert all, or at least some, ... to support his referendum campaign'. He told the same story of the Allies' imminent collapse and his utter confidence that the people were with him. However, as E.J.Holloway recalled, 'Not a single man was impressed in the slightest degree and it became apparent to the Prime Minister that his mission was a miserable failure.' When Holloway told him that "defence of Australia and its territories' provisions of the Defence Act, were the subject of lengthy debate and compromise.

95. CPD, vol.79, 30 August 1916, p.8402.

96. On this point see Firzhardinge, op. cit., pp.167-168; and 187.

97. Anstey later claimed, when he mentioned information given during the session, that he was not bound by any obligation to keep it secret because he was not at the meeting. See CPD, vol.80, 20 September 1916, p.8680.

98. See, for example, Sydney Morning Herald, 1 September 1916, p.7.
the anti-conscriptionists would take their message to the people with equal determination and asked what he would do if the people voted 'no', Hughes promised that he would not force the matter on them. On that point, at least, he was true to his word. His outward confidence in his ability to convert the Labor executives, however, was misplaced. He had been out of the country too long and had lost touch with the mood of the labour movement. The Victorian Central Executive declared itself opposed to conscription. The New South Wales Executive, and the Trades and Labour Council, did the same after Hughes addressed them on 4 and 5 September. Four days later, the South Australian ALP Conference approved the referendum but registered its opposition to conscription. When he returned to Melbourne to introduce the Military Service Referendum Bill to the House of Representatives on 13 September, it was clear that the Labor machine was against him and he would have to treat them as opponents rather than potential converts. Thereafter, his attitude changed to one of belligerent hostility.

Following Hughes' example, the anti-conscriptionists were spurred to action after the proposal was announced. Curtin, who was soon to be appointed Secretary of the Interstate Trade Union Anti-Conscription Congress National Executive to replace

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99 Holloway, op cit., p.5 and 'The Apostasy of W. M. Hughes' in Australian Worker, 6 February 1919, p.18. The source for this remarkably accurate insider account was almost certainly Anstey Holloway, at the time, was the President of the Central Executive. There is no substantial biography of him, apart from his memoirs Fifty Years Hard Labour in the E.J. Holloway papers NLA MS 2098/4.

100 PLC Central Executive, minutes, op cit., 1 September 1916, pp.335-336. Hughes censored the news of the decision so that it would not prejudice his chances with the other executives he was to meet. For an example of the censored news see Age, 2 September 1916, p.11. His opponents, however, had anticipated his strategy and sent the Victorian and Federal ALP Secretary Arch. Stewart and the Queensland Senator Myles Ferricks to Sydney where they addressed the same groups as Hughes. On Stewart see Peter Love, 'Archibald Stewart' in John Ritchie (ed.), Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol.12, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, forthcoming. For an outline of Ferricks' career see Joan Rydon, A Biographical Register of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1901-1972, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1975, p.74.


102 Fitzhardinge, op. cit., p.191.
E.J. Holloway, threw himself into the struggle with renewed energy. On 3 September a crowd of some 10,000 attended a rally on the Yarra Bank to hear Dr. Maloney, E.J. Holloway, James Mathews, Jim Scullin, Maurice Blackburn and Frank Hyett, among others, denounce conscription. There was a large protest meeting on the same day in the Sydney Domain. Broken Hill workers struck on 7 September to express their disapproval of the Hughes proposal, and against the posting of a military censor in the *Barrier Truth* office. In Queensland, on 13 September, the ALP Central Executive declared that Labor members who supported the Referendum Bill would lose their endorsement. The next day an anti-conscription committee was formed with E.G. Theodore as chairman. In many cases, the government’s critics encountered the usual opposition and disruption. Even on Anstey’s home turf, the Mayor of Brunswick, D. Phillips, refused the Labor Party permission to hold street meetings in his city, not because of the chance of disturbance or obstruction, but because it would be an act of disloyalty to ‘our brave boys’ if anti-conscriptionists were given any encouragement by municipal authorities.

In these early stages, the usually prominent Anstey was conspicuously absent from public platforms. In the first two weeks of September he was ill and had been ordered to take a few days rest. Hughes introduced the Military Service Referendum Bill to the House on 13 September and delivered his second reading

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103 Ross, *op. cit.*, pp.50-53. Holloway claimed that he was too preoccupied with industrial matters, but the change might also have been because Curtin was a particularly energetic organiser and effective speaker, when he was over his periodic bouts of drinking. He was appointed by a union conference in Melbourne over the week-end of 23-24 September 1916. The reason given then was that Holloway was needed to help organise the union campaign in New South Wales. See, *Age*, 23 September 1916, p.9.


105 *Age*, 15 September 1916, p.6 and 26 September 1916, p.9. Anstey and the Peace Alliance later challenged that and, with the help of Martin Hannah MLA, had the ban removed. See Judith Smart, 'The right to speak and the right to be heard: the popular disruption of conscriptionist meetings in Melbourne, 1916', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol.23, no.92, April 1989, p.218.

106 *Labor Call*, 14 September 1916, p.3. Anstey was not present at the huge anti-conscription demonstration held in the Melbourne Exhibition Buildings on 20 September. See full report in *Age*, 21 September 1916, p.8.
speech the following day. The formal process of the government's disintegration began immediately. Frank Tudor resigned as Minister for Trade and Customs in protest.\textsuperscript{107} Frank Brennan, in leading the attack, warned that the government was beginning to crumble, that its policy was doomed to failure and that the people would punish it for attempting to 'lay violent hands upon' them.\textsuperscript{108} Anstey had recovered, however, in time to take his part in the sustained guerilla attack on the Bill by 20 September.\textsuperscript{109} After the ritual preliminary skirmish with previous speakers, he stated his position:

\begin{quote}
I have no objection to conscription, to compulsion. I have no objection to force; I never had, either in the work of unionism or in the work of the nation. ... In a time of strife I believe there is something in the doctrine of Kennedy, the old Chartist, when he said, 'Moral suasion is all humbug; nothing convinced like a lift in the lug.' ... I do not even mind forces being sent oversea, if it is oversea we are going to find liberty, and to secure protection; but I wish to make sure that it is in that direction we shall achieve those ends.\textsuperscript{110}
\end{quote}

He went on to cast doubt on the truth of the government's claims about the need for more reinforcements. Not only were the claimed reinforcements unnecessary, their mobilisation would be a positive danger to the nation on a number of grounds. It would undermine the freedoms that the labour movement had won over the years by asking the people to approve compulsion when they were not in possession of all the facts. It would weaken Australia's primary industries by depriving them of essential manpower which could not be replaced by women and children. That would simply encourage 'those peculiary interested [to] make a demand for cheap labour and the importation of Asiatics'. Accordingly, when the Bill reached the committee stage he moved that its title be changed to the 'Coloured Labour Referendum Bill' because:

\textsuperscript{107} Fitzhardinge, \textit{op. cit.}, p.191.

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{CPD}, vols.79-80, 14 September 1916, pp.8558-8561.

\textsuperscript{109} For the full text of the speech see \textit{ibid.}, vol.80, 20 September 1916, pp.8674-8683. Brennan, Dr. Maloney, Anstey and others opposed the Bill at every stage of its progress through the House. Ferricks led the opposition campaign in the Senate.

\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Ibid.}, p 8676.
One of the advantages to be anticipated from the carrying of the proposed referendum is the advance of our industries by the sending out of the country of 200,000 or 300,000 of our men, and replacing them by coloured labourers. It is unnecessary to elaborate the virtues of the proposal. If we can put cheap Asiatics in the place of the men to be sent abroad the advantage to every industry in Australia must be patent.\footnote{Ibid., pp.8741-8742.}

His implication was that such labour would be used to reduce wages and weaken the union movement, an objective which was now central to the Hughes government's desire to crush all opposition. This line of argument, however, was not seriously intended to persuade anyone to change their vote in the house. It was simply meant to point out how far Hughes and his followers had departed from the views they had so recently espoused. The bill duly passed both houses with only a minor amendment and a distinctly loaded question was approved for submission to the people on 28 October.\footnote{The people were to be asked to vote yes or no to the question, 'Are you in favour of the Government having, in this grave emergency, the same compulsory powers over citizens in regard to requiring their military service, for the term of this war, outside the Commonwealth, as it has now in regard to military service within the Commonwealth?' The bill passed the House of Representatives by 46 votes to 10. Those opposed were Burns, Calts, Finlayson, Hannan, Maloney, Mathews, Moloney, Page, Sharp and Tudor. Three opponents were paired; Anstey, Brennan and Mahoney. See report in \textit{Age}, 22 September 1916, p.7.}

When the vote was taken on the bill, neither Hughes nor Anstey were present. They had both gone to Sydney to open the formal campaign in New South Wales. On 22 September Anstey addressed an overflow meeting at the Sydney Town Hall.\footnote{For a detailed report see \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 23 September 1916, pp.19-20. The audience inside the hall was estimated at 4,000 and the crowd outside at about 8,000. See too, \textit{Age}, 23 September 1916, p.14.} His speech was very similar to the one he had delivered in the House two days before. On this occasion, however, he concentrated on the way in which Hughes had changed his views in such a short time. He asked them to consider why a man whom Labor had put into office had turned against the very organisations which he was supposed to represent. He reminded them that only a few months earlier, Hughes had said that the country which needed conscription was 'a country so rotten as to be unworthy of preservation'. Anticipating Hughes' answer, he cast doubt on the need for the number
of reinforcements cited by the government's supporters, and suggested that the result would be a shortage of labour in Australia.\footnote{Among the politicians present on the platform were Finlayson, Catts, Burns, Riley and Lynch from the Commonwealth Parliament and Stuart-Robertson and Minahan from the State Parliament. Doyle, President of the New South Wales Political Labor League Executive, was in the chair. While Anstey was in Sydney, the Melbourne Trades Hall Council organised a week-end conference of affiliated unions who re-affirmed their opposition to conscription and planned their next moves in the campaign against it. They also recorded their satisfaction at the news that the New South Wales PLL Executive had expelled Hughes on 13 September. See Age, 23 September 1916, p.9.}

Back in the House of Representatives, on the same day as eligible men were called up under the existing provisions of the Defence Act, Anstey taunted the government with the allegation that it had betrayed the people by promising them a referendum on prices and now gave them a referendum on conscription. W.A.Watt, one of Anstey's more friendly critics on the other side of the House, asked, if that was his attitude, why he had not moved a no-confidence motion against the government. His reply was an apt summary of his parliamentary behaviour since 1914. 'Have I not been moving such motions ever since we came back from the last election? And a miserable failure I have been!'\footnote{CPD, vol.80, 29 September 1916, p.9152. In the course of some friendly banter with Watt, Anstey promised not to resort to the kind of vituperation that Hughes had employed so far in the campaign. Watt interjected, 'We shall lose half our interest in you, then.' Ibid., p.9153.}

Within a few days Anstey was in Tasmania as the main attraction at a series of anti-conscription meetings. On 5 October he addressed an audience of mixed views in Launceston. He warned them that conscription would mean an end to the White Australia policy, followed by the importation of cheap labour from India. At that point, an Indian soldier in uniform interjected, 'Don't you run down India; that's my country.' Anstey's rather lame reply that he did not criticise 'any man, white, yellow or brown' was almost lost in the ironic cheers. In the end, however, he won a majority over to his view that, 'We will not accept victory abroad for slavery at home.'\footnote{Hobart Mercury, 6 October 1916, p.4.} The next day he spoke at a meeting in the Hobart Town Hall. Joseph Lyons, from in the chair, began by reading out an anti-conscription resolution passed by the Tasmanian
Labor Executive and the Labor caucus. Anstey then delivered a variation on the same speech he had given in parliament and Sydney. After a collection was taken for the cause, he went out and addressed the overflow crowd in the street.\textsuperscript{117} While his speeches were generally well-received, he was taken to task by John Earle, the only Labor MHA who came out in favour of conscription. In an open letter to Anstey, Earle argued the same basic case as Hughes; that it was dangerous folly to talk of liberty when the Empire was in such dire peril. To let Britain down now, no matter what the outcome of the war, would bring dishonour upon Australia.\textsuperscript{118} After he had returned to Melbourne, Anstey published a detailed reply in \textit{Labor Call}. It was an opportunity to elaborate on the points he had been making for the past few weeks. The reply ranged widely over the principle of compulsion, the supposed need for reinforcements and the possibility of a labour shortage being met by the importation of Asian workers.\textsuperscript{119}

Anstey continued to attack Hughes on this point with wild and imprecise charges about plans for the introduction of 'coolie labour after the war' from India, and about secret meetings with the Japanese Ambassador in London.\textsuperscript{120} In calmer times, Anstey's claim might have been easily dismissed, in Hughes' words, as 'an infamous and malicious lie', but the combination of an emotional campaign and the fortuitous arrival of some ninety-eight Maltese migrants in Western Australia made it seem plausible. Before Hughes could stop them, another ship arrived with a further two hundred aboard. In an attempt to limit the damaging propaganda, Hughes had their ship diverted to New Caledonia where they remained, as innocent victims of Australian political passion and prejudice, until they were brought to Sydney, detained on a hulk in the harbour, and eventually released to take jobs (at union rates

\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Ibid.}, 7 October 1916, p.3.

\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Ibid.}, 10 October 1916, p.6.

\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Labor Call}, 19 October 1916, p.11.

\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Ibid.}, 12 October 1916, p.8.
of pay) in March 1917, after considerable public agitation on their behalf.\textsuperscript{121} Although they began their journey as simply a part of the normal flow of migrants from Malta to Australia, Anstey did not see it that way. Two days before the referendum vote, he alleged that they were due to arrive in Melbourne two days after the poll. The implication was that they were the first wave of what would become a flood of cheap labour after the war.\textsuperscript{122} Anstey, however, was not the only one who was playing it rough.

For some time, Hughes and the conscriptionists had been alleging that the opposition within the labour movement to their proposals had been inspired and manipulated by the Industrial Workers of the World. The IWW's radical syndicalism and uncompromising militancy made them the ideal group to alarm respectable opinion in both the labour movement and the general electorate. They were radical in the precise sense that they called into question the most basic values of Australian society. With wit and sarcasm they derided trade unionism and arbitration, ethics and religion, parliamentary democracy and the monarchy, the sanctity of property and the purity of race.\textsuperscript{123}

In August-September numerous members of the IWW were arrested on charges of forging £5 notes, murdering a policeman and burning down buildings in Sydney. While twelve of the 'Wobblies', as they were popularly called, were before a Sydney court on a treason charge for making incendiary 'war against the King', Hughes told a Ballarat audience on 9 October that the IWW were saboteurs, traitors and anti-

\textsuperscript{121} Barry York, 'The Maltese, White Australia, and Conscription: 'Il-tfal ta Billy Hughes', \textit{Labour History}, no 37, November 1989. York's evidence shows conclusively that Fitzhardinge, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.199-200 was wrong in suggesting that most of the men were returned to Malta.


With complete contempt for the legal doctrine of *sub judice*, he made similar statements at a meeting in Bendigo and, on 12 October, produced a letter from Anstey to Tom Barker and read it to a crowd in Hobart. W.H. Lee, the Liberal Premier of Tasmania, asked a 'Dorothy Dixer':

You have said that the IWW was chiefly responsible for the attitude of the Labour organisations towards the Government's proposals. Do you say that any of the prominent men who are denouncing the Government's proposals are in close relation with the IWW?

Hughes replied:

Yes, I do. Further, I say by way of proof that I have here a copy of a letter which I will read to you:- "House of Representatives, Melbourne. My dear Barker,- I am with you to the hilt. I wish you could send me a couple of those posters. Good luck to you. Yours, Anstey." The Barker referred to is the Barker mentioned in yesterday's press reports, in which one of the accused said: "We will teach the Government to interfere with Barker," and "there is another of Barker's fires" and "Barker was the man for whose release all Sydney was to be set on fire."  

Barker issued a detailed rebuttal stating that the letter was written in September 1915 concerning the 'To Arms' poster, that he had no connection with the Labor Party just as Anstey had no connection with the IWW, and that although they were all anti-conscriptionists, the Wobblies had many differences with Anstey and his colleagues. It was, however, too late. If any damage was to be done to the case of the 'IWW Twelve' or to the anti-conscription cause by smearing Anstey with guilt by association, those disposed to believe the accusation would have assimilated it by then. It is doubtful, however, if many were persuaded to change their vote as a result of the stunt. Neither this, nor the allegations about the Maltese migrants, were central to the issues at stake in the referendum, but both illustrated how far these two hardened

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125 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 October 1916, p.17. The letter was found during the police raid on the IWW premises on 23 September 1916 and Detective Moore, a subversion expert with the New South Wales Police, passed it on to Military Intelligence in Melbourne who, in turn, passed it to Hughes. See Cain, *op. cit.*, p.149 and Turner, *Sydney's Burning*, p.47.

political street fighters would go in defence of their respective causes. As far as they were concerned, in politics there was no equivalent of the Marquis of Queensberry.

In the final days of the campaign the pressure mounted. Like most leading participants in the debate, Anstey addressed numerous meetings. His speeches changed according to the issue of the day, but most presented variations on the points he had been making since conscription had become a public issue. He spoke of civil liberty, of military necessity and economic survival, of cheap labour and White Australia, of plutocratic avarice and military belligerence, and, in every speech, the apostasy of William Morris Hughes.127

As the campaign came to an end it was clear that the anti-conscriptionists were making progress, and that Hughes was becoming rattled.128 One indication of Hughes' growing desperation was his attempt to intimidate 'shirkers' from voting by requiring poll clerks to ask voters who looked eligible for military service whether they had responded to the call-up under the proclamation of 29 September. Hughes' clumsy attempt to manipulate the Executive Council into passing the appropriate regulation under the War Precautions Act provoked the resignation of three Ministers; Gardiner (Assistant Minister for Defence), Russell (Assistant Minister) and W.G.Higgs (Treasurer). The regulation was withdrawn just before the poll, but not in time to avoid some very effective, last minute criticism from the anti-conscriptionists.129

When the poll was taken and the final figures tallied the 'no' votes scored a majority by 72,476. It was a narrow margin of only 3.22 per cent, but it carried authority on two other counts. The turn out of enrolled voters at the non-compulsory

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127 See, for example, reports of meetings at Port Melbourne, Age, 16 October 1916, p.3; Northcote, ibid, 24 October 1916, p.6; and Melbourne Town Hall, ibid, 23 October 1916, p.5.

128 Jauncey, op. cit., chapter 7 provides substantial evidence for his claim, on p.211, that 'In August it had been unsafe to hold anti-conscription meetings in almost every section of the Commonwealth, but by the last two weeks of October the position was entirely reversed in every State except Western Australia.'

129 For detailed accounts of the incident see Fitzhardinge, op. cit., pp.211-212; Jauncey, op. cit., pp.207-210; and Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics, p.111.
poll was remarkably high, 82.75 per cent. Even if there had been a majority for 'yes' it might still not have been carried because only three of the four states necessary for a referendum to be successful recorded a 'yes' majority. Those states were Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania.130

All the main protagonists knew what the result meant in political terms, although they were not sure how it would be played out. Hughes confided to Keith Murdoch that, 'The Labor Party is now split into two camps and can never come together again. Do not think that the Referendum is the cause of this unhappy division - it is not, it is only the occasion for it.' 131 Anstey and James Scullin moved quickly to ensure that it was true. They proposed a successful motion at a meeting of the Victorian ALP Central Executive on 3 November that there should be no reconciliation with those Labor MPs who had stood for conscription during the campaign. 132 The next day, Anstey told a mass meeting at the Yarra Bank that, 'The time had come for organisation, for definite methods, for activity, and for an organised spirit of sacrifice, prepared to take all the consequences that came.' 133

Caucus met for the first time after the referendum on 14 November, in the midst of intense political speculation and a crippling national coal dispute.134 Although there are conflicting accounts about the details of what happened at the meeting, the basic facts are clear.135 Several caucus members requested that the

130 For the summary figures see Jauncey, op. cit, p.215 and an analysis of the vote see Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics, pp.113-116.

131 Fitzhardinge, op. cit, p.213.

132 PLC Central Executive, minutes, op. cit, 3 November 1916, p.349.

133 Labor Call, 9 November 1916, p.3.

134 For a summary of the coal dispute see Robin Gollan, The Coalminers of New South Wales: A History of the Union, 1850-1960, Carlton, Melbourne University Press in association with the Australian National University, 1963, pp.146-147. For Anstey's ironic view of the dispute see Labor Call, 23 November 1916, p.8. According to Anstey, when commodity prices rose it had to be accepted in a spirit of patriotic self-denial. Any attempt to raise the price of labour, however, constituted unpatriotic selfishness on the part of workers.

135 The official Caucus minutes, Weller, op. cit, pp.438-439, are sparse, as usual. For the text of a journalist's report, Hughes' version and Tudor's 'official' account, see Weller, pp.484-485.
meeting be held to settle the matter of Hughes' leadership. After confirming the
minutes in the usual way, Hughes asked those who had requested the meeting to have
their say. Finlayson and Hannan then moved a motion of no-confidence in Hughes's
leadership. After some procedural motions and an unsuccessful attempt to refer the
matter to a Special Federal Conference, there was lengthy debate on Hughes'
behaviour before and during the referendum campaign. Underlying all the
specific charges was the allegation that Hughes had failed to recognise the duly
constituted authority of the party and its policies in his reckless pursuit of his
government's war policy. After a break for lunch, Hughes made a statement citing
his long association with the party and deploring the reluctance of his opponents to
hear argument. He then vacated the chair, invited those who thought as he did to
follow him, and walked out of the caucus room with twenty-four supporters. Those
who remained then passed the no-confidence motion, resolved to call a Special Federal
Conference of the party, congratulated Needham and Yates on their difficult
campaigns, and appointed a committee to prepare a press statement. During this most
momentous of caucus meetings, Anstey said nothing. He did not need to. Anything he
had to say about Hughes had been in the public domain for more than a year.

When the House of Representatives met on 29 November, for the first time
after the split, there was some confusion about who constituted the official opposition
to Hughes' new National Labor Party government. Hughes could only rely on
thirteen votes. Any measures proposed by his government required the support of the
official Liberal opposition. Although Tudor, the newly elected leader of the Labor

136 The rough minute book lists the speakers as Finlayson, Hannan, Givens, Charlton, J Lynch,
Yates, Fenton, Hampson, P Lynch, Needham, Poynton, Cats, Carr, De Largie, Senior and Hughes.
There is, however, disagreement about what each said.

137 The minutes, p 442, later recorded the names of the forty-three who remained and the
twenty-five who left. McGrath, Ozanne and O'Loghlin were on active service in Europe, but all
three stayed with the Party. Mahon and O'Malley resigned from the Cabinet immediately after
the meeting and a new Ministry, drawn from Hughes' followers, was appointed. See Age, 15
November 1916, p 7.

138 For a discussion of the incident see G S Reid and Martyn Forrest, Australia's Commonwealth
party, was quick to move a no-confidence motion in Hughes' administration, he did not make an explicit claim to be recognised as the official Leader of the Opposition. Anstey, however, was quick to make a symbolic assertion of his position by claiming a seat on the opposition cross benches.139

Having failed in an attempt to be appointed a delegate to the ALP Special Commonwealth Conference called to discuss the aftermath of the split, Anstey contented himself with parliament as the forum in which he would continue his campaign against Hughes.140 Speaking on the no-confidence motion, he returned to the issue of the relationship between the state and civil society, with particular reference to the attempt to question male citizens of military age about their response to the call-up before they were given a referendum ballot paper. The principle was clear:

Men and women as citizens of the Commonwealth have the right to vote, and the procedure by which they may vote is laid down in the Electoral Act. In this case, a vote of the people was about to be taken, and the Prime Minister formulated a regulation, not under the electoral law, but under an entirely new law, and imposed it upon the citizens.

It was an attempt by the state to usurp the rights of the people. Moreover:

Once we admit the principle of interrogation at the poll, there is no end to it. Once we step aside from the electoral law, there is no limit to corruption.

Having attempted to break that most vital link in the chain of responsible parliamentary government, Hughes and his followers had shown themselves to be contemptuous of constitutional propriety and thus should be cast out.

Whenever the members of the Liberal party make up their minds to oust the present Government, they can have my vote. I am not going to waste time in denouncing the crowd on the Government benches, but I

139. Ibid., p.36.

140. Anstey offered himself for election to the Commonwealth Conference but failed. See PLC Central Executive, minutes, op. cit., 24 November 1916, p.354. This was, perhaps, yet another indication that he was not highly valued as a reliable, predictable delegate. The Victorian delegates were T.C. Carey, R.H. Gill, E.J. Holloway, J. McNeill, J.H. Scullin and Arch Stewart. See Australian Labor Party, Report of Proceedings of the Special Commonwealth Conference Called to deal with matters arising out of the Conscription Issue, Trades Hall, Melbourne 4-9 December 1916, Melbourne, Labor Call Print, 1917, p.2.
shall be glad to do anything I can to induce the Liberal party to put out the Government.\textsuperscript{141}

They did not, of course, take up his offer. By 7 February 1917 they had reached an agreement with National Labor to form a coalition and the Hughes Nationalist Ministry was sworn in ten days later.\textsuperscript{142}

By the end of 1916, hostility from within the Labor Party towards Hughes and his supporters was intense. The Special Commonwealth Conference had debated their sins at length and decided, rather than seek any form of reconciliation, to expel them from the Party and the movement.\textsuperscript{143} Anstey was particularly scathing during debate on the Unlawful Associations Bill. Hughes' flouting of sub judice during the case of the 'IWW Twelve' was without parallel in Australian history.

I shall not go into the case in detail; but I say, deliberately, that for the deepest-dyed scoundrel amongst those men, dissatisfied as they were with their economic condition, suffering from poverty of mind and body, and possessed of a warped intellect, some excuse may be found, but what excuse can there be for a man, excellent in intellect, and in a position to hold evenly the scales of justice, who would so abuse the trust reposed in him as did the Prime Minister during the referendum campaign? His was the greatest crime of crimes, and whatever the crime those other men committed, it sinks into insignificance alongside this violation of the principles of British law, under which alone our courts can give a guarantee of justice.\textsuperscript{144}

Like most who remained in the Labor Party, Anstey's attitude to Hughes had progressed from opposition to hostility to contempt. In Anstey's case, however, the process had begun earlier and was more deeply felt than most.\textsuperscript{145}

\textsuperscript{141} C\textit{PD}, vol.80, 1 December 1916, pp.9377-9381. 

\textsuperscript{142} For discussion of the intricate negotiations leading up to that point see Fitzhardinge, \textit{op cit.}, pp.236-248. 

\textsuperscript{143} Debate on the expulsion motion from Scullin and Stewart occupied the whole of the second day of the conference. After a great deal of discussion about labour principles, about the status of some delegates and the behaviour of political 'scabs', they passed the motion by 29 votes to 4, with three abstentions. See Australian Labor Party, \textit{Official Report}..., pp.4-16. 

\textsuperscript{144} C\textit{PD}, vol.80, 18 December 1916, p.10,142. For comment on his remarks see \textit{Argus}, 20 December 1916, p.9. He was just as scathing on David Hall, the New South Wales Attorney-General, when he charged Henry Boote with contempt over an issue of sub judice but had not done so to Hughes over the IWW trial. See \textit{Labor Call}, 11 January 1917, p.6. 

\textsuperscript{145} This was not specific to Hughes, as was seen in his attitude to Irvine following the 1903 railway strike and Deakin at the time of his retirement.
He was also capable of great loyalty to his friends. John Curtin had worked particularly hard as the secretary of the Interstate Trade Union Anti-Conscription Congress National Executive. He had even spent a brief time in gaol for failing to respond to the call-up. After the victory, he was looking for another job, preferably one where the work would not be so intense as to tempt him to seek comfort in alcohol. Just such an opportunity presented itself when the position of editor of the *Westralian Worker* became vacant. Curtin applied for the job. Anstey was able to help his young friend in January 1917 when he and Dr. Maloney went to Western Australia on an organising tour to try and repair some of the damage that the conscription campaign and the split had done to the party in that state. As one of the most prominent labour journalists in the country, he did some negotiating which was instrumental in Curtin getting the position.

The trip was also the occasion for another skirmish with Hughes. At a meeting in Perth, Anstey apparently repeated the story about conscription being necessary to help prevent the Japanese challenging the White Australia policy after the war. A conscriptionist in the audience disputed the claim and challenged Anstey to swear an affidavit on the matter. Amid considerable uproar, Anstey removed his coat, 'shaped up' to his accuser and the meeting finally broke up in complete disorder. Hughes quickly replied with the simple accusation that Anstey was a deliberate liar. Anstey, in turn, stuck to his story. Whatever the truth of the matter, it was clear

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146 Ross, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

147 *Labor Call*, 11 January 1917, p. 3.

148 Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 54. He made a warm speech at the special 'send-off' for Curtin in February. See *Labor Call*, 23 February 1917, p. 6.

149 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 January 1917, p. 10. Under the censorship regulations Anstey's precise accusation could not be mentioned, but the context points to Hughes' alleged conversation with the Japanese Ambassador.


that there could be no reconciliation between the two of them for some time. They were both good haters.

Back in Melbourne, when parliament resumed on 8 February, Anstey's attacks on Hughes were beginning to assume the proportions of an obsession. In response to the proposal that the elections be postponed for a year, or until the end of the war, Anstey poured scorn on the coalition.¹⁵² 'There are many able-bodied men walking about the streets of Melbourne who are great patriots, and are making great sacrifices for their country with their mouths, but their services are not available at the front.'¹⁵³ The coalition were not, however, prepared to trust the people. They proposed to secure an act of the British parliament to change the constitution and prolong the life of their government. These were the same men who had been explicitly rejected by the people at the last election, and then the referendum. Hughes was the worst of them all.

At Bendigo he poured a stream of abuse upon me, referring to me as an individual caught in a house of ill-fame [the Labor Party], who excused himself on the ground that he was there to distribute tracts. I thought to myself at the time, at any rate, I had an excuse; that the possession of tracts was evidence that the reason for my visit was the conversion of those on the premises. A Christian, anxious to save souls, might visit such a place with a purely moral purpose, especially if he were carrying tracts. But had the Prime Minister such an excuse? No. He says, in effect, 'It is true that I was there. I did not gather up my skirts in virtuous indignation and fly from this home of ill-fame; the inhabitants pushed me out. Only after they had done that did I denounce them.'¹⁵⁴

As on so many other occasions, his satire slid over into invective.

My God! how could this man denounce as the enemies of their country men with whom for long years he had been associated, and assail, not only their methods, but their motives? This is the man who says that we in this House are mere pawns in the hands of outside organisations. To that charge there is but one answer - it is a lie!¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² The proposal that an attempt be made to postpone the election was, in fact, a condition under which certain Liberals agreed to enter a coalition with National Labor. See Souter, op. cit., p.151.

¹⁵³ CPD, vol.81, 28 February 1917, pp.10,743-10,744.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p.10,751.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p.10,753.
The government's motion to seek an act of the British parliament was duly passed, but Labor still had the numbers in the Senate. As if to confirm Anstey's low opinion of him, Hughes pulled another stunt and tried to manipulate the numbers in the Senate.156 He failed and was forced to call an election for 5 May.

Throughout the campaign, Anstey spoke and wrote about little other than Hughes. His campaign against Cr. A. May, the Nationalist candidate, was just as lively and imaginative as the electors had come to expect from their colourful local member. This time, however, there was little mention of his direct opponent. The Nationalists brought in some of their big guns to knock him off. Pearce, for example, opened May's campaign.157 Although Anstey did give some attention to what Pearce said, and repeated his statement that he had no objection to conscription, only the ends to which it was directed, he spent most of his time attacking Hughes.158 He even put out a four page election broadsheet entitled *Hughes and His Views*159 In it he reworked the criticisms he had made of Hughes over the last two years on such issues as profiteering and the war census, the 'metal monopoly', conscription, the split and the Nationalist Party. It was all good, amusing political satire in the style that had made Anstey famous. The general organisation of the campaign, too, was as good as ever. By May 1917, however, it was not as effective as before. Anstey won comfortably, but his majority of nearly thirty-two per cent in 1914 was reduced to ten per cent.160 The

156. Shortly before the Senate vote was to be taken, three Tasmanian Labor Senators became ill and one resigned. Hughes tried to take advantage of this by appointing, at lightning speed, John Earle who had been expelled from the ALP for his conscriptionist stand. He was, however, blocked by two Tasmanian Liberal Senators who threatened to vote against the motion. It was duly withdrawn and Hughes went to the Governor-General and secured a dissolution of the House. See Souter, op. cit., p.152.


158. *Ibid*.

159. Frank Anstey, *Hughes and His Views: Compiled for the benefit of Mr Hughes by his best friend Frank Anstey*, Melbourne, Labor Call Print, 1917. A copy is in the Mitchell Library, catalogued at 355.Z23/9. It was a compilation of articles which had appeared in *Labor Call* during April 1917.

position was much worse for the Labor Party across the country. They won only twenty-two seats in the House of Representatives with the Nationalists taking the other fifty-three, plus all eighteen seats in the half Senate election, giving Hughes control of both houses. Although the people of Australia had rejected conscription, they were more impressed by Hughes' 'win the war' policy than the version which Tudor offered on behalf of Labor. It is also likely that Hughes succeeded in convincing them that Labor was tainted by its connections with 'outside organisations', and that its members lacked the administrative talent to handle the business of government; that the ALP had 'blown its brains out' in the split.

Not only was Labor a much diminished and dispirited party, but there were also signs that Anstey's store of volatile energy was near exhaustion. A sympathetic critic noted, with regret, that he appeared as 'Labour's dying volcano', as a once-great mob orator whose passion and wit could sway vast audiences now reduced to a corrosive bitterness. 'He has the disease of hatred, and he has it in a concentrated, most malignant form - the hatred of one man.'

Through long years of displeasure and dislike the heart grows cruel; and there is now no limit to the humiliation Mr. Anstey would inflict upon Mr. Hughes, if the power were his. ... Mr. Hughes's feelings towards Mr. Anstey are no less profound. Being gifted, like a good Welsh non-conformist, with a proper self-righteousness, Mr. Hughes believes Mr. Anstey to be the most depraved, most unscrupulous emissary ever sent by the devil to waylay and injure a just man. Maybe the vision of both men is distorted. Both are certainly the worse for the rancour within their hearts.

Although this was a particularly insightful point, there was more to the malaise than his consuming hatred for Hughes.


163 Its press critics took an undisguised pleasure in such a shattering defeat. See, for example, *Argus*, 8 May 1917, p.8.

The friction between Anstey and his more strictly pacifist colleagues in the Labor Party was also beginning to wear him down. At the party's annual conference in July he was not re-elected to the Central Executive. Indeed, there was an attempt to censure him for his views on conscription. When the Central Executive report came up for discussion, E.J. Hogan moved an amendment regretting that Anstey, as a member of the Central Executive, had expressed views not in accord with those determined by the 1916 conference. He went on to quote a series of statements where Anstey had said that he was not against compulsion on principle, merely opposed to it in circumstances where it did not apply equally to wealth and where it could be used against the workers. In Hogan's view, 'Whilst it might be that Mr. Anstey had not supported conscription, it might at least be said that he was carrying on a flirtation with it.' After listening to more of the same, Anstey could not restrain himself any longer, 'If it is true that I have been "flirting" with the enemy of the Labor movement, then this amendment does not go far enough. Do the rest.' Although nobody was prepared to move for his expulsion, his critics persisted. E.J. Holloway recounted an argument with Anstey on this point during preparation of the trade unions' anti-conscription manifesto. Others went on to elaborate the pacifist position which they believed the party had adopted on conscription. Although there was no reference to it in the debates, it was known by this stage that Anstey's younger son, Daron, had volunteered for the army and been accepted. This, in addition to his

165. In the VCE annual report to conference he is listed as having attended 12 ordinary and one special meeting of the executive. See PLC Central Executive, minutes, op. cit., June 1917, p.398. The last record of his attendance at a meeting was on 29 June 1917. See ibid., p.485.


167. The documents relating to Daron Anstey's army service are in the possession of his granddaughter Beverley Anstey. He was not medically fit enough for active service and so was employed on largely clerical duties in Melbourne. He died before research for this study commenced. His granddaughter, Beverley Anstey, thought that it was simply the peer pressure to which so many young men were subjected at the time. Interview with Beverley Anstey at 22 Howard Street, Brunswick, Victoria on 3 February 1982.
close friendship with Charles McGrath who was serving as a member of the AIF in London, increased the suspicion that he might be less than resolute on the specifics of the party’s anti-conscription policy.168

All this was too much for some of Anstey’s supporters who reminded conference of how much he had done in the referendum campaign. H.F. Smith put their view most succinctly. ‘No man had worked more effectively in the direction of downing conscription, and yet there were people who were yapping at him like a number of terriers in connection with something he had said.’ Anstey was finally prevailed upon to defend himself. He reminded conference, rather pointedly, that he had explained from the very beginning what the war meant, when many of his critics in the party were equivocating. While he was, reluctantly, prepared to explain, he was certainly not going to apologise, nor for that matter was he going to change his view. After recalling that it was he who had been selected to open their anti-conscription campaign in other states, he explained again the logic of his position. He was a socialist and, therefore, an anti-capitalist. The socialist principles on which the labour movement was based required a degree of compulsion. Indeed, unions relied on it for their very existence. If there was to be conscription of human life for the defence of the nation, then let Labor governments also conscript wealth so that they could have a socialist state. In circumstances where socialism needed to be defended against capitalist aggression, he saw no principled reason why compulsion should not be employed for that defence. This was an implicit, but nonetheless robust, challenge to what he regarded as the unrealistic idealism underlying the pacifist position inherent in the Hogan amendment. Although nobody appears to have been persuaded

168 Labor Call, 5 October 1916, p. 3 had published a letter from McGrath to Anstey in which McGrath explicitly opposed conscription but also said, ‘I feel as strongly as Hughes the war must be won. I think Conscription will provoke industrial trouble, and may only retard Australia’s efforts.’ In the post-referendum, post-election conditions there were many in the party who were not willing to discriminate too finely about views which supported a strong war effort and only rejected conscription on the grounds that it might delay a victory.
by the logic of his argument, there was still sufficient respect for his role in the referendum campaign for the amendment to be defeated by a substantial majority.\textsuperscript{169}

Despite the protestations of his critics that there was nothing personal in their attacks, the whole debate had the appearance of a witch-hunt. In a sense, they were right. It was not just a personal attack on Anstey. Ever since the split, and particularly at the 1916 Special Commonwealth Conference, a spirit of revenge had prevailed throughout the party machine. After such a crushing electoral defeat that mood had darkened. In the incident with Anstey there were signs that the party was beginning to turn in upon itself in a kind of collective blind rage. There were some who wanted a purge, and were not disposed to be too discriminating about who was caught up in it.

Anstey had been through this sort of bruising process before.\textsuperscript{170} It remained, nevertheless, a demoralising business. From the beginning, he had criticised the war and what it would mean for the workers of Australia. He had been among the first to warn them about Hughes and his views. With pen and voice, he had been in the forefront of the campaign to defeat conscription. Now, when he might reasonably expect some recognition for all that work, sections of the Party turned against him with what he saw as petty and mean-spirited criticism. He had been in the labour movement long enough, however, not to expect gratitude from all quarters. Indeed, he was well acquainted with its fratricidal tendencies. Nevertheless, his treatment over the conscription issue did seem unduly harsh.

During the new parliamentary session, where Labor was reduced to little more than an Opposition rump, there were fewer flashes of the old satirical wit or rhetorical fire. Anstey's criticism of the government often descended into a carping bitterness. Even on those occasions when he set upon Hughes, it was with lusty swipes of a claymore rather than deft strokes of a rapier. A typical example of this was when he pursued Hughes with a stubborn, relentless purpose through a series of questions

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., 26 July 1917, p.2.

\textsuperscript{170} The collapse of the Victorian Labour Federation at the turn of the century was one of the earliest examples.
about German trade marks and the sale of confiscated shares in Australian metal companies.\textsuperscript{171} In debates on the Unlawful Associations Bill and the War-Time Profits Tax Assessment Bill his irony was unusually flat-footed.\textsuperscript{172} Towards the end of the session, he even allowed himself to become engaged in a petty squabble with the Chairman of Committees and was removed from the House by the Sergant-at-Arms.\textsuperscript{173}

On some matters, however, he still cared deeply enough to speak with his usual force. The 1917 New South Wales railway strike was a case in point.\textsuperscript{174} In Anstey's view, it had occurred because 'throughout the masses of the people, there is an immense and rapidly growing discontent' which 'arises largely from the fact that the profiteers are governing the country'. As much as the government would like to blame it on the usual agitators, the brute facts were that, 'The upheaval is not a conspiracy, because there is no organisation in it. It is a spontaneous outburst of popular resentment.' He went on the warn them against repressive measures such as Irvine had taken in 1903 against the railway workers in Victoria.

This is a time of war, of great nervous strain, and of inevitable carelessness and indifference to events which in normal times would be viewed with the gravest concern, and if the men are pressed too far we may at last reach a point when even among the masses, among men whose disposition is to be orderly and law abiding, a blood-lust will spring up, with consequences no man can foresee.

The government ought to recognise that danger and put pressure on the authorities in New South Wales to appoint a tribunal to deal with the mens' grievances.\textsuperscript{175}

\textsuperscript{171} The burden of his criticism was that the Government was less than resolute in the matter because it's friends in the 'metal gang' wished to maintain, in a round about fashion, their connections with German companies and were concerned that the sudden sale of large parcels of shares would artificially deflate the value of existing holdings. See, for example, \textit{CPD}, vol.82, 16 August 1917, pp.1162-1167; 29 August 1917, pp.1521-1522; and \textit{Labor Call}, 20 September 1917, p.6.

\textsuperscript{172} \textit{CPD}, vol.82, 19 July 1917, pp.339-340 and 30 August 1917, pp.1533-1534.


\textsuperscript{175} \textit{CPD}, vol.83, 6 September 1917, pp.1773-1776.
He also lent his support to another group who had been punished for giving expression to popular discontent. During August and September, several feminist and socialist women, including Adela Pankhurst, led demonstrations against shortages and rising prices which occasionally turned into something like the traditional European food riot.\(^{176}\) In one such incident, they had disrupted the proceedings in parliament and Pankhurst was arrested. At the time, Anstey made fun of the government with a question about the number of policemen waiting in the basement of Parliament House to 'protect honorable members from molestation'.\(^{177}\) Following another violent demonstration on 29 August, Pankhurst, Jennie Baines and Alice Suter were arrested under the War Precautions Act and subsequently sentenced to short prison terms.\(^{178}\) The Victorian Socialist Party organised a 'People's Prisoners Defence Committee' to raise funds and agitate for their release. Anstey was a member of the committee, although not a particularly active one. His support for the cause was more symbolic, but entirely consistent with the stand he had taken against profiteering from the early months of the war.\(^{179}\)

Anstey was explicit about his growing disaffection with party and parliament in a speech on 'Labour Principles' at the Socialist Hall on 30 September. He told his audience that the working class movement had been weakened by a system which encouraged them to look no further than comfortable wages and conditions.\(^{180}\) This,

\(^{176}\) For a detailed account of the events and their significance see Judith Smart, 'Feminists, Food and the Fair Price: the Cost of Living Demonstrations in Melbourne, August-September 1917', *Labour History*, no 30, May 1986.

\(^{177}\) *CPD*, vol 82, 15 August 1917, p.1064.

\(^{178}\) Smart, *op cit.*, pp.119-120.

\(^{179}\) Minutes of the People's Prisoners Defence Committee, 6 September 1917. The minutes were given to me by Roy Cameron, son of the late Don Cameron who had been a prominent member of the VSP before he became a Labor senator. The originals have been lodged in the National Library.

\(^{180}\) There was, of course, nothing original in that proposition. A French visitor at the turn of the century reported one Australian worker's response to a question about his programme of social reform as 'Ten bob a day!'. See Albert Mélin, *Socialism Without Doctrine*, translated by Russel Ward, Sydney, Alternative Publishing Co-operative, 1977, p.180 [original French edition published in Paris in 1901].
in turn, had restricted the vision of those whom they elected to represent them in industry and parliaments. Because politicians and union leaders held these limited views, they tended to 'become the most idle, careless, and indolent in regard to the wants of the class to which they once belonged'. It was not that the individuals concerned were venal, rather that they had been corrupted by this lack of principles, a deficiency which plagued the whole movement in Australia. This, along with many of his public comments, came to the attention of his sharp-eyed critics in the Labor Party. On 12 October the Central Executive resolved to write to Anstey and 'ascertain if the reports of his statements are correct'. As usual, he did not reply.

The Central Executive had no time to take action against him, nor did Anstey have the opportunity to sink any further into despondency about the future of the labour movement. On 7 November 1917, by the simple expedient of a regulation promulgated under the War Precautions Act while parliament was in recess, they were again called to battle against Hughes' second conscription referendum. This time there would be no divisions in the labour ranks. The conscriptionists had been cast out in 1916 and everything that had happened since had tended to increase labour hostility to the government. The tactics that Hughes employed in his second attempt merely served to confirm all that Anstey and his other critics had said about him in 1916. The electoral rolls were closed only two days after the announcement was made. Those with German origins, and their children, were disenfranchised. The Queensland Hansard was censored because it contained anti-conscription speeches by T.J.Ryan and one of his Ministers. Ryan, J.H.Catts, Henry Boote and other prominent opponents were charged, under the by now notorious War Precautions Act, with

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181. Argus. 1 October 1917, p.4. This had also been noted at the time by Vere Gordon Childe who discussed it in *How Labour Governs: A Study of Workers' Representation in Australia*, London, Labour Publishing Company, 1923, especially chapter 10.

182. PLC Central Executive, minutes, *op cit.*, 12 October 1917, p.518.

making 'false statements'. The Holman government in New South Wales secretly considered sacking young men to boost recruiting. Propaganda on both sides was even more vigorous than before, and there was at least as much violence at meetings the second time around.\textsuperscript{184} Indeed, Hughes was so enraged when a Queensland policeman refused to arrest a man who threw an egg at him during a meeting at Warwick, he set up a new Commonwealth Police Force.\textsuperscript{185}

Much as before, Anstey was thrown into the fray as a leading anti-conscriptionist speaker. In the circumstances, all doubts about the finer points of his position were suspended. He addressed numerous meetings where he heaped even stronger abuse upon Hughes than before.\textsuperscript{186} Again, he undertook a speaking tour of Tasmania, with Vida Goldstein.\textsuperscript{187} As he had done for the 1917 election, he put out a special broadsheet, the \textit{Nation}, which summarised the numerous arguments and insults he employed in his speeches and other writings.\textsuperscript{188} He drew up a balance sheet purporting to show that Hughes and Pearce were lying about the need for reinforcements.\textsuperscript{189} He dwelt on the differences between statements that Hughes and Pearce had made at various times during the war. As might have been expected, he lay a heavy emphasis on the government's desire to conscript men and its reluctance to conscript wealth. Censorship and the War Precautions Act were roundly denounced, as was the prospect of industrial enslavement and the importation of coloured labour.

\textsuperscript{184} Turner, \textit{op cit.}, pp.163-164.

\textsuperscript{185} For the most detailed account of the incident see Fitzhardinge, \textit{op cit.}, pp.289-296. See too, D.J.Murphy, \textit{TJ Ryan: A Political Biography}, pp.329-332.

\textsuperscript{186} For reports of typical meetings and printed abuse see \textit{Labor Call}, 22 November 1917; \textit{Socialist}, 30 November 1917 and 7 December 1917, p.3; and \textit{Argus}, 12 November 1917, p.6, 13 December 1917, p.8 and 14 December 1917, p.8.


\textsuperscript{188} Frank Anstey (ed.), \textit{Nation}, Melbourne, Anti-Conscription Campaign Committee of Victoria, 3 December 1917.

\textsuperscript{189} Of course, what he did not mention, and probably did not know about, were the casualties sustained by the five Australian divisions at Ypres.
after the war. There was nothing particularly new in what he said or wrote, but the old vigour had clearly returned. As far as Anstey was concerned, the combination of Hughes and conscription was like a whiff of cordite to a war horse.

On 20 December the anti-conscriptionists were well rewarded for their efforts. They had worked in a more united and well-organised way. The electorate, particularly the farmers were more weary of the cost that the war was exacting and returned an increased 'no' vote. One feature of the poll which must have been especially satisfying to Anstey and his comrades was the 'no' majority in Victoria.190 Reviewing the result under the headline 'Holman, Hall and Hughes; Rat Bites Rat', Anstey rejoiced in the squabbling that broke out in government ranks after the second defeat.

In spite of threats and intimidations, in spite of penalties imposed for shouting 'Down with Hughes', in spite of 100,000 Australians barred from voting because of their father's origin, in spite of a contest conducted by the Government on 'surprise attack' principles to prevent thousands getting on the rolls, in spite of every affirmation that every 'No' was a vote for Germany, a solid majority of the people of Australia voted 'No' to Conscription.

That 'No' meant the downfall of the Dictator. Australia spat on him and spurned him. That was bad enough, but his allies loaded on him the fault of disaster. And the rats that had followed his fortune bit him as he ran.191

Anstey did not, however, have the satisfaction of seeing the end of the Hughes government. Although Hughes did, as he had promised before the referendum, offer his resignation to the Governor-General, he did not recommend a successor. After the ritual constitutional proprieties had been observed, the Governor-General commissioned Hughes to form another ministry.192

When parliament resumed in January 1918 Tudor moved a no-confidence motion in the government on the grounds of broken pledges, political persecution of

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190 Jauncey, op. cit. p.312 gives a detailed break-down of the voting figures. The 'no' majority increased by 94,112 to 166,588. In Victoria a majority for 'yes' in 1916 of 25,185 was turned around to a 'no' majority of 2,718.

191 Labor Call. 27 December 1917, p.6.

192 Fitzhardinge, op. cit. pp.303-305 gives a detailed account of the charade.
public men and other citizens, the disenfranchisement of Australian-born citizens and general administration of public affairs. Anstey's contribution to debate was one of the longest speeches he had made for some time. Following the general terms of Tudor's motion, he developed an elaborate argument about the government's misbehaviour and mismanagement. He poured scorn on the attempts of a self-serving faction within the government to seek a coalition partner, even Labor. He denounced the desperate tactics of Hughes and his associates, and then rejoiced in their squabbling. On the use of the War Precautions Act against public men, Anstey made a telling point about the rule of law:

These persecutions were of the most odious character, because they were so one-sided. The Prime Minister alone could initiate prosecutions. He could prosecute anyone on this side, but we had no power to prosecute him. Similarly, he alleged, 'censorship has been applied in the most odious manner'. He did not blame the majority of Ministers, it was principally the work of Hughes and Pearce. Even the censors were trying, according to their anti-Labor views, to be as fair as they could. The greatest crime, however, was that the way in which censorship had been administered had led to a kind of spy system which involved the tapping of telephones and the opening of mail. As a result of the Prime Minister's reaction to the 'Warwick egg' incident, that system was now institutionalised.

We hear how, from a little acorn, the oak tree grows. My God! out of a rotten egg they manufactured the Federal police force.

The disenfranchisement of citizens of German descent was nothing more than a 'defilement of the electoral laws'. After reminding Hughes that he had been duchessed in Windsor Castle where kings of German descent had reigned, Anstey asked why had not those who had encouraged Australian-German trade for so many years been similarly disenfranchised.200

In speaking about the origins of others, he was drawn along a line of thought which brought him to reflect on his own. He recalled his childhood experiences and all the deprivation his family had suffered. Even now:

In England itself I have a mother seventy-four years of age. My brother there, who had a small business, was taken by the scruff of the neck and sent to France to fight. What is to become of my aged mother and of the invalid wife who cannot conduct her husband's business?201

He did not think kindly of the old country.

I would refuse to fight or to shed another drop of blood for the maintenance of an England such as has been dominated by the moneyed powers for the last fifty years, by those who have made the slums and destroyed the people. They have crushed out their souls, they have plunged them into horrible misery, and they are now throwing them into the battle lines.202

It was not country or parliament or party which held his allegiance.

Do honorable members desire to know what I live for? I have come out of the bowels of the working class, as others on this side have done. I have been put into a position in the Parliament of this country. I try to be as true as I can to the class to which I belong - not because it is a class, but because it constitutes the great mass of the people. By its very numbers it constitutes the Democracy, the Demos, the great mass of the people. We are told that the defence of our country entails sacrifice. One fights for his house, but no one would be expected to fight for it who was merely a boarder. I want to know that I have a proprietary interest in the country. I want to know that others who are called upon to lay down their lives have a proprietary interest in the soil of the country for which they are fighting.203


201. Ibid., p.3171.

202. Ibid., p.3172.

203. Ibid.
It was the working class, seen in his own distinctively left populist way, which commanded his emotional and intellectual loyalty. It was his attachment to this which had guided him along the difficult and sometimes lonely path he had followed since 1914. He had long since rejected the Empire. The nation, ruled by profiteers and apostate politicians, had surrendered all just claims to his loyalty. The party he helped to build had retreated in abject cowardice from its principles and its responsibility to those who had trusted it to defend them. All that was left was the class from which he had come, the common people.

So it is to-day that the hope of the world - the hope of peace - comes from the rising revolutionary spirit of the people. The revolutionary movement in Russia is spreading to all the countries, and we have seen from the cables that have recently appeared that the controlling powers in Germany dread more the spread of revolutionary doctrines than they do the bayonets of the enemy.204

The future that he had been fighting for all his life was unfolding on the other side of the world, and he wanted to see it.

204. Ibid.
Caroline Lank with daughter-in-law Agnes and children, c. 1918.
Chapter Nine

RED EUROPE

Since the 1905 revolution, the left in Australia had followed events in Russia with a continuing, if sporadic interest. A group of radical émigrés, who had formed a Russian Association in Brisbane in 1911, did much to keep this interest alive. When news of the February revolution reached Australia in March 1917, it was warmly received right across the spectrum of left-wing politics. News of the October revolution, however, was overshadowed by the announcement of the second conscription referendum and it was not until details of the Bolshevik victory began to filter through a heavily-censored press that Australian radicals began to realise its significance. A notorious feudal tyranny had been overthrown. A weak and divided provisional government had fallen. Now, the Bolsheviks had taken power in the name of socialism. Workers' Soviets had seized control of the factories and demanded an end to the slaughter of their comrades at the war front. To Australian socialists, it seemed that all the objectives they had been working for had been achieved in a backward country at the other side of the world. Anstey, who had moved steadily closer to the dismissive anti-parliamentary view of the IWW in the latter years of the war and had maintained close links with leading figures in the VSP, shared the intense curiosity of radicals to know more of the situation in Russia.¹

In January 1918 the Victorian Socialist Party decided to send a delegate to Russia who would be able to present a 'correct working class view and interpretation'.

of the revolution. After protracted discussions with the ALP in an effort to make it a joint project, the VSP executive negotiated an elaborate agreement with some anonymous sponsors on the terms and conditions that would apply to the person selected. In return for the payment of all expenses, the delegate was to be away for no more than nine months, advocate the VSP's peace platform at any conferences attended, supply regular articles for the Socialist, write a book about the trip and, upon return to Australia, give lectures as arranged by the VSP. Two nominations were received; Anstey and Alf Foster, a young barrister active in both the Labor Party and the VSP. After some jostling by the supporters of the two candidates, a ballot of VSP members was held and Foster was declared the winner by a slim margin. However, he was unable to go because, despite protests to P.M.Glynn, the Minister for Home Affairs, the government would not issue him with a passport to embark on a political mission to an unsettled region. Shortly after, it was announced that, 'Mr Anstey, MHR, has left Australia for England to see his mother, the state of whose health has been causing him anxiety for some time.' It has also been suggested that he 'skipped the country' because he had heard that Hughes was preparing to have him arrested on a charge of sedition. Whatever his reasons, he certainly did nothing to draw attention to his plans. There appears to be no evidence that he consulted

3. Ibid, 11 February 1918.
5. Socialist Party of Victoria, Executive minutes, op. cit., 27 February, 4 and 18 March 1918.
6. Argus, 23 March 1918, p.18. The Times, 29 March 1918, p.3 was perhaps more accurate when it noted: 'Mr F. Anstey, a Labour member of the Australian House of Representatives, has sailed for England as a seaman to visit his invalid mother. It is believed that he also intends to go to Russia to learn the conditions there.'
7. Frank C. Green, Servant of the House, Melbourne, Heinemann, 1969, pp.61-62. Anstey was almost certainly the source of Green's story.
either his parliamentary or party colleagues. Unlike his 1907 trip to England which was financed by a public appeal and accompanied by numerous farewell functions, this time he slipped away quietly, working his passage across the Pacific as a seaman on the *S.S. Barunga*.

At the end of April Hughes, too, had left for England, although in a great deal more comfort, to attend meetings of the Imperial War Cabinet. There were suggestions that Anstey might be useful as a counterpoint to Hughes at any gatherings where Australia was to be represented. A public meeting organised by the Carlton branch of the ALP demanded that 'at any conference held in England, at which Mr Hughes is permitted to be present as Prime Minister of Australia, that Mr Frank Anstey, MP, should attend as the Labor delegate to represent Australia'. The Melbourne *Truth* suggested that the 1918 ALP Commonwealth Conference take up the idea. Nothing was done about it, but the mere fact that it was suggested was testimony to the suspicion with which Hughes was regarded, and the esteem in which Anstey was held by some sections of the labour movement.

In the United States Anstey visited Washington where John Murray, from the American Federation of Labor's Pan-American section, introduced him to radicals from the Western Federation of Miners and a number of prominent individuals such as 'Mother' Mary Jones and the New York socialist Meyers London. In a letter to Bob

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8. Either before or after he left, there must have been some arrangement made with parliamentary staff to arrange leave and continue payment of his salary. However, I have been unable to find direct evidence of this.

9. *Australian Tramway Journal*, 24 August 1918, p. 4. The *Barunga* was sunk by a submarine on its return journey to Australia.


11. *Labor Call*, 20 June 1918, p. 3.

12. Quoted *ibid.*, p. 3.

13. Frank Anstey, *Red Europe*, Melbourne, Fraser & Jenkinson, 3rd edition, 1920, p. vii; and *Socialist* (Melbourne), 12 July 1918, p. 3. Shortly before Anstey's visit, many of London's socialist comrades had suffered the same kind of official harrassment that Hughes had inflicted on the IWW in Australia.
Fraser he reported the comments of some American socialists on Woodrow Wilson's administration.

President Wilson seems to be regarded as the best man Labor ever had. He is said to have despotically gone behind the back of Congress to dish up good things for organised Labor and put good things in their way. His popularity today is unquestionable. ...One well-known Socialist here said to me, 'Better a benevolent despot than a stagnant democracy, or one so inoculated with the master's spirit that it cannot free itself.'

Such views were, of course, not unlike his own on the state of the Australian Labor Party at the time he left Australia.

In New York he made many valuable contacts. Among them was Santeri Nuerteva, a socialist Deputy who had escaped the butchery committed by Mannerheim's troops in Finland. Anstey carried Nuerteva's despatches detailing the massacres to Maxim Litvinov who was at that stage the London diplomatic representative of the new Soviet government. As usual with Anstey's trips, there was an exciting incident during his passage across the Atlantic. His ship was apparently pursued by a submarine and had to 'run into the nets for protection'.

Anstey arrived in London at the end of May 1918, only to find that one of his half-brothers, Thomas Lank, had been seriously injured by an explosion at a munitions factory. He died only five days after Anstey's arrival. Despite the sadness of the event, he was at least in a position to give his widowed mother some comfort.

In June he received a cable from W.A.Watt, Acting Prime Minister, inviting him to be one of several Australian representatives on a Dominions Press Delegation.

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14. The letter was written in Washington on 3 May 1918. See Melbourne Socialist, 12 July 1918, p.3. Fraser was one of the partners in the publishing firm Fraser and Jenkinson who were to publish his account of this trip.


17. Labor Call, 13 June 1918, p.3; 8 August 1918, p.3 and Australian Tramway Journal, 24 August 1918, p.4.

18. All references to Caroline Lank at this time confirm that John Lank was dead. A search of the English records for his death certificate was unsuccessful.
to the Western Front, organised by the British Department of Information.\textsuperscript{19} Watt had written to the VSP on 23 May asking their advice on the selection of a representative from the labour and socialist press.\textsuperscript{20} There is no evidence that the VSP nominated Anstey, though it is possible that they did so, given that he was one the candidates in their 'delegate to Russia' ballot. He accepted the offer as the representative of \textit{Labor Call} and received credentials equivalent to a diplomatic passport, which proved to be very useful in establishing his identity when he was denounced to the military authorities as a dangerous anarchist and arrested by Scotland Yard, pending deportation.\textsuperscript{21} At a later stage of his visit Anstey was able to see the file. On 5 July a report was submitted by one 'J. Blackmore Beer' to the British War Office describing Anstey as an anarchist who was refused permission to leave Australia but got away 'by steamer'. 'It is stated that he intends to stir up trouble with the Australian troops in this country.'\textsuperscript{22} Apparently, he could not be traced, so the following day Provost-Marshal Lawrence of the Australian Military Headquarters noted, 'I advise that, in the event of Anstey being traced, arrangements be made, through the Home Office, for his internment or deportation to Australia.' On 10 July General Tom Griffiths ordered that, 'No such action to be taken by AIF Headquarters.' A week later Anstey went to the Australian Headquarters to enquire about a soldier who, after Anstey had left, was questioned by Griffiths and another officer.\textsuperscript{23}

After that followed detectives and Scotland Yard interrogations, to the scare of my dear old mother and the worry of my brother and sister, who waited on the Thames Embankment, ready to report to the High

\textsuperscript{19} Anstey, \textit{Red Europe}, p. viii; \textit{Argus}, 24 May 1918, p. 7; \textit{Labor Call}, 11 July 1918, p. 1; and \textit{Socialist} (Melbourne), 31 May 1918, p. 2. For a brief discussion of some of the tensions that developed within the delegation see Gavin Souter, \textit{Company of Heralds}, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1981, pp. 121-123. Anstey's credentials for the delegation contain a full list of the members and the organisations they were representing. See E. W. Peters papers, Melbourne University Archives.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Socialist} (Melbourne), 31 May 1918, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{21} Anstey, \textit{Red Europe}, pp. viii-ix and \textit{Australian Worker}, 13 August 1918, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Labor Call}, 26 December 1918, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.}
Commissioner, Andrew Fisher, if Scotland Yard attempted to carry out the recommendations of the Australian Provost Marshal. But it ended happily. The Scotland Yard chief and the military officers were handsome in their apologies.24

The file contained a note from Brigadier-General Dodds on 22 July to the effect that 'the Australian Government had seen fit to appoint Anstey as a member of the Australian Press Mission'.25

Undeterred by the harassment, he continued collecting information on the war and events in Russia, and renewing contacts in British labour and socialist circles. On 20 June Anstey wrote to Arthur Henderson, reminding him of their work together in the 1907 Jarrow by-election and asking for a ticket to attend the coming Labour Party Conference.26 He was given a platform seat as a fraternal delegate, and it was there that he met Kerensky who addressed the Conference.27 Later, he recalled that, 'In London, I met Alexandre Kerenski, who was slowly undergoing a process of disillusionment about the real objects of the intervention of Imperial Capitalism in Russia.'28 After researching, reflecting and writing about the fall of the Provisional government, Anstey was able to see Kerensky as a tragic figure.

When he went to England in June 1918, the capitalist press met him with insults and bitter gibes, and the British Government had neither recognition nor honor for the man who to his own detriment had done his utmost for the Allied cause. When in June, 1918, he walked on to the platform at the Labor Conference in the Central Hall, Westminster, a snuffling Parliamentarian whispered to the writer: 'Ah! a bad man, no character, no morals.'29

24 Anstey, Red Europe, pp.viii–ix. After his last dealings with Fisher as Prime Minister in 1915, it might have been tempting for the High Commissioner to ignore any appeal to help Anstey, should one have been made.

25 Labor Call, 26 December 1918, p.3.

26 Anstey to Henderson, British Labour Party Archives, CON/18/1/68.


29 Ibid, pp.41-42.
It was one of many incidents during his visit which convinced Anstey that the British Labour leaders, like their Australian counterparts, were not equal to the challenges confronting them.  

With the arrival of the Press Delegation in early August, Anstey’s range of sources and contacts widened considerably. He now had easy access to military leaders, diplomats, Allied ‘statesmen’ and the international press corps assembled in Paris for the Peace Conference. His membership of the delegation, as well as his status as a Member of Parliament, gave him honorary membership of numerous clubs and access to various institutes where he might otherwise have been regarded with suspicion. After the customary round of official receptions, which included an audience with the King and a huge welcome dinner hosted by W.M.Hughes at the Savoy Hotel, the editors were taken on a week-long tour of the Western Front.  

Covering some 150 miles of battlefields, they watched the struggle for Peronne from the banks of the Somme, the fighting around Lens from the safety of Vimy Ridge, were shown Villers Bretonneux by Monash and visited Pozieres, Albert, the Marne and the Vesle.  

When they met Sir Douglas Haig, Anstey took him to task for wanting to impose the death penalty on Australian soldiers, suggesting that ‘...any Government in Australia that dared to do so would be a Government no more’. In Paris, on their...

30 Socialist (Melbourne), 2 August 1918, p.1 reports him as writing that ‘labor over-worked, feels uneasy and troubled, and wishes reforms, but lacks a leader’. On 10 October 1918 Tom Mann wrote to R.S.Ross and noted in passing that, ‘Frank Anstey... is not finding the political Labor leaders of this country very much to his taste.’ See Australian Archives (Brighton), MP 95/Series 1/Box 12/ DMIS 169/56-99, Special and Secret Reports, Melbourne Censor, November 1918-September 1919, serial no 2401. On 26 December 1918 Anstey wrote to John Cain deploring Arthur Henderson’s opportunist anti-Bolshevism. He went on to suggest, ‘The only really working-class movement in England is the Shop Steward Movement.’ See Socialist (Melbourne), 7 March 1919, p.1.

31 On the royal audience see PRO (London), CO 708/6, Dominions register, WO 44832; and Labor Call, 8 August 1918, p.3 which wondered whether Anstey had sold George a subscription to the paper. On the Savoy Hotel reception, see Argus, 14 August 1918, p.9; and for a complete list of guests see ‘Plan of Tables, August 16, 1918’ in Anstey papers, NLA MS 512/2. It is not recorded whether Anstey and Hughes exchanged compliments.

32 Among the lesser known generals they met were Lawrence, Rawlinson, Horne and Russell. See Argus, 6 September 1918, p.5 and 16 September 1918, p.5. The British Ministry of Information’s official photographs of the tour can be found in the National Library of Australia’s picture collection.

33 Anstey, Red Europe, p.ix.
way back to London, they were received by Poincaré and interviewed Clemenceau.34

The delegation then went to Dublin and Belfast for four days to observe the situation in Ireland which had been such a prominent issue during the conscription referenda. In Dublin Anstey took the opportunity to meet and talk with some Sinn Fein leaders, including John McNeill, Liam O'Brien and Harry Boland, who was being sought by the police at the time.35 At an official reception given for the delegates at the Shelbourne Hotel, Anstey offered an opinion on the 'Irish Question' which he suggested was second only 'to the question of the war itself'. With a proper sense of occasion, he praised the role of Irishmen like Peter Lalor in establishing responsible government in Australia, and went on the suggest:

While there had been in Australia vast diversities of opinion, yet in the present tide of battle they could at least glory in the fact that Irish and Scotch and English had mingled their blood in the common struggle, and had added glory to the particular country from which they came (applause). They, as visitors, were anxious to discover the truth, and to see how and by what means, if possible, they could expound the principles that would bind the British race together in unity and amity (applause).36

It might not have been an appropriate speech for his usual audiences at the Gaiety or Bijou in Melbourne, but he might have reasonably expected it to go unnoticed back home. Unfortunately for Anstey, it was not the case. His 'colleagues' on the delegation ensured that a full report appeared in the Melbourne press.37 This was merely the first of several such incidents during the tour. The remainder of their stay in Ireland, however, seemed to have been amicable enough. It included the obligatory visit to the

34. *Ibid.* and *Argus*, 16 September 1918, p.3.

35. See annotated photograph of Anstey with Sinn Fein leaders outside the Shelbourne Hotel in E W Paters papers, University of Melbourne Archives. I am grateful to Oliver Snoddy of the National Museum of Ireland and T P O'Neill of Dublin for their help in identifying some of the men in the photograph, and correcting some of Anstey's annotations. The discussion might well have included conscription which was a major issue in Ireland at the time.

36. *Freeman's Journal* (Dublin), 25 September 1918, p.3. See too, *Irish Times*, 23 September 1918, p.5. Anstey could not resist a gentle 'dig' at their host, Lord Decies, the Irish Press Censor, to the effect that he 'prescribed the opinions of all around him'.

Guinness brewery and an easy motor tour north to Belfast, from where they returned to London.

On 2 October Andrew Fisher gave a farewell dinner for the delegation at the new Australia House in London. Hughes attended and proposed a toast to the delegates. In the course of his speech he denounced the German who in 1914 had brandished the sword and now sought the same ends by diplomatic 'chicanery'. 'But let him and his country pay the price of their misdeeds.' Anstey, the report alleged, responded to the toast by saying that he hoped 'the war would be earnestly prosecuted and Germany made to suffer for they way she had made the world suffer'. Reports such as this were intended to discredit Anstey in the eyes of those at home who continued to doubt his doctrinal purity. Anstey was sufficiently concerned to write to his Melbourne comrades reassuring them that he had not changed his views at all; if anything they had been 'intensified a thousand-fold'. He did not, however, deny saying the things that were reported. Indeed, one of Hughes' advisers, Sir Robert Garran, had noted in his diary after one such occasion, 'Amusing speech by Anstey - a changed man.' It is entirely likely that the reports were true, but whether he was a changed man is doubtful. He was simply being a politician, tailoring his speech to his audience and accepting the danger that he might be reported accurately. After the press delegation left London for Australia, Anstey remained behind to continue his research into events in Russia.

For the next few months he moved around Britain and Europe, making the most of an ever-widening network of contacts. He returned to Paris, went to Switzerland

38. Argus, 4 October 1918, p.7.

39. See reports of letters from Anstey in Socialist (Melbourne), 8 November 1918, p.1; 29 November 1918, p.1; 6 December 1918, p.2; 7 February 1919, p.2; and Labor Call, 10 October 1918, p.3. Anstey's old friend J.K. McDougall wrote to Henkel at the Labor Call office on 3 November 1918 expressing the hope that 'Anstey might come through the ordeal all right'. See Australian Archives (Brighton) MP93/Series 1/Box 12/MP2217.

40. Sir Robert Garran papers, NLA MS 2001/3/21, 16 September 1918. I am grateful to Dr Geoffrey Serle for bringing this to my attention.
and, in late 1918, Scandinavia. In early 1919 the ALP appointed him as a delegate to
the Socialist International Conference in Berne. However, he chose not to go because,
The men who composed the Berne Conference were mainly "Pacifists", standing in
the middle of the road, and despised alike by the Reds on the one side, and by the tools
of reaction on the other. Instead, he went to Paris again, where Sam Gompers, not
surprisingly, reassured him that he had done the right thing and went on to advise
him on who was, and who was not, trustworthy among the many American labour
people then in France. Through other American contacts he met several European
politicians and journalists, all of whom had information and opinions to offer on the
progress of the Russian revolution and the reactions to it, both political and military.
When he left Paris for the last time, he carried with him fond memories of the
kindness shown to him by Adam Gibbons and Helen Davenport and went back to
London where he again noted the left-wing squabbling that he so deplored. After a
farewell dinner with Tom Mann and some other friends, he returned to Australia,
laden with his usual pile of books and notes assembled during his travels. Soon after
his return to Melbourne at the end of May 1919, he quickly set down the results of his
research in book form, just as the VSP had hoped their delegate would do.

Working at his usual frantic pace, Anstey completed the manuscript for the
200 page book within three months and delivered it to his friend Bob Fraser of the
publishing company Fraser and Jenkinson, who had the first edition of Red Europe
out in September 1919. Written in the dramatic, staccato style for which he was well-
known; it laid bare the rotting corpse of Tsarist oppression; chronicled the stumbling
fall of the Provisional government and the tenuous victory of the Soviets; exposed the
butchery committed by the interventionist forces and the diplomatic chicanery of the

41 Anstey, Red Europe, pp ix-x and Socialist (Melbourne), 7 March 1919, p.1.
resolution might have been interesting.
43 Anstey, Red Europe, pp x-xii.
Allies; and warned of the ominous rise of Japanese power in the east. But, like many of his speeches and other writings, it ended with a ringing peroration heralding a 'red dawn' that would see the toiling masses rise up to take command of their future.

The opening chapter covering the period from the outbreak of war to the February Revolution was familiar reading for those who knew his *Kingdom of Shylock*. The narrative moved briskly from warnings of a coming war by Lord Rosebery and Kropotkin to the increasing momentum of the arms race and then the pretext; the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, followed by Austria's 'punitive expedition'. He applied his usual scornful irony to the Russian protests 'in the name of Humanity'.

Thus it came about that the master class in Russia, the men of reaction, corruption and oppression, the men whose hands were stained with the blood of innumerable Russian citizens, suddenly developed a crocodile sympathy for tribes and races trodden upon by others. Have a bloody war over it! Over the corpse of a murdered Archduke pile millions of dead of all nations! What nobler struggle! What grander pretext!44

When the Russian commanders ordered a general mobilisation, against the Tzar's explicit instructions, they did so for nefarious purpose, not 'in the name of Humanity' but to defuse a revolutionary situation in Petrograd.45

The progress of the war, which Anstey saw as simply a conflict between two autocracies, was a story of rape and pillage, for which the Germans were denounced and the Russians lauded in the Allied press. The Russian army, despite the dogged heroism of its common soldiers, was ill-prepared, poorly-provisioned and led by men who were quick to sacrifice them in futile offensives to take the pressure off the Allies on the Western Front. As the entire resources of the Russian economy were progressively turned over to the manufacture of arms and munitions, the civilian population were plunged into destitution. When the 1916 counter-offensive began to fail the Russian war effort effectively collapsed:

(continued...)

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Yet this nation that suffered these 'unimaginable privations', this nation which to the end of October, 1916, had more dead men upon the battlefield than the combined living armies of France and England upon the Western Front, this nation was subsequently howled at from hundreds of British platforms as a 'traitor to the Allied cause'.

By the end of 1916 even the monarchy was rotten with corruption, personified by Rasputin. After reporting the more lurid allegations of sexual perversion in the royal household, and the charges of treason made against generals and statesmen, Anstey concluded his sketch of Russia before the February Revolution with a typical summary:

That Christmas in Russia settled down upon ruined armies and ruined industries, upon destitute millions, corrupt statesmen, corrupt ministers of God, upon drunken Tsar, whorish Tsarina, and chattering, vacillating politicians.

Running quickly over the events of January to March 1917, he noted the attempts to sue for peace amid growing industrial unrest and civil disorder while whole regiments 'went over to the Revolution' and the Soviets wrested effective control from an indecisive Duma and impotent government. Anstey ended his chapter with the vignette, 'On March 15th Gutchoff, on behalf of the Government, informed the Tsar, "with eyes cast down to the ground", that Russia would have no more of him, and it was so.'

Anstey's account of the stumbling collapse of the Provisional government centred on the struggle between bourgeois democracy and revolutionary socialism; with the narrative woven around two related themes, the fall of Kerensky and the Soviet rise to power on a swelling tide of revolution. He wrote of Milyukov's resignation when the soldiers learned of his promise to the Allies that Russia would

46. Ibid., p.11.

47. Ibid., p.15. From the sources quoted it seems that Anstey put his account together from a combination of newspaper and cable reports, private conversations with politicians, diplomats and journalist, supplemented by the Manchester Guardian's History of the War and John Buchan's Nelson's History of the War.

fight on. 49 He described the impossible position of Kerensky as War Minister in the second Provisional government.

Kerenski, by the fact that he was 'the idol of the masses', was expected, by some strange alchemy or charm, to be able to induce those masses to be once more chopping meat on the battlefield, and to once more, as in February, 1915, overwhelm the enemy by mere force of numbers...He was destroying himself, undermining his prestige with the masses, and nobody was better pleased than the capitalist clique whom, in the name of national unity, he was seeking to placate. 50

As he recounted the political moves leading up to the 'July Offensive', Anstey interpolated a chorus of objections from soldier delegates to the Soviet Congress. At this stage his sympathy for Kerensky began to emerge in his denunciation of 'the treachery of the Kadets' in bringing down the coalition and the 'cowardly resignation of the Premier, Prince Lvoff, leaving Russia without even the formal appearance of a Government'. 51

In this hour, under such circumstances, did Alexandre Kerenski take up the discarded mantle of Prime Ministership and take upon himself the responsibilities from which others fled. 52

According to Anstey, Kerensky's attempts to secure 'national unity' were doomed by those about him. His 'Great National Conference' in Moscow at the end of August was nothing more than a gathering of 'reactionaries from all parts of Russia'. Kerensky's efforts floundered as popular support shifted to the Soviets amid the revelations of the Sukhomlinov trial, the circumstances surrounding the fall of Riga and the unfolding of the Kornilov conspiracy. 53 While the flimsy fabric of bourgeois

49 Ibid., pp 23-25. Anstey spelled the name 'Miliukoff'.

50 Ibid., pp 26-27.

51 Ibid., pp 29-31. Anstey's spelling of Lvov followed his convention of preferring 'ff' to 'v' for Russian names.

52 Ibid., p.30.

democracy was coming apart at the seams, the Bolsheviks won victories in elections for the Pertograd and Moscow Soviets.

Therefore, when Bolsheviki principles triumphed, when the mass vote declared that the Soviet form of Government should be the dominant institution in the land, it declared that the 'Provisional' Government had fulfilled its 'provisional' pro. tem. functions, and should pass away.\textsuperscript{54}

Kerensky's last government, contemptuously dismissed by Trotsky in his famous speech, finally disintegrated when the army would not support him against the Soviets, and he fled Russia.

It would have been easy for Anstey to depict Kerensky as a tool of reactionaries, but he chose, instead, to present the story in terms of classic tragedy, where the protagonist lost control over his destiny.

A revolution is a speculation. It may bring a crown of glory or a crucifixion. It may be a real eruption or only a fizzle. It may sweep over everything, or die at the first barrage. It may cover the earth, or may perish a laughing-stock to all the world. A revolution may sweep far beyond the anticipation of the promoters, may leave them plodding in the rear, or it may recede and leave them isolated and alone, poor objects of the world's ridicule. A revolution is a human lava stream, a state of flux. It takes time to harden into definite strata, needs sharp perception to know what leaven is working in the minds of the mass to be controlled. It is easy to criticise, to be wise after events, to see where a man took the wrong turning, and why he 'missed the bus'.\textsuperscript{55}

Against drama on such a scale, the tragedy of one man was the occasion for pity, not scorn.

It was ironic that one of the most popular Australian books about the Russian Revolution told its readers very little about the revolutionary parties. There was nothing on the Social Revolutionaries, the Mensheviks were barely mentioned and the Bolsheviks received rather cursory treatment considering that they won. In the single chapter on the 'Birth Pangs of the Soviet', Anstey was content with one sentence to introduce Trotsky and a few, brief pages to Lenin, about whom he appeared to know very little. He had read, and was able to quote from 'What to Do'

\textsuperscript{54} Anstey, \textit{op. cit.}, p.33.

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Ibid.}, p.40.
[What is to be Done?] and Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution. The former he described as the blueprint for 'the machinery of the 1905 revolution' and the essence of the latter he summarised as, 'Decisive revolutionary victory over Tsarism and Capitalism rests upon a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the workers.' He was enthusiastic about the Soviet model of political representation, but silent on the issue of democratic centralism, probably out of ignorance. Anstey provided the likely reason for this in his 'Explanatory', where he said that his association with an official press mission made him:

...a suspect in the revolutionary quarters of European cities. I mention the fact to show that if my European environment had anything to do with my opinions or my conclusions, it was certainly not association with the 'Red Rag' elements; it was quite the opposite.

Indeed, he used judiciously selected reports from Allied diplomats and capitalist correspondents as evidence of the 'splendid prospects' for Russia under Soviet rule.

There is no need to explain Soviet work to justify it. No need to explain its operations in mines, mills, fields, factories, workshops, finance, education and administration. The evidence from anti-Bolshevik sources of the general state of Russia after a few months of Soviet rule, its order, its rapid economic recovery, its widened area of cultivation and splendid prospects constitute its justification, its proof that it was as least as good as any Government that preceded it.

The greater part of Red Europe, however, was concerned with the reactions of the capitalist world to the revolution and all it presaged.

Anstey's account of the 'Encirclement of 1918' was intended to show how the Soviets were assailed from all sides and so explain the desperation of their position to justify the 'mass terror' that the Allied press were 'exposing'. Drawing on the information gathered from Nuerteva in New York; his visit to Bergen, Copenhagen, Malmo and Stockholm; as well as press reports, he detailed the 'Northland Butchery'

56. Ibid., pp.45-46. The full text of these can be found in V.I. Lenin, Selected Works, vol.1, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967.

57. Anstey, op. cit., p.x.

58. Ibid., p.60.
committed by Mannerheim and the Germans in Finland. This he linked with the Allied occupation of Murmansk and Archangel.\textsuperscript{59} The situation was such that:

By the end of August, 1918, in all the regions between the Finnish Gulf and the Arctic Sea the populations staggered beneath the blows of Imperial Gemany and Imperial Britain, and if they dared to speak of 'self-determination' or the 'rights of small nations', they got the bullet, the bayonet, and the death rattle.\textsuperscript{60}

He also implicated the Allies in a process whereby the Czech Legion, \textit{en route} to the west \textit{via} Vladivostok, was transformed into a murderous tool of anti-Bolshevik reactionaries in Siberia.\textsuperscript{61} With the installation of the German puppet government of Skoropadsky in the Ukraine, the encirclement was complete.\textsuperscript{62}

Thus by this alliance of German and British Imperialism a ring of reactionary Governments was placed around Soviet Russia for its organised starvation and suppression.\textsuperscript{63}

All this was coupled with diplomatic intrigues, leading up to the storming of the British embassy in Moscow and the 'martyrdom' of Captain Crombie.\textsuperscript{64} The ensuing 'reply terror' of September 1918, so strongly denounced by the western press, was, in Anstey's view, a justifiable response in self-defence.\textsuperscript{65} He quoted Trotsky approvingly:

\begin{quote}
To all our enemies on one side, to all our friends on the other, we shall show that we are a Power - that we need to live and shall live.\textsuperscript{66}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.63-70. On Mannerheim see Luckett, \textit{op. cit.}, chapter 7 and for a brief narrative of the events of 1918 that Anstey described see E.H Carr, \textit{The Russian Revolution From Lenin to Stalin, 1917-1929}. London, Macmillan, 1979, chapter 2. He was probably not aware that there were Australian volunteers among the interventionist forces. If he was, he would almost certainly have used the information. See Jeffrey Grey, 'A Pathetic Sideshow', \textit{Journal of the Australian War Memorial}, October 1983.

\textsuperscript{60} Anstey, \textit{op. cit.}, p.70.

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.70-78.


\textsuperscript{63} Anstey, \textit{op cit.}, p.82.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Ibid.}, p.88.

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.88-97.

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Ibid.}, p.97.
Turning to the allegations that Russia's 'treacherous submission' to Germany had prolonged the war on the Western Front, Anstey argued that it was not Allied force of arms that defeated the Germans.

It was the revolutionary principles of Soviet Russia percolating through Germany, counter-blasting the mind-dope of its Master-class, and undermining the capitalist foundations of its military caste, that shook Germany like a hundred 'offensives', and gave to Allied Capitalism its vaunted 'victory'.

He then moved on to examine how 'Allied Capitalism' had won another victory.

Returning to a theme he had first explored in *The Kingdom of Shylock*, Anstey elaborated on the techniques of 'Mass Hypnotism' that governments employed to persuade their citizens to hate, and eventually kill, common people from other countries. Simple 'enemy propaganda' was too crude and ineffective. It did have a useful purpose, however, in raising the scare of traitors on the home front. He quoted examples from Germany and France, but it is likely he also had in mind his own experience of Australia's War Precautions Act when he wrote:

> The Government makes full use of the one snake in the barnyard. It declares that the country is full of them, and thus, having created an atmosphere of mutual distrust amongst its people, it proceeds to assume fresh powers of despotism, and with those powers it deals out most atrocious punishments for words or acts that have not the remotest association with the enemy or with enemy gold.

It was not sufficient, however, merely to silence doubters and opponents of the war. 'It is necessary to stir amongst the civilian population, men, women and children, a passionate lust for blood.' Departments of Information, working through an acquiescent press, were able to conduct 'atrocities campaigns' which hypnotised the masses into a 'nationalist fervour'. After citing numerous cases from Britain, the United States, France, Germany and Australia to show how 'unpatriotic' elements were  

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70. *Ibid.*, pp.109-115. He was clearly not seduced by the one under whose patronage he had so recently been able to gather so much information for the book.
either suborned or suppressed, he went on to denounce old socialists like Hervé, Kropotkin, Kautsky and Hyndman as 'apostates to the faith they had promulgated'. Following a description of how the American labour movement was converted to a pro-war policy, Anstey purported to quote an officer from the U.S. Bureau of Information in Paris proposing a toast '...to Sam Gompers, the squarest, honestest old man that ever was, and the finest stool pigeon upon which the American Government has been able to lay its hands'. Those who could not be bribed or otherwise silenced were subjected to all manner of innuendo, slander and vilification as enemy sympathisers, while well-connected people with German backgrounds were protected by the 'Hidden Hand' of Beaverbrook, Northcliffe and others who controlled the instruments of public persuasion. In one of his vintage pieces of political character assassination, Anstey drew these threads together around Lloyd George as the personification of all that he had been describing.

As his narrative drew closer to events at the time of writing, there was an increasing tone of optimism in the way he reported developments. The 'Encirclement of 1919' was crumbling at many points. He was confident that the link between Mannerheim in Finland and Ironside in Archangel would fail because the regular troops under Ironside's command had already mutinied. Despite an ominous mobilisation in the Baltic states, the ordinary workers and peasants had previously rebelled against their Germanic ruling class and its attempts to invade Soviet Russia. In Siberia there was cause for concern as 'the monster Kolchak', with British military

71. Ibid., p.124. He had, in fact, reported the anti-war speeches of some of them in 1907 at the Stuttgart Congress of the Socialist International. See Labor Call, 10 October 1907, p.2.

72. Anstey, op. cit., p.128.

73. Ibid., pp.131-135.

74. Ibid., pp.135-140.

75. Ibid., pp.143-146. He did note, however, the very attractive pay being offered for volunteers to fight against the Soviet forces. See too, Luckett, op. cit. chapter 7.

76. Anstey, op. cit., pp.146-152.
and financial support, committed extensive atrocities, even on his anti-Bolshevik opponents.\footnote{Ibid. pp.152-156 and Luckett, \textit{op. cit.}, chapter 11, especially p.224 on the matter of atrocities.} That was offset, however, by the proclamation of the 'Ukrainian Soviet Republic' in February 1919,\footnote{Anstey, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.156-159.} even though Deniken was still able to secure reinforcements.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, pp.159-160 and Luckett, \textit{op. cit.}, chapter 9.} The eventual failure of the 'White' and Interventionist forces in the spring of 1919 was due, in Anstey's estimation, to the superior morale of the Soviets.

The most powerful force in national defence is the power of the proletariat exalted with the knowledge that it fights no longer for the landlord and the slaver, but for the soil which belongs to the tiller and for the product which belongs to the producer.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p.164.}

The 'Autumn Campaign', although a very near thing for the Soviets, also ended in triumph.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, pp.163-170. This was a new section added to the third edition in 1920.} Despite some residual problems, the future of Soviet Russia seemed assured. There were, however, ominous signs that Japan, by the clever manipulation of its interventionist role in Siberia to secure a foothold in Mongolia and Manchuria, was emerging as a powerful capitalist force in the region. \textit{Japan was undisputed mistress of the far East, and in her hands were all the requisites of a vast new empire.}\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p.183.}

Although the war between 'rival imperialisms' was over, Anstey could see no enduring peace. 'Once more we see under every flag Two Nations - the Master Class and the Subject Masses.'\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p.187.} It was an unfinished war in which the duty of labour leaders was to teach workers that a lasting peace could only be secured if they waged 'war against capitalism - against robbery, poverty and monopoly'.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p.189.} Capitalist
governments wanted to revert to the 'old conditions...hoping the storm will pass and everything simmer and settle into the pre-war dominance of the Master Class'. But the world could never be the same again. 'Upon every nation there is a load of debt as odious and burdensome as the tribute levied by a foreign conqueror.' As many capitalist economies slid into recession and the condition of the working class worsened there were rumbles of discontent.

Yes: the ground trembles under their feet. There is a vast mass movement. It exhibits itself in spasmodic and sporadic strikes. It rises and subsides. It is not a policy - it is a portent.

Returning to home territory and the theme of his earlier writing, he noted:

Now, Australia, in common with all belligerent States, finds itself loaded with debt, face to face with the economic and psychological problems which the war has produced, and in the dug-outs of Reaction there lurks a financial Oligarchy small in number but powerful in influence, an impediment, by means of its poison-gas press, to every remedy that threatens its predatory existence.

In the end, however, all such resistance would be swept aside by a tide of history more powerful than any predatory clique.

The impatient world will wait no longer. The frailties of men, the soul-pawning for the prestige of an hour, the desertions of the timid, of the Iscariots for cash, will furnish no despondency. They will all count as part of the inevitable loss in the battle line. Capitalism listens with quaking soul to the drum-beats of the Armies of Revolution. Those beats grow louder and louder - they draw nearer and nearer.

With that ringing peroration, Anstey invited his readers to contemplate their future.

Even before Anstey returned from Europe there was sufficient interest in his correspondence, which had been published in Labor Call and the Socialist, for Harry

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85. Ibid, p.191.

86. Ibid, p.192.

87. Ibid, p.193. He was referring specifically to Britain but it might equally have applied to Australia, albeit to a lesser degree, where there was a significant increase in industrial militancy coinciding with a growing interest in syndicalism. On this point see Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics, chapter 8.

88. Anstey, op. cit., p.194.

89. Ibid, p.196.
Scott-Bennett to make it the topic for one of his lectures at the Empire Theatre. Immediately after his arrival back in Melbourne, Anstey commenced a hectic round of social and speaking engagements. As one of the labour movement’s most popular orators, there was a substantial audience waiting to hear reports of his study tour in Europe. On 8 June 1919 he addressed a meeting of striking wharf labourers on the Yarra bank. On 16 June he spoke in an overcrowded Auditorium on the ‘European situation’. His enthusiastic audience sang ‘The Red Flag’ and ended the night with cheering. He spoke on a similar topic later in the month under the auspices of the Women’s Central Organising Committee of the ALP. These were the first few of many to follow, but perhaps the most typical was on 26 June when he lectured on ‘The Great Dope’ at the Auditorium in Collins Street. With a large map behind him, he outlined the situation in Europe, much as he did in the book. The more formal presentation, however, was broken up with telling anecdotes about things he had seen or snatches from conversations with people he had met. The effect was to give his audience a sense that they were somehow privy to these events of great moment on the other side of the world. As with most of his speeches, Anstey varied the pace of his delivery very skilfully. He moved easily from the serious to the humorous, from the grand to the

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91. *Ibid.*, 29 May 1919, p.7; *Socialist*, 6 June 1919, p.2; and *Australian Tramway Journal*, 30 June 1919, p.3. Anstey was the President of the Tramways Union. The Victorian Socialist Party decided to organise a social night for him. See Socialist Party of Victoria, Executive Minutes, *op. cit.*, 2 June 1919. He did, however, have an unpleasant surprise awaiting him. When he rang the Victorian Railways Union office to speak to his friend and protegé Frank Hyett, he was told that Hyett had recently died during the influenza pandemic. See *Socialist*, 6 June 1919, p.1.

92. *Argus*, 9 June 1919, p.8. Anstey had a special affinity with the men’s cause, having been a ‘wharfie’ himself in Sydney during the late 1880s.


95. A full report appeared *ibid.*, 3 July 1919, pp.2-3. The lecture was organised to raise money for the ‘Frank Hyett Fund’ to support his widow and family. Tickets were 1/- each. See *ibid.*, 12 June 1919, p.7, and for a copy of a ticket to the lecture, R.S Ross, papers, NLA, MS 364/1.
particular, and from the quietly confidential story to the sweeping rhetorical flourish. This was all part of the technique that established an easy rapport with his audiences and allowed him to carry them along to his stirring conclusion on 'liberty, justice and freedom'; after which he sat down, exhausted, amid 'loud, long and continued cheering'.

When the first edition of Red Europe appeared in September 1919, it was a runaway success; in left-wing circles at least. A second edition appeared in November 1919 and a third in March 1920. It received laudatory reviews in the labour press, with R.S.Ross' being the most enthusiastic.

Finally of the book in its entirety, I felt its magnetism as 'holding' as cleverest mystery yarn - it makes you 'start' recurrently, as does the top notchest of detective tales. It will be madly assailed, I expect, and denounced as libellous and seditious. Its chief merit, I fancy, lies most in its special genius - its arrangement and its design. The facts are many in quantity and rich in quality - focussed very, very tellingly; it is a masterly hand at the helm.96

The newly formed 'Y Club' of 'sociable socialists', which Anstey joined soon after his return, adopted the book as its own, complete with a slightly premature 'christening' speech by Alf Foster at the club's August 1919 meeting.97 The New Zealand authorities paid it the supreme compliment available for a radical book; they banned it.98 In 1921 the Socialist Labour Party in Glasgow published an edition for the British and American markets. Their paper promoted it as a best seller, claiming that 'hundreds of thousands' of copies had been sold in Canada and America.99 Even allowing for a little

96 Socialist, 19 September 1919, p.3. W Wallis' review in Labor Call, 18 September 1919, p.6 was similarly excited about his colleague's book.

97 Bob Fraser of Fraser and Jenkinson was a member and was thus able to provide advance copies. See Constance Larmour, 'The "Y Club" and the One Big Union', Labour History, no.19, November 1970.

98 Labor Call, 17 March 1921, p.9 reported an item from the Maoriland Worker which noted that Whitcombe and Tombs had been fined £2 for importing Red Europe.

99 Socialist (Glasgow), 10 March 1921, p.80. The advertisement, which ran between February and July 1921 read, in part:

RED EUROPE
By Frank Ansty [sic.], M.P.
Illustrated
NOW READY
The Most Sensational Book of the Age
socialist hyperbole, it is possible that it did do well in the large North American market.

If the frequency with which it is mentioned in memoirs is a fair measure of influence, it would seem that *Red Europe* made a lasting impression on many of Anstey's contemporaries, and some of the next generation of radicals. The comments of two leading Australian communists were typical. Ralph Gibson recalled:

*Red Europe* ... ranks as an all-time classic in its exposure of wartime Departments of Information, in its frank portrayal of early Labor Governments, and above all in its truly magnificent description of the first wars of intervention against the Soviet Union, the motives of the imperialists for waging those wars, how they were defeated and why.

Norman Jeffery, though less effusive, thought it sufficiently important to summarise its contents and went on to observe, 'I regard *Red Europe*, despite some obvious weaknesses, as a real contribution to Australian understanding of the period.'

Jeffery was right, there were weaknesses in the book. Perhaps the most obvious was its lack of any substantial discussion of the revolutionary parties and politics in Russia. There was no account, for instance, of how 'the communist tail' came to 'wag the socialist dog'. It certainly did nothing to address the theoretical or doctrinal issues at stake in the struggle for control over the direction that the revolution was to take. But these were sins of omission, many of which were explicable on the grounds of justifiable ignorance. Nor was there any real sense of the conditions that drove the Russian workers and peasants to revolution. No doubt, to

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many socialists Anstey's account lacked a proper materialist base and an eye for the contradictions. It did, nevertheless, give a very real sense of the seismic ground-swell of class mobilisation that drove the revolution and threatened to engulf the whole capitalist world. In so doing, it captured the mood of many in 1919-1921 who sincerely believed that a revolution in Australia was not only possible, but imminent. Although Anstey did have a highly sensitive nose for capitalist intrigue, his left populist analysis did occasionally incline him to err too much in the direction of conspiracy theory. Yet, while that was a weakness in the book, it did hint at what was perhaps its greatest strength. It assigned a primary role to human agency in shaping the epoch-making events he described. It was certainly not one of those penetrating but difficult theoretical expositions that many self-educated radicals complained about. *Red Europe* presented a profoundly human drama replete with capitalist hostility and diplomatic chicanery, military brutality, political apostasy, mass heroism and individual tragedy. It had what Anstey described to his Melbourne audiences as 'a moral side'. The Glasgow *Socialist* was right to say that it read like a novel, just as R.S.Ross was perceptive with his reference to mystery yarns. But, despite its omissions and unavoidable errors, it was more than that. It chronicled, with a deep moral passion, the triumph of the Russian workers' revolution over the same forces of reaction and greed that had inflicted mass slaughter on the common people in all belligerent nations. To the radical audience for whom it was written, *Red Europe* was not just informative. It was instructive and inspirational.

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Anstey at the helm, probably during his European trip in 1918-19.
When Anstey returned from the 'seething pot' of Europe in mid-1919 he found Australia in a disturbed but much less turbulent condition. In Europe he had seen and described how the old order was crumbling under the weight of four years of total war and massive popular discontent. He had been witness to a struggle which began as a war between governments [and] ended as a struggle between classes which, for a while, seemed likely to tear the whole fabric of European society asunder.¹ Australia had been spared the devastation and experienced nothing like the same social upheaval. It did, however, experience a substantial rise in industrial militancy. Syndicalist ideas, energetically propagated by a growing band of radical agitators had begun to cohere around the proposal to unite industrial labour under the One Big Union. Various socialist and Marxist sects attempted to overcome their accustomed sectarianism in an effort to co-ordinate their activities in preparation for what they saw as the coming revolution.² Even the normally cautious and cumbersome Labor party conferences had begun flirting with more radical resolutions. In April the Victorian Labor party's annual conference called for the peaceful overthrow of capitalism.³ In terms very like those which Anstey had been using for some time, the Commonwealth conference of the ALP in June added the nationalisation of banking to

the party platform and condemned the Allied intervention in Russia. Behind all this, there were signs of a steady shift in the balance of power within the labour movement away from the largely ineffectual parliamentarians towards the industrial wing.

The growing intensity of industrial unrest was evident in a number of widespread and protracted strikes, and there were ominous signs that the economic transition from war to peace would be difficult, particularly in the matter of absorbing demobilised troops. Indeed, the 'red flag riots' in Brisbane during March gave warning of the kind of eruption that might occur with the volatile mixture of loyalist ex-soldiers and militant workers. Building on the infrastructure created under the War Precautions Act, some conservative businessmen and ex-army officers reacted to this burgeoning radicalism by developing their own para-military organisations to combat the expected outbursts of revolutionary insurrection. They did not 'listen with quaking soul to the drum-beats of the Armies of Revolution'. They mobilised to meet them head on.

There was, indeed, clear evidence that the working class was becoming unusually restive. In 1919 some 6.3 million man-days were lost as the result of industrial disputes, at a cost of something like £4 million in lost wages. The miners' strike at Broken Hill and, more particularly, the maritime disputes led to coal shortages, disruption to transport and consequential lay-offs of factory workers. The economic effects of these disputes were, as always, the occasion for concern by both the government and employers. Moreover, the increasingly radical agenda of leaders


5. Raymond Evans, *The Red Flag Riots: a Study of Intolerance*, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1988 provides the most detailed account of this outburst.


like Tom Walsh, who was gaoled during the seamen's strike, provoked even the
normally benign Justice Higgins to blame the dispute on 'the revolutionary dogmas of
a few non-Australian leaders'.

It was, in fact, the government's tough attitude towards foreign-born radicals
which brought Anstey to his feet in the House of Representatives for the first time
since his return. He asked W.A. Watt why Paul Freeman, an alleged IWW agitator, had
been denied the due process of law before he was gaoled, deported and forced to
remain captive aboard a ship as it sailed back and forth across the Pacific because
neither the Australian nor United States authorities would allow him to land. On 2
July he raised the matter again in the course of a speech deploring the ways in which
the War Precautions Act and the Unlawful Associations Act had been used to suppress
dissent and by-pass normal judicial procedure. Citing Freeman's present position back
in an Australian gaol, his own experience with the British authorities in 1918, Tom
Barker's deportation and the treatment of Peter Simonov, the Bolshevik government's
Consul General in Australia, he went on to suggest that the two acts had not only
been applied unjustly in the past, but would be worse than useless in the future.

This is not a day merely of legislation; the world is a marching army.
Our soldiers are coming back, and the Government cannot cope with
them.... The present system cannot meet the situation; and since work
cannot be found for the growing masses, we are inevitably confronted
with revolution which neither this Government nor any other can
avoid.

9 *CPD*, vol. 88, 27 June 1919, pp 10042-43. Watt, who was Acting Prime Minister until Hughes
returned from the Paris Peace Conference in late August, replied *ibid.*, 27 June 1919, p 10225
that Freeman had been deported as an undesirable alien under the War Precautions Act. The
most detailed account of this remarkable case is provided by Raymond Evans, 'Radical
Departures: Paul Freeman and Political Deportation from Australia following World War One',
*Labour History*, no. 57, November 1989. His case was taken up at the ALP Commonwealth
conference in 1919, as was the more general issue of political deportations. See *Report*..., pp 42-
43 and 52.
10 For a biographical sketch see Eric Fried, 'Peter Simonov' in Geoffrey Serle (ed.), *Australian
11 *CPD*, vol. 88, 2 July 1919, pp 103883.
This, of course, was entirely consistent with what he had been saying in his numerous public lectures on the European situation. In the latter half of 1919 he was so widely regarded as the Labor party’s most effective radical publicist that hardly a rally or protest meeting was complete without an address from Anstey.\textsuperscript{12}

Although he was much sought-after as an interpreter of events in Europe, it would be wrong to suppose that he was preaching revolutionary insurrection to his audiences. For all of his impatience with the Labor party, his professed disdain for parliament and other institutions of the capitalist state, he was far too wily a politician, and he knew the Australian labour movement too well, to cut his ties with party and parliament and throw in his lot with those who thought of themselves as revolutionaries. He often agreed with their objectives and sentiments. He could move his audiences to tears with his accounts of heroic sacrifice by Russian soldiers and workers. Indeed, the spectre of violent revolution haunted all his speeches and writing during this period. However, he was not impatient for its arrival in Australia, nor did he advocate it. For him it was a threat, a portent of things to come, if substantial, indeed revolutionary, changes were not accomplished quickly by more peaceful means.

This placed him in a delicate position. To some on the radical left he appeared as a hypocritical wind-bag lauding the achievements of a revolutionary working class while retaining the salary and perquisites of his parliamentary position.\textsuperscript{13} To those on the right he was either a dangerous or foolishly deluded radical abusing the privileges available to him under a liberal democratic system of government. The difficulty of being a left-wing parliamentarian at a time of growing enthusiasm for revolutionary change was evident in a speech he made to a meeting of striking

\textsuperscript{12} See, for example, reports of a march of the unemployed on Parliament House in \textit{Labor Call}, 3 July 1919, p. 10 and of a protest meeting about profiteering at the Melbourne Town Hall \textit{ibid.}, 7 August 1919, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{13} Interview with Thomas Audley, who was General Secretary/Treasurer of the Workers’ International Industrial Union in the early 1920s, at 9 Sharp Street, Northcote, Victoria on 18 February 1977. For a short summary of Audley’s life see his obituary, Peter Love, ‘Tom Audley’, \textit{La Trobe Library Journal}, vol. 8, no. 32, December 1983, pp. 92-94.
waterside workers on 8 June. He told them that they had to stop fighting their industrial battles on the old 'sectional lines'. They had to unite as a class so that 'one man's troubles' became 'every man's troubles'. But that, it seems, was the way of the future. For the present, 'He hoped that the Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Watt) would find a way out of the present trouble.'

At the end of September he was challenged directly on his apparently contradictory role in the labour movement. During a speech at the Socialist Hall, Jock Sommerville, a member of the Seamen's Union, charged him with being a strike-breaker and a traitor to the union. In his usual pugnacious manner, Anstey accepted the challenge and offered to debate the issue a few days later. At the subsequent debate, Sommerville alleged that Anstey had attended a strike meeting on 12 August and urged the men to return to work, promising that the substance of their demands would be met if they did so. Anstey, Sommerville charged, could not have kept that promise since he did not have the authority to make it in the first place and was thus exposing them to the mercy of the bosses. In reply, Anstey claimed that the union executive had already decided to accept the government's offer before he addressed the meeting and that if Sommerville and any of his comrades wanted to take the matter further, they should look to their own executive. In this case, the dilemmas inherent in Anstey's position seem to have trapped him in a web of his own good intentions. The difficulty in solving the dispute, after Walsh's arrest, was to find a way to meet the reasonable demands of the seamen while still allowing the government to keep face. In these circumstances, it appears likely that the executive had asked Anstey, as a prominent and persuasive ex-union member, to recommend the return to work without any of the protagonists having to be seen to back down in public. In the end, that was how it worked out. The seamen went back to work, they got most of

what they could realistically expect and Walsh was released after an interval long enough to preserve the government's honour in the eyes of its conservative constituency. The Socialist recognised the inevitability of such compromises and sprang to the defence of Anstey, and other prominent men in the movement who had been similarly attacked. An editorial, probably written by R.S.Ross, asked why these men were 'attacked by other Labor militants in terms both explosive and dreadful'.

The only explanation would appear to be that following upon the pent-up feelings of the war years and the trying times we have gone through, everybody's political and industrial teeth are on edge. ... [It is, to say the least, horribly unseemly to have them assaulted with a reckless venom only justifiable under proven scabbery upon principles. It is absurd, almost criminal, to lay this charge at the door of Boote, or Anstey, or Brookfield. Whatever their 'offences' they are certainly not offences calling for the vile approbrium and frenzied 'downing' some are indulging [sic.] in and attempting. The record of each one gives the lie to the ruthless attacks some are angrily 'fathering'. It is not good for the Left Wing to foul its own nest. It reminds us of the French Revolution 'eating up' its fairest sons.

For Anstey it was neither the first nor the last time that he would find the role of the left wing parliamentarian uncomfortable.

The same industrial unrest which had given rise to these difficulties soon provided the occasion for him to escape from them, at least for a while. When Hughes returned from the Paris Peace Conference in late August he found not only widespread industrial unrest, but also a faction-ridden Nationalist party. He resolved to call an election on the grounds that his government had been elected to conduct the war but now needed a renewed mandate to lead the nation through the difficult transition to peace. Among the weapons which he needed were increased Commonwealth powers in line with the referenda proposals he had put to the people as Labor Attorney-General in 1911 and 1913. The more conservative faction in the Nationalist party was uneasy about his residual 'socialist' tendencies and watered-down the proposals before the bill was pushed through the House in time for a mid-

17 Turner, op. cit., p.196.

18 Socialist (Melbourne), 10 October 1919, p.2.
December election.\textsuperscript{19} The return of Hughes, the revival of the referenda and the prospect of an election campaign gave Anstey the opportunity to engage in the kind of unproblematic political battles which he found so much more congenial than fratricidal squabbles on the left.

When the Constitution Alteration Bill came before the House he denounced it as a sham, alleging that the government was not sincere in its declared intention to suppress profiteers - the very people who supported and financed the Nationalists. By requiring the proposals to pass at both the referendum and a subsequent Constitutional Convention, the objective was to give the appearance of decisive action while, at the same time, ensuring that increased Commonwealth powers would not be approved by both the people and the states. In Anstey's view, the proposals would do nothing to address the fundamental issues of economic reconstruction which underlay the present popular discontent:

How then can this tinkering, this trifling Bill solve the problem when men are walking about the streets of our cities looking for work? It matters not how you regulate things, or how far you fix the rates of wages. The question is: How far shall prices themselves be restricted? And then, behind the wages and behind the prices, is the fundamental fact, with which you are coming face to face every day, that you must meet our enormous debts and obligations. ... These are the problems which confront our country, and this Bill is so much piffle. ... It is valuable from a political point of view, because it will carry the Government over the elections.\textsuperscript{20}

Three weeks later, during the budget debate, he developed the point about economic irresponsibility with a detailed exposition on the difficulty the government would have in meeting all its election pledges, particularly the payment of a war gratuity to ex-servicemen. During a series of lively exchanges with Watt about the fate of their previous promises, he accused the Nationalists of a cynical attempt to buy the soldiers' votes.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} L.F. Fitzhardinge, *The Little Digger*, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1979, pp. 423-427. He told the Governor-General, "Dangers beset us on every side: the cries of faction deafen our ears. The alternative to me is chaos or at least decadence: yet these troglodytes bleat and whine and howl like the sheep and wolves and dingoes that they are!"

\textsuperscript{20} *CPD*, vol. 90, 2 October 1919, pp. 12976-78.

Out on the hustings, Anstey and his supporters followed their well-proven battle plan which was to attack the government and simultaneously unsettle the local Nationalist candidate, Sergeant R.F. Tracey. Their basic strategy required Anstey to occupy the high ground of national politics, with only occasional side-swipes at his opponent who was to be treated as a minor irritant. It was the role of his local followers to harass Tracey at every opportunity, particularly during public meetings. From mid-November the local Labor machine began to build up momentum, organising the usual meetings and associated activities. Anstey, meanwhile, produced another of his election broadsheets. In it, he said nothing about local issues. It was a pastiche of articles denouncing Hughes and his record of political apostasy, linking the government with profiteers, questioning the Nationalists' promises to returned soldiers, and pointing to the relationship between a high national debt and high prices. The overall message was that the Hughes government was both insincere and incapable of implementing its policy for national reconstruction. He took that message to Hughes' own constituency in Bendigo with some vigorous speeches in support of A.J. Hampson, the Labor candidate. Back in the Bourke electorate, Anstey's supporters were making it difficult for Tracey to be heard above persistent jeering and heckling. One meeting broke up in disorder, with rival sections of the audience singing the National Anthem and socialist songs. Anstey, of course, disclaimed any responsibility for such behaviour. All the fuss, however,
seems to have had little effect on the outcome. Anstey retained the seat with his majority only slightly reduced.27

During the campaign there was another incident which, in its own small way, illustrated the tension between labour's left wing and the more aggressively loyalist returned soldiers. A Nationalist election leaflet had misquoted a J.K.McDougall poem about the Boer War to suggest that the same members of the Labor party who had opposed conscription also disdained the sacrifice of the ANZACs at Gallipoli. On the evening of 6 December a group of ex-sevicemen, offended by what they imagined to be McDougall's attitude to their dead comrades, lured him from his home, bound him and took him to nearby Ararat where he was tarred and feathered. The severity of the attack, the relatively small fines imposed on the offenders at their subsequent trial, and the disingenuous expression of regret by Hughes provoked angry responses from McDougall's supporters. Among his numerous friends, Anstey was one of the more forthright. 'A thousand sympathies for you and yours and a thousand vengeances on the dirty perpetrators.' However, the only form of vengeance that he could recommend was for McDougall to sue the Nationalists for infringement of copyright, and then move to establish a link between that and the assault.28

When parliament resumed at the end of February 1920, it was clear that the thirty-seven members of Hughes' Nationalist government were in a potentially difficult position. In the unlikely event that the eleven members of the newly formed Country party and the one Independent Nationalist voted with the twenty-six Labor members, the government could fall.29 At various stages in the first session, Anstey

27 It was a two-way contest in which Anstey won 33.17 per cent and Tracey 46.83 of the total valid votes. See Colin A Hughes and B.D.Graham, *Voting for the Australian House of Representatives, 1901-1964*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1974, p.76. At about the same time he was re-elected, unopposed, as President of the Victorian Branch of the Tramways Union. See *Australian Tramway Journal*, 23 December 1919, p.3.


attempted to exploit the differences between Nationalist and Country members, but did not succeed.\textsuperscript{30} His efforts amounted to little more than ritual irritation. Nor did he succeed in the election for the caucus executive.\textsuperscript{31} Even his old mouthpiece \textit{Labor Call} seemed less readily accessible, but there were still public platforms and the floor of parliament.\textsuperscript{32}

In the early months of 1920 Anstey used both forums to proclaim his jeremiad for the post-war world. He lamented the size of Australia's indebtedness to Britain.\textsuperscript{33} He lectured on 'The Collapse of Capitalism'.\textsuperscript{34} He warned against 'selfish extremists' in the ranks of both labour and capital who pursued narrow, personal advantage with the result that an inflationary spiral of prices and wages threatened to undermine a precarious economy and worsen existing industrial unrest.\textsuperscript{35} He even took the message to St Paul's Cathedral where he grafted it onto his familiar views about 'the Church and Labour':

\begin{quote}
It was now an age of mere greed and grab. It was an age of tooth and claw. It was useless to try to patch up or shore up the present system. The world must walk again through the valley of death and suffering to the top of its Calvary. It must find salvation through mutual suffering and sorrow if it could not find it through mutual discussion and help.\textsuperscript{36}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{30} See, for example, \textit{CPD}, vol.91, 4 May 1920, pp.1739-1741.

\textsuperscript{31} See Patrick Weller (ed.), \textit{Caucus Minutes, 1901-1949: Minutes of the Meetings of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party}, vol.2, 1917-1931, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1975, p.103. He was appointed to the Treasury and Finance Committee, but there was no distinction in that. Almost every member of Caucus was appointed to one of the committees to watch specific departments. See \textit{ibid.}, p.106.

\textsuperscript{32} In its usually loose way, the paper did not have the firm guiding hand which Henry Boote exercised over the \textit{Australian Worker}. It seems likely that Anstey's absence in Europe had tended to weaken his direct influence over editorial matters and strengthened the slightly different style which Maurice Blackburn brought to it. Besides, Anstey had been preoccupied with \textit{Red Europe} after his return and, later, with \textit{Money Power}. It might have been significant that his election broadsheet was published by Fraser and Jenkinson and not, as in the past, by \textit{Labor Call} Print.

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{CPD}, vol 92, 13 May 1920, p.2076.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Labor Call}, 1 April 1029, p.3.

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Argus}, 8 March 1920, p.6 and \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 8 March 1920, p.7.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Argus}, 3 March 1920, p.10.
Even the *Argus*, which often took delight in applying a patrician wit to Anstey's excesses, grew weary of what it saw as his calamity-howling. 'If ..., men with the gift of emotional utterance and with no very balanced judgement were accepted as the nation's guides it would be difficult to say what might be the result.'

Although Anstey was in real danger of becoming a repetitious bore with his dire warnings of imminent catastrophe, he was, nevertheless, trying to make a serious point about economic instability, industrial unrest and the consequent danger of civil disorder descending into utter chaos. All around him, he saw incompetence and greed, not vision and purpose. The government was adrift without a responsible economic policy. The Labor party was little better. Both capital and labour were engaged in a selfish scramble for illusory monetary gain. He might well have wanted a socialist society very like the one he believed that the Bolsheviks were building, but he did not necessarily want Australia to take the same road to get there. Besides, it was clearly implicit in his criticism of short-sighted union militancy that he did not believe the Australian working class had reached a sufficiently advanced stage of revolutionary consciousness to challenge the capitalist state. In all his speeches the message was fundamentally the same but, as usual, the emphasis changed according to whether he was on a radical platform, in the parliament or the pulpit.

In the middle of May members of his own union threatened to strike if tramway workers were not paid double-time during the coming visit of the Prince of Wales. It was exactly the sort of narrow and selfish demand he had been denouncing. At a union meeting on 17 May, Anstey was vigorously opposing the motion for a strike when he suddenly began to bleed from nose and mouth. He was assisted to a chair, but collapsed soon afterwards and was taken to St Vincent's Hospital. He was later moved


38. *Age*, 18 May 1920, p.7 and *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 May 1920, p.7. At its executive meeting on 24 May 1920, the VSP expressed a suitable concern for the welfare of their long-term comrade. See NLA MS 564/4. When he recovered and resumed work in September the *Australian Tramways Journal*, 4 September 1920, p.3 was suitably effusive in welcoming his return. Attempts to locate the successors to Dr Williams, Anstey's medical adviser, in the hope that some records of his recurring ill-health might have survived, were unsuccessful.
to a private hospital where he spent some weeks. However, because he did not make the progress that his doctor had hoped for, he was ordered to leave Melbourne for a complete rest. As a confirmed believer in the restorative powers of its mineral springs, he again went north to Moree for his convalescence.\(^{39}\)

During this absence, he was no doubt cheered to hear that the parliament had voted to raise Members' salaries from £600 to £1,000.\(^{40}\) Not only did he have the benefit of a sixty-six per cent pay rise, he was also relieved of the obligation to justify it to his working class constituents.

When Anstey returned to parliament for the budget session in mid-September, Sir Joseph Cook was 'pleased to see him glinting and sparkling' again.\(^{41}\) He certainly gave no signs of having been changed or chastened by his illness. He resumed hostilities with an attack on the New Guinea Bill, arguing that the powers granted to the administrator in Australia's new territory would allow \textit{de facto} forced labour to be inflicted on the native inhabitants in much the same manner as had occurred last century with the Pacific Islands labour trade.\(^{42}\) In the estimates debate he harassed the government with allegations of hypocrisy over the size of the defence vote when they had just won 'the war to end wars', and taunted them on the delicate matter of the white Australia policy and Japan's status as an ally during the war. There was also, he claimed, a degree of irresponsibility in 'unproductive' defence expenditure in a period of high interest rates.\(^{43}\) When they came to the budget debate he took the deficit as his central theme:

\begin{itemize}
\item[\(^{39}\)] \textit{Labor Call}, 3 June 1920, p.7 and 17 June 1920, p.3.
\item[\(^{42}\)] \textit{CPD}, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.4573-4578. The provision was eventually deleted when Hughes accepted an amendment to that effect. See \textit{ibid.}, p.4684.
\item[\(^{43}\)] See, for example, \textit{ibid.}, 22 September 1920, pp.4818-4819; 4822; and 4840-4843.
\end{itemize}
We are confronted with a load of debt, and the problem is the more serious from the fact that our indebtedness is mounting up year by year. There is the awful burden of the annual interest, and with the redemption of each loan that burden will be increased.\footnote{Ibid., vol 94, 14 October 1920, p.5680.}

Having been asked whether he would give the House the benefit of his remedy, he replied,

I have not the slightest objection; but my remedy would be so rapid, so drastic, that the hour is not yet. ... Let the honorable member wait until the time is ripe, and when he gets my remedy he will wonder what has struck him. ... I am sure the reply would not be to the satisfaction of the bulk of the men with whom I am associated; nor do I believe the public sentiment of the country would, at this particular moment, tolerate my remedy. But the hard pressure of economic facts will, eventually, compel the people to face the position and accept solutions which today they ridicule.\footnote{Ibid.}

Presumably, he meant the solutions he had outlined at the end of \textit{The Kingdom of Shylock} and, at that stage, was developing more fully for \textit{Money Power}, which was to appear in the new year.\footnote{There was a good deal of his money power thesis in the criticism he made of the Commonwealth Bank Bill which, among other provisions, proposed to bring the note issue under the nominal control of the Bank, but with a separate Board comprising members drawn from the Bank, Treasury and the world of private finance. This, in Anstey's view, was tantamount to handing over control of an important component of the money supply to individuals whose background and interests were not always perfectly aligned with the public good. See \textit{Ibid.}, 10 November 1920, pp.6348-63-58.}

There could be no doubt that he was back in his old form when, on 11 November 1920, Hughes moved that Hugh Mahon, the Labor member for Kalgoorlie, be expelled from the House because of 'seditious and disloyal utterances at a public meeting'.\footnote{Ibid., vol 94, 11 November 1920, p.6446. For an account sympathetic to Hughes see Fitzhardinge, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.452-457. For a balanced, but more critical view, see Souter, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.182-184.} Mahon, a rather cold and stern Irish patriot, had become uncharacteristically passionate in a speech about the death of the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence McSwiney, in an English gaol after a prolonged hunger strike. Centuries of inherited resentment, intensified into hatred by the current 'troubles', spilled out in a torrent of abuse against the British government and its agents in Ireland. The
sobbing of McSwiney's widow, he told the four thousand strong audience, 'would reach round the world, and one day would shake the foundations of this bloody and accursed Empire'. The police in Ireland were 'spies, informers and bloody cut-throats'. He took delight in reports that some of them had been shot and 'trusted that Ireland would not be profaned by their carcasses'.

Mahon's tirade provoked outrage among loyalist groups. Hughes seized the opportunity presented by this happy convergence of Imperial loyalty and the chance to bolster his slim parliamentary majority. He introduced two motions, to expel Mahon and to declare his seat vacant. They were guillotined through the House against both reasoned and impassioned Labor opposition. Sensing that the public mood was against Mahon, Tudor did not defend his views, nor his right to express them. Instead, Tudor argued that the evidence against Mahon was indirect, and that the matter was one for the courts, not the parliament. Frank Brennan, another supporter of Home Rule for Ireland, became so excited at one stage of the debate he was prompted to call Hughes a 'dirty mongrel'. Anstey revived the same arguments he had used when the Victorian Legislative Assembly expelled Ted Findley for *Tocsin's* 'libel on the King' in 1901. He saw it as a matter of principle. Although he did not explicitly say so, his central theme was that the government's action violated the doctrine of the separation of powers under the Westminster system.

This Parliament is not the judge of offences against the law; it is for the Courts of the country to judge them; and it is for the people who have elected us to Parliament to judge us.

Taking up Hughes' point that Mahon had breached his parliamentary oath of loyalty to the King in the alleged statements, Anstey dwelt on the implications of the government's position:


49. For the report of a protest meeting convened by the British Empire League see *Age*, 12 November 1920, p.7.

50. The *Age*, 12 November 1920, p.7 provides a broader report of the proceedings, including interjections and atmosphere, than the official record of the debate.
Now I ask what has any man here said detrimental to the titular head of the Empire? Nothing. What has been said has been said about a Government, but, because Mr Mahon has said something about a Government, he is held to have disparaged his King. By this logic, by this code of ethics, whoever reflects on the chosen Ministers of the King defames His Majesty, and, by pursuing that argument, you arrive at the conclusion that no man can criticise the King's Ministers without being liable to the punishment which it is proposed to mete out to the honorable member for Kalgoorlie. There is nothing wanting to that, but a powerful majority with the will to exercise its power. By such a majority a minority may be swept out of existence. Every tyranny which gets control of the Government may, by the exercise of the organised forces of the community, do its will at the expense of its opponents.

As if to confirm Anstey's argument, Sir Joseph Cook moved the gag half way through the speech and the Speaker over-ruled his objections. Exasperated, Anstey could only reply, 'Thank you. I am much obliged. God help you in the future.' Hughes' motions were passed. Mahon was duly defeated by the Nationalist candidate at the subsequent by-election and the government's majority was bolstered accordingly. Ironically, only a week earlier, Anstey had published an article declaring parliament obsolete because, in his view, it was dominated by the executive.

Accordingly, he contributed relatively little to parliamentary debate during 1921. In keeping with the responsibility that caucus had assigned him for financial matters, most of his speeches were delivered during the committee stages of the Customs Tariff (Industries Preservation) Act and the Tariff Board Act. On the first of these, he pronounced himself a high protectionist, arguing that Australia needed to develop its secondary industries if it was to be economically independent and create sufficient jobs for its citizens, no matter whether the factories were owned by capitalists, the government or the workers. On the Tariff Board, he took the view

51. CPD, vol 94, 11 November 1920, pp 6468-6472. In fact, Anstey's speech was delivered in the early hours of 12 November.

52. Souter, op. cit

53. Frank Anstey,'About Politicians' in Ross's, 6 November 1920, pp.4-6.

54. For a summary of the provisions in these two acts see Geoffrey Sawer, Australian Federal Politics and Law, 1901-1929, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1956, pp.193-194

55. For a statement of his general protectionist principles see CPD, vol 93, 18 May 1921, p.8500.
that it was a waste of time and money since the minister might choose to ignore or emasculate its report and make decisions on other advice, or his own inclinations.\textsuperscript{56}

Protection also commended itself as one of the mechanisms that would help sustain the white Australia policy. 'Whether it be food, or anything else, it is infinitely better that it should be produced by white men in Australia than that it should come from other countries.'\textsuperscript{57} He had also raised the matter of white Australia in debate over Hughes' attendance at the 1921 Imperial Conference.\textsuperscript{58} Anstey's main concerns were with the implications of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty. If, he hypothesised, the British came to an agreement with the Japanese which was not satisfactory to the Americans, and a conflict subsequently broke out between Japan and the United States, Australians would find themselves in an intolerable situation:

There is no government, no law, or no power which could compel the people of Australia by reason of their peculiar psychology to fight side by side with an Asiatic race against a white man's country.\textsuperscript{59}

It would therefore be both necessary and wise to have any treaty ratified at a referendum, not simply approved by an executive government out of touch with the wishes of the people\textsuperscript{60}

Despite his cynicism about the effectiveness of parliament, it did at least provide Anstey with the opportunity to indulge his wit at the expense of the members opposite. Referring to a newspaper report of a speech by Dr Earle Page, the recently elected leader of the Country party, he asked Sir Joseph Cook, as Acting Prime Minister, whether he had read the report:

... in which it is suggested, in effect, that members should be paid £1,000 for each session, instead of per annum, and that the session should, if

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., vol.96, 6 July 1921, pp.7925-7926.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., vol.93, 18 May 1921, p.8324.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{58} On Hughes' role at the Conference see Fitzhardinge, \textit{op. cit.}, chapter 18.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{59} \textit{CPD}, vol.95, 21 April 1921, p.7644.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{60} This was, in fact, the rather unrealistic position which the Labor Party had taken on the issue. See Sawer, \textit{op. cit.}, p.211.}
possible, be cut down to three weeks? Is the right honorable gentleman, in view of this suggestion, prepared to agree to charging for questions upon notice, or without notice, and so much per yard for speeches, in order to bring about that efficiency, economy, and effective dispatch of business which is so desired by the honorable member for Cowper [Dr Page]?

No doubt, Anstey took pleasure from Cook's reply that, 'The honorable member for Cowper is a new, and in some respects a young member.' He also enjoyed teasing the more bellicose conservatives on the government benches. During the tariff debate he warned:

I feel that these industries are necessary, and not merely to the capitalistic State. A change is coming and it may come to-morrow, next year, or even the year after, when we transfer this capitalistic State to a Bolshevik paradise, when the honorable member for Barrier (Mr Considine) and the honorable member for Bourke (Mr Anstey) will be the Trotskys and Lenins of this new world, the honorable members for Kooyong (Sir Robert Best) and North Sydney (Sir Granville Ryrie) will have to demonstrate their loyalty by kissing the red flag.

It might have been a jocular taunt, but they could not be entirely sure whether he meant it or not. He had, after all, published *Money Power*, with its radical proposals for a nationalised monetary system, only two months earlier.

At the time there was certainly enough going on in the labour movement to alarm conservatives like Best and Ryrie. In October 1920 a Communist party had been formed in Sydney from an uneasy coalition of socialist and Marxist sects. Although, at that early stage, they were more a threat to each other than the capitalist system, the formation of a party did raise the spectre of communism on Australian soil. But perhaps a more significant indication of the changing mood in the labour movement was seen at the All-Australian Trades Union Conference in June 1921, convened at the request of the ALP Federal executive which recognised the need to

61. *CPB*, vol.95, 14 June 1921, pp 8996-8997.
63. See the review by R.S. Ross announcing its publication, in *Labor Call*, 31 March 1921, p 5.
64. See Turner, *op. cit.*, chapters 9 and 10.
'formulate a forward industrial policy with a view to its adoption by the Australian Labor Party'. The growing strength of the industrial wing, and its increasing dissatisfaction with the ALPs performance, reached its highest point at the conference. As part of a more co-ordinated strategy between the industrial and political wings of the movement, they urged the party to adopt a bolder objective which was more in keeping with contemporary conditions; the 'socialisation of industry, production, distribution and exchange'. After protracted debate, delegates approved a quasi-syndicalist form of economic organisation for Australia in which a Council for Action would prepare for the transition to socialism where both parliament and a Supreme Economic Council elected by workers would share responsibility for the administration of nationalised industries. Anstey was one of the Tramway Union's delegates, but he did not take a particularly active part in the debates. His only formal contribution was during discussion about the proposed scheme of organisation for the socialisation of industry. Although he could not agree entirely with the committee's recommendations, he thought that they 'had evolved a very fine thing' in the way they had drawn together the elements of divergent opinions into 'one concrete form'. Drawing on his long experience of the disparity between bold plans and effective action, he warned that it was one thing to agree on a programme, but quite another to ensure that elected representatives implemented it once they were in power.


67. See, for example, E. J. Holloway's opening speech in the Official Report of the All-Australian Trades Union Conference held at Trades Hall, Melbourne, June 20th to 25th, 1921, Melbourne, Labor Call Print, 1921, p. 3.

68. Ibid. p. 9.


70. Ibid. p. 11. He attended almost all sessions of the conference, but spoke only once. See All-Australian Trades Union Congress, 1921, attendance book, in La Trobe Library, MS 10389/96.
Despite having made only one, rather inconsequential speech during the debates, his influence could be seen clearly in the recommendation which the delegates accepted from their banking and finance sub-committee:

That as the control of the financial institutions of Australasia by a capitalist oligarchy stifles free development, prevents the development of a free press, by virtue of the control of advertising, and, by and through their pressure upon and dictatorship of Governments, stifles the full and natural growth of Australasian States, we affirm that when the powers of Government will have been captured by a working class majority, the first essential of a reconstructed Australasia will be the rapid expansion of the Commonwealth Bank, to embrace the entire credit system, and the establishment of a similar bank in New Zealand.71

Although Anstey would never have written such fractured prose, it was essentially the same proposal that he had outlined in *Money Power*. On that issue, at least, it was clear that he had set the radicals' agenda.

It is not clear whether Anstey was entirely enthusiastic about the new objective. He had, at the 1905 Victorian ALP annual conference, expressed doubts about the political wisdom of adopting a similar objective which he thought was too far in advance of popular opinion. By 1921, however, both he and the labour movement had become more radical, but even then he had warned conference delegates that bold resolutions would not, by themselves, bring revolutionary change. Although he did not say so explicitly, Anstey's view of the situation was informed by the basic principles of historical materialism. If the economic crisis that he had been predicting did arrive, the Australian working class would come to understand its historical role and develop a revolutionary self-consciousness. Then, as conditions worsened, it might be in a position to challenge the capitalist state. Until that situation arose, however, all Labor could do was to plan for the future and press ahead with its long-standing programme of state intervention so that it could at least control the commanding heights of the economy. But he, more than most, understood the reluctance of his parliamentary colleagues to embrace radical solutions. Besides, they

71. *Official Report...* p 32. Perhaps this is what *Labor Call*, 30 June 1921, p 4 meant when it described him as 'amongst the most commanding figures' at the conference. It certainly could not have been referring to his presence on the floor during debate.
would have to win government first, and that would require them, in the absence of compelling economic circumstances, to convince a majority of the electorate that socialism was a good idea.

The delegates to the ALP Commonwealth conference at Brisbane in October also understood the dilemmas of parliamentary socialism.\(^7^2\) When the objective came up for debate, E.G. Theodore spoke for the more conservative pragmatists when he protested against 'Labor being prostituted by Communism'.\(^7^3\) Scullin, addressing the party's immediate problem, observed that:

The capitalist system is crumbling, and the world's events point to the end being accelerated. It will bring about chaos. If there was any Conference in history trying to prevent a revolution by force, Conference is doing it at present.\(^7^4\)

That was the issue at the heart of the conference. Unless the party accepted the objective, the movement could split and the union leadership might seek a more revolutionary road to socialism. After a good deal of spirited debate, conference finally accepted the socialisation objective, but added a series of significant qualifications in the form of the 'Blackburn declaration'.\(^7^5\) Its purpose was to give the

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\(^{75}\) The declaration, proposed by Maurice Blackburn, read:

That this Conference declares:-

(a) That the Australian Labor Party proposes collective ownership for the purpose of preventing exploitation, and to whatever extent may be necessary for that purpose.
(b) That wherever private ownership is a means of exploitation it is opposed by the Party; but
(c) That the Party does not seek to abolish private ownership even of any of the instruments of production where such instrument is utilised by its owner in a socially useful manner and without exploitation.

parliamentarians some room to manoeuvre with what they knew to be an electorally unpopular objective outside their militant unionist constituency.

Anstey and his caucus colleagues may well have been grateful for it because they were certainly in no position to respond to the rank and file impatience which lay behind the new objective. Not only were they in opposition, but they were also short of conspicuous talent. T.J. Ryan, one of their brighter prospects, had died in August 1921. Frank Tudor, their respected but largely ineffectual leader, had been absent from caucus meetings because of illness since 28 April 1921. He died on 10 January 1922. At the subsequent caucus election on 16 May, Matthew Charlton was elected leader and Anstey assistant leader of the party in the House of Representatives. As the deputy leader was elected from the Senate, where Albert Gardiner was Labor's only representative, this meant that Anstey was, effectively, Charlton's deputy.

While he might have anticipated Tudor's death and accepted it in the normal course of events, it would have been more difficult to accommodate the news that his mother had died on 26 January 1922. He probably expected the news at any time. She was, after all, eighty-two years old and living in a home for the aged and ill. Nevertheless, the death of a parent is usually the occasion for regrets, for joyous memories and reflections on human mortality. Although there is no record of Anstey's reaction to the news, his occasional but regular public references to her, as well as the fond way he wrote about her in his memoirs, suggest an attachment which


77 On Charlton see Murray Perks,'Matthew Charlton' in Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (eds.), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 7, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1979, pp 617-619. Scullin won Tudor's old seat of Yarra at the subsequent by-election. There were two nominations for the position of Assistant Leader: Anstey and Scullin but Scullin declined so Anstey was elected unopposed. See Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes*, pp 154-155.

78 Caroline Martha Lank died at the Forest Gate Sick Home of 'senility'. Her death certificate confirms that John Lank had predeceased her. A copy of the certificate has been deposited in the Anstey papers, NLA.
might well have caused him deep and sincere grief. But no matter what his reaction, his new position did not allow much time for the contemplation of a private loss.

In his parliamentary career so far, Anstey had always enjoyed the righteous impotence of the backbencher, and had made the most of it. Now, at the age of fifty-six, he had been given a frontbench position, albeit from a lacklustre field. It might have been expected that this elevation to a position of responsibility would have produced a change in his parliamentary style and approach to debate. It did not. He simply spoke more often on routine matters. In the period leading up to the general elections in December 1922, he performed much as before, criticising the government for its close relations with 'big business', denigrating the role of George Pearce at the Washington Conference, deploring Hughes' appointments to the Public Accounts Committee and questioning the administration of the public service. Nor did he miss an opportunity to exploit the differences between the Nationalists and the Country party, 'This Government are [sic.] held in power by the vote of those who detest them.' There was also a hint of things to come in the way he welcomed 'that noble British officer', S.M. Bruce, to the Treasury portfolio. However, there were no more taunts about the coming revolution, merely steady and sustained harassment of the government and its policies. Besides, there were no burning issues to provoke him to the heights of oratory which, in the past, had inspired admiration and respect on both sides of the parliament.

This slide into a rather mundane ritual was a reflection of the more general temper of Australian politics at the time. The enthusiasm for radical change which

had given an urgency to union militancy during 1919-21 appeared to have run its course. The earnest debates about the socialisation objective appear to have had a cathartic rather than revolutionary effect on the labour movement as the number of strikes diminished and most unionists returned to the more familiar struggle over employment, wages and conditions. Ex-servicemen seemed less concerned with Bolshevism than the hard slog of extracting repatriation benefits from the government and settling back into civilian life. The Country party under Page's energetic leadership had begun to find its feet in the parliament and was starting to flex its muscles. Labor's new leadership team provided united, if less than threatening, opposition to the government. Anstey later recalled his five year partnership with Matt Charlton. They were not years of conspicuous success, but they were years of good fellowship inside the Caucus. The only area where it did not seem to be business as usual, was in the matter of Hughes' leadership of the Nationalist party.

The campaign leading up to the election on 16 December 1922 did not excite a great deal of interest. On the day, less than sixty per cent of eligible voters attended the polls. Hughes had promised a continuation of the policy direction that his government had followed in the previous parliament, Charlton did the same for the

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83 According to Hagan's statistical tables on those matters most directly affecting the interests of workers, there was every reason why the labour movement began to turn away from radical solutions. Between 1921 and 1922 the rate of unemployment as reported by trade union returns fell from 12.5 per cent to 9.6 per cent. The number of man-days lost through industrial disputes declined from 1,286,200 to 858,700. The real value of wages, meanwhile, remained steady. See Jim Hagan, *Australian Trade Unionism in Documents*, Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1986, pp.278-279.


87 For Bruce's comments on Page's somewhat erratic energy see Cecil Edwards, *Bruce of Melbourne: Man of Two Worlds*, London, Heinemann, 1965, p.82.


opposition, playing down the party's new objective, and Page offered increased support for rural industry. The only real interest appeared to be in the degree of hostility to Hughes on the conservative side.\textsuperscript{91} Although Labor made substantial gains, particularly in the Senate, no party could govern in its own right and it was clear that the Nationalists and the Country party would have to reach some kind of agreement.\textsuperscript{92} In Bourke, the national trend was accentuated. Anstey won a substantial increase in his majority from a very low turn-out of voters.\textsuperscript{93}

In the negotiations following the election Page insisted that there could be no coalition unless Hughes resigned as Nationalist leader. After some tough bargaining, an embittered Hughes withdrew in favour of Stanley Melbourne Bruce and the first Bruce-Page ministry, consisting of six Nationalists and five Country party members, was sworn in.\textsuperscript{94} When parliament resumed, Anstey led for the opposition during the address-in-reply debate.\textsuperscript{95}

From the beginning, it was clear that the new Prime Minister was seen as more than just a normal opponent. He was a symbol of everything that Anstey and the Labor party were campaigning against. Bruce was born in Melbourne, the son of a rich merchant who had a major share in the importing firm of Paterson, Laing and Bruce. The family lived in Toorak from where the young Stanley went to Melbourne

\textsuperscript{91} For a summary of party policies see Sawer, \textit{op. cit.}, pp 221-223. During the campaign Page said that the Country Party would not support another government led by Hughes, and the newly-formed Victorian Liberal Union dismissed the Nationalists as a redundant war-time coalition, by which they meant that Hughes had to go.

\textsuperscript{92} In the House of Representatives the Nationalists won 26 seats, the Liberals 5, the Country Party 14, Labor 29 and there was one Independent. In the Senate the Nationalists won 8 places to Labor's 11. See Hughes and Graham, \textit{A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics}, p 326.

\textsuperscript{93} He won 70.07 per cent to his Nationalist opponent, J March's 29.93 per cent. The turn-out was only 53.4 per cent. See Hughes and Graham, \textit{Voting for the Australian House of Representatives}, p 91. It was the only election for some time at which the usual contingent of Anstey 'rowdies' did not disrupt their opponent's meetings. See, for example, the report of a lively, but good-humoured meeting addressed by J March in \textit{Brunswick and Coburg Leader}, 1 December 1922, n.p. [p 21].

\textsuperscript{94} For accounts of the negotiations see Fitzhardinge, \textit{op. cit.}, pp 308-317; and Edwards, \textit{op. cit.}, chapter 8.

\textsuperscript{95} Charlton was ill.
Grammar and, after a year working in the family firm, left to study at Cambridge. After graduation he read for, and was admitted to the bar, thereafter combining law with the family business in London. Although he was in Australia at the outbreak of war he did not join the AIF, but returned to England where he enlisted in the Royal Fusiliers. He was at the Gallipoli landing where he was wounded, and was subsequently awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous bravery. Discharged in 1917, he returned to Australia and won the federal seat of Flinders for the Nationalists at a by-election in 1918. Handsome, well-groomed and accomplished, he made no attempt to disguise his taste for luxurious accommodation and expensive motor cars. Bruce epitomised the suave self-assurance of the English ruling class and, as far as Anstey was concerned, was the perfect target for his wit, irony and sarcasm.

In moving a motion of no-confidence, Anstey described the new ministry as remarkable for its lack of parliamentary experience, comprising merely 'business men, shrewd and astute'. It was also different from previous governments in that it contained men who 'had been cultured in Oxford or Cambridge' who treated the parliament and the people with contempt because, as a coalition, they could not agree on a policy and so proposed to go into recess as soon as possible.

Taking up the proud boast of R.F.H.Green, a newly-elected Country party member, that it was the first all Australian-born ministry, Anstey drew a distinction between birth-place and sentiment. 'But to-day we have a Government controlled by a new force, by a man who is not merely Australian, or merely English, but is a cultured Australian seeking to adapt to himself the manners, customs, and fashions of Bond-street and Piccadilly.' While he might have acquired a veneer of metropolitan

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97 For the full text of the speech see CPD, vol.102, 1 March 1923, pp.68-78. For a detailed report, with informed commentary, on both Anstey’s speech and Bruce’s reply see Sydney Morning Herald, 2 March 1923, p.9.
civilization, his betrayal of Hughes in the coalition negotiations showed that he had not absorbed the 'honour and culture' of the old country:

It is not the culture nor is it the honour taught in the universities. It is not the code of honour understood in the messroom of the 7th Royal Fusiliers... But it is that culture which is taught by "big business" in Flinders-lane.

He was not only without honour and devoid of policy, he simply did not consider Australia as his first priority. In reviewing a series of public speeches that Bruce had given in various cities, Anstey turned to a report of one in Adelaide:

It contained twenty-seven Empires and three Australias. He spoke of ties of Empire, bonds of Empire, love of Empire, unity of Empire, faith in Empire, stream of Empire, and so on. There was not much Australia in it.

It was entirely consistent with this attitude, Anstey claimed, that Bruce should seek to resolve questions of defence, foreign policy and trade at an imperial conference rather than by legislation in the Australian parliament. After dismissing the Country party as short-sighted simpletons who only stood 'for the abolition of governmental activity', he proceeded to instruct the ministry on the need for systematic state intervention if a complex, modern economy was to be managed efficiently for the benefit of all citizens.

Bruce's brief, initial reply to Anstey's charge that he had no policy was all the more effective for the unruffled candor of its delivery:

Not having a ready-made policy, we require a little time to consider some of the great problems with which we are faced, and to endeavour to find a solution of the difficult circumstances which surround us today.

It was the kind of easy self-assurance that both infuriated and impressed Anstey. In his memoirs he recalled it clearly:

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98. Not surprisingly, he expressed particular concern at the government's proposal to create a board to oversee the management of the Commonwealth Bank. See CPD, vol.102, 1 March 1923, pp.76-77.

99. Ibid., p.79. He seemed to have the same lofty disdain for the sort of ready-made policies that Labor brought to the parliament as he probably had for their ready-made suits. He did, however, give Anstey a little of his own medicine with a reference to the way Charlton had avoided mentioning the socialisation objective during the campaign and went on to quote a passage from Money Power about radical solutions of the 'coming crisis' in capitalism.
The new Saviour was urbanity personified. Nothing was permitted to ruffle the calm of his superiority. No insult could draw from him the slightest protest - only a gaze of curiosity, such as an entomologist might give to a bug. He had unswerving purpose, serene audacity, and a half concealed contempt for all around him.  

Soon after this first skirmish parliament went into recess until 13 June.  

Early in the new session, however, Anstey attacked again. This time the issue was Bruce's attendance at the forthcoming Imperial conference. Anstey did not share the Prime Minister's faith in the empire's 'men, money and markets' as the best solution to the problems of Australia's defence and development. Britain was not interested in the defence of Australia, merely in what contribution Australia could make to the defence of imperial interests. Imperial preference was just a means to let British manufacturers share the benefits of Australian protection, without any real guarantee of reciprocal benefits for Australian exporters. To integrate Australian defence, trade and foreign policy within an imperial framework would be to surrender national sovereignty to those whose 'Imperialistic exploitation' had so recently plunged the world into war. Labor did not share Bruce's faith in the efficiency and benevolence of capitalist imperialism. Instead, 'we want to make Australia a great nation - not in slaughter, not in destruction, not in bringing death; a nation great in its ideals, its abilities, and its purposes, great in its love of justice between man and man, and in its influence for peace between the nations'.

100 Frank Anstey, The Viceroy, NLA MS 4636, reproduced in *Overland*, no. 32, August 1963, p. 20.

101 The first session only lasted from 28 February to 15 March 1923.

102 On Bruce's participation in the 1923 Imperial conference see Edwards, *op. cit.*, chapter 11.

103 *CPD*, vol. 103, 19 June 1923, p. 152. Anstey regularly criticised Bruce for what he believed to be the government's undue emphasis on imperial defence at the expense of national defence. See, for example, Anstey's speech on the construction of cruisers *ibid.*, vol. 110, 16 June 1923, pp. 230-234 and the report of a lecture given at the Victorian Labour College in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 August 1923, p. 11.

While Anstey's supporters, and even some of his old friends on the other side of politics, thought it a great speech, Bruce could see little substance in it.\textsuperscript{105}

On one occasion, not long since, I described him as 'a chartered libertine of words'. That, I think, is exactly what he is... I listened to the honorable member for Bourke, and say without hesitation that I thoroughly enjoyed his speech. Whatever may be his faults, he always gives considerable pleasure to his hearers. He makes speeches that abound in rhetoric, and quips, and similes, and instances that please the mind of the most fastidious, but which, when analyzed and considered by the application of cold, hard logic are disappointing.\textsuperscript{106}

On most occasions, this was how the debate would go. Anstey would assail Bruce as the personification of capitalist imperialism, or something similar and Bruce would reply in a calm and measured way, with a hint of bemused condescension.

Despite Anstey's attempts to unsettle Bruce with provocative insults and irony, there was never any animosity between them. Anstey was certainly capable of fleeting but intense hatred of men like 'Iceberg' Irvine during the 1903 railway strike or Hughes in the midst of their 1915-17 tussle. They, for a while at least, were bitter enemies. But Bruce, like Bent in the Victorian parliament, was an opponent rather than an enemy. There was no real venom in Anstey's taunts about disloyalty or want of honour, it was merely a matter of point-scoring.\textsuperscript{107} He had a certain respect for Bruce's 'unswerving purpose' and 'serene audacity'. Even the satirical tone of his memoirs, written over a decade later, could not disguise a sneaking regard for Bruce's style and polish:

In political campaigns he broke all records in physical endurance, rapidity of movement, distance covered, meetings held, variety of socks, shirts, spats, suits, ties and hats worn per day, and emerged from a contest as fresh and debonair as when he started. He delighted the

\textsuperscript{105} See, for example, \textit{Labor Call}, 2 August 1923, p.2 for an article on Anstey in which W. A. Watt is quoted as saying, 'One might totally disagree with what he said, but he always had something to say worth hearing. It's the same in the Federal Parliament. The word, "Anstey's up!" is quite sufficient to clear the libraries and the lobbies, and bring members trooping into the chamber.'

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{CPD}, vol.103, 19 June 1923, p.164.

\textsuperscript{107} Bruce recognised this when he noted how Anstey had fired some passing shots 'which he did not really think would do any damage'. See \textit{ibid.}, p.165.
masses with his unlimited promises, and the wealthy by the fact that he never fulfilled them.108

Bruce's biographer has gone so far as to suggest that they actually liked each other.109 Indeed, there was a certain warmth in the respectful way that Bruce dealt with Anstey's arguments about the Imperial conference.110 Perhaps it was the attraction of opposites. They could hardly have been more different in family background, education, attitudes and temperament. Bruce was an Australian-born imperial loyalist, Anstey an English-born Australian nationalist. Bruce's assured composure contrasted sharply with Anstey's tense and volatile personality. Earle Page, in the same manner as he might have taken case notes on a patient, observed some of the distinctive elements in Anstey's style, which was so different to Bruce's:

He burst into debates like a tempest. His torrent of biting sarcasm and devastating wit was supplemented by a wealth of facial expressions and emphatic gestures which brought a dramatic quality to the debates in which he joined. He was, however, extremely temperamental and, having worked himself into a positive frenzy on the floor of the House, was likely to subside into a deep depression and terminate his speech after an unwelcome interjection.111

But for all their differences, there was at least one thing they had in common. In their own ways, each was true to his class. Perhaps it was the recognition of that underlying consistency in each other's position which formed the basis for the kind of mutual regard which sometimes crosses political boundaries.

That, however, did not mean that Anstey was any the less forceful in his opposition to government policies. The 1924 Commonwealth Bank bill was a case in point. The main provisions of the bill had been outlined in the Governor-General's speech and Anstey denounced them during the address-in-reply. The stated intention of the bill was to rationalise the bank's operations by increasing its central banking

108 Anstey, The Viceroy, op. cit.
111 Sir Earle Page, Truant Surgeon: The Inside Story of Forty Years of Australian Political Life, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1963, p.60.
functions, giving it control of the note issue, requiring the private banks to settle their exchanges through deposits with the bank, and placing its policy under the direction of a board which represented major economic interests. Most Labor criticism focused on the composition of the board which, it was said, would turn the people's bank over to the Money Power. In his speech on the bill Anstey subjected it to detailed scrutiny, claiming that it could not achieve its stated aims. Its real objective, he alleged, was to help Australian financiers who had made huge profits on loans during the war and now wanted the Commonwealth Bank to rescue them from the results of their own recklessness in allowing liquidity ratios to fall below twenty per cent. It was ironic, he suggested, that in other advanced capitalist countries the private banks provided the capital for a central bank and the nation supervised it, while 'here it is proposed by the Government that the nation shall provide the capital and that private individuals shall supervise and utilize it'. He later developed the argument more fully in a pamphlet *Money Power Strangles Australia*. There he claimed that the bill was the last in a series of 'offensives' against the Commonwealth Bank whereby it had become neither a people's bank nor a true central bank, but 'the bank for the bankers'. At the government's instigation, it had raised its rates in concert with the private banks rather than act competitively to restrain them. Having won the 'right to draw' Commonwealth notes, the private banks then

112. For a summary discussion of the bill and its progress through the parliament see L.F. Giblin, *The Growth of a Central Bank: the Development of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, 1924-1945*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1931, pp. 13-23. Giblin is sceptical about the degree to which its central banking functions were increased by the act when it was passed.


114. For the full speech see *CPD*, vol. 107, 9 July 1924, pp. 1939-1947. The quote is on p. 1947. He developed these views on the exchange crisis in a speech delivered in Sydney a few months later. See *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 October 1924, p. 14.

115. Frank Anstey, *Money Power Strangles Australia*, Perth, Westralian Worker, n.d. [1923]. In his usual way, he reworked the speech into a newspaper article. See *Westralian Worker*, 5 December 1924, p. 4. From there, he expanded it further into the pamphlet. See Anstey to Curtin, 12 February 1925 in Lloyd Ross papers, NLA MS 3939/33/7.
restricted credit with such dire effects on the economy that they succeeded in extracting an additional, and inflationary, £5 million. By this and similar measures, the government and its newly-appointed board of capitalists surrendered to the Associated Banks a great deal of the Commonwealth Bank's business as well as effective control over the management of monetary policy.\footnote{For some time the Labor press had been denouncing the members of the Commonwealth Bank board for the possibility of a conflict of interest with their business connections. W.F. Ahern, for example, in the \textit{Australian Worker} of 29 October 1924 had listed some of them as, 'J.J. Garvan, insurance; Sir Samuel Hordern and Sir Robert Gibson, commercial and trading profiteers; J.M. Lees, Financial Ring; and R.S. Drummond and R.B.W. McComas, squatters'.}

Anstey's argument here was not only an adaptation of his general Money Power thesis to the specifics of the bill, it also brought into sharp focus some of the fundamental differences between Labor and the coalition in their approaches to economic management. The parliamentary Labor party's strategy, the socialisation objective notwithstanding, tended to emphasise state intervention and competitive government enterprise. The Bruce-Page coalition, on the other hand, thought that the private sector, with government encouragement and infrastructure support, would be better able to develop both primary and secondary industry within a proposed framework of imperial preference which would make available abundant 'men, money and markets'. The coalition looked for 'efficiency' in all areas of the economy, most particularly in government enterprises. As one means to that end, they favoured the appointment of 'experts' to the boards of autonomous statutory corporations. Labor preferred direct ministerial control. Accordingly, to Bruce the composition of the Commonwealth Bank board was in keeping with the sound principles of modern business practice. To Anstey, however, it represented a handing over of the people's bank to monopoly interests who cared nothing for the common good.

At periodic intervals during the ninth parliament, Anstey brought this concern about the effects of monopolies and combines to an investigation of the maritime industry. In response to complaints from Tasmania and Western Australia
that the operation of the Navigation Act created difficulties for people in those states, the government appointed a select committee of the House of Representatives, and later a royal commission, to investigate the problems associated with the coastal shipping trade. Anstey, as an old seaman, was appointed a member of both the committee and the commission. The members were J.H.Prowse (chair), Anstey, W.L.Duncan, H.E.Elliott (who was later replaced by H.J.M.Payne), C.S.McHugh, A.C.Seabrook and G.E.'Gunner' Yates; a four to three majority for the coalition. They undertook intermittent trips to various parts of Australia to inspect ports and other installations, take submissions and hear witnesses.\(^{117}\) In the end they could not agree on what changes to the act would best improve the industry, so they presented a first report divided into sections, and a separate report on New Guinea and Papua.\(^ {118}\) Anstey presented a supplementary memorandum analysing the effects of the 'shipping combine' on the Australian coastal trade.\(^ {119}\) After detailed investigation of official and other public records, combined with close questioning of witnesses, he reached the conclusion that Australian mercantile shipping was under the secret control of the British 'Inchcape Group' which used the act to exclude other 'foreign' operators.\(^ {120}\) Although 'the Australian shipping business is one vast non-competitive combine', that was not necessarily a bad thing:

Monopoly is not a crime. It is not necessarily a public evil. It may be an instrument for the public good. It furnishes the best opportunity for

\(^ {117}\) On one such trip Anstey broke with conventional propriety and agreed to a request from John Curtin to address various ALP meetings in Albany, Kalgoorlie, Bunbury, Fremantle and Perth. The speeches were essentially political ones designed to boost support for the Labor branches in the respective areas. See reports in *Labor Call*, 18 October 1923 p.1 and 1 November 1923, p.9.

\(^ {118}\) The first report is in *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers*, 1923, vol.1, p.129 and the second ibid. vol.2, p.1323. The section of the first report signed by the Labor commissioners, Anstey, McHugh and Yates, made findings that were in substantial agreement with ALP policy. They recommended, for example, that the administration of the act be placed under direct ministerial control.

\(^ {119}\) The memorandum was not included in the report. A copy can be found in Prime Minister's Department, correspondence files, class 3 (Royal Commissions), 1921-48, 'Royal Commission - Navigation Act - reports and evidence' 1923, Australian Archives CRS A460 item C/5/9.

the elimination of waste, for the most effective service, for the most economic production, and for the most efficient distribution of a nation's needs. Everything depends upon the way monopolistic power is used, whether used for the common good, or the common good subordinated to the aggrandizement of the few.121

He left the question open, but in the light of ALP policy and his own statements in the past, there was no doubt that he preferred a government-owned shipping monopoly to operate in Australian waters.122

He had been a good deal less circumspect in his comments on the maritime industry in July 1925 when the government, angry at the economic disruption caused by a protracted series of disputes between shipowners and seamen over wages and job control, introduced a series of remarkably harsh bills aimed directly at the union's militant leaders.123 In an emotional denunciation of the way that the Immigration bill was to be used to deport Tom Walsh and Jacob Johansen, Anstey declared, 'Tom Walsh, in spite of all his errors, has been more years in this country than some of the mongrels running the [Commonwealth Government] Line have been months.'124 During debate on this and the related Navigation and Peace Officers bills, he ranged widely over the old territory of workers' rights, class legislation and due process of law. As far as he was concerned, the bills represented nothing more than a blatantly partisan attempt to crush the union when the government should be trying to settle the dispute, not win it on behalf of farmers and shipowners. The bills were, he correctly predicted, the prelude to an anti-union, law and order election campaign.125

121. Ibid., p.7.

122. The Labor Daily: 11 September 1925, p.5 welcomed Anstey's memorandum as an exposure of 'criminal' behaviour by the shipping companies, while the Sydney Morning Herald, 11 September 1925, p.12 published a straight report of its contents.


125. For his speeches on the Navigation and Peace Officers bills see ibid., vol.110, 16 and 17 July 1925, pp.1234-1238; and vol.111, 28 August 1925, pp.1916-1919. The Immigration bill established a board with the power to recommend the deportation of any foreign-born resident who obstructed the transport of goods or was considered 'injurious to the peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth.' The Navigation bill allowed the government to introduce foreign ships into the coastal trade as a way of avoiding Arbitration Court jurisdiction, and so
Bruce called an election for 14 November 1925 and soon made it plain that communism in the union movement, industrial unrest and Labor's association with both would be his central themes. Page supported him with alacrity. Charlton tried to ignore the government's offensive and concentrated, instead, on Labor's traditional economic and social policies; immigration and unemployment, protection for manufacturing industry and closer settlement in rural areas.\(^{126}\) Anstey, however, was not going to be forced into a defensive position. He spent most of his time attacking the government in much the same terms as he had done in the parliament.\(^{127}\) Again, he campaigned widely and left much of the work in Bourke to his local machine which handled the Nationalist candidate, E.J.Price, quite satisfactorily, despite an eight per cent drop in his majority.\(^{128}\) Across the nation, however, the coalition swept to victory with an increased majority. They won fifty seats in the House of Representatives to Labor's twenty-three, and filled all twenty-one Senate vacancies.\(^{129}\)

There was doubt, however, whether Anstey would be able to take his place on the opposition frontbench when the tenth parliament opened in January 1926. While walking towards his home in Brunswick on 10 December 1925, he was seen to stagger and fall to the ground. He was carried, unconscious, to a nearby shop. A doctor was summoned and eventually revived him. He was diagnosed as having suffered a slight stroke, and taken home where he remained, under close medical supervision, for some break maritime strikes. The Peace Officers bill established a uniformed Commonwealth police force in response to ALP Premier of New South Wales, Jack Lang's refusal to provide state police to arrest Walsh and Johansen. They were subsequently arrested but the High Court declared invalid the section under which they were to be deported. See Souter, *op. cit.*, pp 203-204.

\(^{126}\) Sawer, *op cit.*, pp 256-259.

\(^{127}\) See, for example, *Age*, 14 November 1925, p 15.

\(^{128}\) There was the usual 'rowdy element' at Price's meetings. See *Argus*, 13 November 1925, p 21. Anstey won 62.5 per cent of the vote to Price's 37.5 per cent. Comparisons with previous elections, however, are not particularly helpful due to the high turn-out of 94.68 per cent brought about by the introduction of compulsory voting. See Hughes and Graham, *Voting for the Australian House of Representatives*, p 106.

\(^{129}\) Sawer, *op cit.*, p 259.
weeks.\textsuperscript{130} By 12 January he had made sufficient progress to attend the first caucus meeting where he was unanimously re-elected deputy leader.\textsuperscript{131} However, he had still not recovered and took almost no part in parliamentary debate during 1926. He only made one speech, on the Tariff bill, in which he praised the quality of Australian whisky and urged that it be granted higher protection against cheap and inferior imports.\textsuperscript{132} He did not speak again until March 1927.\textsuperscript{133}

During the early stages of his convalescence he had ample opportunity to ponder his position. Although he had been re-elected deputy leader, the federal election result seemed to offer little prospect of a Labor government in the near future. He was sixty years old and, having had a sharp reminder of his mortality, might well have thought about his retirement and his family's future. There were no parliamentary pensions, and although his salary was nearly five times the basic wage, he was not noted for his thrift.\textsuperscript{134} The need to make provision for his retirement, or for his wife Kate if he should die suddenly, was becoming a matter of some urgency.

In August-September 1926 he took a 'health trip' to New Guinea, which just happened to coincide with news of the rush to the Morobe goldfield on the Bulolo river.\textsuperscript{135} On 14 September he wrote to Don Cameron from Madang, 'I think I am once

\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 11 December 1923, p.10 and 12 December 1923, p.14. The \textit{Melbourne Herald}, 8 January 1926, p.3 reported that he hoped to be well enough to attend the opening of the new parliament.

\textsuperscript{131} Weller, \textit{op. cit.}, pp 248-249. He was also, by virtue of that position, elected to the caucus executive.

\textsuperscript{132} \textit{CPB}, vol.113, 22 March 1926, pp.1835-1838. During the speech he made oblique references to representatives of overseas and Australian whisky manufacturers lobbying members in the precincts of the parliament. He admitted that 'it may be said that I am not animated by high motives'. Some might have wondered if he was referring to John Wren and his interests in United Distillers.

\textsuperscript{133} He asked a question about conditions in Fiji and in giving an answer Bruce noted, without apparent irony, how 'extremely glad' they were to see him back. \textit{Ibid.}, vol.113, 2 March 1927, p.24.

\textsuperscript{134} Interview with Beverley Anstey, \textit{op. cit.}

more O.K. I feel so. I hope so. I would sooner be dead than sick and useless. All the same I will give up the deputy leadership. The freelance satisfies my fancy.'136 When he returned to Melbourne in early October he was interviewed at his home by a Herald reporter. He said that he had spent some time at Salamaua where he studied maps and plans, and spoke with men who had been to Morobe, although he did not go himself because he was not yet fit enough to tackle the difficult terrain between the coast and the gold field. Nevertheless, he had taken out a miner’s right and intended to form a syndicate to work the new field with modern equipment. Sounding more like a businessman than a radical Labor parliamentarian, he complained of difficulties with the territory administration over the size of claims and the availability of native labour.137 Soon after, he went back to New Guinea for a longer period. This time, his improved health allowed him to trek from Salamaua to the Bulolo, Edie Creek and the Upper Watut. In another interview after his return to Melbourne in January 1927, he announced that he intended to concentrate on claims along the Watut.138 With obvious enthusiasm, he went on to discuss at length the regional topography and the condition of the indigenous people.139 The reporters noted how much slimmer and fitter he looked. It was clear that he had been captivated by the country, that much of his old energy had returned and that he was more interested in gold mining than sitting on the opposition frontbench.

1976, chapter 14. For a participant’s view see Jack O’Neill (edited by James Sinclair), Up From South: A Prospector in New Guinea, 1931-1937, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1979, chapter 5. I am grateful to Mr Harry H. Jackman of Angaston, South Australia, for drawing these references to my attention.

136. Don Cameron papers, NLA MS 1005/1/1.


138. According to an official report the gold from the Watut was more valuable. ‘A discovery of gold was made during the year at the Watut River. The gold from this area is of much better quality than that from the Bulolo field, and is valued at £3 per ounce as against 50s per punce for the Bulolo gold.’ See ‘Report to the League of Nations on the Administration of the Territory of New Guinea from 1st July 1924 to 30th June 1925’ in CPP, session 1926-28, vol.2, p.1559.

139. For the detailed reports see Sydney Morning Herald, 12 January 1927, p.16 and Herald, 17 January 1927, p.3.
Anstey submitted his resignation as deputy leader to the caucus on 3 March 1927, citing persistent poor health. In his memoirs he claimed to have resigned in disgust at the factional intrigues against Matt Charlton’s leadership by supporters of E.G. Theodore:

There was no sign to implicate Theodore in any effort to dislodge Charlton. He sat at his table facing a window reading, writing, smoking, affable to any who spoke to him, but never obtruding himself upon the party attention. Yet, whenever the party met, one of his admirers would rise to dig a spur into Charlton and another would pour caustic on the wound.

Theodore had recently won the Sydney seat of Dalley at a by-election brought on by the resignation of W.G. Mahoney, under suspicious circumstances. There was certainly a degree of resentment within caucus at the unorthodox manner of Theodore’s selection, and some hostility to his obvious leadership ambitions. Although the minutes do not record whether Theodore stood for the position, caucus decided to protect Charlton’s back by electing Scullin as deputy.

Neither of Anstey’s stories, although plausible, is entirely convincing as the primary motivation for his resignation. His health might not have been up to the rigors of the deputy leadership, but it was good enough for him to hike over mountains and through rainforests in New Guinea. He may well have been dismayed by the whispers that ‘Matt was too stodgy’ and should be replaced. At that stage, however, it seems more likely that he was principally concerned with his mining interests and the prospect they offered for a comfortable retirement.

On 13 July 1927 the Upper Watut Gold Mining Company Pty. Ltd. was incorporated in Victoria. The directors were John Wren, Francis Lawrence, and Richard Lean, all of 27 Swanston Street, Melbourne; Karl Soltwedel and Oscar Schwarz.

140. Weller, op. cit., p.271. Caucus asked him to reconsider, but when he refused they accepted it and wished him a quick return to ‘his former health and vigor’.


142. Young, op. cit., pp.72-73.

both miners from New Guinea; and Frank Anstey of Howard Street, Brunswick. The nominal capital consisted of 104,000 shares at £1 each, with 75,000 allotted to Wren, 25,000 to Anstey and 1,000 to each of the others.\textsuperscript{144} It is unlikely that the shares were fully paid up, just as it was obvious who was really providing the capital. Unfortunately, no other records of the company's activities can be found.\textsuperscript{145} Accordingly, it is difficult to know what happened to the 'crushing plant and other gear' which the \textit{Herald} of 1 November 1927 said was on the beach at Salamaua and would soon be on its way to the Upper Watut.\textsuperscript{146} It was later disclosed that Anstey had been a signatory to a 'sheaf' of mining claim applications published in the \textit{New Guinea Gazette} of 15 December 1927.\textsuperscript{147} There was, however, no uncertainty about his intentions regarding the mine, 'Next year Mr Anstey is going back to New Guinea to see for himself whether or not the New Guinea venture will result in his retirement from politics at the end of the present Parliament's life.'\textsuperscript{148} He did go back in 1928, but the mine was apparently not profitable enough to allow him to resign his seat.\textsuperscript{149}

All this is consistent with the contemporary suspicion, later popularised by a passage in Frank Hardy's \textit{Power Without Glory}, that Anstey's partnership in the mining company was linked to his resignation so that Theodore, as Wren's candidate,

\textsuperscript{144} Ian Turner papers, NLA MS 996/3.

\textsuperscript{145} A thorough search, with the assistance of archivists at the Public Records Office, Laverton, Victoria, failed to locate any further details. Even the Defunct Companies Register, VPRS 5/567, does not record its passing. Enquiries in Papua-New Guinea, made on my behalf by Peter Ryan, ex-Director of Melbourne University Press, also proved fruitless. There is, therefore, no way to confirm the belief, popularised by Frank Hardy's \textit{Power Without Glory}, London, Sphere Books, 1968, p.611, that Anstey paid for the block of flats in Bondi, which he bought during the early 1930s, from the dividends paid by the mining company. It does, however, seem unlikely since he told J.K. McDougall in May 1932 that he had a £900 mortgage. See p.436 below.

\textsuperscript{146} The report is on p.5.

\textsuperscript{147} \textit{Smith's Weekly}, 5 April 1930, pp.1-2 contains a long expose on this Anstey-Wren connection, alleging that Anstey had, without declaring an interest, sat on a government committee which recommended changes to mining lease conditions in New Guinea. It also attempted to implicate Theodore in the same allegations.

\textsuperscript{148} \textit{Herald}, 1 November 1927, p.5.

\textsuperscript{149} The \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 8 March 1928, p.10 did not mention the mine, it simply recorded his return from a trip to Rabaul.
could assume the deputy’s position as the first step towards leadership of the parliamentary party.\textsuperscript{150} Indeed, in June 1928, Anstey made it plain that he could even be persuaded to give up his seat if an inducement, sufficient for a comfortable retirement, was offered. Appearing as a witness before the royal commission which found that Mahoney had been bribed, by persons unknown, to resign the seat of Dalley in Theodore’s favour, he drew a clear distinction:

\begin{quote}
There are two positions, which are as wide apart as the poles. One is where a man sells himself, his principles and his Party, his notion or his country to the enemy. The other is that if a Member retires from his position to allow another man of the same Party or creed or country to step into it, and any money is paid to him as compensation for the loss of his seat, as is sometimes done in England, there is nothing improper or corrupt about it. \ldots I would say that if I had been in Mr Mahoney’s place, and this Commission had been begun, I would have said, ‘I did vacate my seat, and I had a right to do so. I gave it up to Theodore, and if Theodore or any other man thought fit to give me compensation, that is my business and not yours.’\textsuperscript{151}
\end{quote}

Had he been asked about the deputy leadership and shares in the Upper Watut Gold Mining Company, he might have given a similar answer.

After resigning as deputy leader, Anstey was not particularly active in debate. His attendance in the house was regular enough. There was, after all, little else to do on sitting days after parliament moved to Canberra in May 1927. He seemed content to speak only on those matters in which he had a special interest. In October he accused the government and its appointees to the Commonwealth Bank board of wilful neglect in not allowing the ‘great national bank’ to reach its full potential.\textsuperscript{152} In November

\textsuperscript{150} For the passage see Frank Hardy, \textit{op. cit.}, p.302. A number of people interviewed during the research for this study were sure of the connection, but when pressed on the matter, their source was always Hardy’s novel. Attempts to interview Hardy about his sources were not successful.

\textsuperscript{151} The ‘Report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into statements in the press in regard to offers alleged to have been made to members to resign seats in the Federal Parliament’ is in \textit{Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, 1926-28}, vol.4, pp.1235-1245. The transcript ‘Report of Proceedings’ is in Australian Archives CRS A467/SF 8A/ bundle 23. For a brief account of the circumstances surrounding the allegations and the commission see Young, \textit{op. cit.}, chapter 14. The quote appears on p.858 of the ‘Report of Proceedings’. Although Anstey occasionally played a mischievous role before the commission, he was serious on that point. It was widely suspected, on the basis of later circumstantial evidence not put to the commission, that Wren was the ultimate source of the bribe paid to Mahoney. See, for example, Young, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.83-86.

\textsuperscript{152} \textit{CPP}, vol.116, 19 October 1927, pp.621-625.
he deplored the decision to sell the Commonwealth shipping line as another example of the government's preference for private rather than public enterprise.\textsuperscript{153} They were effective, methodical speeches but, by Anstey's standards, rather flat.

On 29 March 1928 Matt Charlton finally resigned under pressure from the state branches, who wanted a fresh leadership team.\textsuperscript{154} Again, there was speculation that Theodore was making a run for the position but caucus elected Scullin and, against all expectations, Arthur Blakeley as deputy. In his memoirs, Anstey recalled his distaste for the factional intrigue behind the move:

A majority of the party had approached Theodore, urged his acceptance of the deputy leadership and promised support. He was nominated and everybody clapped. Then somebody nominated Blakeley but nobody clapped. Apparently he was a thousand to one chance but he won. The defeat was an act of vengeance for the treatment of Charlton. I could see no good for a movement when its leaders steeped themselves in conspiracies against each other, and I said so.\textsuperscript{155}

He was one of the original majority who stood by their promise to vote for Theodore as deputy. In an attempt to prevent such incidents happening again, he moved that there be no more secret ballots for party positions.\textsuperscript{156} Although the motion lapsed, he had made his point about the sorry state of the party.

Despite his growing pessimism, there were occasional flashes of the old fire during the latter half of 1928 when the government passed two remarkably punitive pieces of industrial legislation. The 1928 Conciliation and Arbitration Act gave the Arbitration Court extraordinarily wide powers to discipline and punish militant unionists.\textsuperscript{157} Although Anstey did not deliver one of his set-piece speeches, his

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 6 November 1927, pp.1139-1142. The government had pointed out, quite reasonably from its point of view, that since the line was running at a loss it ought to be sold to avoid a further drain on the public purse. Anstey conceded the point but went on to argue that it was in the country's interest to maintain a national mercantile marine, even at a loss, just as railways and other public services were recognised as having more than a purely commercial function.

\textsuperscript{154} Weller, \textit{op. cit.}, p 299.

\textsuperscript{155} Anstey, \textit{Red Ned}, \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{156} Weller, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 300 and 305.

\textsuperscript{157} For a full list of the provisions in the act see Sawer, \textit{op. cit.}, pp 269-270.
necessarily fragmented arguments during the committee stage made a coherent general point. He exposed what he saw as the government's basic strategy, to undermine the unity of the unions by driving a wedge between the moderates and the militants. The Transport Workers Act was intended to break a long-running waterside workers' strike, and the union in the process, by giving the Governor-General unprecedented powers to regulate employment in the maritime industry. Referring to the licence provision whereby an individual worker would need official approval before he could get a job, Anstey observed with typical sarcasm, 'I suppose it is intended to supply them with dog-collars, or discs; and they can then pursue their work and earn a livelihood.' They were good speeches which made their points well, but they lacked the rhetorical power and passion which, only a few years earlier, would have made him the obvious choice to lead for the opposition. Increasingly, that work fell to others such as Scullin, or younger men like Frank Brennan.

By mid-1928 Anstey was drifting towards the fringe of public life. The combination of uncertain health, political pessimism and his new-found interest in gold mining seemed to be drawing him away from the platform, the press, the party and the parliament which had consumed so much of his life. In the following year, however, the tide of events swept him and the Labor party back to national prominence. Industrial unrest became more intense, despite the government's efforts to suppress militant unionists. There were two federal elections in rapid succession as, all the while, the Australian economy slid closer to a major depression.

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159. See Sawer, *op. cit.*, p. 263 for a summary of the powers conferred by the act.


Amid sporadic violence on the waterfront, the Bruce-Page government went to the people on an industrial law and order platform for the 17 November election. Again, the government attempted to link Labor with the militants, although Bruce did acknowledge rising unemployment and promised to reduce immigration until it eased. Scullin criticised the government for its extravagant spending, mounting deficits, unemployment and provocative industrial policy. He promised tariff protection, extension of the Commonwealth Bank, a government-owned coastal shipping line and reform of the arbitration system. Although Anstey had spoken on most of these issues in the previous parliament, he did not play such a major role in this campaign. In his own electorate he confined himself to the main outline of party policy, with particular emphasis on the revival of the Commonwealth Bank. His Nationalist opponent, L.J. Smith, had the usual difficulty getting his message across. Anstey was returned comfortably with a six per cent increase in his majority. Overall, Labor made significant gains on the coalition, winning thirty-one seats to the government’s forty-two, with two Independents. Among the new Labor members were J.A. Beasley, J.B. Chifley and John Curtin, whose presence was no doubt a source of considerable satisfaction to Anstey. The first sign of Anstey’s return to a more active role in the party came with his election to the caucus executive, shortly after the election of Theodore to the deputy leadership.

Almost immediately after the election, the industrial situation worsened. In addition to the continuing trouble on the waterfront, in January the Arbitration Court


164. *Brunswick and Coburg Leader*, 2 November 1928, p.3. One of Smith’s meetings was so disrupted by hecklers that police escorted some of them from the hall, whereupon, the cry, ‘One out, all out’, went up and two-thirds of the audience left.


166. Sawer, op. cit., p.302. In the Senate, the coalition won 12 places to Labor’s 7.

handed down a decision which reduced pay and lengthened hours for timber workers, who promptly struck. In March mine-owners on the northern coal-fields of New South Wales locked-out the miners, in breach of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1928.\textsuperscript{168} The government launched a prosecution against the most rich and powerful of the owners, John Brown, but in the hope of a negotiated settlement, withdrew the charge. During debate on the ensuing censure motion, moved by Theodore, Labor speakers recounted the numerous occasions when the government's punitive industrial laws had been speedily applied to union militants but were not now applied to a militant capitalist who broke the same laws. It was an issue tailor-made for Anstey and he made the most of it:

Let us for a few moments strip ourselves of the cloak of hypocrisy with which we are accustomed to clothe ourselves when in the public gaze. Let us look at ourselves plainly. When we speak of governing in the public interest, we know full well that what we have in mind in administration is the interests of the party which the Government represents. Affirm it or deny it as we may, unquestionably we are engaged in a class war; a war which was not created by an agitator, but is the product of the ages and as much a part of the social system under which we live, as the sun is part of the solar system.\textsuperscript{169}

He went on to develop a point about the deeply partisan nature of the government's policies since it was first elected and made fun of Latham, likening him to a tiger who had tasted the flesh of seamen and waterside workers, and now wanted a pound of John Brown's flesh but had been denied by his Prime Minister.

The tiger was dragged away from his meat. He was not even allowed one bite. The prosecution of the coal baron had to be withdrawn. What hard luck! Perhaps the Attorney-General will be more fortunate another time. It may be that then he will be after someone on this side, in which case he will not be called off, but will be allowed his bite.\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{168} See Macintyre, \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{169} \textit{CPD}, vol 121, 16 August 1929, p.61. He had already had sport with Bruce after a loyal motion was proposed sending condolences to the Queen on the occasion of the King's illness. Anstey also proposed to send condolences to the Prince of Wales who had, so recently, been forced to witness the misery and starvation among the people in the north of England. See \textit{ibid.}, vol.120, 6 February 1929, p.24.

\textsuperscript{170} \textit{Ibid.}, vol 121, 16 August 1929, p.64.
It was certainly not the most incisive contribution to debate, but it was a clear sign that Anstey’s enthusiasm for the forum of parliament had been revived, on this issue at least. All the boisterous knock-about wit was there, with his usual underlying seriousness of purpose. For Anstey, the debate was the parliamentary equivalent of a whiff of cordite to an old war-horse.

When, in exasperation at the worsening industrial situation, Bruce introduced the Maritime Industries bill which was the means by which he proposed to dismantle the Commonwealth arbitration machinery and turn most of its functions over to state tribunals, Anstey was in his element. Replying to Page’s robust denunciation of labour leaders, he observed, “The gentle individual who has just resumed his seat exalts me to the skies. He has lifted this debate to the lofty eminence of the sewer!” He waxed lyrical about the attachment of the vast majority of Australian workers to the arbitration system. It was their only protection against the brutal anarchy of a free labour market. It was a shelter under which they worked to bring some modest comfort to their lives. He took particular delight in the role that Billy Hughes was playing in organising opposition to it among Nationalist supporters, knowing full well that if Hughes was successful the government would treat the matter as one of confidence and resign. He also realised that it presented Hughes with the chance to avenge his own demise at the hands of Bruce and Page. Accordingly, he fanned the smouldering embers of Hughes’ resentment:

But for some reason the Nationalist party has not been able to cast out William Morris Hughes; he alone of those who left the Labour party remains on the other side. But he is a desolate and lonely figure. Now the members of that party are after his scalp once more. They object to him because he cannot escape from endorsing the things he learned in

171. Unfortunately for the Labor party the issue was to linger after the 1929 election and become a major problem for the incoming Scullin government.

172. For a lively narrative of events leading up to the defeat of this bill, see Souter, op. cit., pp 243-255. See too, C.B. Schedvin, Australia and the Great Depression: A Study of Economic Development and Policy in the 1920s and 1930s. Sydney, Sydney University Press, 1970, pp.108-113 where the telling point is made [p. 112] that ‘the strikes diverted government attention from the cause to the symptom of economic contraction’.

his boyhood. He developed in hunger and poverty and misery; he rose from the pit. Poor workmen lifted him up on their bucklers to the most honoured position in this country. In our arbitration laws there is evidence of his driving force, some of his blood, his brain, his talents; and now, in spite of his present associations, he cannot forget the things of his early manhood.\footnote{Ibid., p. 627.}

He was not only confident that Hughes would exact his revenge, but also that the people would vote for the retention of the arbitration system as they knew it. The measure before us can only be regarded as a valuable aid to the Labour party - so "let her go!"\footnote{Ibid., p. 628.} Hughes administered the final coup on 10 September and Bruce announced two days later that the Governor-General had granted a dissolution of the House of Representatives. The election was set down for 12 October 1929. It is difficult to know who enjoyed the situation most, Hughes or Anstey. Hughes certainly savoured his revenge.\footnote{Fitzhardinge, op. cit., p. 379.} Anstey’s taste for political irony would have been well satisfied by the prospect of a vindictive Hughes bringing down the party he had created.

The election was fought almost exclusively on the arbitration issue, with both major parties taking the same basic position as they had done in the parliament. Anstey did the same in Bourke, criticising the government’s attempt to abolish federal arbitration.\footnote{Brunswick and Coburg Gazette, 4 October 1929, p. 1.} The Nationalist candidate, Lionel Hahn, conceded that it would be difficult to unseat a popular local member like Anstey, noting cheerily that he was still young and, besides, the election campaign ‘provided good fun’.\footnote{Ibid., 11 October 1929, p. 2.} It is not recorded whether Hahn had fun, but there was plenty of joy for Anstey and the Labor party in the result. Anstey won by a huge majority.\footnote{He received 77.4 per cent of the vote to Hahn’s 22.6 per cent. See Hughes and Graham, op. cit., p. 129.} The Labor party was swept to government on a landslide, taking forty-six of the seventy-five seats.\footnote{Souter, op. cit., p. 234.}
was all the sweeter with the defeat of Bruce in the seat of Flinders, symbolically, by E.J. Holloway, the secretary of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council.\textsuperscript{181} The Senate, however, retained its conservative majority inherited from the 1928 election for both houses.

For Anstey, the last ten years had been a long haul. He had seen the potential for revolutionary change in 1919-21 degenerate into sectional industrial militancy and hollow resolutions. He had watched, with increasing dismay, as a succession of conservative governments dismantled state intervention and further integrated Australia into a dangerously unstable framework of capitalist imperialism. He was elected to a lack-lustre Labor frontbench but resigned, in understandably cynical self-interest, to look for gold with John Wren. After a decade of unrewarding prospects he was preparing for retirement when he and the Labor party were swept into office, only to find that Bruce had left them 'sitting on the eggs of the serpent'.\textsuperscript{182}

\textsuperscript{181} Hughes and Graham, \textit{op. cit.}, p.130. Anstey later observed, 'He caught the first boat for Britain and in his most courteous manner gave Australia a sailor's farewell.' See Anstey, \textit{The Viceroy}, \textit{op. cit.}, p.20.

\textsuperscript{182} \textit{Ibid.}
Minister for Health and Repatriation, 1929-31.
Chapter Eleven

FACTS AND THEORIES OF FINANCE

The 'cheery optimists', as Anstey was to call his caucus colleagues in the early months of the Scullin government, began arriving in Canberra on 21 October 1929. At Melbourne's Spencer Street railway station, and at most stops along the way, Scullin was applauded by crowds of well-wishers. At the Canberra station he was greeted by the city band and an enthusiastic crowd. In an impromptu speech, he assured them that his new government would keep its promises and concluded with the obligatory statement for incoming prime ministers, 'When our time ends, we hope to leave behind a better state of affairs than our predecessors have left for us.' Caucus members were in a buoyant mood when they arrived. They were about to form the first federal Labor government since 1916. That night at the Kurrajong Hotel, they ended a boisterous sing-along with a lusty rendering of 'The Red Flag' and retired to consider how they would vote the next day in the caucus election for the ministry. Most of them probably gave more attention to the two how-to-vote tickets that were circulating than to the brief news items in the daily press about the slump that was gathering momentum on the Wall Street stockmarket.

At the caucus meeting on 22 October Scullin and Theodore were unanimously elected leader and deputy leader. Then followed the ballot for the ministry. It was

1. See Gavin Souter, *Acts of Parliament*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1988, p.256 and John Robertson, *J.H. Scullin: A Political Biography*, Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1974, 170. What he did not tell them was that he had already seen Sir Robert Gibson, chairman of the Commonwealth Bank board, who had warned him that Australia's balance of payments position was much worse than was generally supposed. See ibid., p.183.

2. Souter, *op. cit*.


first decided that there should be nine 'portfolio' and four 'honorary' ministers, and that two should be senators. When the vote was counted it was clear that members had decided not to follow either ticket faithfully. There were issues other than factional alignments to be considered. Questions such as a balanced representation from each state, length of parliamentary service and personal standing within the party were also thought to be important. This produced some interesting results. Curtin was on both tickets, but was not elected because, it was claimed, Theodore had denounced him as unreliable. Instead, the longer-serving A.E. 'Texas' Green filled the position set aside for a West Australian representative. Anstey was on neither ticket, but was elected, probably because of past service, some personal following and a belief that there should be a party 'conscience' in cabinet. If that was the view, he was going to be very short of support. The cabinet was composed almost entirely of moderates, with the exception of the young radical from New South Wales, Jack Beasley.

In his distribution of portfolios Scullin took on External Affairs and Industry in addition to his prime ministerial duties. Theodore, as expected, was given Treasury. Frank Brennan, a lawyer, became Attorney-General. Joe Lyons, an ex-premier of Tasmania, was considered to have sufficient ministerial experience at state level to handle the Postmaster-General's portfolio in addition to Works and Railways. Jim Fenton, with no special skills to recommend him, got Trade and Customs. Arthur Blakeley was allocated Home Affairs; 'Texas' Green, Defence; and Parker Moloney, Markets and Transport. Frank Forde and Jack Beasley, along with Senators J.J.Daly and John Barnes became honorary ministers. Anstey was given the relatively minor portfolio of Health and Repatriation. There was surely a touch of irony in Scullin's decision here, considering Anstey's uncompromising position during the war and the

5 Curtin was disappointed and hurt by this rejection. See Lloyd Ross, John Curtin: A Biography, Melbourne, Macmillan, 1977, p.96.

6 Anstey, despite his periodic swipes at royalty, kept the letters patent certifying his appointment as a member of the Executive Council. It is in the E W Peters papers, University of Melbourne Archives.
very different attitudes of most ex-soldiers and their organisations. \(^7\) With its usual inscrutable logic, caucus had given Scullin a ministerial team of mixed background, age and talent. There was one thing, however, that they could not give him. None of them had any experience as a federal minister. While it was true that Theodore and Lyons had been premiers of Queensland and Tasmania respectively, that hardly constituted a solid foundation. Nor were the conditions propitious for them to have an easy time learning on the job.

The most urgent political problem confronting the government was the lock-out on the northern coal-fields of New South Wales, particularly since Theodore had made the rather rash promise during the election campaign that it would be settled quickly. As events at Rothbury on 16 December were to symbolise, there would be no quick or easy solution to the dispute. \(^8\) It dragged on until the middle of 1930, by which time the miners had returned to work on the owners' terms and the government was seen to have failed. \(^9\) However, it was in economic, not industrial policy where the government faced its greatest challenge. Towards the end of 1929 the Australian economy was in a particularly vulnerable position, despite Labor's soothing reassurances during the election campaign. A high level of debt on the London money market, combined with a heavy reliance on rural commodities for foreign exchange made it hypersensitive to overseas conditions. When the first shock-waves from the Wall Street crash reached London there was a consequent nervousness about


\(^8\) On this incident see Miriam Dixson, 'Rothbury', *Labour History*, no 17, 1970.

the delicacy of Australia's position.10 Those worries were not eased when falling prices for wheat and wool signified an adverse trend in the terms of trade. In these circumstances the London market's doubts about Australia's ability to meet its existing commitments turned into anxiety and further requests for loans were viewed with a rather stern scepticism. Faced with falling revenue, rapidly diminishing currency reserves, and loan obligations which could no longer be covered by new borrowing, the Scullin ministry was confronted with the beginnings of a crisis in government finance.11

Scullin already knew some of this after an earlier meeting with Sir Robert Gibson in Melbourne. The position was explained to cabinet by Theodore who then invited Gibson to address them on behalf of the Commonwealth Bank board.12 The minutes of that meeting are not available,13 but Anstey gave his own version in his memoirs.14 He recalled that Gibson 'piled on the horrors and notified us that unless the government indicated the methods by which it would reduce expenditure the bank could not finance the government beyond the end of November - five weeks.'15

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13 The only minutes available do not begin until mid-November 1929, too late for the meeting which Anstey recalled. See Australian Archives, A 3264, Cabinet Secretariat [II], Scullin Ministry - folder of typed copies of cabinet minutes, 1929-1931, (hereafter referred to as Cabinet minutes).


He claims to have told Gibson that the bank's treatment of the Scullin government was in sharp contrast to its dealings with the Bruce-Page government. According to Anstey, Gibson resented the charge of partiality and Scullin apologised for his rudeness. Indeed, it is possible that Anstey was being a little unfair to Gibson at that point. After all, the position on Australia's external account had altered substantially between the middle of 1929 and the end of October.

After Gibson left the cabinet meeting, Anstey claims to have told his colleagues, 'That puts the lid on us. We are going to be blockaded not only by a hostile Senate but by a hostile Bank board. There is only one way to save our lives - force a double dissolution before the tide of popularity runs from under us.' He reconstructed the ensuing discussion where the precedent of Joseph Cook's defeat after the 1910 double dissolution was raised. In Anstey's view, defeat was better than disgrace. If they did do it, he was asked, on what issue should they force the dissolution? They were committed to abolish the board, but the Senate would not pass such a measure. Perhaps recalling the Asquith government's famous tussle with the House of Lords, Anstey suggested they amend the act and swamp the board with new appointments. But, it was objected, the Senate would reject that too. 'Then,' Anstey claimed to have said, 'we get a double dissolution.' His colleagues, having fought two elections in less than a year, were not persuaded to chance it all on such a rash move. They preferred 'some saner way' to get around the problem.

One of the difficulties which Gibson suggested the government address as a matter of urgency was the foreign exchange crisis brought on by the simultaneous decline in sterling reserves and the cessation of new borrowing. Increases in the exchange rate had failed to stem the tide of demand for foreign exchange from

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16 Ibid
17 Ibid
importers. For some months the Commonwealth Bank had been increasing its sales of gold to the Bank of England to bolster the position in London, but if the trend continued it would be more profitable for the private banks and individuals to export their gold reserves. In a letter to Scullin, Gibson recommended that a bill be presented to parliament allowing the Commonwealth Bank to obtain information about gold reserves in private hands and, if necessary, to require owners to exchange their gold for Australian notes. This would give the bank sufficient control over the store of gold to use it to meet national obligations, should the need arise. A Commonwealth Bank bill containing these provisions was duly introduced and eventually passed. The tide of gold exports, which had surged in anticipation of the bill's passage, was stemmed and Australia quietly slid off the gold standard.

Anstey was triumphant. He saw this as a vindication of his views on the gold standard, as argued in *Money Power* more than eight years earlier. He claimed, moreover, that he had already suggested it to cabinet:

> I suggested to the Cabinet that we should make an attempt to mobilise gold reserves, and use them to meet the nation's obligations to foreign bondholders. That was met with peals of derisive laughter. Of all my silly ideas that was the limit. If such a thing could become law it would make every Commonwealth Bank note valueless or without a gold reserve every Associated Bank would have to close its doors. It would create a nation-wide panic and cover the government with public odium and contempt. They would not touch such a preposterous idea - NEVER.

But that, he claimed, was before the Associated Banks decided that they could take advantage of such a scheme to mobilise gold reserves. If the Commonwealth Bank took

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21 For a detailed analysis of the circumstances leading to this measure see Schedvin, *op. cit.*, pp.122-126.


23 *Ibid* As there are no minutes for cabinet meetings prior to the one at which Gibson's request was received, Anstey's claim cannot be verified.
control of their gold they could use the credit given in return as the basis for 'bank
manufactured cheque currency'.

Thus, the Commonwealth bank, designed by the Labor platform, to be a
'Bank of Reserve', a reservoir of the nation's power over all subsidiary
institutions, was, under a Labor government, to be made a reservoir
from which the Associated Banks could draw new life and increased
dominion.24

The scheme, he alleged, was conveyed to the Commonwealth Bank board by Alfred
Davidson of the Bank of New South Wales. The board wrote to Theodore who then put it
to cabinet where it was promptly approved by the same men who, the previous week,
had condemned the idea as 'insanity'.

Then the mouthpiece of the Associated Banks whispered into the ears of
the Nationalist leaders that everything was O.K. and the necessary
legislation, presented by the Labor Government, passed both Houses
with silent promptitude.25

While the whole affair, in his view, exposed the fallacy of the gold standard it also
exposed the self-interested hypocrisy of the private banks. If a departure from the
gold standard was to their advantage, it was to be applauded. If it was to be a means to
expand credit for employment creation, it was heresy 26 The supposed quick switch of
opinion in cabinet showed that 'the Labor leaders of Australia, like the Macdonald
Labor Government in Britain, were mere Yes men to the bankers'.27

This account of the Commonwealth Bank Act of 1929 is a good example of how
Anstey's inclination towards conspiracy theory, combined with his undiscriminating
hostility to the private banks, could lead his analysis astray and diminish some of the
stronger points in his critique. As there is no evidence that he raised the idea of
mobilising gold reserves before Gibson's letter was read to cabinet, the claim must 'lay

24 Ibid. p.370.

25 Ibid

26 This was a reference, based on the hindsight available when he wrote the memoirs, to the
proposals for credit expansion and fiduciary notes which were introduced later in the life of the
Scullin government.

27 Ibid
on the table'. There are two other points, however, on which he was demonstrably wrong, and which cast grave doubt on his interpretation. The first is that Alfred Davidson conveyed the proposal to the Commonwealth Bank board and thus, implicitly, supported it. As Schedvin has shown, far from endorsing the idea, Davidson only accepted the decision to slip off the gold standard with reluctance. The second is the claim that the bill passed both houses with 'silent promptitude'. Again, as Schedvin has correctly noted, the bill had a difficult passage, particularly in the Senate. Anstey's line of reasoning here recalls his argument about the British banking crisis of 1914 where, again, he preferred to explain events in terms of a self-seeking conspiracy rather than the muddle, expediency and compromise which was the hallmark of so much policy-making during both the war and the depression. However, he was right to warn his colleagues about the danger of obstruction by the banks and the Senate because, no matter what the motivation, the incident marked the beginning of a shift in the formulation of monetary and fiscal policy away from the government to the banking system.30

While the coal dispute and the beginnings of the financial crisis were cabinet's main preoccupations during its first few months, individual ministers were primarily concerned with mastering their own portfolios. Like most of his colleagues, Anstey had no experience in the administration of a government department, nor did he have any skills appropriate to either Health or Repatriation. If anything, he began with something of a disadvantage in the latter case.

For most of his political career, Anstey had been reasonably attentive to the needs of his constituents. In the early 1920s he had conducted a sustained campaign of harassment against the Repatriation department on behalf of electors who were


30 Ibid., p.118.
having difficulty with claims for war gratuities or pensions. At one stage in that campaign he told the house that:

In my twenty years of parliamentary experience, I have not known a department to show a more callous indifference to the requirements of members than that shown by the Department dealing with war pensions and war gratuities.

By 1929 there would still have been some officers in the department who remembered Anstey's attack on them. Others might have associated his leading role in the anti-conscription campaigns with a certain hostility towards ex-servicemen. Indeed, there was one prominent military officer associated with Repatriation who remembered Anstey well from London. When General Tom Griffiths was introduced, Anstey reminded him of their last meeting in 1918 when the military authorities in England attempted to deport a certain ‘dangerous anarchist’. Apparently, neither Anstey nor Griffiths harboured any grudges and the meeting was entirely cordial.

Most of the work in Repatriation involved routine processing of claims and appeals for various entitlements. The majority of that work was handled, under the terms of the Repatriation Act, by a commission of three senior military officers, with Colonel J.M. Semmens in the chair. Decisions on individual cases would be made and passed on for ministerial approval. Anstey's private secretary, A.W. Paul, was impressed by three aspects of his approach to this more mundane work.

31 See, for example, representations made on behalf of Johnson, Williams, Morison and Johnston in Repatriation department files, Australian Archives A2487/1/21/6111. For speeches and questions on war pensions and the administration of the War Service Homes scheme, see CPD, vol 95, 15 June 1921, p 9046; vol 98, 24 November 1921, p 13204; and 2 December 1921, p 13614.

32 Ibid, vol 95, 26 May 1921, p 8665.

33 See chapter 9 above.

34 Interview with A.W. (Gus) Paul at 55 Ellalong Road, Cremorne, New South Wales on 1 July 1983. Paul was Anstey's private secretary, recommended to him by Frank Green, the Clerk of the House of Representatives who was particularly friendly with Anstey. A copy of the interview tape had been lodged in the oral history collection at the National Library of Australia.

35 For the minutes of the Repatriation Commission's regular meetings during 1930 see Australian Archives A 3572/1930.
Over the years a cosy relationship had developed between the Returned Servicemens' League (RSL) and the department whereby all manner of *ad hoc* decisions had been made after representations from the League. Paul remembered Anstey as 'a slave to principles' in his style of administration. He insisted that all decisions be made in accordance with the principles enshrined within the act. He informed the RSL that if they wished those principles to be changed they should apply to have the act amended. Apparently, it reduced the incidence of special pleading markedly.

Like many bureaucrats, departmental officers had got into the habit of writing rather circumspect letters to unsuccessful claimants. Anstey became impatient with this and, in the case of one rather audacious claim from a war widow in his electorate, dictated an unambiguous reply. According to Paul, it read, 'Madam, for several years your husband drew a pension for a wound he never received, from a shot that was never fired, in a war he never took part in. You ask me to restore it. I will not do it. Frank Anstey.' Explaining his reasoning to an astonished Colonel Semmens, he said that if the facts of the case were true, the woman would not dare show the letter to anyone. If, on the other hand, the more 'sugary' departmental letter was sent she would 'hawk it all around the electorate' saying, 'There, that proves what I always said. Anstey's just as big a bastard as all the others.'

Paul was particularly impressed with Anstey's generosity of spirit towards those who had been victims of the rather strict and puritanical rules which were applied to war widows. He remembered one case where a woman's pension had been cancelled seven years earlier on the grounds of 'misconduct', because she had been living with a man to whom she was not married. Soon after the pension was cancelled, the man left her and she was forced to earn a living by arduous work such as scrubbing floors. She applied, after those seven years, to have the pension restored since she could no longer perform such hard labour. After checking that the details

36 Paul, *op. cit.*
of the case had been verified, Anstey asked Semmens how much the woman had lost in pension payments over the years. After a quick calculation, the Colonel came up with a figure of £600. According to Paul, Anstey sat back and said, '£600. That's a lot of money Colonel ... That's a lot of money, Colonel, to pay for a naughty. Would you pay it, Colonel?' Semmens is said to have replied, 'If you put it that way, I don't think I would, Mr Minister.' Anstey's decision was immediate, 'All right, give her back her pension.'

His parliamentary work as Minister for Repatriation was also routine. Most of it involved answering specific questions from members like Colonel Donald Cameron, Nationalist MHR for Brisbane, who was active in the Queensland branch of the RSL. The only legislation that he introduced, the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation bill, was a minor measure designed to plug a small gap in the appeal process. Latham commended it as a sensible measure.

There were only two matters which caused any concern in that portfolio, the question of preference to unionists and the fear of pension cuts as the government's financial crisis deepened. When the government attempted to implement Labor policy and substitute preference to unionists for preference to ex-servicemen in public employment, they came into direct conflict with the RSL. After a long tussle, Scullin backed down and the RSL won. Although Anstey was not directly involved in the negotiations, he had to contend with a related problem in his own department. Early in 1930, the Clerks' Union asked him to enforce the party's preference to unionists

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37. Ibid.

38. See, for example, CPD, vol 123, 12 March 1930, p 16; 19 March 1930, p 206; 27 March 1930, p.601; vol 124, 14 May 1930, p.1719.


40. See Kristianson, op cit., pp 51-58.

41. See cabinet minutes, op cit., 1 May 1930.
policy. He allowed union representatives to speak to departmental officers in an attempt to recruit members, but would not agree to compel anybody to join the union. He told the union secretary that he would give preference to ex-soldiers who were unionists over ex-soldiers who were not unionists.42 However, he would go no further because, The only instrument of compulsion is the threat of dismissal if they do not join the union. The difference between that and a government which dismisses a man because he joins a union is nil. They are both processes of victimisation, and equally odious. I will not be a party to it.43 The union replied that, 'Mr Anstey's ideas of victimisation and his kindly regards for non-unionists sound strange coming from one who has always been regarded as a staunch and militant member of the Labor Movement.'44 They had obviously not looked at Anstey's record on the question of compulsion. Nor were they telling the whole truth in publishing the letters in that form. They neglected to mention that the officers in the department already had a union and that they, the clerks, were simply engaged in the well-known practice of 'poaching'.45

In mid-1930 the RSL was alarmed at rumors that pension cuts might be made as the government's budgetary problems intensified. Anstey informed the Federal President that the matter had not been raised in cabinet but if it was he would oppose any cuts.46 Again, he was true to his word, but when the cuts came, he was in no position to do anything.

Anstey did not seem to be much troubled by these issues. He dealt with them firmly, quickly and according to clearly expressed principles. Not all of his decisions were popular, but those who had dealings with him came to appreciate his directness.

42. This was later adopted as government policy. See ibid, 22 July 1930.
43. The correspondence was published in the Australian Worker, 2 April 1930, p 20.
44. Ibid.
45. Paul, op. cit.
According to Paul, many who were initially disconcerted by his unorthodox approach were eventually won over by abundant, if rather rough-hewn, personal charm.\(^{47}\)

The Health department was even less of a problem. Under the competent and experienced leadership of Dr John Cumpston, it virtually ran itself. In many respects, it was Cumpston's own empire which he had built up over many years.\(^{48}\) As no major policy issues arose in the portfolio during Anstey's tenure as minister, he simply made the usual public appearances, provided carefully prepared departmental answers to parliamentary questions and took minor issues to cabinet.\(^{49}\) During the budget and estimates debates it was clear that he was well-briefed and in command of his material.\(^{50}\) This was, perhaps, the result of the mutual trust and friendship which Paul claims developed between Anstey and Cumpston after they had overcome an initial reserve towards each other.\(^{51}\)

As the Minister for Health and Repatriation, Anstey was competent and effective but the portfolios hardly presented him with the opportunity to leave an enduring mark on policy or public administration. When he was dumped from the ministry in the caucus spill of 2 March 1931, Paul remembers that the people in both departments were 'sorry to see him go'.\(^{52}\) Warren Denning's judgement on Anstey's

\(^{47}\) Paul, *op. cit.*


\(^{49}\) For examples of ministerial visits to Health establishments see, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 March 1930, p 10 and 30 June 1930, p 8. On detailed answers to questions see, for example, *CPD*, vol 124, 30 May 1930, p 2339; vol 125, 3 July 1930, p 3649; and 15 July 1930, pp 4104-4105. Very few matters were taken to cabinet. They included: the appointment of a medical officer at Alice Springs and a quarantine officer at Fremantle; the importation of angora rabbits into Tasmania; measures against buffalo fly infestation; and the transfer of a tract of land in Sydney's North Head Quarantine Station to the Manly shire for a public park. See cabinet minutes, *op. cit.* 18 and 19 November 1929, 30 May 1930, 5 June 1930 and 3 February 1931.

\(^{50}\) *CPD*, vol 126, 22 July 1930, pp 4412-4419 and 4 August 1930, p 5181.

\(^{51}\) Paul, *op. cit.*

\(^{52}\) *Ibid.*
brief ministerial career was typically pithy and accurate, "Mr Anstey eventually drifted out of the Ministry, leaving no mark on it commensurate with his ability."  

During the first eight months of the Scullin government, Anstey was not conspicuously active in areas outside his portfolios. A short time after his skirmish with Gibson over the 1929 Commonwealth Bank Act, he told a public meeting that Australia had the most reactionary banking system in the world. That, however, was one of his rare public statements over the Christmas-New Year period. For most of December and January he was in New Guinea attending to his gold-mining interests. He had gone with Scullin's knowledge and consent, but the trip was kept as quiet as possible. Were it generally known, the government's critics would have exploited the fact that a minister had left the country on private business so soon after taking office. Beasley was nominated to act for him in cabinet during his absence. The official fiction was that he was in Brisbane, from where his private secretary dealt with correspondence and other routine ministerial matters.

After his return in late January 1930, he had little to say on any subject other than health or repatriation in parliament, caucus or the press. In fact, he made no parliamentary speeches of any consequence until April 1931, by which time he had returned to the backbench. During the first half of 1930 he said nothing in caucus or the house on any of the important economic policy issues. He made no recorded comments, for instance, on the Central Reserve Bank or Commonwealth Bank bills. These, above all other measures, were closest to the changes he had proposed in *Money Power*. For several years he had argued for a strong central bank as a

53 Denning, *op. cit.*, pp.73-74.

54 Sydney Morning Herald, 23 November 1929, p.11.

55 It is not clear what were his reasons for going at this time, although it might be assumed that something more than usually important had arisen with the venture.

56 Cabinet minutes, *op. cit.*, 16 December 1929. Scullin's anxiety to avoid publicity might have been offset by relief at not having Anstey present to question the majority view.

57 Paul, *op. cit.*
necessary precondition for effective government control over the monetary system. The proposal in the second bill to abolish the Commonwealth Bank board and return to a single governor was consistent with all he had said in *Money Power Strangles Australia*, published soon after the board was created in 1924. He said nothing when the All-Australian Trade Union Congress of February 1930 revived the anti-capitalist rhetoric of 1921, and put forward an implicitly underconsumptionist set of recommendations for the revival of employment. He did not speak during the lengthy caucus debate over the 'financial question' on 6 March.

This prolonged silence might suggest that he was deliberately taking a back seat in debates, that he was progressively disengaging himself from the centre of the action. He was, after all, approaching his sixty-fifth birthday. His health was still not good. Years before, he had elaborated all the arguments that were now being put by the younger, more energetic men like Curtin and Yates. Indeed, Curtin had been his pupil in these matters and was now a close caucus colleague and drinking companion. His absence in New Guinea during December-January could be seen as a sign that his commitment to politics was diminishing. All this might have been true, but there is another, more obvious explanation for his uncharacteristic silence on so many issues where he had set the radical agenda for so long.

Against the habits of a lifetime, he may have felt that he was bound by the principle of collective cabinet responsibility. There is, in fact, some evidence to suggest that this was the case. Before Anstey left for New Guinea, it seems that he,

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58. For an outline of the bills and their defeat by entrenched orthodox opinion in the banking system and the Senate, see Schedvin, *Australia and the Great Depression*, pp.172-176.
Theodore and Scullin formed a sub-committee of cabinet to draw up proposals for the 'reconstruction [of the] Commonwealth Bank'. Theodore outlined the proposals on 16 December which, presumably, were those that eventually surfaced as the Central Reserve Bank bill and the Commonwealth Bank bill. The provisions in those bills may well have been the result of a compromise between Anstey and Theodore in committee discussion.

In his memoirs, Anstey claimed that in the early months of the Scullin government, 'Cabinet discussion drifted into a debate between Theodore and myself.' He reconstructed an exchange which he claimed took place between them. When challenged by Theodore about what he hoped for from a double dissolution, he said that he wanted 'a Labor Commonwealth policy for a Commonwealth Bank - not a Nationalist Bank Board policy for a Labor Government'. Pressed as to what that involved, he claimed to have replied, 'It means the employment of surplus energy on the construction of public works and the issue of Commonwealth credit for the Commonwealth Bank to enable energy to function.' After Scullin objected that bankers could not pluck credit from the skies, Anstey argued that they had no need to, 'They issue bank manufactured cheque currency on securities furnished by public and private borrowers.' When told that the government would not tolerate political control of banking, he claimed to have replied, 'No, but it tolerates bankers' control of government.' If Anstey was not reading history backwards to glorify his role in the growing opposition to orthodox economic policies, it is possible that such a debate inside cabinet might have had echoes in the proposals for the creation of credit which Yates put to caucus on 13 March and, in a more elaborate form, on 14 May. The same proposal, for £20 million to be made available through the Commonwealth

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63. Cabinet minutes, op. cit.
64. Anstey, Memoirs, op. cit., p. 371.
65. Ibid.
Bank for public works, was discussed at the May 1930 ALP Commonwealth conference in Canberra. Although there is no direct evidence that Anstey was the first to propose a 'release of credit', it is possible that he did raise it in the relative secrecy of cabinet from where it 'leaked' to Yates and others. On the basis of previous work, Anstey would certainly seem more likely to have thought of it. In the circumstances, this would have been the most effective way for him to get his views across. Accordingly, his public silence on monetary and fiscal policy during the first half of 1930 need not necessarily be interpreted as a sign of indifference or a progressive disengagement from the political fray.

Although Anstey maintained his public silence, the government's responses to mounting political and economic pressure in the second half of the year were beginning to push him towards open defiance of cabinet solidarity. There is very little public record of his immediate reactions to specific issues, but the account of the government's disintegration given in his memoirs agrees in general terms with the contemporary evidence. There is, however, some doubt about his accuracy on particular points.

For most of his term as Treasurer Theodore had been subjected to allegations that, as Premier of Queensland, he improperly benefitted from the sale of mines to a government smelting corporation. The conservative Moore government in

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67 Australian Labor Party, *Official Report of Proceedings of the Twelfth Commonwealth Conference, Canberra, 26 May 1930 and following days*, ALP, 1930, p.29. During debate on whether or not conference should hear a speech by Frank Lock on the nationalisation of credit, Curtin showed some impatience at so much talk about the causes of the depression. 'They knew the difficulties of the situation', he said, 'and everything that had been said there that day about the majesty of the money power. Why should they not equally ask Frank Anstey to come and read chapters out of *The Kingdom of Shylock*? *Ibid.*, p.25.

68 The only work that Yates is known to have published on the subject is a pamphlet, *Who Governs Australia? Finance is Government and Government is Finance*, Sydney, the author, 1930.

69 The *Daily Telegraph*, 13 June 1930, p.3 reported a difference of opinion between Anstey and Theodore over banking policy and speculated that Anstey might resign but, 'Mr Anstey would neither confirm nor deny the rumor.'

70 For a detailed account see K.H. Kennedy, *The Mungana Affair: State Mining and Political Corruption in the 1920s*, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1978. For a rebuttal of Kennedy's interpretation that Theodore probably was guilty of corruption, see Ross Fitzgerald
Queensland set up a royal commission which began taking evidence at the end of April. Between then and 4 July, when its final report implicated Theodore in corrupt practices, there had been a great deal of damaging publicity which reflected indirectly on the Scullin government. In his memoirs, Anstey was not so concerned with guilt or innocence. He saw Theodore's resignation on 5 July 1930 as the result of two related issues which were symptomatic of the problems confronting the government. The first was hostility from the conservatives, specifically the Moore government's political management of the commission combined with the federal opposition's refusal to allow a parliamentary enquiry to review the commission's findings and so give Theodore a chance to vindicate himself. The second was Scullin's alleged weakness in not defending his Treasurer properly. 'When the report became public Theodore tendered his resignation as Commonwealth Treasurer and his comrade Scullin promptly accepted - neither Cabinet nor Caucus had any voice in it.'

Anstey was also disappointed at the failure of 'the industrial militants' to insist that the government force a double dissolution over the Senate's emasculation of the 1930 Arbitration Act. At the request of the union movement, the original bill was designed to repeal or drastically modify many of the more draconian provisions in the act passed by the Bruce-Page government. When the Senate returned it to the Representatives with a substantial number of amendments, the unions urged the government to resist. Several members of caucus were pleased to do so.


71 Anstey, *Memoirs*, *op. cit.* p.373. He was correct on the last point. Scullin announced Theodore's resignation to cabinet on 7 July and officially informed caucus the next day. Neither was consulted about possible courses of action. See cabinet minutes, *op. cit.* and Weller, *op. cit.* p.382.

If there was to be a double dissolution here was an issue the workers could understand. Here there was no banking and currency mystery but something all could see and comprehend. So the Senate amendments were rejected and returned and finally referred to a 'Committee of both Houses'. If neither party gave way the road was open for a dissolution of both chambers with a chance of securing a Labor Government in power - not merely in office.\(^3\)

However, like cabinet and caucus at the end of 1929, many unionists were not prepared to take the risk of a Nationalist government. During July and August a procession of union leaders went to Canberra and lobbied the government to accept the Senate amendments. They thought that any Labor government, no matter how weak, was preferable to a Nationalist one which they expected would embark on a vigorous policy of wage reduction.\(^4\) In Anstey's view, it was a significant capitulation:

Thus the stalwarts of industrial unionism came to Canberra not as stimulants to the fray but as defeatists afraid to take a risk. Their 'no fight' policy pleased the Government and the amendments of the anti-Labor Senate were accepted, a chance of securing a Labor Senate majority was thrown away and the Nationalists - Bank Board, Senate and Judiciary - became assured the Federal Labor Party, supported by political executives and industrial leaders, would not force a fight on any issue.\(^5\)

Thereafter, he noted, the way was clear for wholesale reductions to wages and conditions. With the benefit of hindsight, and the political immunity of retirement, he declared, 'Such were the products of the cowardly capitulation policy of the industrial and political leaders of the working class.'\(^6\) He neglected to mention that he was not one of the five Labor members who voted against the Senate amendments when the House of Representatives finally passed the bill on 8 August.\(^7\) He may well have been disgusted by the outcome, but he was not yet ready to take a stand. However,

\(^3\) Anstey, Memoirs, \textit{op. cit.}, p 376.


\(^5\) Anstey, \textit{op. cit.}

\(^6\) \textit{Ibid.} The memoirs were written somewhere between August 1935 and August 1936.

\(^7\) \textit{CPD}, vol 126, p 5678. They were James, Lazzarini, Yates, E.C.Riley and E.Riley.
a sequence of events had already begun which finally forced him into the open as a critic of the government.

By July-August 1930 it was clear that orthodox opinion favouring deflationary policies was beginning to occupy the high ground of economic debate. It was not confined to Sir Robert Gibson and the Commonwealth Bank board. In April T.R. Bavin, the Nationalist premier of New South Wales, stated the prevailing conservative view plainly. To him, the issue was simply put. As national income had fallen dramatically, so real wages would have to fall too. In July, the economist L.F. Giblin put the same case to a popular audience in a series of 'Letters to John Smith' which were published as a pamphlet by the Melbourne Herald.78 Alfred Davidson had already organised for the conservative majority in the Senate to defer the Central Reserve Bank and Commonwealth Bank bills.79 However, the most powerful expression of orthodox opinion which worried Anstey and many others in the labour movement was the 'imported wisdom' from the Bank of England.80

For some time, the British Treasury and the Bank of England had been taking a close interest in Australia's position on the London money market. When a request came to postpone a war loan repayment due in March, they sought further information on Australia's difficulties before they would agree to provide continuing support in London. There was some concern about the likely effects of the Scullin government's drastic tariff increases, its slide off the gold standard and the proposed changes to the Commonwealth Bank. All this tended to confirm the long-held suspicion that Australian governments were not addressing the main problem underlying the balance of payments crisis, namely costs of production.81 It was

78 Love, op. cit., p. 96.

79 Schedvin, Australia and the Great Depression, p. 174.


81 These views had already been put in the Report of the British Economic Mission ..., op. cit. On 2 December 1929 Professor Edwin Cannan wrote to Professor Theodore Gregory on the subject of Australia's slide off the gold standard, asking, 'Is anything being done in influential quarters to stop the Australians making currency fools of themselves?' See Sir Theodore Gregory papers, British Library of Political and Economic Science, Miscellaneous collection 460.
eventually agreed that a mission sponsored by the Bank of England, comprising Sir Otto Niemeyer, Professor Theodore Gregory and Raymond Kershaw, would be sent to confer with Australian governments on the best ways to restore confidence in their credit on the London market. After a brief inspection of the available data, Niemeyer delivered his report, first to the Loan Council in Canberra and later to a Premiers' conference in Melbourne on 18-21 August. His message was clear and uncompromising. Australia's large and inadequately financed government deficits compounded by unfunded floating debts and declining savings were responsible for the collapse of its credit in London. Falling export income combined with low productivity resulting from protectionist policies had produced an unfavourable balance of trade with little prospect of immediate recovery. In short, the Australian standard of living was beyond the capacity of its economy. If the situation was to be improved there would have to be a reduction in domestic costs, increased productivity and stringent economies in government finance. Suitably impressed by the gravity of the situation, the conference resolved to balance budgets, forego foreign loans and manage existing debts in a more systematic manner.

To Anstey, this was the culmination of a series of events which signified Scullin's total surrender to the banks, and explained his reluctance to take so many important cabinet decisions to caucus for approval. However, Anstey was wrong about the circumstances surrounding the appointment of the Niemeyer mission. In his memoirs he said that Scullin and Theodore had issued the invitation to the Bank of

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83. The report is reprinted in Shann and Copland, *op. cit.* pp. 18-29.

England without approval from either caucus or cabinet. It was true that neither had been consulted, but had he known that the invitation was effectively engineered from the London end, he would certainly have made a fuss about it in his usual way. He also alleged that Scullin had secretly re-appointed Gibson before leaving to attend an Imperial conference in London. Scullin hoped that the re-appointment would help to reassure the City that the Australian government was not about to depart from the canons of sound finance. While it was true that caucus was not consulted, his claim to have first heard of it after Scullin's departure on 25 August is wrong:

Three weeks after the departure of that ship [S.S. Orama] Joseph Lyons mentioned to Cabinet that Gibson's term of office was expiring and the Prime Minister at the ship side had expressed his strong opinion that Cabinet should reappoint him. There had been a distinct promise that there would be no reappointment of Gibson without Caucus consent. Therefore I moved that the question be submitted to Caucus for decision. Then Lyons said 'I may as well mention that the Prime Minister renewed Gibson's term of office before he sailed. All you are asked to do is endorse his action'. After some strong language the Cabinet majority rubber stamped the accomplished fact.

Anstey failed to mention that he was present at the cabinet meeting on 4 August, with Scullin in the chair, when the re-appointment was approved. No dissent was registered in the minutes of that meeting. In the subsequent controversy over the matter, he claimed that he handed a protest note to Forde. This seems unlikely. Forde denied receiving any note, despite Beasley's statement that he saw it passed. What Beasley forgot when he supported Anstey's story was that he was absent from the cabinet meeting in question. What Anstey was trying to do when he gave a personal

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86. Ibid., p.377.
88. Ibid., p.378.
89. Cabinet minutes, op. cit., 4 August 1930.
91. See CPD, op. cit. and cabinet minutes, op. cit.
explanation to parliament, and again in his memoirs, was to absolve himself from any responsibility for the Niemeyer mission or Gibson's re-appointment, both of which were seen in his left-wing constituency as acts of betrayal by the Scullin government. Indeed, Anstey depicted it as such in his memoirs. Referring to Niemeyer's report to the Melbourne conference, he claimed:

Then did the Chairman of the Bank Board (Sir Robert Gibson - with his secret reappointment by Scullin up his sleeve) go to the Federal Cabinet (18 August) and issue his 'twenty-four hours - at most forty-eight hours' ultimatum to cut expenditure or perish. Then did the Federal Cabinet surrender, send its representative to conference with the State Governments and agree with them to spend no more money on public works. That meant, as existing works came to an end, an increasing mass of unemployment.92

In this Anstey was not the first politician to sprinkle a little mendacity throughout his memoirs to smooth over the inconvenient wrinkles in the historical record.

Although he might not have been as resolute as he claimed in resisting the cabinet majority, there is some evidence to suggest that he was quite active in helping to strengthen the labour movement's opposition to the stringent orthodoxy contained in the Melbourne Agreement. On 21 August a Special Conference of Unions and the ALP in Sydney passed a motion from Jock Garden calling for a five year moratorium on overseas interest payments, repudiation of all war debts and 'the mobilisation of the credit of the community to provide work or sustenance for the unemployed and for the revival of industry'.93 This was designed as a direct answer to the Niemeyer report, and those Labor members thought likely to support it. On 4 September the Adelaide Advertiser reported that:

Before the NSW ALP - Union Conference last week which recommended credit expansion and "repudiation", Anstey had a "long and private" conversation with Garden who later drafted and steered the resolution

92. Anstey, Memoirs, op. cit. The meeting referred to was, in fact, held on 20 August at Scullin's home in Richmond. Cabinet did endorse the terms of what was to become known as the Melbourne Agreement. See cabinet minutes, op. cit., 20 August 1930.

urging that action must be taken by the movement to stand up to Niemeyer, as a Cabinet majority will not.\textsuperscript{94}

What Anstey appears to have been doing at this stage was to acquiesce to the cabinet majority in public, but to work quietly in the labour movement to undermine its decisions. He was present, for instance, on 5 September when cabinet, in the presence of Gibson, unanimously endorsed the absent Scullin's pledge to 'uphold every obligation to the people of this country and to its creditors'.\textsuperscript{95} He was, however, already preparing a very public declaration of his opposition to the prevailing facts and theories of finance.

In late September he finally declared his position. Characteristically, he began with a series of articles in \textit{Labor Call}. The first appeared on 25 September and the last in the series of five on 23 October. They were then issued as a pamphlet under the title \textit{Facts and Theories of Finance}.\textsuperscript{96} His main point was that the orthodox theories of banking and finance, which lay behind the deflationary policies so recently given the Bank of England's imprimatur by Niemeyer's report, had been discredited by new 'facts'. He began, in a style which recalled the early passages in \textit{The Kingdom of Shylock}, with an attack on professional economists whom he accused of deliberately mystifying the language of economic debate.

In Parliament, on the platform, in the Press, their books and their doctrines were quoted as Holy Writ to prove that the worker was the pre-destined victim of forces over which he had no control. He was economically damned - a commodity and nothing more...They surround the subject with a shelter of mysterious words - make it a Holy of Holies, to which the masses may not enter except with bated breath, with unsandalled feet to accept with reverence and without question the dictums of the new economic priesthood.\textsuperscript{97}

\textsuperscript{94} I am grateful to Dr Peter Cook of LaTrobe University for bringing this reference to my attention.

\textsuperscript{95} Cabinet minutes, \textit{op. cit}.

\textsuperscript{96} For the articles see \textit{Labor Call}, 25 September, 2, 9, 16 and 23 October 1930. The pamphlet was Frank Anstey, \textit{Facts and Theories of Finance}, Melbourne, Fraser and Jenkinson, n.d. (October 1930).

\textsuperscript{97} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.1-2. He had in his sights Copland, Giblin, Shann, Dyason and Melville, but was not particularly discriminating about the differences between them. The charge of mystification was a little unfair to Giblin who had put the deflationary case in very plain, folksy language in his pamphlet \textit{Letters to John Smith}. 
Having intoned this ritual incantation, he moved to the substance of his argument, beginning with the quantity theory of money which, in his view, was the basic theoretical impediment to a 'release of credit'.98 Recent evidence from Britain and the United States, he claimed, demonstrated that an increase in the money supply did not necessarily result in price rises. This was because 'a dozen other factors enter into the determination of price levels'.99 The advocates of deflation were slaves to this exploded theory and were thus blind to the 'facts' of modern finance. It was thus possible for the Commonwealth Bank to pursue an expansionary monetary policy to relieve unemployment without the disastrous 'inflationary' consequences which so alarmed orthodox economists and bankers.

The traditional doctrine that a 'proper' cash reserve ratio was essential to sound banking practice was another exploded theory, according to Anstey. That ratio had changed markedly according to prevailing economic circumstances in different countries at different times. Even that most cherished of all financial fictions, the gold standard, had been abandoned.100 The real foundation of bank liquidity was not cash reserves, gold, deposits or subscribed capital.

On the contrary, it is the owners of capital and wealth who pledge their capital - their property, products, and plants - their homes, farms, and factories - and pay interest to secure from the banks circulating symbols of securities deposited by the owners of material wealth.101 On that basis, Anstey argued, banks entered credits in their books and those credits were transferred by means of cheques which then became a form of currency. The money created in this way was not redeemed in gold or by any other 'backing'. 'A cheque or note is redeemed every time it is accepted by a member of the public for

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98 He did not formulate it in the usual way as $MV = PT$ and so did not explore questions relating to the velocity of money or the volume of transactions. His point was a simpler one, to discredit the nexus between the quantity of money and price levels.

99 Ibid., p.3.

100 Ibid., pp.3-4.

101 Ibid., p.5.
goods or services.\textsuperscript{102} By far the greatest proportion of money in circulation at any given time was not in the form of Commonwealth notes but ‘bank manufactured cheque currency’ created in this way. In the last year alone, he alleged, the banks had expanded the money supply substantially but prices had, in fact, fallen.\textsuperscript{103}

By taking the wealth of others, converting it into ‘bank manufactured currency’ and charging interest thereon, the banks imposed a cost upon production that was not only unearned, but became an increasing burden for the community. This was particularly the case, he claimed, with Australia’s loan obligations which had increased markedly in their effects since the onset of the depression. The general deflation of the economy had meant, given the fixed interest burden, that a greater proportion of production and increased taxation was necessary to service the debt:

...the efforts to raise wages, to reduce hours, to improve social conditions must be a fruitless task while increasing interest (and taxation to meet the bill) consumes more and more of the substance of human toil. WHAT GOES TO THE PAWNBROKER CANNOT GO INTO THE HOME.\textsuperscript{104}

His suggestion for the progressive liquidation of the nation’s internal debt was for the Commonwealth Bank to buy up maturing bonds and issue in their place negotiable, non-interest bearing bonds as the Commonwealth’s own form of ‘bank manufactured currency’. Such bonds would be ‘redeemed every time they pass from hand to hand in exchange for commodities or services - redeemed by the Government every time [they were] accepted in payment of taxes and [for the] service of public utilities’. Thus could the hitherto ‘frozen’ credit of the community be made ‘liquid’ to fertilise the ‘fields of

\textsuperscript{102} Ib\textit{id}, p.6.

\textsuperscript{103} Ib\textit{id}, pp.6-7.

\textsuperscript{104} Ib\textit{id}, p 8. Emphasis in original. Niemeyer took up this point about falling wages and fixed interest in a letter to the Adelaide businessman, Sir Walter Young. During the long voyage across the Pacific Niemeyer ‘amused’ himself by reading Curtin’s pamphlet, \textit{Australia’s Economic Crisis and the £55,000,000 Interest Bill: How the Years of Money Power Extortion have brought Misery to the Nation}, Perth, Westralian Worker, n.d. (October 1930). In the course of a long review, Niemeyer thought the radicals were being inconsistent in demanding that interest be reduced while award wages and pensions be maintained at a time when prices were falling. Niemeyer to Young, 16 November 1930, Bank of England, archives, OV9/289, Sir O.E.Niemeyer, Visit to Australia, 1930.
industry', and the national debt be steadily diminished. Anstey, it seems, had not heard of Gresham's Law.

His solution to the problem of Australia's external debt was less novel. 'A Commonwealth-owned banking system should be made to function for the exclusive handling of foreign obligations.' It would manage all overseas transactions, have exclusive control over foreign exchange and issue 'internal credits' to exporters. This was simply an elaboration on the Labor party's bank nationalisation policy. New loans would be treated in the same way as he proposed to liquidate the existing debt. The Commonwealth Bank would issue bonds to Governments against the security of national assets. The only restriction imposed would be the capacity of those assets to generate sufficient revenue 'to meet the annual charges, annual reduction of the principal, and ultimate redemption within an assigned period'. If Australia did not move to a nationalised banking system operating according to these principles 'then it must continue to subject itself to processes of self-torture, to increasing loads of interest and taxation until industry crumbles beneath the strain'.

The pamphlet was as much a political testament as it was a theoretical tract. As a guide to immediate policy, it was useless. In addition to its theoretical flaws, it was utterly unrealistic in terms of practical political economy. The nationalisation of banking was simply not on. The conversion of existing debt into non-interest bearing negotiable bonds based on 'the credit of the community' would not only violate the 'sanctity of contract' but would amount to repudiation in the eyes of Gibson, the private banks, the Senate and the City. Anstey was undoubtedly sincere in what he wrote, but he surely realised that its influence on events would be purely political. As a pamphlet, it was a disorganised pastiche of points he had been making for the last fifteen years, applied to the present circumstances. Although it did serve to remind

105. Ibid., p.10. This simply re-worked passages from pp.125-126 of Money Power.
106. Ibid., pp.10-11. This was from pp.121-124 of Money Power.
107. Ibid., pp.11-12.
his more conservative party colleagues that they were formally committed to public control over the monetary system, its immediate purpose was to serve as an open declaration of independence from the cabinet majority which, until then, he had only opposed privately. In fact, he made a point of sending pre-publication copies to all members of parliament.108

Unlike 1915, when he was among the first to denounce a Labor government which departed from its policy and principles, this time he simply added his voice to an existing chorus of disapproval. There had already been widespread protest against Niemeyer and the Melbourne Agreement in the labour press as unemployment climbed towards eighteen per cent. From all corners of the continent, labour papers decried the agreement as a betrayal of the workers and heaped scorn on Niemeyer, 'London Jews and other War Profiteers'.109 In mid-September a conference of key unions convened by the ACTU rejected the agreement and called for £20 million 'of the credit resources of the country' to be freed by the government. A concurrent special conference of the Victorian ALP made the same demand.110 In mid-October the ALP federal executive deplored the action of any government which lowered the standards 'of the workers by reducing wages or increasing hours', and directed attention to 'the planks dealing with Banking, Insurance and Arbitration'.111 This was followed soon after by similar declarations from the Labour Council of New South Wales as well as the Tasmanian and Queensland parliamentary Labor parties.112

108. Labor Daily, 27 September 1930, p.5. Don Cameron, Anstey's comrade and friend from the Tramways Union noted in the Tramway Record, 2 October 1930, p.2 that, 'Anstey has told the Federal Labor Government that it can and should use immediately the Commonwealth Bank more effectively in the interests of the workers of Australia.'


110. Ibid., p.111.


It was significant that the first 'Facts and Theories of Finance' article in *Labor Call* appeared on the day after Jack Lang opened the Labor campaign for the New South Wales state election. The circumstances surrounding Anstey's first contribution to that campaign were symbolic. On 1 October he, J.J. Daly, Jack Beasley, and Arthur Blakeley left a cabinet meeting, at which Beasley complained about Treasury's refusal to show him the Niemeyer file, to join Lang at an election rally in Queanbeyan where the campaign slogan was 'Men versus Money'. Anstey's speech seemed to give vent to long-suppressed passions:

> In a fiery outburst Mr Anstey condemned Sir Otto Niemeyer and Professor Gregory, whom he described as cormorants and vultures of finance, whose mission was to degrade the condition of the working people... These people do not want government for [sic] the people, by the people for the people, but government by finance for finance. There is Sir Otto Niemeyer and Professor Gregory, whose real name is not Gregory but Guggenheimer.' (Cheers)

His descent into racial slurs to inflame the baser instincts of the audience was symptomatic of a blind rage born of frustration. It was clearly recognised at the time that this speech marked the point at which his differences with the majority of cabinet had become irreconcilable. Thereafter, it would only be a matter of time before he resigned or was dumped.

Later in the campaign he delivered more measured speeches, but his message contained an unmistakable challenge. Addressing a rally of some ten thousand people in the Sydney domain on 19 October, he poured scorn on those in England who had been protected by Australian soldiers during the war but who now despised the nation...

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115 *Ibid.* According to A.C. Paddison, an associate of Jack Lang and author of the pamphlet *The Lang Plan: The Case for Australia*, Sydney, 1931, Anstey appeared on the platform with Lang in full knowledge that it might 'lead to trouble with the party'. Interview with A.C. Paddison at the Belview Hospital, Bondi on 18 May 1981.

116 Paul, *op. cit.*
for its predicament. Reminding his audience of the last depression during which they founded the Labor party, he observed:

We started out to secure better wages in the days when sweating was rife, and we fought for and won shorter hours and better conditions of life. The country did not perish. It grew, and we have seen nations grow great, not upon the pauperisation of the people, but upon the improvement of their material conditions. (Applause.) Whosoever at this hour seeks to solve the problems and difficulties that beset us by the degradation of the masses is no longer with us and is not of us. (Hear, hear.)

There is no record of what Fenton and Lyons thought of the last sentence. The following day at Coogee he maintained the pressure, promising that under no circumstances 'would the Federal Labor Party agree to reductions in wages'.

The election on 25 October gave Lang an overwhelming majority and an indisputable mandate from the people of New South Wales to follow an expansionary policy in contrast to the deflationary Melbourne Agreement to which Bavin had committed them. The electorate, however, did not endorse the repudiation of foreign debt payments. Lang had explicitly promised not to embark on such a policy. It was, nevertheless, a decisive expression of electoral opinion from the most populous state. It set the scene for a caucus revolt.

With the mood in the labour movement and the electorate so firmly against the Melbourne Agreement, the government's temporary leaders came under considerable pressure. While Scullin was in London, Fenton was Acting Prime Minister and Lyons Treasurer. Neither appeared comfortable in their respective positions. At the Melbourne conference Niemeyer had noted that Fenton and Lyons were entirely at sea, and like a couple of rabbits popping their heads occasionally out of the hole.

Although he was still dogged by the Mungana scandal, Theodore took the


118. Ibid., 21 October 1930, p.6.

119. For an assessment of the election results, see Nairn, *The 'Big Fella'*; p.207.

120. Love, 'Niemeyer's Australian Diary...'; *op. cit.*, p.268.
opportunity to commence his come-back. He made his first move on 28 October during a caucus debate on the government's proposals to implement the Melbourne Agreement. Using George Gibbons as a front, he fired the first shot in what became known as 'the battle of the plans'. He proposed a detailed scheme for a controlled 'release of credit' through the Commonwealth and private banks to cover maturing internal loans, to fund government works and stimulate private industry. Interest on that money was not to exceed five per cent. These domestic measures were to be supported by mechanisms for greater government control over Australia's external account.\textsuperscript{121} It was the first instalment of the Theodore Plan, which was developed in successive stages to its mature form in March 1931. Drawing on technical advice from R.F.Irvine, a former Professor of Economics at Sydney University, it represented a direct challenge to Niemeyer's orthodoxy by offering the promise that gentle inflation might stimulate business activity and revive employment, and at the same time, allow Australia to meet its foreign debt obligations.\textsuperscript{122} Although it proposed a degree of inflation, its aim was to stabilise the economy, balance the budget and restore pre-depressions price levels.\textsuperscript{123} On 30 October caucus rejected Lyons' policy and approved the Gibbons-Theodore proposals by 26 votes to 14.\textsuperscript{124}

During his period as Treasurer, Theodore had inclined to orthodox policies but during his absence from cabinet had, with Irvine's help, been converted to a more expansionary policy. That conversion, as Cook has pointed out, was in happy

\textsuperscript{121} Weller, \textit{op. cit.}, p 391. This summary of events relies heavily on Love, \textit{Labour and the Money Power}, p.112.


\textsuperscript{123} On this point see Marcus Robinson, \textit{Economists and Politicians: The Influence of Economic Ideas Upon Labor Politicians and Governments, 1931-1949}, PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1986, pp.8-11. On 22 January 1931 Irvine was explicit about this when he wrote to Theodore. The policy which both of us have in mind should be described as one of Restoration and Stabilisation. By controlling credit issue through the medium of price levels and other barometers stabilisation can be secured at the point which indicates the maximum employment of labour and capital.' Irvine to Theodore, E.G.Theodore, papers, NLA MS 7222/1/2.

\textsuperscript{124} Weller, \textit{op. cit.}, p.394.
conjunction with his ambition to return to the Treasury, consolidate his power base in the New South Wales branch of the party where it was threatened by the recently triumphant Lang, and capture leadership of the new mood in caucus. In his memoirs, Anstey was utterly cynical about 'the transformation' in caucus opinion occasioned by the Theodore plan:

In that Caucus there were at least twenty men who had no definite abiding opinion on any subject...They whispered support to both [factions] and deceived both. Where they were not deliberate crooks they were as unstable as water and as fickle as the wind. Under Theodore guidance they now turned against the Government they had slavishly supported.

He recalled the reaction of those in caucus, including himself, who had opposed deflation all along:

The minority he had previously denounced as 'nitwits' now jibed and jeered him as a two-way facer, but they had to vote with him or against everything they had advocated. These, in conjunction with the heelers who twisted when he twisted gave Theodore a majority against the government on any issue he pleased.

At the time, however, they had to sink their differences because the main problem was to stop Fenton and Lyons implementing the terms of the Melbourne Agreement which they all agreed would mean further unemployment and wage cuts.

When caucus met again on 6 November Fenton read a cable from Scullin opposing the Theodore plan, particularly the demands that the Commonwealth Bank cover internal maturing loans and provide £20 million for government works programmes. Scullin saw it as 'unsound, and I expect the banks to refuse to do so. Government cannot deliberately coerce the administration of the banks.' The whole scheme, he warned them, raised the spectre of inflation which would prejudice the conversion of maturing loans. Lyons then raised the matter of a £27 million loan

125 Cook, op. cit. p.262.


127 Ibid., p.379.

128 For the minutes of the meeting see Weller, op. cit., pp.395-397. For Scullin's cable see Shann and Copland, op. cit., p.53 and for commentary on the meeting see Cook, op. cit., pp.277-283.
which would soon mature, and proposed that it be converted by public subscription in the normal way. This was correctly seen as a defiance of the Gibbons-Theodore resolution and thus, the authority of caucus. Curtin and Yates moved that the Commonwealth Bank underwrite the conversion. This was superseded by an amendment from Anstey requiring the bank to meet the loan and, in the event that it refused to do so, a bill be prepared and presented to parliament to compulsorily renew the loan for twelve months. Curtin accepted Anstey's amendment. As the meeting adjourned for the beginning of the evening session of parliament, Lyons shouted above the noise that he would not do it, that he would leave public life first, that he would cable the Prime Minister and if Scullin wanted it done then he would have to find a new Treasurer. When the meeting resumed the Anstey-Curtin motion was put and passed by 22 votes to 16, with 13 members absent. At the end of the meeting Fenton and Lyons said that, in view of the vote, they would consider their position.

In the exchange of cables following the meeting, Scullin deplored the decision and its effect on confidence in Australia's credit. 'To enforce renewal by refusing to pay the debts for a year is repudiation.' He agreed with Lyons that the loan be converted in the usual manner, which it subsequently was. When caucus met again on 12 November, with more members present, a motion effectively recinding the Anstey-Curtin resolution was passed unanimously. It was recognised that the issue had brought the party to the verge of a split and members were not yet ready to take the matter that far. Accordingly, it was agreed that the issue should be adjourned until Scullin returned.

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The caucus revolt against the Melbourne Agreement had three immediate effects. It formalised, around the Theodore plan, two major factions in caucus, even though neither was particularly tight in its membership.\textsuperscript{134} It created difficulties for Scullin in London who was attempting to negotiate for some assistance to cover Australia's debt in the City.\textsuperscript{135} It also, as Schedvin has argued, hardened Sir Robert Gibson's resolve to 'fight the government to the bitter end'.\textsuperscript{136} Anstey's motion only made things worse. It served to confirm Gibson's opinion that the government could not be trusted to honor the nation's obligations and maintain its solvency. The threat of repudiation had further diminished Australia's reputation in the City. Nor did the motion strengthen the hand of the caucus radicals. It had the opposite effect, causing them to recoil in repentance at their next meeting when they saw the alarm created in the press and the London money market.

It seems likely that Anstey made his move out of frustrated petulance after hearing Scullin's cable with its reference to governments not being able to coerce the administration of the banks. He might also have been angered by Lyons' defiance of caucus authority, against both the rules and traditions of the Labor party. He later admitted that it was not a considered action, 'Of course - when you come to think of it - my suggestion was as futile as all the others. Nothing Labor moved or mooted could get through the Nationalist Senate without the prior consent of the Nationalist Bank Board. We had no power. From the first moment of our existence we were only the stuffed effigy of a government. For a moment - in the caucus turmoil - I forgot that fundamental fact.'\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{134} Theodore, for example, voted against Anstey's motion. See \textit{ibid.} p.379.

\textsuperscript{135} On 3 December, for example, he asked the Bank of England for £3 million to cover maturing Treasury Bills. This was not only to ease the pressure on Australia's balance of payments; he hoped that it would also be interpreted as a sign that the Bank of England supported him in his stand against the rebellious caucus majority. Sir Ernest Harvey replied that the Bank could not oblige because the government had departed from Niemeyer's advice and because there were 'grave misgivings' about the Central Reserve Bank bill. See record of interview at the Savoy Hotel in Treasury files, Public Record Office, London, T160/396/F11935/02.

\textsuperscript{136} Schedvin, \textit{Australia and the Great Depression}, p.192.

\textsuperscript{137} Anstey, Memoirs, \textit{op. cit.} p.379.
Scullin's prediction that the Commonwealth Bank would reject the Theodore plan was quickly confirmed. On 16 December Sir Robert Gibson told cabinet that a £20 million expansion of credit would stimulate inflation which would 'not only fail to improve the situation but will definitely contribute towards plunging the country into more serious difficulties, and, if proceeded with, into final disaster'. Accordingly, the Commonwealth Bank was 'not prepared to subscribe to any such policy'. Since the terms of the Melbourne Agreement could not be honored, he suggested a further meeting of the Loan Council to formulate a new plan.138 When the meeting was held in mid-January 1931, Gibson had his way and it was agreed that a Premiers' conference be convened to work out a three-year plan to adjust government finances.

By this stage it was clear that the government was in serious trouble. On the same day that Scullin arrived back in Australia, Anstey predicted a crisis within two months:

"Australia was rapidly heading for chaos and he did not see how it could be stopped under the present system. At the present rate, it looked as if the banks would have to close down on the Government very soon. When that occurred it would give Australia a chance to reconstruct on new lines...Australia, he said, would have no option but to tell foreign creditors that she could not pay. 'Default and be damned!' added Mr Anstey."

He was right about the timing, and although he was inviting a reaction to the last statement, it is unlikely that he foresaw the exact circumstances in which he would be damned for advocating a policy of default.

In the two months following Scullin's return, events moved quickly to a climax. After a meeting between federal and New South Wales ALP representatives at which it was agreed that the Parkes by-election should be fought on the basis of the Theodore plan, the pressure mounted on Scullin to re-appoint him.140 On 22 January

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140. The by-election was brought on by the government's decision to elevate one of its members, E.A. McTiernan, to the High Court.
the Arbitration Court ordered a ten per cent wage cut and the government could do nothing about it. The party’s promise to protect the wage-earner was irrevocably broken. On 26 January Scullin summoned a special caucus meeting and recommended that Theodore be re-instated as Treasurer. After a long and bitter debate, caucus approved his return to the ministry by 25 votes to 19. The voting on the motion was significant. Theodore’s supporters now comprised a majority faction of predominately moderate pragmatists who saw his plan as the only realistic hope of balancing the demands of the labour movement against the constraints imposed by the opposition and the banks. The opponents of re-instatement comprised two main groups. The radicals, led by Anstey, disliked and distrusted Theodore. They saw him as an opportunist and a 'twister', remembering that he had denounced them when they advocated an expansionary policy during his earlier term as Treasurer. The other group was made up of conservatives such as Lyons and Fenton who could see no alternative to economic orthodoxy and felt bound to honor the Melbourne Agreement. They were supported by more principled men like Makin who could not agree to reappoint a man who had not yet been cleared of corruption charges. Soon after the caucus vote, Fenton and Lyons resigned from the ministry, and Moses Gabb from the party. On 31 January the electors of Parkes added to the government’s troubles by recording a nineteen per cent swing to the successful Nationalist candidate. Three days later J. West, the Labor MHR for East Sydney died and another by-election was set down for 7 March.

141 He had already discussed the matter with cabinet on 23 January where the proposal received a mixed reception. The minutes do not record debate, but it is likely that Anstey opposed the move. See cabinet minutes, op. cit., p.106.

142 Weller, op. cit., p.411.

143 For the most detailed analysis of the factional alignments over this issue see Cook, op. cit., pp.321-336.

144 Ibid., p.336.

145 Ibid., pp.336-337.
When the Premiers' conference opened on Friday 6 February 1931 Scullin told them that there was no precise plan for the next three years. It was their task to formulate one. The next day Theodore cautiously outlined the essential features of his developing plan in the hope that the premiers would give their approval for him to take it to the Commonwealth Bank. The conference then adjourned for the weekend. The following Monday, Jack Lang put an end to what he called the conference's 'shilly-shallying' and announced that he had a plan which would strike at the very heart of the nation's financial troubles, its fixed interest commitments. He proposed:

1. That the Governments of Australia decide to pay no further interest to British bondholders until Britain has dealt with the Australian overseas debt as Britain settled her own foreign debt with America.

2. That, in Australia, interest on all government borrowing be reduced to 3 per cent.

3. That immediate steps be taken by the Commonwealth Government to abandon the gold standard of currency and set up in its place a currency based upon the wealth of Australia, to be termed 'the goods standard'.

It was not a sophisticated package of monetary and fiscal measures like the Theodore plan. The other premiers recognised it immediately as 'repudiation' and essentially a political declaration of war on Theodore. As such, they rejected it out of hand and authorised Theodore to begin negotiations on his plan with the Commonwealth Bank. But despite its economic simplicity, the Lang plan was a very clever political document. Its over-riding purpose was to destroy the Theodore plan and undermine its author's support in New South Wales. To that end, each of its points was directed at specific sections of the Labor constituency.

There has been considerable speculation about the authorship of the Lang Plan. The most commonly suggested candidates are Harold McCauley, Lang's secretary.

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146 Both the Theodore and Lang plans are in Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, 1929-31, vol.2, pp.108-114 and 121.


There was, however, considerable press speculation at the time that Anstey had assisted in its preparation. Over the weekend before Lang announced his plan, Anstey was seen 'at frequent intervals' in 'close collaboration with Mr Lang'. One paper went so far as to term it 'the Lang-Anstey panacea'. Although the matter of authorship will probably never be settled, it is possible to make out a case to suggest that Anstey was probably one of the contributors. He certainly shared Lang's distaste for Theodore and his political machine. It is also clear that, since the middle of 1930, Anstey had been moving steadily closer to the Lang faction in New South Wales. The first point in the plan is consistent with the attitude that Anstey had expressed in *Money Power* and his later writings about Britain and war loans. Anstey shared the widely held view that if wages were to be cut then interest rates should, as a matter of equity, be reduced too. Although it was not precisely the same, Lang's 'goods standard' was not unlike Anstey's currency proposal in *Facts and Theories of Finance*. But no matter what the extent of his involvement in the formulation of the Lang plan, the important fact affecting his immediate future was the wide-spread belief that he was a Lang supporter.

After the conference, the government pressed on with the frustrating business of negotiating with Gibson over the Theodore plan. On 12 February Gibson wrote to Theodore telling him that if they cut wages, salaries and allowances, pensions, social benefits of all kinds, interest and other factors which affect the cost of living then the Commonwealth and private banks would assist the government to

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149 Cooksey nominates McCauley, Irwin Young, 'JT Lang and the Depression', *Labour History*, no 3, November 1963, p.8 identifies Paddison as the author. Paddison claimed that he, Lang and McCauley were the authors. See Paddison interview, *op. cit* Theodore, in the *World* of 14 December 1931 nomi nates Sleeman.

150 Schedvin, *Australia and the Great Depression*, pp.228 cites the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 February 1931 as his source for the speculation about Anstey's involvement. Cook, *op. cit*, pp.339-340 cites the *Age*, 10 February 1931 and the *Argus*, 16 and 17 February 1931 as well. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 February 1931, p.9 is the most emphatic. 'Knowing Mr Anstey's views on finance, the leaders of the Government, it is said, feel justified in assuming that the policy put forward by Mr Lang, was, in reality, formulated by Mr Anstey.'
sustain industry and restore employment. Anstey regarded the whole process with contempt and did his bit to sabotage negotiations by restating the position of the caucus radicals. On 21 February Lang's *Labor Daily* carried a long article in which Anstey revived the argument of *Money Power Strangles Australia*, alleging that the decisions taken in 1924 were the genesis of the present trouble with the Commonwealth Bank. By then, the split between the federal and New South Wales Labor parties had widened over whether the Theodore or Lang plan should be advocated during the East Sydney by-election campaign. In his memoirs, Anstey recalled the cabinet meeting where ministers were asked to declare their position on the Lang plan.

Then Theodore said, in effect, 'Cursed by Lang', and one by one other Ministers recited the malediction. Then Scullin said, 'Your turn, Anstey.'

'No thanks.'

'We want to know where you stand on the Lang plan.'

'I am not interested in the policy of State governments. I want to know the policy of this government.'

'Answer the question.'

'You will do what you have all agreed to do without any answer from me.'

Finally, badgered from all sides, I said, 'If I have to make a choice between this government, constantly belly-crawling to the banking power, and John Lang, then give me John Lang.' That was all they wanted and that was my farewell to the Cabinet.

On 19 February a motion for a spill of all positions was foreshadowed in caucus and a special meeting set down for 2 March.

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153 The NSW executive had determined that federal members taking part in the campaign must advocate the Lang plan. Scullin, with the backing of the Federal Executive, had insisted that they accept federal policy, which meant the Theodore plan. See Weller, *op. cit.*, pp.412-415.

154 Anstey, *Memoirs*, *op. cit.*, p.381. The meeting was, in fact, his second last attendance in cabinet. See cabinet minutes, *op. cit.*, 17 February 1931. His last attendance was on 26 February.

The first business of the meeting was a consideration of the latest instalment of the Theodore plan. It was much as before, except that it now proposed to create £28 million of fiduciary currency by legislation to get round the banks' refusal to issue further credit. After an unsuccessful attempt by Crouch and Lazzarini to block it, caucus gave approval for Theodore to prepare legislation to create a fiduciary note issue of £18 million, although many members confessed that they did not fully understand what they were voting for.\textsuperscript{156} They were more interested in the spill.

When the motion came, it was for a complete spill of all positions, not just the ministry. It was clearly an attempt by Theodore's faction to clean out all the Lang supporters. After the exhaustive secret ballot had been completed, it was apparent that the followers of Scullin and Theodore had 'got the numbers'. Anstey, Beasley and Daly were dumped from the ministry. They, along with Lyons and Fenton who did not stand, were replaced by Senator J.B.Dooley, J.B.Chifley, C.E.Culley, E.J.Holloway and John McNeill. There was solid support for Curtin in the early rounds of voting, but after Anstey was dumped, he urged his supporters not to vote for him. Charles McGrath was defeated as chairman of committees.\textsuperscript{157} Significantly, many of the casualties had voted against Theodore's re-instatement. Anstey was doubly damned. He had not only done that, he had also, it was believed, helped Lang to attack the government at a time when it needed to present a united front to Gibson and the advocates of orthodoxy.

Anstey took his defeat philosophically. He had, after all, been taunting the Scullin-Theodore majority for some time and could even be seen to have courted his own dismissal. His association with Lang was simply the last straw.\textsuperscript{158} He had always been uncomfortable performing that balancing act between principle and

\textsuperscript{156} \textit{Ibid.} pp 415-418. The margin was 32 for and 12 against, with one informal. See too, Cook, \textit{op. cit.}, p 346.

\textsuperscript{157} For the minutes see Weller, \textit{op. cit.}, pp 418-420. For commentary see Cook, \textit{op. cit.}, pp 346-351.

\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Age}, 3 March 1931, p 7.
pragmatism which is the hallmark of the successful politician. Despite his abundant contradictions, he had always erred on the side of principle. Towards the end, he found it unbearable to sit in cabinet and caucus to watch, month after month, as a Labor government presided over an economy where living standards declined steadily and unemployment rose alarmingly. To be responsible for that, even under protest, was too much. There was, moreover, the shame in being part of a government which did not even put up a fight against its oldest and bitterest foe, the Money Power.

Lang and his supporters at least had the courage to stand up to the banks and put 'men before money'. There was a genuine sense of relief behind the ironic barbs in his parting statement:

The Theodore-Scullin Cabinet tolerated me and my absurdities much longer than I would have tolerated them and their wisdom. They were, and they are, a Cabinet of the unctuous, the righteous, and the unco' guid, and when a group of honest men like that permit me to escape with my life I am very thankful. I have the feeling akin to that of the criminal who falls over a fence and finds that the police have rushed by and missed him. My disappearance from the Cabinet means the restoration of public confidence, the squaring of Budgets, the supply of unlimited credit, and the associated banks and the general public will now have a confidence in the honesty of Mr Theodore and his associates which they never had in me, and so I am truly grateful. Good-bye.159

He did not attend the caucus meeting the day after the spill, but remained in Canberra to conclude ministerial business. When he left for Melbourne on 10 March he could not resist the temptation to take another swipe at Theodore. Responding to a report that Theodore had denied any part in Gibson's re-appointment, Anstey told the Labor Daily correspondent that he 'distinctly remembered Mr Scullin saying, when the matter came up in Caucus, that he consulted Mr Theodore before the reappointment had been decided, and that Mr Theodore had acquiesced'.160

159. The statement was widely quoted, verbatim, in the press. See, for example, Sydney Morning Herald, 4 March 1931, p.13; Age, 4 March 1931, p.8; and Labor Call, 5 March 1931, p.7. In his memoirs he wrote of the shame in being associated with the Scullin government. 'In my association with that government there was neither honor nor pride, nor self respect, merely a hunger after gain, a feeling that the emoluments of office might as well be in my pocket as in those of some other man.' See Anstey, Memoirs, op. cit., p 381.

Soon after that momentous caucus meeting, the Labor party proceeded to split into three mutually hostile groups. On the conservative side, Lyons, Fenton, Guy, Gabb, Price and, later, McGrath went over to the opposition. In his memoirs, Anstey was remarkably generous about the circumstances surrounding McGrath's defection and remembered him fondly, 'All his life he was a tenacious warrior, a bitter foe, a staunch friend and one of the few men in public life whose word was his bond.' On 7 May Lyons became leader of the newly formed United Australia Party, and thus leader of the opposition.

On 7 March E.J. Ward won the East Sydney by-election. When caucus met on 12 March Scullin drew attention to the Federal executive ruling that anyone not elected on the official federal platform could not be a member of the federal parliamentary Labor party. Beasley objected to Scullin's ruling but caucus upheld it by 34 votes to 3. Beasley, Ward, Lazzarini, Eldridge, James, Dunn and Rae then walked out and formed the Lang Labor group. On 15 March the Sydney metropolitan Labor conference expelled Theodore and all other federal Labor MPs under their jurisdiction who had opposed the Lang plan. Twelve days later, a special federal conference of the ALP replied by expelling the whole New South Wales executive. The Lang Labor party was thus established. What was left of the Scullin government was now in a minority in the House of Representatives. Its tenure in office depended on the support of either the opposition or Lang Labor.

Although his sympathies were with them, Anstey did not join Lang Labor for the obvious reason that to have done so would have put him outside the Victorian branch of the ALP which endorsed the candidate for Bourke. It meant, in short, that he would almost certainly have lost his seat. Principles were all very fine, but

161 Anstey, Memoirs, op. cit., p.387.
162 Weller, op. cit., pp.421-422.
unemployment without any other assured income at the age of sixty-five was a more
daunting prospect than the sullen compromise required to remain in parliament.

Anstey reviewed this turbulent period rather succinctly in his memoirs:

From the reappointment of Theodore to the East Sydney result was
exactly forty days. In that period the government had lost six
supporters to the Nationalist Opposition. It had gone to a Premiers'
conference to admit "we have no plan". It had lost Parkes on a "no policy"
programme. It had humiliated itself before the banking power. It had-
as a result of expulsion - produced an independent Labor faction.
Finally the Caucus membership was a dozen men weaker than when
Scullin returned from Britain. That was wonderful work in Forty
Days.164

From then on, he returned to his more accustomed position as a backbench critic of
the government.

During March to May 1931 the government persisted with its attempts to
implement the Theodore plan. On 17 March Theodore delivered his second reading
speech on the Fiduciary Notes bill. A month later the Senate rejected it. Gibson,
meanwhile, continued his staunch defence of orthodox 'sane finance'. On 2 April he
refused a request from Theodore for funds to help wheatgrowers and warned that
they would soon be at a point where it would 'be impossible for the Bank to provide
further financial assistance for the Government in the future'. He was unmoved by
Theodore's angry reply that it was 'an attempt on the part of the Bank to arrogate to
itself a supremacy over the Government in the determination of the financial policy
of the Commonwealth'. When the opposition took the unprecedented step of calling
him before the Senate on 6 May, he left no doubt that he opposed the Commonwealth
Bank bill (No. 2) which sought to reduce the gold backing of the currency so that
bullion could be exported to London. The bill was rejected a week later.165 Anstey took
a cynical view of the government's new-found boldness in pursuing an expansionary
monetary policy:

164 Anstey, Memoirs, op. cit., p. 382.

165 Love, Labour and the Money Power, pp. 122-123; and Schedvin, Australia and the Great
Depression, p. 242.
Having for eighteen months defended the banking power and refused to move without its advice it now proceeded to curse it. The Government now said, 'The banks denied credit to the government. It was therefore necessary to create it.' Yet it had denounced as 'a crank' every man in the Party who previously said so and had officially stated it would 'never be a party to so calamitous a policy'.

In claiming to have been vindicated, Anstey neglected to mention that Theodore's fiduciary notes were not exactly the same thing as his 'bank manufactured currency', despite their superficial similarities.

Lang was also running into trouble. Beginning on 15 March, his government defaulted on interest payments to the Commonwealth and overseas bondholders. This happened repeatedly until July when his state's finances were so depleted that he had to rejoin the Loan Council and sign the Premiers' Plan in June to secure sufficient funds to pay state government employees. In the early stages of this process, there was a run on the Government Savings Bank of New South Wales and it was forced to close its doors on 23 April. The bank's collapse was brought on by lingering suspicion following a Nationalist scare campaign during the October 1930 state election, the Lang government's failure to repay money owed to it, and the reluctance of Gibson and Theodore to support it lest Lang syphon off funds from any Commonwealth rescue operation. Soon after the run began, Anstey made a plea on behalf of small depositors, the same kind of people who had been the victims of the 1893 crashes:

It is true that a blow may be struck at Mr Lang and the faction which he represents; but in the striking of that blow other sections of the community will be more seriously affected. Indeed, no section of the community will escape. I warn those who would destroy Mr Lang and his faction that, in their desire to accomplish their end, they incur the risk of destroying themselves and the country.

The plea went unheeded, but the consequences were not as severe as he predicted. His later judgement was predictable, but not entirely wrong, 'It was not insolvent, nor

167 Schedvin, Australia and the Great Depression, pp.233-234.
mismanaged, and its only offence was that it made loans to the State Labor Government to whose policy the Bank Board and Associated Banks were bitterly hostile.\footnote{Anstey, Memoirs, \textit{op. cit.}, p.384.}

Towards the end of April it was plain that the Theodore plan had come to grief at the hands of the Commonwealth Bank board and the Senate. By that stage, the government had not only lost control of financial policy, it was taken out of their hands entirely. The Loan Council appointed a committee of experts to advise it on ways to balance budgets by June 1934.\footnote{The committee comprised five state under-treasurers, along with the economists Melville, Copland, Giblin and Shann. See Schedvin, \textit{Australia and the Great Depression}, p.244.} Their report was presented to a Premiers' conference at the end of May. After two and a half weeks of often spirited discussion - during which it was found necessary to admit Lyons and Latham because the opposition's approval was needed for any scheme to pass the Senate - the Premiers agreed on an essentially deflationary plan. As expected, there was some difficulty with Lang, who wanted to make the loan conversion compulsory, but a compromise was reached whereby governments would cut expenditure by the required amount in their own way after the voluntary loan conversion was completed.\footnote{Lang's position on this echoed the Anstey-Curtin motion of November 1930.} The conference's final resolution became known as the Premiers' plan. It involved three main elements: a twenty per cent reduction of adjustable government expenditure, with the exception of old age pensions which were to be cut by twelve and one half per cent; increased income and sales tax; and a reduction of public and private interest rates, with the conversion loan's rate lowered by twenty-two and one half per cent. It was a deflationary version of 'equality of sacrifice'.\footnote{This summary is taken from Love, \textit{Labour and the Money Power}, pp.124-125. For a detailed analysis see Schedvin, \textit{Australia and the Great Depression}, pp 244-253.}

The wage and pension cuts produced a storm of outrage in the labour press, expressions of regret from Labor executives and the resignations of two ministers.\footnote{174}
Holloway and Culley. Anstey was particularly bitter about the way the ALP federal conference resolved its dilemma over the plan:

At the end of August a Federal Labor Conference met in Melbourne and condemned the wage and pension cutting of the Labor Government, but threatened with excommunication those who refused to support it. It denounced the crime but endorsed the criminals. Loyalty no longer meant loyalty to the platform, but loyalty to men who acted in defiance of it.

When the necessary legislation came before the house in the form of the Financial Emergency bill, Anstey poured scorn on the plan and its perpetrators. Even the title of the bill, he said, was meant to disguise its purpose because the government was too ashamed to declare it on the front page. After reviewing the likely effects of the pension cuts, he declared that the bill represented 'the annihilation of everything that the Labour party has produced during two long generations'. They had lost their way:

The history of this party might be expressed in this way: First, the party drifted, then a plan was devised. Then there was no plan; then there was a plan; then there was no plan, then there was another plan, then there was no plan, and now there is another plan. How, in the name of creation, can a party which drifts in that way get anywhere?

It was the final testament to a government which had not only retreated in abject cowardice in the face of the enemy, it had done his work and turned its weapons 'upon those whom we are pledged to fight for'. Christ might have been betrayed by his friends, but at least he was tortured and crucified by his enemies.

But to-day this Government is crucifying the very people who raised its members from obscurity and placed them in power. I am appalled that they should even contemplate doing this contemptible thing.

He went on to oppose the bill, clause by clause, but his impassioned moral economy failed to impress Theodore, with whom he exchanged insults, or any of the other


175. Anstey, Memoirs, op. cit. p 388.

176. CPD, vol.130, 8 July 1931. p.3564.

177. Ibid, p 3565.
government loyalists. They had heard him so often before and no matter how eloquent his pleas on behalf of pensioners, no matter how biting his satire, they did not want to be reminded of what they were doing.178

Thereafter, he withdrew in disgust to let the ministry get on with the sordid business of inflicting the 'starvation scheme' on its defenceless supporters. He made no further parliamentary speeches and took no part in caucus discussion. He did not, however, retreat into a sullen silence. In his usual fashion, he turned from parliament to the press. Between 27 August and 26 November 1931 he published a series of articles in Labor Call under the generic title 'Overloading the Camel'.179 They followed the same pattern as before, except this series was not issued as a pamphlet or a book. Predictably, their central theme was the relationship between government, finance and the depression. Under that broad theme, the articles ranged widely over the major political issues of the last eighteen months. The Foreign Yoke deplored the effects of overseas interest payments on Australian industry and employment.180 'The Policy of Damnation and Disaster' defended the Lang plan and argued that default was not a shameful act, as conservatives alleged.181 'The Irresponsibles' contrasted the twists and turns in the Theodore plan with the consistency of the radical position.182 Most of what he wrote was either an adaptation of previous work or material which he later used in his memoirs. As a sequence, the articles did not present a coherent argument. They were more a series of uncoordinated attacks on familiar targets; the banks, Theodore, Scullin and their

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178 For Anstey's speeches during the committee stage see ibid, 9 July 1931, pp 3659-3663 and 3673-3674.

179 There were thirteen articles in the series. Most appeared on p.1.


supporters. Anstey seems to have spent most of his time during the last few months of the Scullin government pouring his anger and frustration into these articles.

When the end finally came it was, significantly, at the hands of Lang Labor. On 25 November 1931 Beasley pressed for an enquiry into allegations that Theodore had improperly influenced the distribution of unemployment relief funds in his own electorate. After a short debate, the five Lang Labor members voted with the opposition and then moved the adjournment of the house. Scullin went to the Governor-General the next day and advised a dissolution. Anstey voted with the government but later cast doubt on the wisdom of Scullin's action:

Scullin could have had an election earlier on any one of half a dozen important issues, but he had side stepped every one. Now with the popular tide running fast from under his feet he decided for an election on a minor matter, on something that stirred no man's blood. That was his wisdom.  

The election was set down for 19 December.

In the brief, three week campaign Scullin complained of obstruction by the Senate and the banks, committed Labor to establish a Central Reserve Bank, defended some aspects of the Premiers' plan, and promised to restore the wages and pension cuts as soon as possible. Lyons campaigned principally on a return to 'sane finance', the responsible policies contained in the Premiers' plan, preservation of the Commonwealth Bank board and the promise not to alter the tariff schedules radically. Page implicitly promised lower tariffs, advocated 'sane finance' and foreshadowed strong policies against communism.

While Scullin was restrained in his criticism of the banks, many of his Labor colleagues aired their frustrations. They gave vent to a torrent of abuse against the Money Power in the same language as that used since mid-1930 in the labour press, at

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183. _CPD_, vol.132, 25 November 1931, p.1906. For a detailed account of the events see Robertson, _op. cit._, pp 365-369.


185. Sawer, _op. cit._ p.41.
union and party conferences and in a flood of pamphlets.\textsuperscript{186} Theodore spoke of foreign banks and pastoral companies 'exploiting Australian wealth in the manner of an ancient empire dragging the wealth out of its enslaved tributary States'. J.L. McKenna, ALP candidate for Fawkner, described banks as 'a gang of heartless ruffians who have brought suffering to countless thousands for their own political ends'. The Victorian central executive declared that, 'Our fight is against the dominance of the Money Power.' The Lang Labor campaign warned that the 'sinister grip of the banks' must be broken if the 'hordes of Mammon at the gate' and the insidious designs behind the 'dictation from Semitic Britain' were to be thwarted so that money might be a 'servant not a dictator'. This had become the lingua franca across all Labor factions by December 1931. Significantly, almost any of the phrases could be found in \textit{The Kingdom of Shylock} or \textit{Money Power}.\textsuperscript{187} In his own electorate, Anstey criticised the banks too, but not in such vivid language as many of his Labor colleagues. In a less than usually energetic campaign, he concentrated on the way in which the banks had looked after themselves and their friends in other crises, but would not come to the aid of a Labor government when the nation was plunged into depression.\textsuperscript{188}

But all these fulminations against the moral turpitude of the Money Power had no effect on an electorate which associated Labor with disunity, incompetence and dishonor. The result was a landslide to the conservatives. In the House of Representatives, the United Australia Party won thirty-eight seats, the Country party sixteen, the ALP thirteen, Lang Labor five and there were three Independents. The conservatives retained control of the Senate.\textsuperscript{189} Among the more notable Labor

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\textsuperscript{188} For coverage of the Bourke campaign and result see \textit{Age}, 7 December 1931, p.10; and 21 December 1931, pp.9 and 10.

\textsuperscript{189} Sawer, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.42-43.
\end{footnotesize}
casualties were Theodore who was defeated by Rosevear, the Lang Labor candidate; Brennan in Batman; and Curtin in Fremantle. In Bourke, Anstey was up against a strong UAP candidate, R.Ivey, who had been mayor of Brunswick; W.H.Norman, an Independent; and J.Adie, a Communist. After a close count, Anstey scraped home:

From that election I emerged all tattered and torn - one of the few survivors of the wreck. The crowds did not discriminate. Every politician tarred with the 'Labor' brand was public enemy Number One. My majority fell from 32,000 to 2,000. Others with equally large majorities fared worse and lost their seats. I was still on the pay roll and for that was truly thankful. Depression and carelessness had reduced my equities to the level of my liabilities - my net assets were nil.

It had been a particularly tense election. As Anstey left the Albert Street polling booth he remonstrated with some men who were handing out how-to-vote cards for the Communist candidate, claiming that they had introduced an element of personal abuse into the campaign. As he walked away someone said something about New Guinea. He turned around, strode back and knocked a man named Walter Guest to the foot-path. Anstey walked away and Guest was taken to hospital where he was treated for minor injuries. His campaign manager, E.W.Peters, remembered that he could not bear to wait in the campaign office to hear the result and spent most of the night with some supporters at the side of the Melbourne General Cemetery. According to Peters, they agreed that, 'The cemetery is the most suitable place to be on such a night as this.'

It was, perhaps, a fitting end to the most demoralising period in his political career. He had seen all that he worked for collapse about him in disorder. Yet again, a Labor government had forsaken policy and principle in the name of 'responsibility' and 'national honor'. The party that he helped to build since his youth had rejected

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190 *Age*, 21 December 1931, p.9.

191 Anstey, Memoirs, *op cit.*, p.390. Anstey was well-known as a 'soft touch' among those constituents who were in need of some assistance. He was also in the habit of 'shouting the bar' whenever he went into a local hotel. Beverley Anstey, interview, *op cit.*

192 *Age*, 21 December 1931, p.10.

him because he remained loyal to its platform and traditions while others cringed before the enemy, and called it 'honour'. That same party had inflicted misery on the very people who, since the 1890s, had given it life and sustenance.

Towards the end of a long political life he had finally been rewarded with a ministerial post, but it was a minor one which gave no opportunity for accomplishment. Indeed, by virtue of that appointment, he had been collectively responsible for the actions of a 'belly walking' cabinet until he could stand it no more and courted his own dismissal. Although he had warned them from the beginning that they would be defeated by the conservative Senate and the banks, in the end there was little comfort in the prospect of his colleagues, friendly and otherwise, cursing their enemies in terms that Anstey had elaborated and defined for them years before.
While the defeat of the Scullin government at the December 1931 election might have been expected, the magnitude of Labor's loss came as a shock, even to a seasoned old campaigner like Anstey. He told a young activist at the declaration of the poll that the Labor party was finished as a progressive force in politics, and advised him to join the Communist party.¹ It was only necessity that had driven Anstey to the polls again. He wrote to his old friend J.K. McDougall soon after, 'I think I told you that if I had not been such a waster with money, if I had enough to keep me off the breadline this last election would not have seen me in it.' He was going to take his parliamentary salary and live quietly, 'so plurry quiet you will think I am dead.'²³

McDougall tried to cheer him up with the jocular taunt that he was really scared of his political opponents. Anstey's reply revealed just how much the election result had soured his view of the common people:

It is not the enemy that scares me. It is the hopeless, spineless mob you try to save. The educated democracy is a myth. The Government of the people is a delusion. As much as ever, they worship images of rags, and wood and stone. They will perish for a king, or a priest, as in the days of old, and see their children starve without a kick. They are hopeless - they have only the instincts of slaves, and in them there is no hope - and I am finished.⁵

While it was true that the Scullin government had betrayed the working class, at the 1931 election they had failed themselves.

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¹ Les Barnes to Peter Love, 10 October 1982. Barnes did join the Communist party but, Today I regard it as tragic advice.'


³ Ibid.
Since he first entered the political arena through *Tocsin* and the Labour Federation in the 1890s, he had tried to convince working people that by taking control of the material conditions of life, they might transform their social existence into something higher and better. If, however, they meekly accepted the misery inflicted on them by hostile opponents and failed friends, they deserved their fate. He had warned them of what would come. He had taken a stand and, feeble though it might have been, he did at least try to kick. But the vast majority of workers had not fought back. Out of ignorance, fear and blind resentment, they endorsed the same people who had beaten and cowered their own party. Against all his warnings, they had embraced their enemies, and Anstey took it personally. He had, as best he could, been loyal to them, but they had failed him by not understanding and acting out their historical role as agents of radical change. Accordingly, he turned his back on them.

By May 1932 he had turned over the family home in Brunswick to his younger son Daron and gone to live in Sydney, where he bought the 'Ozone' flats in Campbell Parade, Bondi. That was why, he explained to McDougall, he had to remain in parliament:

I must work off a £900 mortgage before I get out, or else finish up on the breadline. I can only do that by living away from the pleaders for help who would leave me bone dry and then throw me to the dogs.4

The plan, it seems, was to occupy one of the flats, pay off the mortgage before the next election and live off the rental income from the others during his retirement.5

Although he could live outside his constituency with impunity, he still needed to satisfy the parliament’s minimum attendance requirements if he was to receive his salary. He went to Canberra no more than was necessary. During the latter stages of

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4. Anstey to McDougall, 28 May 1932 in Lloyd Ross papers, NLA MS 3939/33/3.

5. As the building no longer exists, there is very little evidence available about the property and it is not known how many flats were in the block. Anstey might well have done all he could to ensure that this was so. After the *Smith's Weekly* episode over the New Guinea gold mine, it would have been difficult to explain the propriety of a radical Labor MP becoming a landlord during the depths of the depression.
his last term he even took to sleeping in a friend's office to save money. He saw it as a simple matter of 'taking long service furlough prior to retirement'.

In 1932-34 he made only four speeches, all of them inconsequential. He spoke during the 1932 budget debate about expenditure cuts and the Premiers' plan. His main point was to expose the futility of the plan when the savings made from retrenchments and wage cuts were being offset by adverse shifts in the exchange rate:

> Health, wealth, morale - all those things that make for the stability and the character of man - have been sacrificed, and what has been saved has been swallowed up in other directions.

But his sense of irony had not deserted him:

> I read, either in a speech by a member of the Ministry, or in the budget speech itself, that the dole was destructive of morale. Of course we all agree with that statement. We know how pleasant it would be for a man to starve rather than accept the dole.

However, it was a bitter, carping irony, entirely devoid of his customary wit. When he came to the end of the speech, he sounded like a tired old preacher mumbling the liturgy:

> Humanity will be forced to adopt new methods, although we may not live to see it. I believe that the first step in that direction will involve the abolition of the existing system and the adoption of a system of public ownership in the instrumentalities of production in the interests of the whole community... I thank the honorable members for their attention and consideration. I shall trouble them no more.

Despite his declared intention, in the succeeding months he rose to his feet to deliver increasingly shorter and ineffective speeches. In November 1932 he criticised Page's views on the tariff and cast doubt on whether the government's changes to the Navigation Act would reduce freight costs to Tasmania. In May 1933 he informed the

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6 Typescript 'Frank Anstey', p.74 in Lloyd Ross papers, NLA MS 3939/33/2. There is no mention of his name in the caucus minutes covering the period.

7 Ibid., p.73.


9 Ibid. 9 November 1932, pp.2123-2126.

10 Ibid., vol.137, 24 November 1932, pp.2789-2790.
house that royal commissions were a waste of money because, 'Their appointment has merely enabled the government of the day to evade awkward issues.' They were flat speeches on mundane issues.

He offered no parting testament or valedictory address. Towards the end, his contributions to debate represented nothing more than a pathetic slide into inconsequence. By then it was obvious that, for one of the parliament's most fiery and popular orators, the embers had finally gone out. He freely admitted as much in his memoirs:

The worldly hopes I had set my heart upon had turned to ashes and everything was sour in the mouth...I had become an annoyance to all sane, sensible Labor men, so I selected obscurity and left the limelight and dollars to wiser and more saintly men. On 7 August 1934, I ceased to be a politician.

There were no ceremonies or celebrations, he just slipped quietly into that relative obscurity permitted to ex-politicians who finish their careers in disfavour.

Despite attempts by some locals to recruit Curtin, and Curtin's efforts to persuade Anstey to stand again, Maurice Blackburn won preselection and, at the September 1934 poll was duly elected the Member for Bourke. On 15 November 1934, at Blackburn's behest, caucus placed 'on record the great services rendered by Mr Frank Anstey to the Australian Labor Movement'. There was nothing effusive. That was as far as they cared to go. The wounds of 1929-31 were still sore.


13. For the exchange of letters between Curtin and Anstey over the preselection see Lloyd Ross, *John Curtin: A Biography*, Melbourne, Macmillan, 1977, pp.139-141; and 'Frank Anstey' typescript, *op. cit.*, pp.73-74. In his letter, Curtin described Blackburn as being 'personally too good to be politically worth a damn'. Ross, *op. cit.* p.139. Anstey replied that, 'All you say about Mr B goes with me. I would sooner see you in the old seat, a kind of family succession.' Anstey to Curtin, 34 March 1934. Lloyd Ross papers, NLA MS 3939/33/3.

14. Patrick Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes, 1901-1949: Minutes of the Meetings of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party*, vol 3, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1975, p.89. Even after December 1931, Anstey continued to pour scorn on the Scullin leadership. In September 1932, for example, he told a speakers class at Rozelle that his coming retirement from politics had a great deal to do 'with some so-called leaders who had been raised from obscure positions to eminence'. *Labor Daily*, 20 September 1932, p.3.
By the end of 1934, Anstey had settled into a kind of routine at the Bondi flat. He corresponded with friends, sat on the beach, took long walks, called on young men for a talk, sometimes over a beer, and attended occasional meetings at the Bondi branch of the ALP. He also commenced writing his memoirs and toyed with a fragmentary history of Europe.

There were, however, two matters which gave him cause for anxiety. The flats were a constant source of worry. They were, by then, his principal source of income and it not clear whether he had managed to clear the mortgage before his salary stopped. But his wife's health was an even greater concern to him. For some time Kate Anstey had been a heavy drinker, and over the years it had become an increasing problem. By the early 1930s she had also developed a mental illness which required Anstey to care for her, as best he could. His own health, moreover, had not been good in recent times. In addition to the danger of another stroke, he suffered considerable discomfort from rheumatism. He became increasingly fearful that he might be confined to a nursing home, or die, and there would be nobody to care for Kate.

Since he was unable to move around as easily as before, he concentrated more and more on his writing as both an escape and an outlet. Although his memoirs of the Scullin government displayed occasional touches of generosity, such as when he described Theodore as 'the ablest Roman of them all', the pervading tone throughout was one of bitterness and disillusionment. They were written between August 1935 and August 1936, when his anxieties about Kate, his own health and the flats weighed

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15. 'Frank Anstey' typescript, op. cit., p. 82. For some examples of that correspondence see Don Cameron papers, NLA MS 1005/1/1; Lloyd Ross papers, op. cit.; and letters to Anstey from Don Cameron given to me by Roy Cameron and since lodged in the National Library's manuscripts collection.

16. 'Frank Anstey' typescript, op. cit.

17. Ibid. and interview with A.W. Paul at 55 Ellalong Road, Cremorne on 1 July 1983.

most heavily. These private worries found an outlet in the memoirs and sharpened their cynical edge:

In Britain the wage scalers and pension scrapers were disowned as Labor men. In Australia they were given absolution and sanctified as true exponents of Labor principles....There was no prospect that if Labor returned to office, with all-requisite power, it would be any different to its competitors. It was only the difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee...If [a new man] thinks his influence will make any fundamental change in Parliament he is a dreamer.

He had come to accept that his own efforts had been futile and retreated into fatalism:

All that an honest man can do is to use the opportunities that a Parliamentary life gives him to be himself ready for 'the Day' when forces more powerful than himself make for change and provide an outlet for his knowledge. The forces of the world do not threaten - they operate. The great tides of the world do not give notice that they are going to rise and run - they rise in their might and those who stand in their way are overwhelmed.

This was what it all came down to in the end. The social forces of historical materialism and the cruel hand of fate would mock the feeble efforts of those who dared defy them.

Looking out across the Pacific, he escaped into the past with his 'life on the ocean wave'. There, he recreated his youth from a compound of his seafaring experience and the 'ripping yarns' of popular novelists like Louis Becke. Those were his 'roaring days' of hardship and adventure, of danger, privation and education. In his imagination, at least, he was able to recapture that youthful vigor he had lost long since. Then, he was independent and optimistic, with all his life before him. Now, as it drew to a close, there was some comfort in an escape to the past.

As his mind and pen wandered further back to his childhood in England he dwelt on the simple, direct memories of a little boy, and added an old man's perspective

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19. At the end of the memoirs he noted, 'If I were 43 instead of 70 ...'. *Ibid.*, p.393.


to those remembrances. He recaptured the pleasures of country life in Devon, the excitement of the railway construction camp, the travelling, the mining village, the seaside, rivers and the lingering taste of stolen apples. He also knew it to be a land of deprivation and misery, of squalid cities and 'dark satanic mills' besmirching a 'green and pleasant land'. But for all of that, it was the land of his ancestors, the place where his romantic imagination came to rest most comfortably as he contemplated the end of a long life that had brought him little but disappointment and anxiety.

However, this period was not one of unrelieved despondency. There were moments of joy when it seemed that all was not hopeless. When he learned that Curtin had won the ballot for the leadership of the parliamentary Labor party, he was delighted:

That was a surprise - a pleasant one. And I wish for a million more! But my plurry oath what a surprise - not pleasant to my dear Forde. I'll wager 10/- to a penny he had the numbers in the bag...Now you have it, I hope you will not let the details exhaust your energies or obscure the larger vision.

He even contemplated coming out of retirement, asking Curtin to consider recommending him as Labor's representative on the royal commission to enquire into the banking system:

If you should remember that I made a few remarks on the futility of Commissions, you will also remember that so many good men have seen the light when honors and emoluments go with it and it would suit me to join the holy commission of the saved - if only for a few months and I could take Ma for a few rides before she takes the long last from which there is no return.

It was a poignant appeal which must have given Curtin some pain when he had to refuse it and appoint Ben Chifley to the position.

Anstey was not able to take Kate for any more rides. Her condition steadily deteriorated over the following months until she was finally admitted to the

23. Frank Anstey, 'Now I am dead', edited and with an introduction by David Potts, *ibid*.


Gladesville Mental Hospital. On 21 November 1937 she died, aged seventy-three, from senility and 'exhaustion of acute mania'. She was taken, by Labor Motor Funerals, to the Rookwood Crematorium the next day where her passing was marked by a simple ceremony. It was a sad end for a woman who had spent nearly fifty years living with a man whose occupation was insecure, whose moods were likely to change suddenly from elation to despair and plunge them into poverty for the sake of a principle. She had borne and raised their two sons, often without Anstey's support while he was preoccupied with political matters. She had run a home which was frequently filled with his colleagues, supporters and supplicants seeking their local member's all too generous help. In addition, there were the innumerable public functions which demanded her presence. It had not been an easy life for the shy wife of an ebullient politician. Even in death, the contemporary conventions which discouraged public discussion of family life, conspired to deprive her of due recognition for her role in supporting Anstey and his career.

Some months after Kate's death, Anstey returned to Melbourne to live. There, at least, there were friends and family who might help and watch out for him in his old age. Presumably, he sold the flats in Bondi. However, he did not return to the old family home in Brunswick to join his son Daron's family. Nor did he go to his elder son Ward. They had been estranged for some years. He went, instead, to live with Harriet Middlecoat at 46 Park Street, West Brunswick. For several years before moving to Sydney, Anstey had a close relationship with Harriet. After such a long period of uncertainty and anxiety occasioned by Kate's illness, the flats and his own health, at last he had found a haven where he would be cared for and comforted. Visitors to the


27. His probate records show no real estate on the inventory.

28. Interview with Beverley Anstey at 22 Howard Street, Brunswick, Victoria on 3 February 1982.

29. Interview with E.W. Peters at offices of the Australian Insurance Employees' Union, Queen Street, Melbourne on 18 April 1978. Peters and other informants confirmed that, with the exception of some minor literary embellishments, the broad outline of the relationship depicted in Hardy's *Power Without Glory* is accurate.
Park Street house remarked on the air of settled domesticity that surrounded 'old Frank' and Harriet.  

As far as his health would permit, he resumed contact with many old comrades and friends. Most called to see him at home, but occasionally he went out to meetings and functions where he was greeted as something of a celebrity. In November 1938, for example, he was entertained at the Brunswick Town Hall where he delivered a short speech on the danger which militarist Japan posed to Australia and the rest of the Pacific region. On another afternoon in 1938 he went to the races where he met George Nicholas whom, in 1917, he had helped secure the rights to manufacture aspirin in Australia. At the time, all Anstey did was to satisfy himself that the product was pure and then enlisted the help of W.M. Hughes to hasten official recognition of Nicholas' claim to take over the trade mark which was then held by the German firm Bayer. That small kindness on Anstey's part helped establish Aspro, the most widely known brand of aspirin in Australia. Nicholas had prospered from the product and was pleased to renew their acquaintance. A few days later, he received a cheque of £500 from Nicholas, 'for services rendered', which he bid 'a hearty welcome'. In September 1939 he attended, after an absence of many years, a meeting of the 'Y' Club where he gave an address on the mysteries of currency and the sins of bankers.

As he had done in Bondi, Anstey spent a good deal of time writing in that lively, pugnacious style he had developed over the years. His memoirs of the Scullin


31. Brunswick Sentinel, 9 November 1938, n.p. Ever since writing Red Europe Anstey had maintained an interest in the increasing military and economic power of Japan in the Pacific region.


33. Frank Anstey, 'Aspro' in Anstey papers, NLA MS 4636.

34. The minutes, written in verse, were given to me by the late Ralph Gibson. They have been lodged in the National Library manuscripts collection.
government complete, he continued to scratch out vignettes of characters from European history. Henry V's victory at Agincourt was not an heroic triumph but a brutal slaughter in which more men died from disease and pestilence than in combat. Joan of Arc and Savonarola were religious fanatics who finally succumbed to the treachery of popes and princes. The Franciscans began as a religious order but soon developed into an efficient business enterprise. The great medieval universities were not dignified halls of learning but refuges for ruffians and criminals. The two statues of Charles I and Cromwell in London were the occasion for an essay on the blind, reactionary violence of the mob in history. In each there was the usual brisk narrative of events surrounding the central character or episode, and a moral to every story. The lessons to be drawn mostly concerned the brutality of kings and aristocrats, the treachery of popes and bishops, and the ignorant superstition which sustained popular religion. In many cases, the stories were constructed, and the history distorted, to draw implied parallels with issues and incidents from Anstey's career. The story of the two statues, for example, with its contempt for the mob's ignorance carried echoes of his disenchantment with working class voters after the 1931 election.

Interspersed with these historical parables were a few articles on more contemporary issues. There was a savage satire on Lloyd George as a political mountebank, a vigorous defence of Soviet Russia against its detractors in the late 1930s, and a warning about the ominous rise of Japanese power in the East.

In their content, the writings said nothing new about Anstey. They covered many of the issues that had preoccupied him at the height of his political career. What they did show, however, was the degree to which his intellectual and literary powers had declined. Because they followed so closely the pattern of his earlier work,

35. The rather scrappy manuscripts cover some two hundred pages. On internal evidence, they were written at various times between 1935 and 1939. They are to be found in the Lloyd Ross papers, op. cit. box added 21 February 1979, folder A.
the comparisons were obvious. The satire was rough and clumsy, the irony leaden and the wit bitter and raw.

Towards the middle of 1940, Anstey was diagnosed as having cancer in the large intestine. As the tumor developed, he had increasing difficulty in taking food and grew steadily weaker and more emaciated. As his decline accelerated, family and friends came to see him, many for the last time. Realising that the end was near, he changed his will to leave all that he had, in equal parts, to Harriet and Daron. On 31 October 1940 he died, aged seventy-five, from a combination of the cancer and the progressive starvation that it caused.

The day after he died he was cremated at Fawkner, following a private ceremony attended by family and a few close friends. His old comrade from the 1890s, Ted Findley delivered a short eulogy. There was no public notice of his death until after the funeral. Anstey had expressed the wish that his passing should be kept as quiet as possible:

Instructions to my son Daron Anstey. When I am dead give my carcase to the undertaker with instructions to have it cremated. There are to be no followers or flowers or praise, prayers or preachers. No burial, death or other advertisement in any paper. Any person who by advertisement gives publicity to my death does so against my wishes and their authority to do so should be repudiated.

36. It has been suggested that Wren, Mannix, Theodore and Curtin were among the visitors during Anstey’s last months. See Frank Hardy, Power Without Glory, London, Sphere Books, 1962, pp.618-627; and ‘Frank Anstey’ typescript, op. cit., pp.84 and 89. However, as it was not possible to confirm this from other sources, the information can only be noted.

37. He had made a will in December 1938 leaving everything to Daron. See Anstey file, Merrifield collection, La Trobe Library. The last will was made on 9 September 1940. He left nothing but money in two Commonwealth Bank accounts. After probate had been granted, and all expenses met, Harriet and Daron received £640 each. See probate records, Public Record Office, Melbourne.


39. The press reports mentioned the chief mourners as Daron and Ward Anstey, Frank’s grandsons Eric and Ivan, Ted Findley, J Brownlie, G Napier, P Napier and Pat O’Loughlin. See Argus, 2 November 1940 and Age, 2 November 1940. Harriet was not mentioned in any of the reports.

40. Anstey file, Merrifield collection, op. cit.
As he prepared for death, his thoughts returned to the West Country of his ancestors. There, with all the tragic resonances of Thomas Hardy's Mayor of Casterbridge, his imagination finally came to rest.
Anstey, less than a year before his death on 31 October 1940.
When Anstey died the ritual forms were observed. The obituaries in the daily press reviewed the highlights of his career and rounded off with well-crafted assessments of his place in Australian politics. The *Age* applied this standard formula:

> Genial, witty, picturesque Frank Anstey will long be remembered as one of the Commonwealth’s most brilliant orators. Like many another leader of democracy, he was himself a man of the masses, self-educated, widely read and well informed. From the beginning to the end of his long career in public life he was a fighter for the under dog, and when time in its passing threatened to break the harmony that had prevailed between him and his old colleagues of the party he retired from politics.

The other dailies followed the same pattern with an outline of his years in the Victorian and Commonwealth parliaments, his writings, his wit, oratory and some general references to his periodic differences with the Labor party. They were, in the usual way, informed, judicious but essentially descriptive.

As might have been expected, his old paper *Labor Call* published a full, front page appreciation which described him as a ‘brilliant Labor man, writer and orator, pioneer in the workers’ cause’. It, too, reviewed the landmarks in his career but dwelt on particular incidents to illustrate his colourful character, his wit and his distinctive fighting qualities. The obituary ended with a long passage from the introduction to *The Kingdom of Shylock* as an example to younger Labor people of the kind of man ‘who was always prepared to express himself forcibly in the cause which so many have advocated yet have failed to uphold in a crucial test’. But that was as far

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1. *Age*, 2 November 1940, p.22.
2. See, for example, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 November 1940, p.13; *Argus*, 2 November 1940, p.3; and *Sun*, 2 November 1940, p.8. The *Brunswick Guardian*, 8 November 1940, p.1 simply reprinted the *Age* obituary.
as it was prepared to go in mentioning his differences with the Scullin government. It was, understandably, more diplomatic than judicious.

The parliamentary tributes at the beginning of the next session observed the conventional proprieties. There was a certain generosity mingled with a touch of condescension in Menzies' observation:

In him were combined a genial and kindly nature with a spirit independent and aggressive. These attributes, aided by a gift of brilliant and direct speech, caused him to become a picturesque figure in the political life of Australia.

Curtin's tribute, however, was deeply felt:

I find it very difficult to speak about Frank Anstey...He was a man in whom Mother Nature had, so to speak, planted the infinite variety of her riches. He was volcanic, but he was also capable of a placid philosophy. He could storm and rage, yet he could, too, woo and win...He studied man; he studied political systems; and he sought to make the Labour movement a conquering movement, so that it might be a movement which would reconstruct the social and economic order. He wanted that done, not for the mere pleasure of tearing things down, but in order that justice might prevail among his fellow citizens, and that the poor might be less poor...He was, indeed, what might be described as a Labour warrior...He was no mere apologist for the cause that he espoused. Rather was he, as I have described him, a man who fought for it, and, in fighting, gave all that he had in him to give. He spent himself in almost every speech that he delivered...I believe that the people of Australia, too, owe him a great deal, and that in the years to come, when the history of this Parliament is to be written, he will be regarded as much more than a picturesque figure; he will be numbered among its inspiring figures.

This was a sincere and generous acknowledgement of the debt that he and others owed Anstey for the support and encouragement they were given at the beginning of their careers, and during their periodic crises. Blackburn spoke of his courage in pursuing unpopular causes, his clear-sightedness and the affection for him among the electors of Bourke. Indeed, the Brunswick branch of the ALP pressed the Victorian central executive to sponsor a memorial edition of Anstey's writings.

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4. CPD. vol.165, 20 November 1940, pp.16-17 (Senate) and pp.31-37 passim (Representatives).
5. Ibid., p.31.
6. Ibid., p.34. Curtin might well have been satisfied with the treatment of Anstey in Souter's Acts of Parliament.
7. CPD, op. cit., pp.36-37.
Other friends and admirers expressed their appreciation in characteristic ways. J.K. McDougall wrote a long panegyric of twenty-one stanzas in sonnet form. Jack Lang, never noted for his generosity of spirit, was almost effusive in his admiration for Anstey as a 'great commoner' who, unlike many in the Labor party, remained loyal to the people. Towards the end of 1944 John Wren, in a typical gesture, named a racehorse after him. The Victorian Railways Commissioners paid a more enduring tribute by giving his name to a station on the Upfield line. Now, if he is remembered at all, it is perhaps most commonly as the character Frank Ashton in Frank Hardy's *Power Without Glory* where he is a tragic figure whose failure and disillusionment symbolises the fate of all idealists who are inevitably defeated by the compromises and corruption at the heart of bourgeois social democratic and labour parties.

But was he just that, a man doomed by the contradictions inherent in any attempt to abolish capitalism through the institutions of a liberal democratic state? Was he, as Curtin suggested, a passionate reformer whose ultimate objective was greater justice and equity for the common working people of Australia? Or was he, in Menzies' condescending phrase, merely 'a picturesque figure in the political life of Australia'? The short answer is, that he was all those things, and more.

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8. *Australian Labor Party (State of Victoria)*, central executive minutes, 21 August, 12 October, 4 and 7 December 1942, in DLP papers, La Trobe Library, MS 10389/B2. E.W. Peters pushed the proposal but nothing was done about it.

9. It was published in handbill format. A copy is in the Moir Collection, La Trobe Library. I am grateful to Mr Tony Marshall of the La Trobe Library for drawing this to my attention.


11. Anstey papers, NLA MS 512/3 and Frank Hardy, *The Hard Way: the story behind Power Without Glory*, Hawthorn, Gold Star Publications, 1971, p. 45. Wren paid 2,000 guineas for him as a yearling. He was by the New Zealand sire Foxbridge, out of Administration. Although 'Anstey' was a half-brother to the Auckland Cup winner, Dominion, he does not appear to have done particularly well for his owner.

12. Ms Beverley Anstey has the letter from the commissioners seeking the family's permission to give the station his name.
To understand Frank Anstey it is helpful to start with the obvious. He was a member of the working class, born and bred. Both his mother's and father's families were respectable, improving, working class aristocrats, proud of their craft skill and the modest comfort it provided. Further back, his father's people had been yeoman farmers in north Devon until the pressure of family and economic circumstances forced them from the land that had sustained them for centuries. But young Frank was denied the chance to grow up in a secure family home and learn a trade to see him through life as a worthy and responsible citizen. His father died before he was born. His mother understood, as working people do, just how precarious was a family economy built on the labour of one breadwinner. In her quiet, purposeful way, she set about building a new life for herself and her son. As was customary, she turned to the family as the primary agency of social security and sent her boy to stay with his father's relatives in Devon. Anstey began an unsettled childhood as a victim of those fundamental facts of working class life and death. He could not have understood them, all he could remember of Devon were the direct sensory experiences of a child, but they were facts which limited his mother's choices and shaped the course of his life from the beginning.

When his mother come to reclaim him, she had married again, this time to a volatile, militant man whose itinerant work as an ostler exposed them to the rougher, more insecure life of the casual labour market. Although Anstey remembered his step-father as a colourful, flamboyant character, John Lank's explosive temper and brooding silences might have been something of a model for his own dramatic changes of mood from elation to despondency. The family's frequent moves, occasioned by Lank's work and disposition, gave Anstey a wide experience of working class life in England but they also began a pattern for the rest of his life which would make it difficult for him to remain comfortably settled in one place for any length of time. They meant, as well, that his schooling was constantly interrupted. It seems, however, that his mother did her best to give her naturally bright son a rudimentary literacy which provided the foundations of his later passion for self-education and
improvement. If there was a little too much emphasis on religion in this unsystematic schooling which later encouraged an almost obsessive anti-clericalism, it did provide him with a solid body of biblical knowledge which he turned to good account in later years on the platform and in the press.

By the time that the family settled in the London docklands, Anstey had developed into a restless and rebellious youth. After a family quarrel, it seems, he left home and sought adventure at sea by stowing away on a clipper bound for Melbourne. Eventually, he was 'taken up' by a ship's captain who found his natural intelligence and lively character engaging. During his next few years, first as a cabin boy and then a seaman, he read widely and intensively. He began with poetry, which ranged over the sublime to the satirical and the salacious. After a while he took an increasing interest in history and politics, with a particular emphasis on nationalist and revolutionary leaders. There was an element of romanticism in his choice of reading. It was as if his youthful imagination had been captured by the heroic role of men who stood at the front of mass movements. But it was not undisciplined, self-indulgent reading. He copied the more significant passages with great care into a commonplace book. Despite the humour and titillation in some entries, it represented a serious effort at self-education. This interest coincided with the emergence of Australian literary nationalism. Like so many other young working men of the time, Anstey was an avid reader of the Bulletin. Its populist nationalism and anti-imperialism complemented his reading of European history and politics, just as its satirical anti-clericalism and robust disdain for humbug and pomposity reflected his own distaste for social pretension. The paper's slogan 'Australia for the White Man' also expressed the ethnocentric views he had come to accept from his observation of the Pacific island labour trade. These years at sea were a period where he gradually began to make connections between the heroic romanticism of Europe and the burgeoning nationalism of Australia in the 1880s; to see them as part of the same process of enlightenment, reason and liberation that would cast off centuries of tyranny, ignorance and superstition.
After a brief period of grinding toil on the Sydney wharves, he carried his swag south, pausing at Sale where he met his wife and resumed his efforts at self-education under the benign guidance of a local clergyman. But, like many other young men in the late 1880s, he was attracted to the bustling sophistication of Melbourne where there was both work and the company of others who talked and wrote and argued about the great issues of life and labour, and of changing the world. But he had only begun to immerse himself in Melbourne's radical sub-culture when, amid strikes, bank crashes and a deepening depression, he was plunged into a period of prolonged unemployment. Like many of his contemporaries, he emerged from that experience with an abiding conviction that the brutal anarchy of capitalist social relations should never again scar the lives of so many innocent people. Moreover, it was not just a matter of economic and social reform, it was also a moral issue. If the common people were to be raised from the pit of misery and degradation to a higher level of material and moral life, those bankers and speculators whose wanton greed had brought about the calamity would have to be swept away as a social evil.

It was significant that he chose two co-operative ventures, the Victorian Labour Federation and *Tocsin*, to express his vision of social regeneration. Both were characterised by a romantic idealism about the working class and its potential to make its own history. It was a vision shaped by his reading and impelled by his experience of the capitalist labour market. Yet, in seeking to change the world, his imagination turned to the pre-industrial past for its models of social harmony and human perfectibility. In his subsequent political career this romantic longing for a world that had been lost in the march of progress lay behind much of what he said and wrote. Despite the collapse of the Labour Federation, and the Tocsin Co-operative's precarious position, Anstey emerged from the 1890s with a growing reputation as an energetic, if somewhat erratic, organiser, a vigorous orator and a pugnacious journalist.

By the turn of the century, however, he had lost faith in the utopian strategy of independent working class action and embraced the Labor party as the only
realistic outlet for his reforming zeal. The party also presented the only realistic opportunity to build a career on the talents he had developed. Although there were some doubts about his steadiness and reliability, he was elected to the Victorian parliament in 1902. There, for the next eight years, he devoted his prodigious energies to propaganda work, to industrial and political campaigns, expanding the party's membership and developing its policies. At the end of that period the distinctive qualities of his political persona were well established.

Although he did well in country organising tours and was attentive to his electorate, he had no taste for the grinding routine of machine politics. He was at his best on the platform, in the parliament or writing for the labour press. He was primarily a publicist for the Labor cause. To that role, he brought an unusually wide knowledge acquired from voracious reading. Over the years he had learned platform skills from men such as Tom Mann but went on to develop a style that was all his own. Like many public performers, he was acutely nervous before 'going on', and it showed in the speed and intensity of his delivery. But as he warmed to the task, his sense of pace and timing gave his speeches a theatrical quality which established both an intellectual and emotional rapport with the audience. However, this did not rely on a set of contrived techniques. He cared passionately about liberty, equality and democracy, and his sincerity was obvious. When he spoke about freedom of speech, the right to strike or more commonplace pastimes like having a drink or a bet, he made them seem like matters that were fundamental to human liberty. In one way or another there were always great principles behind the specific issues and there were few speakers in the Labor camp who could articulate them better than Anstey. But underlying that was an even stronger bond between him and his working class audiences. He was one of them. He knew about the hopes and fears of working people but, unlike many, he could express them in eloquent and persuasive terms so that they acquired a logical clarity and moral force that was compelling. At his best, he was more than one of them. He became a symbol of their fighting spirit, their
conclusion. Again, there was nothing contrived about this because working class politics for Anstey was not just a cause or a career, it was an expression of himself.

This acutely personal sense of class made him hypersensitive to any sign of hostility or condescension. Better than anyone on the Labor side, he understood how the wowser campaign of 1906–7 was, in part, a patronising and hypocritical attempt to have the state enforce a strict, petit-bourgeois respectability on male workers. He explained, moreover, how the wowsers had completely misunderstood the role of drinking and gambling in working class culture. But this close identification of himself with his class was most striking when he was defending workers who were under attack. There was a hatred that was truly elemental in his reaction to Irvine’s coercion bill during the 1903 railway strike. He was equally brutal with men like McKenzie and Swinburne when it appeared that they were guilty of corruption or hypocrisy. But while he could be a ‘good hater’, in most cases his animosity was fleeting. It would erupt like a volcano and then subside quickly.

Such incidents, however, were relatively rare. It was more common for Anstey to treat his opponents as professional politicians like himself. He would abuse, satirise and taunt them with wit and sarcasm, but there was little or no venom in his attacks. For some, such as Bent, Bruce and Watt, he had a sneaking regard, which was often reciprocated. Although they might have stood for all that he opposed, he could never bring himself to hate them as individuals. He reserved that for class enemies who acted in a vindictive or mean-spirited way. There seems to have been only one exception to this general pattern. His relationship with Billy Hughes was ambivalent. What began as friendship and mutual respect quickly turned to enmity after Hughes left the Labor party. But despite that, they retained a lingering, if sceptical, admiration for each other’s abilities and political instincts.

Although Anstey was renowned as a public and parliamentary orator, he was most influential through his writings on the political economy of finance capital. In common with many other Labor men of his generation, during the early 1890s he had acquired through reading and personal experience a deep distrust of bankers and all
their works. He had not only read the populist literature of the period, he had also lost his job and been separated from his family as a direct result of the bank crashes in 1893. However, he did not begin any sustained writing on the subject until the outbreak of World War One. By then he had read a good deal more of the radical American and British literature which emphasised the role of monopolies in the growth of modern capitalism. In 1914 he began to adapt that literature to the situation in Australia and, over the next seven years, went on to develop it into an elaborate theory about the Money Power. He combined existing resentment towards Australian banks with a distillation of the radical populist literature on monopoly capital, and an untutored reading of underconsumptionist economics, to explain the emergence of the Money Power as the dominant force in the modern world. His analysis placed financial institutions at the centre of a set of interlocking monopolies whose interests were opposed to those of the common people.

To Anstey’s working class audience, his Money Power theory made sense of the bewildering and threatening business of banking and finance. It pointed to the economic processes and the people who had inflicted misery on the masses in depression and war. Although it tended to err on the side of conspiracy theory and, as such, provided a direct and personal focus for popular discontent, it did make the more reasonable point that the operation of the monetary system was too important to be left in private hands. Anstey’s work provided the most detailed elaboration of a radical tradition which demanded government control of money and banking as the first step towards the construction of a socialist society. His arguments helped to shape and give weight to the radical view which, in 1919, put the nationalisation of banking on the Labor platform. For the rest of his political career, he continued to press his case for public control, often to the discomfort of his more moderate Labor colleagues. It was ironic that, seven years after his death, the Chifley government’s attempt to nationalise the private banks revived this tradition of monetary radicalism which
Anstey had done so much to define. A good deal of what was said during that campaign on the Labor side drew heavily on his writings.\textsuperscript{13}

Anstey’s somewhat romantic view of the working class as an agent of historical change was revived by the Russian revolution in 1917. Convinced that it heralded a ‘red dawn’ for the post-war world, he went to Europe in 1918 to see for himself the mass insurrection that was finally sweeping away the last remnants of a feudal past. \textit{Red Europe}, published soon after his return, told something of the revolution, but said a great deal more about the diplomatic intrigue and military brutality surrounding the Allied intervention and the civil war. Like so much of his other writing, it opposed the heroic sacrifice of the Russian workers, peasants and soldiers to the treachery of their enemies at home and abroad. It was more than a revolution, it was a moral drama where a titanic struggle between good and evil was being played out across the vast expanses of Eurasia. When he brought that story back to an increasingly restive working class constituency in 1919, his place in the forefront of Labor radicals was assured.

Although he was, in Curtin’s phrase, a ‘Labor warrior’, that did not mean that he was always comradely. At various times during his career he found himself at odds with Labor executives and his parliamentary colleagues. Soon after he moved to the federal parliament in 1910 he became impatient with the Fisher government’s timidity in not moving quickly enough to implement the party platform. In 1915 he threatened to resign over the War Precautions act and related matters. In 1916-17, although he took a leading role in the campaign against conscription, he found himself the subject of suspicion and distrust because he did not endorse the same pacifist line taken by some Labor executives. In such circumstances, he found it impossible to compromise. Instead, he tended to take an almost belligerent attitude. He was not, however, irrational in his opposition to prevailing party orthodoxies. On the contrary, he sought every opportunity to argue his case with all the force at his

\textsuperscript{13} The Brisbane \textit{Worker}, 23 August 1947 was most explicit about their debt to Anstey. Under the headline ‘Frank Anstey Knew’, they reprinted his chapter on ‘American Money Power’.
command. He would appeal to party policy, to customary practice or, finally, to class loyalty. Having done so, he refused to budge until some face-saving solution was reached, often by the simple passage of time. Reasoned though it might have been, there was an inflexibility in the way he took a principled stand on these issues. While this might have appeared admirable to some, to others, more accustomed to the deals and compromises of party and parliamentary politics, he was nothing short of an obsessive nuisance.

This problem was particularly evident during the life of the Scullin government. From the beginning, Anstey could see the obstacles in front of them and, in characteristic fashion, urged them to 'crash through or crash'. As their problems mounted and they met stiffening resistance from the Commonwealth Bank and the conservative Senate, Anstey grew increasingly impatient. When the orthodox policy of wage and pension cuts received the imprimatur of the Bank of England, he proposed a bolder policy but it was rejected by cabinet. He led a caucus revolt but was outvoted by the supporters of moderate reform. While unemployment worsened and the crisis in government finance became desperate, he finally took a stand and helped Jack Lang to throw down a direct challenge. He was promptly dumped from cabinet and sat out the remaining months of the government's term on the back bench, sniping occasionally at those Labor ministers who presided over a policy which reduced the standard of living of the very people who had put them on the Treasury benches. They had retreated in the face of the enemy and inflicted misery on the people who needed their protection most. In Anstey's view this was not the best they could do in the circumstances. It was craven cowardice. They had deserted the working class without so much as a fight. He had no use for the banner of 'national honour' while workers' children went hungry. He had railed against that same ideology during the war when it had enticed men into the slaughterhouse at the Western Front. It was Labor's duty to look after the working class, not the bondholders, the imperial loyalists and advocates of 'national honour'. If they could
not discharge that duty because they were not in power, then they should not cling to office. There was 'neither honour nor pride' in his association with that government.

But the final disappointment was the worst of all. At the 1931 election even the people whom he had fought to protect turned against him and he was nearly defeated in his own constituency. Those vaguely romantic ideals he held about the working class, even when private necessity had seduced him into capitalist speculation, were dashed. Even the workers had failed to resist the tide of calamity as it engulfed them. All his political life he had identified himself with the working class, their party and its policies. Now, after more than thirty years, they had turned against him. It was not just a political rout, nor a personal disappointment; it was the destruction of his faith. Thereafter, he retreated into an embittered fatalism that was the corollary of the radical, populist romanticism which had sustained him through the long years of political struggle and repeated disappointments. Like so many other radicals who have sought to transform society through parliamentary politics, there was an air of tragic inevitability about Anstey's fate.
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