'A VERITABLE DYNAMO':
LLOYD ROSS, THE AUSTRALIAN RAILWAYS UNION AND
LEFT-WING POLITICS IN INTER-WAR AUSTRALIA

Stephen James Holt

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of The Australian National University

May 1988
STATEMENT

This thesis is entirely my own work.

(Stephen Holt)
Lloyd Ross, c.1938.

By courtesy of the National Library of Australia.
And, all the time, everywhere, activity. Lloyd Ross, State Secretary, a veritable dynamo and sapping the energy, willingly given, of scores and scores of activists throughout the State.

F. Gordon Crane, Advocate, 15 May 1939.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In completing this thesis I benefitted immeasurably from the encouragement and knowledge of my supervisor at the Australian National University, Professor J.N. Molony. At various stages in locating source material I was greatly assisted by other researchers and students of history notably Nicholas Brown, Geoffrey Browne, Dr Joy Damousi, Michael Easson, Dr Greg Patmore and Dr Jenny Stock.

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Gollan, Tom Hickey, Eileen Powell and Phil Thorne were equally helpful. In so far as I am able, so aided, to shed a clearer light on the manifold achievements of this outstanding group of Australians I will have performed some service to Australian scholarship.

Finally, I take this opportunity to thank Kerryn Hyde of the Alpha Secretarial Service for skilfully and speedily 'keying-in' the manuscript.
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<td>AACF</td>
<td>Australian Association for Cultural Freedom</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Commission</td>
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<td>ABL</td>
<td>Australian National University, Archives of Business and Labour</td>
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<td>ACP</td>
<td>Australian Communist Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACTU</td>
<td>Australasian Council of Trade Unions</td>
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<td>ADB</td>
<td>Australian Dictionary of Biography</td>
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<tr>
<td>AEU</td>
<td>Amalgamated Engineering Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFULE</td>
<td>Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen</td>
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<tr>
<td>AH</td>
<td>Australian Highway</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIIA</td>
<td>Australian Institute of International Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIPS</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Political Science</td>
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<td>ALP</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
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<td>ANU</td>
<td>Australian National University</td>
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<td>ARTSA</td>
<td>Amalgamated Railway and Tramway Service Association</td>
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<td>ARU</td>
<td>Australian Railways Union</td>
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<td>AW</td>
<td>Australian Worker</td>
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<tr>
<td>AWU</td>
<td>Australian Workers' Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>BDT</td>
<td>Barrier Daily Truth</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIC</td>
<td>Barrier Industrial Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAR</td>
<td>Commonwealth Arbitration Reports</td>
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<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Common Cause</td>
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<td>CCRSC</td>
<td>Central Council of Railway Shop Committees</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIB</td>
<td>Commonwealth Investigation Branch</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPA</td>
<td>Communist Party of Australia</td>
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<td>CPD</td>
<td>Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DN</td>
<td>Daily News</td>
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<tr>
<td>DT</td>
<td>Daily Telegraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E&amp;O Cttee</td>
<td>Australian Railways Union, New South Wales Branch, Educational and Organising Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIA</td>
<td>Federated Ironworkers' Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>FSU</td>
<td>Friends of the Soviet Union</td>
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<td>ILD</td>
<td>International Labor Defence</td>
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<td>IPC</td>
<td>International Peace Campaign</td>
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<td>IWW</td>
<td>Industrial Workers of the World</td>
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<tr>
<td>LC</td>
<td>Labor Call</td>
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<td>LD</td>
<td>Labor Daily</td>
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<tr>
<td>LPD</td>
<td>League for Peace and Democracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAWAF</td>
<td>Movement Against War and Fascism</td>
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<td>ML</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLA</td>
<td>Member of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>MMM</td>
<td>Militant Minority Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLA</td>
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<tr>
<td>NMH</td>
<td>Newcastle Morning Herald</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSWPP</td>
<td>New South Wales Parliamentary Papers</td>
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<tr>
<td>NUR</td>
<td>National Union of Railwaymen</td>
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<tr>
<td>RILU</td>
<td>Red International of Labor Unions</td>
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<td>RL</td>
<td>Red Leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROEU</td>
<td>New South Wales Railways Operating Employees' Union</td>
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<td>SLV</td>
<td>State Library of Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMH</td>
<td>Sydney Morning Herald</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRC</td>
<td>Spanish Relief Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Sunday Telegraph</td>
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<tr>
<td>THC</td>
<td>Trades Hall Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>TLC</td>
<td>Trades and Labor Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>TUC</td>
<td>Trades Union Congress</td>
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<td>UAP</td>
<td>United Australia Party</td>
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<td>UV</td>
<td>Union Voice</td>
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<td>VLC</td>
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<td>WEA</td>
<td>Workers' Educational Association</td>
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<td>WV</td>
<td>Workers' Voice</td>
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<td>WW</td>
<td>Workers' Weekly</td>
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A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Unless otherwise indicated references in this thesis to the Australian Railways Union relate specifically to the New South Wales branch of the union. This usage is consistent with the highly decentralised structure of the ARU during the inter-war period.
This thesis examines the role played by the longterm labour activist Lloyd Ross (1901-1987) in the affairs of the Australian labour movement from his formative years in the opening decades of this century up until the consolidation of the Curtin government in 1942. By this time, although having years of service to the labour movement ahead of him, Lloyd Ross's once close association with left-wing politics (altogether a narrower cause) was at an end.

The eldest son of the socialist agitator Bob Ross (1873-1931), Lloyd Ross inherited a commitment to radical politics, militant trade unionism and working-class cultural activities. He was eager to confront social and political problems head on. In 1935, after having served with the Workers' Educational Association for some ten years, he was elected secretary of the Australian Railways Union in New South Wales. In this capacity he soon became deeply involved in Labor Party factionalism and Communist anti-war agitation as well as formulating and pursuing the industrial demands of railway workers.

Lloyd Ross enthusiastically accepted Communist Party policy in the era of the united front against fascism (1935
onwards). He preached the gospel of internationalism. However this alliance was sundered in 1940. Ever a 'broad left' man, Lloyd Ross came to reject the renewed sectarian emphasis in Communist thinking that accompanied the Russo-German treaty of 23 August 1939. Following the rupture he managed to stay on in the ARU but an attempt on his part to sustain his radical position was frustrated by the exigencies of his new factional situation. With the Communist Party now alienated, he was obliged to strengthen his links with the dominant moderate wing of the Australian Labor Party. By 1942 this process was fully evident.

Lloyd Ross's subsequent involvement in anti-communist politics in the post-war era is surveyed in an epilogue. This connection culminated during the Labor split of 1955 following which Lloyd Ross gradually forsook factionalism, preferring to concentrate on industrial issues.

The demise of Lloyd Ross's radicalism is related to structural instability in the inter-war labour movement. The most notable source of this instability is located in the tension between political and industrial forms of radicalism and in particular the divergence between old-style industrial unionism and the political priorities of the Communist Party. The inherent instability that arose with socialist trade union ideologues juxtaposed alongside a workforce containing
a strong Catholic component is also highlighted, notably in relation to Lloyd Ross's dealings with the powerful Lang Labor faction.

By succumbing to deradicalisation Lloyd Ross aligned himself with the mainstream of Australian labour history, notwithstanding the imprecations of his Communist detractors. After 1940, having rid themselves of left-wing dominance, the New South Wales Labor Party and the Labor Council in Sydney together went on to attain adamantine stability with consequent political dividends still evident today. In this regard Lloyd Ross undoubtedly played a key role in the ideological evolution of modern Australia.
INTRODUCTION

In the historical consciousness of the Australian left an honoured place is reserved for the various 'rebels and radicals' who, when called upon to do so, 'stood against the dominant beliefs and policies of their times'.¹ No matter how reviled these dissenters and agitators may have been in their own day, there is always the possibility that they may be redeemed from oblivion by a later generation of university researchers and scholars.

In the course of time the process of left-wing canonisation has resulted in the development of an enduring pantheon of radical heroes. Many of the protagonists who feature in Eric Fry's 1983 book Rebels and Radicals previously appeared, fulfilling a similar exemplary role, in the pages of the Communist Review in the 1930s. The black freedom fighter Musquito,² the convict balladist 'Frank the

Poet3 and the socialist agitator W.R. Winspear4 fit into this category. The octogenarian anti-conscriptionist Monty Miller, who fought at Eureka and later joined the Industrial Workers of the World, was, and is, another celebrated figure.5 In like fashion, the importance of recognising the role played by socialist and pro-labour women in helping to defeat conscription in 1916, which is currently well to the fore on the agenda of radical historiography,6 was similarly highlighted in the mid-1930s by the Communist Review's sister publication, Woman Today.7 The 'rebels and radicals' view of Australian history is, clearly, a firmly established part of the folklore of local leftists.

The transition from Communist Party sponsorship to academic respectability, so far as the brand of radical historiography currently under investigation is concerned, occurred during the Cold War years of the 1950s. As part of the decomposition of the Communist Party a number of left-wing researchers - notably Robin Gollan, Ian Turner and

Russel Ward - gravitated to the sanctuary of the Australian National University in Canberra where they proceeded to embalm their radicalism by incorporating it in a series of theses, learned articles and monographs. Following the Australian Labor Party split of 1955 the political scene was dominated by R.G. Menzies and the Liberal Party but notwithstanding this development the essential historical experience of the Australian people was, for the left, eminently capable of being redeemed. As a result of the research efforts conducted in Canberra a valuable corpus of historical literature evolved with the basic aim being to elucidate the social and institutional context of Australian radicalism and to establish its central place in Australian history. Ward led the way in this regard. His influential celebration of the abiding spirit of Australian anti-authoritarianism, The Australian Legend, was published in 1958. After some preliminary soundings Robin Gollan and Ian Turner, in separate but similar ventures, proceeded to add to the picture, carefully charting the evolution of

8. Gollan joined the staff of the Australian National University in 1953, which was the year Ward commenced his doctoral thesis at the ANU. Turner commenced his thesis in 1959. All three men left the Communist Party during the 1950s: Ward in 1950, Gollan in 1957 and Turner in 1958.


working-class and socialist politics in Australia in the
great democratising era between the gold rushes of the 1850s
and the upsurge of left-wing sentiment at the end of the
First World War (out of which the Communist Party emerged).

What we have here, then, is a tradition of Australian
historiography which itself seeks to elucidate - and sustain
- local radical traditions. As was the case with their
Communist Party predecessors, the Cold War 'legenders' fixed
their attention on the 'arch of Australian rebelliousness'
which encompassed the Eureka uprising and the anti-
conscription movement and likewise took in the convict era
and the strikes of the 1890s.11 In short, the 'Monty
Miller syndrome' was displayed to the full.

The 'legenders' of the 1950s, being good tradition-
alists, believed implicitly in the importance of constancy
and fidelity which in their case culminated in a resounding
reaffirmation of the Australian cult of mateship as expounded
by Henry Lawson and Joseph Furphy. For Russel Ward, and for
all those like him who believed in 'aggressive, militant
democracy',12 the Australian radical tradition was the
offspring of primitive fraternal ardour. The basic outlook
of the Australian labour movement still reflected this
situation: the archetypal Australian worker, Ward asserted,
'will stick to his mates through thick and thin, even if he

12. Cf. Ian Turner, 'The Life of the Legend', Overland,
no.16, December 1959, p.25.
thinks they may be in the wrong.' The trade unionist's hatred of the 'scab' and the 'rat' was unbounded.13

As presented by the 'rebels and radicals' tradition, the Australian leftist is expected to embody the virtue of steadfastness. There can be no wavering in the struggle against injustice. Those who falter and desert to the established forces of conservatism are viewed as tragic cases.14 Homage is paid only to those who stay the course. Yet once this test is passed, gratitude is freely expressed. Those who show exceptional dedication to the struggle for a better world come to be held in high regard by their fellow toilers. Every effort is made to ensure that they are not forgotten after they leave the scene of their labours. Should they not undertake the task themselves, the business of recording their ideas and accomplishments for posterity is liable to be taken up by like-minded biographers, oral historians and other memorialists. The tendency to associate radicalism with undying constancy is inevitably strengthened as a result of this process. A number of examples can easily be cited. Thus in his 1979 biography of the pro-labour historian and publicist Brian Fitzpatrick Don Watson seeks to perpetuate the memory of a man whose 'radical

politics ... hardly altered in the 40 years of his political life.'15 In another labour biography, Fly a Rebel Flag Bill Morrow 1888-1980 (1986), Audrey Johnson performs a similar operation in respect of the left-wing Australian Railways Union official William Morrow, who is shown to have always 'stood his ground', opposing conscription in 1916 and manfully supporting the Australia-China Society in the bleak years before the Communist regime was finally recognised. In a similar vein Stuart Macintyre's 1984 biography of the trade unionist Paddy Troy16 presents the story of a radicalised 'battler' who lasted the full distance of his political 'shift' without at any stage buckling under adverse pressure. The 'Monty Miller syndrome' is obviously still a force to be reckoned with.

The indomitable spirit of a Paddy Troy or a Bill Morrow is undoubtedly worthy of commemoration. But in the study of Australian radicalism a range of other factors need to be taken into account as well. The steadfastness of the lifelong militant represents only one aspect of the overall picture so far as the dynamics of Australian radicalism is concerned. In emphasising the adamantine character of the radicalism of individual stalwarts the 'rebels and radicals' school is forced to avert its gaze from the traditionally highly mutable character of Australian radicalism as a

whole. Instability is as much a part of the story as steadfastness in this regard given that throughout its development the course of Australian radicalism has been shaped by diverse and often conflicting elements in society.

At the turn of the century Catholics of Irish descent and 'radical secular humanists' gravitated to labour politics,17 joining the populists and nationalists of the Labor Party, who for their part were increasingly forced to contend with new and alien Leninist and internationalist tendencies in the trade union movement after 1917.18 Furthermore throughout the pre-World War I and inter-war periods there were enduring differences between those radical labour men who chose to operate in the political sphere - whether in the Labor Party or in the various left-wing sects - and the hardline trade union militants, who, in line with the classical tenets of industrial unionism, tended to be highly suspicious of all political parties, including eventually the Communist Party. Even if we confine our attention solely to the industrial sphere the picture is still highly kaleidoscopic, with the militancy so characteristic of the 'new unionism' of any particular period confronting the forces of established trade unionism, which in their turn may have exerted a progressive and energising

influence before the dubious fruits of office were finally appropriated. The formation and subsequent petrification of the Australian Workers' Union is perhaps the best example of this process at work.  

The interplay of diverse forces as described above inevitably had a highly destabilising effect, with the radicalism of one period being easily transformed into the 'reactionary' politics of another. The tottering arch of Australian rebelliousness was periodically reconstructed, only to again buckle as new pressures arose. The process of decomposition was inexorable. Many of the heroic organisers and propagandists of the 1890s eventually turned into the 'rats' of the conscription era while in turn an increasing number of anti-conscriptionist stalwarts gravitated, in the years after 1917, to a strongly anti-communist position as Soviet Communism came to replace the British Empire as the great bugbear of old-style isolationist and nationalist sentiment in Australia. Individual examples of the linkage between anti-communism and anti-conscriptionism may be found by studying the ideological history of the socialist suffragette Adela Pankhurst Walsh, Archbishop Daniel  

Mannix of Melbourne, J.T. Lang, and P.R. Stephensen's Australia First coterie. Overall the anti-conscriptionist impulse in the inter-war era gradually ceased to be equated with a progressive stance in politics and ideology generally. Against this backdrop of a growing disenchantment with radical politics the youthful cultural nationalists of the pre-war years were forced, in the 1920s, to severely curtail their expectations regarding the possibility of achieving a major overhaul of the prevailing values in Australian society. With the emergence of a new post-war era in 1945 this process, for the entire Australian left, was simply repeated, with the democratic patriotism of the latter war years giving way to the far less congenial ideological climate of the Cold War era. The consequent sense of betrayal felt by the left took on an added element of poignancy as a result of the nagging realisation that many of the leading post-1945 anti-communist crusaders had earlier, during the 1930s, been unquestionably deeply anti-capitalist in their basic political and ideological orientation.

24. Craig Munro, Wild Man of Letters: The Story of P.R. Stephensen, Melbourne, 1984, pp. 162-163 (where the key role played by the wealthy nationalist W.J. Miles is rightly emphasised).
philosopher John Anderson,27 the ex-Trotskyite Laurie Short,28 the poet James McAuley29 and the Belloc-style Distributivist B.A. Santamaria30 may be cited in this regard.

The constant decomposition of Australian radicalism strikes at the very heart of 'rebels and radicals'-style historiography. In order to cope with this situation a strong element of political myopia is required. Although itself clearly a tradition and extolling the virtues of traditionalism, the 'rebels and radicals' school is incapable of coming to grips with its own history. Publishing accounts of the deeds of Musquito and W.R. Winspear can hardly be described as 'a novel enterprise' in 198331 given that the Communist Review indulged in this practice in the 1930s. The men of the 1950s - notably Ian Turner - were similarly ignorant of their immediate ideological inheritance.32 The instability of inter-war radicalism had the effect of

32. See Turner, 'Life of the Legend', p.25, where it is incorrectly stated that it was not until the 1940s that 'the search for origins' got underway among Australian leftists. Gollan, Revolutionaries and Reformists, p.195, cheerfully perpetuates Turner's erroneous view.
thoroughly truncating the left's sense of its own past. For the most part, the earlier inter-war version of the 'rebels and radicals' view of Australian history was presented by left-wing researchers and publicists who, as part of the grand process of deradicalisation, eventually moved out of the Communist Party and as a result were henceforth relegated to oblivion so far as the collective memory of the left was concerned. To be precise, the Communist Review's earlier forays into historical and literary scholarship have been overlooked in later years largely because most of the material was compiled by the Communist Party's chief research officer J.N. Rawling, who in 1939 resigned from the party and subsequently became a fierce anti-communist crusader. From the moment he left the Communist Party the realisation that he had made a notable contribution as a left-wing antiquarian was thoroughly exorcised in line with political requirements.

The fate suffered by Rawling likewise befell another notable inter-war 'rebels and radicals' man, the pioneering labour historian and highly influential trade union official, Dr Lloyd Ross (1901-1987), whose career serves as the focus of this thesis. A pro-labour zealot from his earliest years - his father was the notable labour journalist and activist R.S. Ross - Lloyd Ross drifted into the Communist Party following his election as New South Wales secretary of the Australian Railways Union in 1935, at the height of the

33. Who himself was the leading 'rebels and radicals' man of his day. See chapter 1, infra.
united front era. In the period that followed he attained considerable notoriety as a left-wing speaker and activist. He was exceptionally well attuned to the ideological requirements of united front politics. In the labour spectrum he was definitely associated with a 'broad' rather than a 'narrow' left-wing position. The Communist Party, from his perspective, was essentially a ginger group whose true role was to work for the redemption of the ALP and the broader trade union movement, thereby securing as wide an observance as possible of the tenets of socialism and internationalism.

Lloyd Ross's association with the Communist Party mirrored the rise and fall of united front politics in the mid and late 1930s. In line with his ecumenical approach he was excommunicated from the Communist Party after it moved into an aggressively sectarian phase at the beginning of World War II. Henceforth, like Rawling, he was forever classified as an obdurate enemy of the people. However there is an important difference to be noted in the case of Rawling and Ross. After leaving the Communist Party Rawling gradually dropped out of the labour movement altogether. His descent into ignominy did not have to be greatly helped along. But in the case of his ARU comrade the process was far more traumatic. Unlike Rawling Lloyd Ross was able to maintain his close connection with the trade union movement.

34. Cf. the use of these terms in Len Fox, *Broad Left, Narrow Left*, Sydney, 1982.
notwithstanding the animus of the Communist Party. In mid-1940, when the act of expulsion occurred, he still had some three and a half decades of active service as a labour man - and Labor apologist - ahead of him. He was an indomitable fighter. However in his case survival undoubtedly came at a high price. In order to beat off his implacable left-wing opponents he was forced to align himself with various anti-communist groups, beginning in 1941 when he teamed up with the followers of J.T. Lang and culminating, in the 1950s, with his becoming a stalwart supporter of the ALP Industrial Groups and, eventually, the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom. Against this background his radicalism gradually withered and died.

Inevitably, given the political passions involved, the demise of Lloyd Ross's leftism was not accompanied by any of the 'sweetness and light' which always needs to be exercised if we wish to gain a true historical understanding of any highly controversial event. Factional rancour was the order of the day. Everything was presented in highly moralistic terms. Lloyd Ross, in the eyes of the left, was obviously just another 'rat'. His political sins were simply too heinous to be dwelt upon after the initial shock had worn off. He was condemned out of hand. In the years that followed his painful wartime break with the party he was relegated to oblivion or at best was allowed to occupy a minor if enduring place in the Cold War demonology of Australian Communism. Moreover there was no compensating
attempt at understanding on the part of Lloyd Ross's post-1945 anti-communist friends. Like his erstwhile left-wing associates, they preferred not to be reminded of his earlier radical phase. A conspiracy of silence settled over his pre-war past. Such an attitude, while highly understandable, was hardly likely to encourage the development of a well-rounded view of an important episode in the ideological history of modern Australia. The political metamorphosis of Lloyd Ross, and of the Australian Railways Union as a whole, gradually became enshrouded in mystery. This thesis seeks to end that situation.

Given the evident importance of the theme of mutability in this exercise, it is important at this juncture to pose the ultimate question that needs to be addressed in regard to Lloyd Ross: What connection is there between the vibrant left-wing orator and activist of the mid-1930s and the assiduous anti-communist zealot of the 1940s and early 1950s? Does the act of excommunication imply that the earlier left-wing phase was somehow unreal? Amidst the thrust and counter-thrust of ideological politics Lloyd Ross's identity and integrity are in danger of vanishing altogether.

The decisive point to be considered in this regard is that in actively defying the Communist Party Lloyd Ross

35. 'What counts is not what Lloyd Ross was, but what he is now'. News-Weekly, 18 August 1954, p.4.
was reaffirming rather than repudiating his ideological heritage. His radicalism long predated his membership of the party so that, for him, the broader socialist cause and the particular priorities of the Communist Party could, conceptually and in practice, be separated. Eventually his erstwhile radicalism slowly disintegrated as a result of his leaving the Communist Party but at the time his willingness to incur the wrath of the party represented the ultimate expression of his self-confidence as a radical, a self-confidence which stemmed from the fact that his strong socialist faith had been attained independently of the proselytising activities of the Communist Party.

Lloyd Ross's action in linking up with and then, after a while, dropping out of the orbit of the Communist Party was hardly a unique political phenomenon. Many other left-wing intellectuals trod a similar path in the Stalinist era. The enduring significance of his ideological progression lies rather in the fact that after he left the party he managed to stay on as a key official in the hitherto highly radical ARU notwithstanding the animosity of the Communist Party, which saw itself as 'the vanguard of the proletariat'. Lloyd Ross was able to defy this proud boast partly because he managed to acquire a set of right-wing allies. However other factors came into play as well. Even as his radicalism was about to consume itself Lloyd Ross

succeeded in mobilising a dissenting brand of left-wing activism and in so doing was able to capitalise on a previously hidden weakness in the Communist Party's overall position. To sketch the parameters of this particular source of dissent requires the previous analysis of the basically unstable structure of Australian radicalism to be applied to the particular circumstances prevailing in the ARU.

Following the formation of the Labor Party in the 1890s radicals who gravitated to the political arena soon discovered that the party's position in regard to the creation of a socialist society left a lot to be desired. In time the trade union militants arrived at a similar conclusion. Alternative avenues to the promised land had to be found. At the political level various socialist sects and left-wing pressure groups emerged, with these groups eventually being swallowed up by the Communist Party. On the trade union front the ideology of syndicalism began to exert an increasingly pervasive influence. The militants dreamt of attaining salvation through direct industrial action culminating in class warfare and working class autonomy. Politics and parties were to be superseded altogether. The tenets of aggressive industrial unionism inspired the


formation of the Miners' Federation (1915)39 and the Australian Railways Union (1920), with both unions going on to become the main left-wing unions of the inter-war period.

From the early 1920s onwards the syndicalist impulse that had originated in the pre-war years gradually faded away but nevertheless its influence was not wholly obliterated. Although apparently fully tamed by the mid-1930s, the anti-political side of old-style industrial unionism effectively surfaced again in the ARU in the early 1940s, when Lloyd Ross and his chief factional supporter, Jack Ferguson, were able to mobilise anti-communist sentiment in the union by strenuously insisting that the ARU needed to free itself from all forms of control exercised by outside political groups, which in this case meant the Communist Party. In this way pre-1914 syndicalist attitudes effectively prepared the way for a dramatic swing to the right in the ARU long before the Cold War ever materialised. The irony of this situation dramatically confounds the simple verities of the 'rebels and radicals' strain of history.

What follows in this thesis, then, is a study in the reaffirmation and eventual decomposition of a particular brand of Australian radicalism as expressed through the activities and ideas of a man who, at his peak as a left-wing activist, was undoubtedly one of the most effective and

influential trade union militants that Australia is ever likely to see. By way of background Lloyd Ross's indebtedness to a pre-Leninist form of Australian radicalism is thoroughly explored. The thesis then examines the reaffirmation of his socialist creed following upon his election as secretary of the New South Wales branch of the Australian Railways Union. The vibrancy of his radicalism at this time ensured that the ensuing factional disputation that accompanied his wartime break with the Communist Party was conducted with exceptional bitterness, a state of affairs which served to overshadow the remaining three and a half decades of his career as a leading ALP and trade union identity and which eventually led to his being banished to an ideological no man's land. In recent times the cloud of unknowing has partly lifted, but the full ideological significance of Lloyd Ross's career is only capable of being revealed by means of a major exercise along the lines of this thesis.

40. Work on this thesis was completed in the latter half of 1987. During this period a number of books were published containing details of Lloyd Ross's left-wing political and trade union activities. See Joyce Stevens, Taking the Revolution Home Work Among Women in the Communist Party of Australia: 1920-1945, Melbourne, 1987, pp.68, 93, 220-221; Rupert Lockwood, War on the Waterfront Menzies, Japan and the Pig-iron Dispute, Sydney, 1987, pp.168-169, 202 and Amirah Inglis, Australians in the Spanish Civil War, Sydney, 1987, pp.50, 63, 78, 103. The article 'The Metamorphosis of Lloyd Ross', Quadrant, September 1987, pp.15-22, by the author, appeared a few days before Dr Ross's death, which occurred on 7 September.
PART ONE

1901-1935

THE YEARS OF PREPARATION
Lloyd Robert Maxwell Ross was born on 28 February 1901. His native city was Brisbane, where in 1890 his father, Robert Samuel Ross, at that stage a 17-year-old apprentice in the printing trade, had embraced the gospel of socialism as presented by the messianic trade union journalist and organiser William Lane.¹ A loyal disciple, Bob Ross henceforth regarded the labour movement as a sacred cause. Years later, following his mentor's death, he wrote an obituary lauding Lane as his 'prophet, priest and king'.²

From the very outset Lloyd Ross was caught up in a whirl of political agitation and ideological ferment. He was brought up as a second generation socialist in an environment in which domestic tranquillity was readily sacrificed. In his eagerness to propagate the gospel of

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socialism his father, a true crusader, was prepared to enter into a decidedly unsettled and even itinerant existence. In 1903, having gained valuable experience as a trade union journalist and socialist agitator in Brisbane, Bob Ross moved on to become editor of the Broken Hill labour newspaper, the **Barrier Truth**, being appointed on the recommendation of yet another great Queensland labour activist, Henry Boote. Together with his wife Ethel and young son, he took up residence in the city. For the first time in his adult working life he was guaranteed a regular income. A year later a second son - Edgar Argent Ross - was born.

It soon became apparent that the labour movement in Broken Hill had got more than it bargained for. Bob Ross's radicalism was not confined to trade union and political issues. An ardent rationalist, he was eager to discredit clergymen as well as capitalists. The Christian church, he considered, was, through its ideological influence, an important upholder of the existing social order. As a labour journalist it was his duty to expose the baleful effects of 'superstition'. To this end he boldly attacked the Sunday observance laws and later went on to publicly champion the need for birth control. Eventually a Roman Catholic-inspired campaign was organised against him and in the ensuing controversy he was compelled

4. Ibid.
to sever his connection with the Barrier Truth.5 His spirit was unbroken, however. Forced to gain alternative employment as a municipal librarian, he defiantly added a swag of socialist titles to the library's collection.6

In 1908, following an invitation from his fellow labour agitator Tom Mann, Bob Ross migrated to Melbourne. A few years earlier Mann had formed the Victorian Socialist Party, which had since developed into the premier socialist organisation in Australasia. In Melbourne Bob Ross assumed the editorship of the VSP's newspaper, the Socialist, and at various times also acted as party secretary.7 Apart from two stormy years spent in New Zealand as editor of the Maoriland Worker (1911-1913)8 he was henceforth a stalwart if contentious denizen of Melbourne.

Immensely studious by nature, Bob Ross ranged far and wide in his search for wisdom. He pored over the works of Shelley, Swinburne, Darwin, Huxley, Marx, Engels, Bellamy, Blatchford, Robert Owen, William Morris, Henry

7. TRC 236, 1:1/9-10.
George, Laurence Gronlund, Walt Whitman, Jack London and towards the end of his life, D.H. Lawrence. Nor was local literature ignored: Bob Ross was steeped in the writings of Joseph Furphy, Henry Lawson and Bernard O'Dowd.9

In line with his bookishness, Bob Ross's home in Melbourne virtually functioned as a private socialist academy. With his younger brother Will having already fully embraced the gospel of socialism,10 Bob Ross now turned to the task of ensuring that his two young sons took the same direction. At the hands of their father Lloyd and Edgar were imperceptibly initiated into the higher mysteries of socialism. They grew up in a house which was crammed with socialist books, tracts and newspapers and which was frequented by an endless stream of left-wing visitors and guests including the socialist newlyweds, Tom Walsh and Adela Pankhurst.11 From an early age every effort was made to direct the political education of the two boys along the right path. Lloyd and Edgar were


10. An 'avid reader and an ardent rationalist' like his brother, Arthur William Ross (1875-1944) similarly carved out a career as a labour journalist. See Bulletin, 16 August 1944, p.9 and CC, 19 August 1944, p.3.

enrolled in the VSP's own Socialist Sunday school while at the age of twelve Lloyd was required to prepare a synopsis of one of the party's Sunday evening lectures for the Socialist.

Never one to conceal his own proselytising fervour, Bob Ross was keen to see other socialists publicly attest to their faith as well. Accordingly he was a great supporter of 'workingclass celebrations'. Firstly in Broken Hill and then in Melbourne he was active in promoting left-wing May Day festivities. Likewise he was determined to keep the hallowed name of Eureka alive. In 1904, when the fiftieth anniversary of the Ballarat insurrection came round, his efforts helped to ensure that Broken Hill was one of the few places in Australia where the miners' bravery in standing up for their rights was publicly commemorated. His importance as a Eureka man was further indicated, when, in 1914, he published Eureka Freedom's Fight of '54, a compilation of historical material connected by a left-wing commentary. Lloyd assisted him with the proofreading.

13. Socialist, 24 October 1913 (in NLA MS 3939, Box 24).
15. Ibid., p.99; Ross, Storm and Struggle, p.13.
1914 brought the great challenge to socialist ideology. A pacifist in the sense that he favoured concerted international co-operation to ensure world peace, Bob Ross from the start opposed Australia's involvement in the Great War. Even before hostilities began he was active in the campaign against compulsory military training for young men and as the fighting dragged on his obsession with militarism grew, reaching a peak during the lead up to the two conscription referenda of 28 October 1916 and 20 December 1917. Undeterred by wartime censorship and surveillance, he emerged as one of the leading anti-conscriptionists in Victoria, operating both as a propagandist and organiser.

The struggle over conscription, culminating in the desertion of W.M. Hughes and his conscriptionist colleagues, seriously weakened the position of Labor's parliamentary spokesmen. The balance of power in the labour movement shifted decisively in favour of the industrial wing. Along with this development there arose a demand for the Labor Party to adopt a more explicit commitment to socialist policies. Labor's left-wing theorists came into their own. To a large extent it fell to Bob Ross to formulate their claims. Already an eloquent champion of industrial radicalism in the pre-war period, he enjoyed, from 1917

20. R.S. Ross, 'Industrial Unionism as Trustified Working Class Weapon', Co-operator, 8 January 1914, p.4.
onwards, an unprecedented opportunity to promote socialist ideas in the inner circles of the labour movement. With his VSP and anti-conscriptionist credentials he was connected to many of the up-and-coming industrial militants, especially among the Victorian railwaymen. His services as a propagandist and organiser were again called on as the militants stepped up their efforts to secure the adoption of their basic demand: the organisation of workers on an industry-wide as opposed to a craft basis, accompanied by a frank acceptance of class struggle and a determination to ultimately abolish all forms of wage slavery. Socialism when defined in this way was equated with the creation of the One Big Union covering all workers. Theoretically parliament was to be by-passed. There was no chance of this happening in practice, of course. Bob Ross readily agreed that the Australian worker was firmly wedded to constitutional and democratic procedures. He did not regard this as an obstacle, however. The point, he insisted, was to radicalise mainstream labour's drive for piecemeal reform.

In line with his ecumenical standpoint, Bob Ross proceeded to involve himself ever more deeply in the internal politics of the ALP, convinced that 'it could do

22. 'Industrial Unionism'.
23. R.S. Ross, Revolution in Russia and Australia, Melbourne, 1920.
the job of social revolution'.

By mid-1921, following a specially convened interstate congress of trade union delegates, this end seemed within sight. At the congress the proper objective of the Labor Party was defined as the 'socialisation of industry, production, distribution and exchange'. The delegates went on to formulate methods by which this objective was to be implemented: greater industrial unionism, nationalisation, the election of an industrial parliament, workers' control and an extensive programme of socialist education. The delegates also agreed that the ALP should place the demand for socialisation at the head of its electoral programme.

The gospel of socialism was clearly in the ascendancy at the interstate congress. But once the delegates dispersed the campaign rapidly lost direction. At the ALP conference which was summoned to consider the decisions of the interstate congress the case for maintaining a more pragmatic Labor programme was ably presented by E.G. Theodore. Despite his opposition, the socialisation objective was formally adopted.

Thereupon the zealots, led by Bob Ross and Ernie Lane (Will's older brother), asked for the objective to be placed at the forefront of the party's electoral platform.

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25. Ibid., pp.277-278.
However they had now reached the point beyond which Labor was not prepared to proceed. At Theodore's instigation the delegates rejected Lane and Ross's proposal even though this meant directly contradicting the interstate congress's view on the matter. The two men naturally were aggrieved. The decision, they insisted, 'would render the whole question [of socialism] negative and absolutely ineffective'. As a result of Theodore's machinations socialism for Labor had become merely a 'pious objective', devoid of any practical import.27

Following the 1921 conference the retreat from the goal of socialisation on the part of the ALP was inexorable. At another party conference in 1927 the official list of methods of achieving socialisation that had been drawn up in 1921 was thoroughly emasculated.28 At the next party conference, in 1930, Bob Ross attempted to persuade the delegates to restore the original version of the objective and methods, but a motion to this end lapsed for want of a seconder.29

Bob Ross had reached the end of the road. The 1930 ALP conference was his last major public appearance as a socialist crusader. He died the following year, on 24 September. The news of his death was greeted with

29. Ibid., p.285.
expressions of regret from a host of Labor luminaries including John Curtin, Don Cameron and Henry Boote. Responding on behalf of the family Edgar Ross reaffirmed an undying commitment to 'the grand cause of Labor'. Bob Ross's family was ready to 'thank all kind friends, and accept his legacy'.

Edgar had already shown himself to be as good as his word. Since 1925 he had been employed on the staff of his father's old newspaper in Broken Hill (which was now known as the Barrier Daily Truth). Nevertheless it fell to Lloyd, as the eldest of the two brothers, to lead the way in carrying on the good work. Certainly he had every intention of doing his utmost to advance the sacred cause of socialism. Brought up as a true believer, his radicalism, by 1931, was completely instinctive.

The young Lloyd Ross was an increasingly knowledgeable observer of his father's political activities. His growing acquaintance with the complexities of ideological conflict began in a proper sense during the war years, as he slowly emerged from the tight little world of the VSP. Beginning early in 1916, as a result of his having won a scholarship, he was able to attend University High School,

30. _LC_, 1 October 1931, p.8.
32. Ibid., p.10.
33. _LC_, 5 November 1931, p.4.
for many years one of the handful of government secondary schools in Victoria. His teachers, although middle class and pro-war, were not adversely swayed by the knowledge that he was the son of a well-known anti-conscriptionist. They were tolerant. He in turn was 'very devoted' to the school. He easily met the high academic standards of the institution and participated in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. He edited the school magazine and was an excellent athlete and stalwart member of the drama and debating societies. Eventually he became a senior prefect.

At the end of his final year at University High School (1919) Lloyd Ross won a scholarship which allowed him to go on to study at Melbourne University. The future, from his perspective, was full of promise. Already in an editorial for the school magazine he had embraced the challenge of the post-war world:

In the train of the war have come disorder and excitement; new doctrines are spreading, old institutions are tottering. Tolerance and knowledge are needed to weigh these new ideas, and to reject or accept them, not as they are suitable for individuals only, but good for the whole nation.

34. TRC 236, 1:1/39-40, 42; Lloyd Ross, conversation with author, 25 September 1983; Student Records, University High School.
35. University High School Record, June 1919, pp.14, 16-17, Xmas 1919, pp.19,25,27 (in NLA MS 3939, Box 14); TRC 236, 1:1/40,42.
36. Ibid., 42; Alice Hoy, A City Built to Music The History of University High School, Melbourne 1910 to 1960, Melbourne, 1961, p.175.
The 'new ideas' referred to were, inevitably in Lloyd Ross's case, left-wing ideas. Already he had made his debut as a book reviewer in his father's secularist magazine, Ross's Monthly, using the opportunity to align himself with the cause of evolution and enlightenment. With socialist agitation in the labour movement now in full swing, his ideological heritage was thoroughly consolidated. Beginning in 1918, Lloyd Ross proceeded to study the books and pamphlets which provided the theoretical underpinning for the programme of industrial democracy being hammered out by Labor's socialists. In England, the ultimate source of all wisdom in these matters, pro-labour thinkers and propagandists were stressing the incompatibility of political democracy and wage slavery. Like his father, Lloyd read as much of this literature as he could lay his hands on, familiarising himself with the ideas of Noah Ablett, James Connolly, R.H. Tawney, G.D.H. Cole, Bertrand Russell (in his capacity as the author of Roads to Freedom) and the Guild Socialists A.J. Penty and S.G. Hobson.

38. 'The Shell' [Lloyd Ross], 'Savage Survivals and Modern Sidelights' [review of John Howard Moore, Savage Survivals, London, 1918], Ross's Monthly, 8 March 1919, pp.16-17. Lloyd Ross's authorship is revealed in an annotation in a copy of the article in NLA MS 3939, Box 63.

39. Lloyd Ross, 'Thinking Aloud on Workers' Control', Standard Weekly, 5 October 1944, p.5; 'Liberty and the Worker', pp.1-2; NLA MS 3939, Box 11a, undated and untitled ABC script by Lloyd Ross, p.3.
Lloyd Ross's politicisation developed apace following his admission to Melbourne University. In April 1920, during his first term as an undergraduate, he joined a study circle which investigated the significance of the post-war demand for workers' control. The study circle was organised by the Public Questions Society, whose magazine Both Sides later published some of the group's findings. The views of various interested parties - orthodox trade unionists, co-operative societies, advocates of State collectivism (notably the Webbs), syndicalists and the Guild Socialist movement - were all neatly classified and assessed.

The Public Questions Society provided an outlet for Lloyd Ross's widening interest in left-wing ideas. His formal university studies, in marked contrast, were far less attuned to the post-war world's ideological ferment. Having decided to pursue an honours course in history, his main teacher was Professor Ernest Scott. As part of his studies he was forced to attend an extremely dull set of lectures in British political history: Scott's approach to the subject was, he considered, completely lifeless and uninspiring. The honours class was a different matter, however. Scott's special field of study, on which he expended all his skill as a teacher and researcher, was the

40. 'Liberty and the Worker', p.2; TRC 236, 1:1/43.
European discovery of Australia. His honours class dealt with this theme, with the various features of Europe's great age of navigation being touched on by way of introduction. Lloyd Ross sat enthralled as Scott lovingly detailed the exploits of the seafaring heroes of the British Empire, ranging from the Elizabethan navigators to Bass and Flinders. Despite his own left-wing background, he was not put off by the course's obvious 'imperialistic bias'. In private discussions he discovered that Scott still regarded himself as an old-style radical. Whatever ideological animus he had was reserved for the Catholic church.42

Lloyd Ross obtained his B.A. early in 1923.43 His years as a student were not yet over, however. Prompted by his father,44 he decided to stay on at Melbourne University and complete a law degree. At the same time he was able to maintain his connections with the History Department. In June 1924 he was taken on as a tutor.45 He also proceeded to enrol as a candidate for the degree of M.A.

At Melbourne University, as at University High School, Lloyd Ross pursued a wide range of extra-curricular

42. Lloyd Ross, conversation with author, 23 November 1983; TRC 236, 1:1/46-47.
43. University of Melbourne Registry, Lloyd Ross's academic record.
44. TRC 236, 1:1/48.
45. University of Melbourne Registry, Council Minutes, 2 June 1924.
activities. He continued to be an outstanding athlete (he was equally proficient at middle-distance and cross-country running) and maintained his involvement in debating and public speaking. In 1924 he was elected to the presidency of the Students' Representative Council, going on to become 'one of the most enthusiastic and popular presidents that body has ever had'.

Journalism remained another of Lloyd Ross's outside interests. He was a regular contributor to 'widely-circulating periodicals and publications' - eventually he won a literary competition conducted by a Melbourne daily newspaper and likewise wrote book reviews and commentaries for the Melbourne University Magazine as well as continuing to submit material to Ross's. Early in 1925 he was recruited to the staff of the new student newspaper, Farrago, working alongside another young radical, Brian Fitzpatrick. The enterprise began with the noblest of intentions. On 1 May Farrago published a letter from Lloyd Ross in which he emphasised his determination to speak out on behalf of 'the democratic trend in modern

47. Ibid., August 1923, p.126.
48. Ibid., p.128.
49. Ibid., November 1924, p.187.
50. Socialist, March-April 1923, p.3.
51. Undated clipping from Melbourne Sun in Victorian Socialist Party Papers, NLA MS 564, Box 2, Folder 1.
life'. The only hope of creating 'a keen University spirit', he contended, lay in 'linking it with service to the community'.

In practical terms the concept of 'service' implied a strong commitment to the labour movement. Consistent with this principle, Lloyd Ross was anxious to do something towards narrowing the class barrier that existed between university students - who were linked to the professions and the middle class - and trade unionists. In mid-1925, along with Ralph Gibson, Macmahon Ball and Brian Fitzpatrick, he was one of the founding members of the Melbourne University Labor Club. He drafted the club's manifesto, taking the opportunity to reaffirm his commitment to the notion of industrial democracy. Soon afterwards he was elected as the club's first president and in this capacity chaired its early meetings, at which the guest speakers included Frank Anstey, Frank Brennan, Alice Henry, E.J. Holloway and A.W. Foster.

The Labor Club was able to end the year in a spectacular fashion. At the time of the club's formation

52. Farrago, 1 May 1925, p.4.
53. TRC 236, 1:1/43-44; Watson, Brian Fitzpatrick, p.17.
54. Farrago, 16 July 1952, p.3 (Ralph Gibson); NLA MS 3939, Box 25, Michael Roe to Lloyd Ross, n.d.
the Seamen's Union was involved in a bitter and protracted industrial dispute. In a gesture of solidarity Lloyd Ross decided to convert the club's final meeting for 1925 into a forum for airing the seamen's grievances. He wanted one of the seamen to address the meeting, which was rather daring seeing that never before had students at Melbourne University been addressed by a worker who was out on strike. The meeting was held in the main lecture hall and, not surprisingly, a large audience was attracted. In the event the students were addressed not by one of the seamen themselves but by an official of the union. This enforced change in the advertised arrangements left Lloyd Ross feeling 'most annoyed and disappointed' but overall his dedication to the sacred cause of labour and industrial struggle remained unshaken. Shortly afterwards, during the course of the 'law and order' federal election campaign of 1925 - in which the seamen's strike was a key issue - he mounted a soap box to speak in support of the Labor member for the seat of Melbourne. 56

At the time of the Labor Club's formation Lloyd Ross was already busily occupied in other organised pro-labour activities. In March 1923, he applied for the post of tutor in Industrial History at the Victorian Labor College, which conducted evening classes for trade unionists

at the Trades Hall. The application was successful - there were in fact no other suitable candidates - but a delay occurred when the class was temporarily suspended. The appointment finally came into effect from the beginning of 1924.57

Lloyd Ross hoped by joining the VLC to come into direct contact with class conscious proletarians. Set up during the left-wing fervour of 1917 (two of Bob Ross's anti-conscriptionist colleagues, Frederick Sinclaire and Guido Baracchi, were among its founding fathers), the VLC modelled itself on the Central Labour College in London. It shared that organisation's commitment to disseminating proletarian ideology as a prelude to the establishment of a socialist society.58 The teaching of history was vitally important in this scheme of things. The VLC aimed to 'teach the history of the class struggle of the past in order that the workers may realise more clearly the nature of the class struggle that exists in modern society'.59

The key to understanding the past was provided by the new

57. Bob and May Brodney Papers, SLV MS 10882, Box 12, VLC Minute Book, 9 January 1923, 13 April 1923, 11 May 1923 and Secretary's report to annual conference, 26 January 1924; Victorian Labor College Collection, University of Melbourne Archives, Lloyd Ross to B. Davies, 24 March 1922 [i.e. 1923], H. Partridge to Lloyd Ross, 31 May 1923.


59. Do Your Own Thinking! [Plebs League (London) pamphlet reprinted by VLC], Melbourne, n.d., p.3.
science of Industrial History that elucidated the change in the relations of production which had prepared the way for the emergence of scientific socialism. 'Industrial evolution' (to use another favoured term for this process) was seen as culminating in the widespread acceptance by workers of the necessity for industrial unionism.60 In line with the importance of these ideas, a class in Industrial History was provided for in the original syllabus of the VLC. Initially taken by Maurice Blackburn,61 the class was assigned to Lloyd Ross in March 1924. For the rest of the year he delivered a series of weekly lectures which ranged over the history of class struggle in Australia beginning with the advent of the convicts.62

The VLC point of view was freely championed by Lloyd Ross. On 22 January 1925, at the college's annual general meeting, he emphasised 'the necessity for [the] organised collection of facts to assist the Labor Movement in the class struggle'.63 When teaching recommenced after the long summer break a few weeks later he was ready to resume giving his lectures on Australia's industrial problems - 'giving same their historical setting'.64 At

63. Ibid., 5 February 1925, p.5.
64. Ibid., 19 February 1925, p.9.
the end of March he delivered a lecture on the Chartist movement. He was regarded as an expert on this topic, since his M.A. thesis purportedly covered the Chartists' impact on Australian radicalism. But instead his knowledge was minimal. His thesis dealt largely with events in England since he was unable to find anyone who could tell him where material relating to the Chartists in Australia was likely to be held.

Summaries of several of Lloyd Ross's 1925 VLC lectures appeared in the pages of Labor Call. In August he lectured on Australia's establishment as a penal settlement. There was, he insisted, no great need for working-class agitation in the early colony because the land was not yet alienated. In a later lecture he discussed the significance of Eureka. Proletarian history in the true sense only began in Australia with the discovery of gold. 'The Eureka Stockade was the first popular outbreak in our history', he pointed out. On another occasion he examined the process whereby Australian workers organised themselves into trade unions and became involved in political activities in an effort to weaken the pervasive power of the pastoralists.

65. Ibid., 26 March 1925, p.8.
67. LC, 20 August 1925, p.5.
As the academic year drew to a close, Lloyd Ross derived considerable satisfaction from the belief that a year spent with labour activists was a year well spent. However humble his efforts, he was helping to usher in a new world governed by humane values. 'Nothing', he proclaimed on one occasion, 'is more certain than that socialism must come - or civilisation will perish'.

The nobility of these sentiments, however, was at times contradicted by the deeds of actual socialists. The VLC was not immune from outbursts of sectarian rancour. From the outset Lloyd Ross encountered a degree of hostility at the college because he was the son of Bob Ross, whose alignment with the incurably reformist ALP - an alignment matched by a 'favourable attitude' on his part to the VLC's anti-class war rival, the far more respectable Workers' Educational Association - was a source of abiding irritation to the VLC's more doctrinaire supporters.

The young man's strong links with the university strengthened the militants' doubts regarding the seriousness of his commitment to the working class. Eventually he was asked to explain whether or not he had any connection with the WEA, which in its pedagogic activities relied upon the staff of Melbourne University, including Professor Ernest Scott.

Lloyd Ross responded

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68. 'If I were Minister for Education', Melbourne University Magazine, November 1925, p.149.
69. Lloyd Ross, conversation with author, 23 November 1983.
by formally denying that any such connection existed. 'His position was a tutor with the University & had no connection with the Workers Educational Assoc.' In the event the undercurrent of hostility failed to rattle the young tutor. Sectarianism in the VLC, he concluded, had to be looked upon as merely a storm in a tea-cup.

In contrast to his burgeoning political education, Lloyd Ross was never able to summon up much enthusiasm for the law studies that he pursued after 1923. Repelled from the start by the minutiae of the law of property and contracts, he took to browsing 'in the literary quarter of the public library as an antidote for musty unimaginative law cases'. His enthusiasm sank even lower after he spent a few weeks working part-time in the office of an up-and-coming Labor lawyer named Bill Slater: he was required to spend most of his time preparing summonses against railwaymen who had fallen behind with their union dues.

Late in 1925, after obtaining a particularly bad set of examination results, Lloyd Ross decided that the time had at last come for him to abandon the Melbourne

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71. VLC Minute Book, 9 January 1925.
72. Lloyd Ross, conversation with author, 23 November 1983.
73. Ibid.
75. TRC 236, 1:1/48-2/1.
University law school. Although willing to continue his studies as an external student, he was now intent on pursuing a career in ways other than as a lawyer. After applying for a range of positions he was finally offered a job as a tutor-organiser with the Workers' Educational Association in Dunedin.

As Lloyd Ross well knew, any form of association with the WEA was scarcely compatible with the maintenance of a doctrinally rigid socialist viewpoint. Founded in England in 1903 and with branches in Australia and New Zealand, the WEA sought, through the methods of adult education, to encourage the disinterested scrutiny of contemporary social and political issues. In intent it was 'strictly non-sectarian and non-party political'. It aimed to develop a spirit of liberality and good citizenship among individual students irrespective of their social origin. The intention was to break down class barriers. As a result of its efforts in this direction the WEA aroused the abiding suspicion of conservative elements in society but equally its profession of impartiality offended labour's radical wing as well since, having regard to this ideal, the association could hardly operate as a committed agent of the labour movement. In contrast to the labour

76. In which capacity he eventually gained his law degree in 1928.
77. 1916 Victorian WEA Syllabus.
college ideal it refused to enlist itself in the class war and thus was attacked from both sides.78

His own VLC background notwithstanding, Lloyd Ross eagerly accepted the offer of a job with the Dunedin branch of the WEA. In the mid-1920s the WEA in New Zealand was undergoing a major expansion in its teaching activities and as a result was recruiting new staff.79 The Dunedin offer was part of this overall trend. Whatever ideological qualms he may have felt, Lloyd Ross was in no position to turn down the material benefits attendant on a full-time job. His immediate priority at this time was to get married. His choice was Christina Adelskold, whom he had first met when they studied together at University High School. Although disappointed by his son's decision to abandon his full-time law studies Bob Ross came forward with 'every possible assistance'80 at this important juncture in the young man's life. Lloyd Ross and Christina Adelskold became man and wife on 2 February 1926. Six days later they sailed for New Zealand.81

From the moment he set foot in New Zealand Lloyd Ross faced an uphill battle. On arriving in Dunedin it was

80. TRC 236, 1:2/1.
81. UV, 13 February 1926, p.5.
discovered that he had contracted typhoid fever. For the next five months he was confined to a hospital bed. Upon recovering his health he was immediately required to attend to the local WEA's own frailties. In Dunedin the WEA attracted little working-class or trade union support. Instead Lloyd Ross was obliged to cater for the varied interests of a disparate collection of private individuals and community groups. In taking on this challenge he soon discovered that many New Zealanders found it difficult to comprehend what he was seeking to achieve in his new position:

That it is possible for a teacher to hold strong opinions of his own and yet look towards his pupil as a personality to be assisted to grow, and as a mind to be aided to come to its own conclusions, and that it is good for all education to be controversial and provocative, are ideas not accepted in New Zealand, even among teachers themselves.

Other challenges existed as well. Although modelled on the WEA in England, the New Zealand adult education movement had developed its own way of doing things. 'There is', Lloyd Ross later wrote, 'no departmental insistence on written work, on limitations of numbers in a class, on regular attendance, or three-year registration, on, in short, the English tutorial class

82. TRC 236, 1:2/2-3.  
83. Ibid., 5-6.  
system'. In more positive terms, he found himself operating in an untried situation where there was 'greater freedom to experiment' and 'wider latitude in devising new methods of propaganda and teaching, such as are necessary in a new country where standards of education and interest vary so much'.

For his part Lloyd Ross was determined to improvise to the full. As a result of introducing new ways of organising classes he hoped to generate fresh interest in the WEA's activities in the Dunedin area. In the event he enjoyed considerable success. He launched a correspondence course designed for students living in remote rural areas. Another of his initiatives took the form of lunchtime lectures delivered to workers at the Roslyn Woollen Mills and Sargood's Boot Factory. Acting in a similar spirit, he enthusiastically set about the task of developing a WEA drama group. The idea again was to encourage wider participation in adult education by attracting people in the community who were unlikely to show any interest in a WEA course if it entailed writing essays. By 1929 the drama group had ninety members, with plays being, on occasions, written, as well as acted.

87. Ibid., p.58; 1928 Dominion Annual Report, p.65.
88. 1929 Dominion Annual Report, p.61; TRC 236, 1:2/6, 8; NLA MS 3939, Box 52, Lloyd Ross diary, 30 September 1929.
The WEA in New Zealand, Lloyd Ross claimed on one occasion, provided 'an oasis of learning and goodfellowship in a desert of ignorance and intolerance'. At its annual summer school New Zealanders from diverse backgrounds were able to come together and discuss their differing ideas in an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding. The WEA, however, was powerless to dispel the prevailing gloom, and the situation was getting bleaker all the time. New Zealand was facing an economic disaster. Its prosperity depended on the value of its rural exports and by the late 1920s world trade was sliding into a depression. Already among the rural population poverty was 'noticeable everywhere'. As he travelled round the countryside Lloyd Ross, as an urban outsider, frequently found himself the object of suspicion and resentment: in the eyes of many rural New Zealanders the cities were firmly in the grip of rapacious trade unionists. 'The W.E.A. tutor', he commented, 'arriving in some country town towards sunset with his notes and his books, is often despised by the very practical man on the land, yet strangely enough he may have a solution to the problem'.

Rural paranoia notwithstanding, industrial radicalism was the least of New Zealand's worries. For

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90. Lloyd Ross, 'Education for the Farmer', ibid., 10 May 1928, p.5.
Lloyd Ross the New Zealand labour movement was decidedly uninspiring. The socialists and left-wing unionists with whom his father had collaborated during 1911-13 had for the most part gone on to become respectable Labour Party men with seats in parliament.91 In his travels he encountered a number of keen and energetic union secretaries, but there was little evidence of rank-and-file militancy. Radicalism at this level had, apparently, been made redundant by New Zealand's long-established system of industrial arbitration.92

The taming of the New Zealand labour movement's socialist zeal was not a unique phenomenon. Across the Tasman the ALP's obfuscation of the 1921 objective was proceeding apace. In Great Britain doctrines of working-class initiative and independence, which had flourished on a grand scale since 1910, flared up again during the General Strike of 1926 only to be extinguished with the failure of the strike. Against this background socialists needed to know why their crusade had lost momentum. A close study of the recent history of the labour movement was obviously required.

As a keen practitioner of Industrial History, Lloyd Ross was ready to respond to the ideological

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91. TRC 236, 1:2/3.
92. Lloyd Ross, 'Pages from a Tutor's Diary', New Zealand Highway, 10 April 1928, p.13.
challenge facing labour's socialist wing. During his period as a VLC lecturer he had already begun the task of elucidating the history of the labour movement in Australia. As a VLC man he operated within the broad ideological context set by the labour college movement in England. He was particularly attuned to the ideas of Mark Starr, a Welsh miner and labour college lecturer who, in 1918, had done much to advance the cause of Industrial History by publishing a popular textbook on the subject entitled _A Worker Looks At History_.93 Even before joining the VLC Lloyd Ross regarded Starr as the ablest contemporary interpreter of the materialist conception of history (a creed, incidentally, which he himself had adopted as his basic position in preference to his father's aggressive rationalism).94 Starr focused on the labour process and the historical experience of the working class. He had nothing but contempt for the view of history peddled by 'class-biassed University professors'. For too long, he insisted, young people had been 'stuffed with "drum-and-trumpet history, Royal amours, Court intrigues, the romping of armies over the Continent", and the like'. The working-class historian, by way of contrast, considered that there was only one form of warfare deserving of study: the war between the classes.95 History needed to be written from

94. 'Socialism v. Rationalism', ibid., 3 June 1922, p.11.
this standpoint, with the future victory of the working class being the basic point of reference.

Lloyd Ross remained a keen admirer of Mark Starr's work even after he left the VLC and joined the WEA in New Zealand. Beginning in May 1927 he undertook to publish an antipodean version of *A Worker Looks at History* in the form of a series of articles duly entitled 'A Worker Looks at Australian History'. The articles appeared in *Union Voice*, a monthly publication edited by his father which had previously featured a series of articles on Irish history written by the influential Mark Starr.96

In the opening instalment of 'A Worker Looks at Australian History' Lloyd Ross restated the ideological principles underlying the labour college view of history. Mark Starr's insistence on the connection between the class war and the writing of history applied as much to Australia as to England. Ernest Scott, in his *Short History of Australia*, had shown himself to be just another class-biased university professor. Scott devoted five pages to Governor Bligh but chose to ignore William Lane; he was able, similarly, to give a detailed account of wartime Rabaul while overlooking the ideas of the Australian Labor Party. This lack of proportion was only to be expected in an official textbook. 'No Imperialistic State', Lloyd Ross

96. 'A Worker Looks at Irish History', *UV*, 15 January 1924, p.4 (and subsequent issues).
noted, 'could permit the economic interpretation of overseas expansion to be taught in its schools; no capitalist State could teach the point of view of the workers, because the "doctoring" of history is one of the means by which it retains its power'. Lloyd Ross hoped to correct this imbalance by shedding light on Australia's neglected proletarian history, with the emphasis always being placed on its central component, class struggle.

Once his ideological scaffolding was in place, Lloyd Ross turned to the actual content of Australian labour history. The early instalments of 'A Worker Looks at Australian History' covered the convict era, the rise of the pastoral industry, the impact of the gold rushes and the birth of protectionism. The focus became narrower once interstate trade unions and official parliamentary labour parties appeared on the scene. From December 1927 onwards the articles concentrated on the politics and ideas of the labour movement in the four decades since the commonly accepted turning point in its history, the strikes of the early 1890s.

In the September 1928 instalment of 'A Worker Looks at Australian History' Lloyd Ross examined the emergence of J.T. Lang as a Labor leader. Thereupon the series abruptly ceased. The sudden termination was entirely appropriate.

97. Ibid., 7 May 1927, p.8.
Well aware that Lang made no pretensions to be a scientific socialist, Lloyd Ross found himself confronted with a serious dilemma. Industrial History, as ultimately defined by the labour college movement in England, derived its value from its role in assisting workers to attain a level of ideological understanding appropriate to a socialist society, the imminent arrival of which was keenly anticipated. For over two decades, in fact, studying Industrial History had been one of the front-line activities of the radical wing of the British labour movement. However by 1927, following the General Strike, working-class radicalism had clearly run out of steam. The labour college movement itself was a declining force. Industrial democracy, long viewed as the terminating point of all previous history, had suddenly vanished as a credible political concept. A far more sober ideological climate had come into being.

As a devoted student of history, Lloyd Ross was only too aware of what had happened. Analysing the career of J.T. Lang dramatically confirmed the British experience: the labour movement was unwilling to take socialist ideas seriously. A decade of strenuous left-wing activity in Australia's largest state had resulted in the rise to power of an unprincipled opportunist. 'The Lang Ministry [of

1925-27] was the greatest tragedy in the history of Australian Labor'. In this murky atmosphere, it was impossible to discern any evolutionary process at work. The real challenge facing the left-wing historian of 1927 was to find out why the demands of the post-war socialists had been so thoroughly frustrated. Industrial History necessarily had to be transformed into a study of the intricacies of Labor Party factionalism.

Lloyd Ross further acknowledged the unfavourable trend of events in a second series of articles focussing on the problems of the Australian labour movement which appeared in the wake of 'A Worker Looks at Australian History'. The venue chosen for publication was the English journal, the Socialist Review. These two sets of articles, in Union Voice and the Socialist Review, together presented a considered view of the dynamics of the labour movement as it operated in Australia on the eve of the Great Depression.

Lloyd Ross had no intention of providing a dispassionate analysis of Labor's performance. Instead he set out to condemn the shortcomings and inconsistencies of the various Labor politicians - notably Lang and Theodore - who had assisted in the downgrading of the party's socialisation objective. In this sense his starting point was the sense of betrayal felt by his father following the

99. UV, 15 September 1928, p.5.
heady days of mid-1921. Central to his scenario was the division between labour's anti-capitalist ideologues - men such as William Lane and Bob Ross - and the pragmatists who comprised the movement's parliamentary leadership. The ALP was influenced by a tradition of socialist criticism dating back to the thinkers and activists of the 1890s - Lane, Bellamy, Henry George. Among the rank-and-file there was still a keen minority of socialists who revered the 1921 objective. Their presence ensured that there was always a core of idealism in the party as a result of which it could never be said that it was indistinguishable from the anti-Labor parties. But whenever they set out to achieve something more positive the socialists were invariably frustrated by the politicians, who in their attempt to win and retain office ignored the requirements of ideological purity and instead offered the electorate piecemeal reforms designed to prop up the existing social order. Labor governments favoured intervention in the economy on an ad hoc basis (as did S.M. Bruce at times) and swallowed nationalist panaceas (White Australia and high tariffs), all of which was far removed from the socialisation of industry. Social reform was paid for out of the profits that capitalists were still allowed to accumulate or by way of overseas loans; wage slavery and the unequal distribution of wealth continued unchecked.100

The concept of industrial democracy hovered around the fringes of Lloyd Ross's analysis. External control over workers, whether exercised by government authorities or private capitalists, remained the great sticking point. 'State socialism' in Australia - government-run enterprises operating alongside capitalist competitors - failed to meet the demand for greater social control of economic activity. For the most part, Lloyd Ross argued, state employees were hired hands who were liable to be retrenched in times of recession.101 'The problem of Australian Labour is how and when will it control the life of the community so that decent conditions are not limited by the prosperity of capitalists?'102 The recent burst of prosperity was sure to be followed by a bust. Already there was far less money around to fund reformist policies. Labor would be required to act decisively when the crash came. The temptation to adopt short-term palliative measures would then have to be sternly resisted. What was needed instead was a reactivisation of the socialist zeal of 1921.103

102. Ibid., p.21.
103. UV, 14 April 1928, p.4, 15 September 1928, p.5; Socialist Review, December 1928, p.20.
Throughout the individual instalments of both series of articles Lloyd Ross's dissatisfaction with Labor's record in government was readily apparent, coming through even when he looked at the more remote aspects of Labor's historical legacy. The party's inadequate grasp of socialist ideology could, he assumed, be taken as proof that the capitalist class had never seriously been challenged at any stage in Australian history. The seeds of a socialist community had not been sown in 1788. The early convict labourers did not comprise Australia's first proletariat - a working class only emerged once free immigrants started arriving. The eventual granting of self-government, although preceded by an outburst of political radicalism, was primarily intended to be of benefit to the squatters and the landowning class generally. The unholy alliance between the English manufacturer and the Australian pastoralist was personified in the career of John Macarthur. The pursuit of wealth knew no bounds. The removal of William Bligh from office in 1808 was not an antipodean Runnymede, but rather 'the work of a narrow clique just as selfishly tyrannical and undemocratic as he was'.

Historical scepticism was similarly well to the fore in Lloyd Ross's treatment of the famous Eureka

104. UV, 11 June 1927, p.1, 9 July 1927, p.4.
105. Ibid., 15 September 1927, p.4.
106. Ibid., 7 May 1927, p.8, 13 August 1927, p.4.
uprising. R.S. Ross, of course, had helped to give the event a special significance in the eyes of the labour movement, but his son's purpose, on this occasion, was rather different. He was anxious to distance himself from all aspects of standard Labor thinking. For this reason he was determined to undermine the comfortable left-wing view of Eureka. The Ballarat miners, he thus insisted, while certainly rebellious, were by no means intent on revolution. 'The rebellion was neither Socialistic nor Labor'; the diggers instead were hard-pressed small-time capitalists. The Eureka flag was not the Red flag of socialism but the Southern Cross, the flag which had since served as the symbol of Australian nationalism (even though the miners themselves were completely cosmopolitan). With the passage of time the labour movement had latched on to the events at Eureka and as a result an altogether incongruous ideological configuration had arisen:

Official Labor to-day is not republican, not internationalist, and is hysterical in its opposition to force. Raffaello might not be admitted to Australia in these days of Italophobia; Lalor and Seekamp might be expelled for their advocacy of force!107

By immersing itself in creeds other than socialism the Australian labour movement had, Lloyd Ross insisted, opened the door to a host of undesirable tendencies. The same nationalist attitudes that underlay the Eureka myth

107. Ibid., 15 October 1927, p.3.
also found expression in Henry Lawson and Federation and, less innocently, protectionism, White Australia and 'the final futility of the Compulsory Military Training Act'. Labor's political leaders, having unreservedly embraced the cause of Australian nationalism, readily took up a pro-war position in August 1914. Their willingness to countenance conscription for overseas service finally alerted the rank-and-file to the betrayal of working-class principles that had occurred. Anti-war ideas swept the party and, with the departure of the conscriptionists, Labor moved on to a more emphatic acceptance of the need for socialism - which in turn provided the new crop of Labor leaders with an opportunity to betray the party's ideals. Against this background the study of labour history remained a vital activity, even though it had to be pursued in a spirit different to that of old-style Industrial History. In this latest version of working-class historiography, as developed by Lloyd Ross, the Australian labour movement was shown to be entrapped in a cycle of dream and disillusionment; it was assumed by the author that the gloominess of the portrait would be sure to enhance the attractiveness of socialist politics, which was envisaged as the only force capable of bringing the cycle to an end.

108. Ibid.
109. Ibid., 14 April 1928, p.4.
Lloyd Ross at this stage was confident that the material contained in his published articles could serve as the basis of a full-length book dealing with the Australian labour movement. After a period of further research and writing he would have a publishable manuscript on his hands. In October 1928, in his capacity as a budding author, he journeyed to Broken Hill with a view to researching the city's distinctive history 'per medium of musty newspaper files and tattered minute books'. His brother Edgar - who was active in the Broken Hill WEA as well as being a local journalist - did his utmost to ensure that his brother's visit did not go unnoticed. Beginning on 27 October Lloyd delivered a series of public lectures under the auspices of the Broken Hill WEA. The lectures covered a variety of topics, including Henry Ford's approach to industrial relations, the political implications of anthropological research and the impact of anti-war and socialist ideas on the contemporary theatre. On 10 November, in the penultimate lecture, the topic was 'The Problems of Australian Labor'. In the lecture Lloyd Ross repeated his trenchant criticism of the ALP's reformist tendencies while at the same time stressing that he spoke from the standpoint of a frustrated supporter. Despite Labor's unwillingness to pursue radical measures, he still thought that it was possible for socialism to be

110. AH, 10 December 1928, p.47.
111. BDT, 11 October 1928, 27 October 1928 (unpaginated).
legislated into existence by parliamentary majorities. For daring to advocate such a position he 'raised the ire of Broken Hill "Reds"'. A number of these 'Reds' - who no doubt comprised local Communists as well as former IWW supporters - flocked to the lecture and their expressions of dissent did much to enliven the evening.112

Although eager to become a published author, Lloyd Ross found that, as a busy WEA tutor, he had little free time to devote to writing and research. Eventually an attempt was made to help him along. The Professor of Economics at Otago University in Dunedin, Allan Fisher, was a man of influence. Having been largely responsible for securing Lloyd Ross's appointment in the first place,113 he now was responsible for a second act of beneficence. Fisher was a friend of Professor Douglas Copland of Melbourne University, who among other things was the Australasian representative of the Rockefeller Foundation of New York. Fisher was able to persuade Copland that Lloyd Ross deserved an opportunity to study in England.114 Accordingly, in March 1929, Lloyd Ross was awarded a Rockefeller Fellowship,115 which covered the expenses of a year's study abroad. His intention was to go to Manchester University and undertake research into trade

112. AH, 10 December 1928, p.47; BDT, 27 October 1928.
113. TRC 236, 1:2/3.
114. Ibid., 2-3, 14.
115. NLA MS 3939, Box 25, Certificate from Rockefeller Foundation, 21 March 1929.
unionism under Professor Henry Clay, who had pioneered the academic study of industrial relations in the United Kingdom.116

Lloyd Ross left Dunedin at the end of September 1929. He arrived in Sydney on 4 October and so was on hand to witness Labor's landslide victory in the snap election of 12 October 1929.117 In a post-election commentary written for a New Zealand newspaper he emphasised that Labor's triumph represented a victory for the status quo. Scullin had won because the electorate, fearing wage cuts, was not prepared to countenance the Bruce-Page government's obvious attempt, by means of its contentious Maritime Services Bill, to dismantle the arbitration system.118 In an ironic twist (ironic given his deep interest in labour politics) Lloyd Ross was removing himself even further from local developments just as an historic moment in the fortunes of the Australian labour movement was opening up: his departure neatly coincided with the advent of the Great Depression. After entrusting Bob and Ethel Ross with the care of their infant daughter Marea Lloyd and Stina sailed from Melbourne at the end of November, reaching England early in the new year.119

116. TRC 236, 1:2/14.
117. Lloyd Ross diary, 30 September 1929, 1 October 1929, 4 October 1929.
118. Lloyd Ross, 'The Australian Elections', Evening Star, 26 October 1929 (in NLA MS 3939, Box 25).
119. Lloyd Ross, letter to author, 21 August 1983; diary, 3 January 1930.
On arriving in Manchester Lloyd Ross was forced to quickly rearrange his schedule. Professor Clay, it transpired, was about to leave the university to take up a position with the Bank of England. Lloyd Ross's sojourn in the north of England was, as a result, confined to a single academic term. During this period he visited the textile towns of Lancashire where he discussed developments in the field of industrial relations with local trade union officials. Back at the university he renewed his friendship with Ralph Gibson, who had come to Manchester to write a thesis on the economic effects of unemployment insurance. Near the end of his brief sojourn he prepared a farewell gift for the city in the form of an article for a local labour newspaper in which he discussed the shortcomings of the Queensland variant of State socialism.

In April Lloyd Ross moved south, transferring to the London School of Economics where he resumed his study of trade unionism under a new supervisor, C.M. Lloyd. In addition he dutifully sat through some extremely esoteric lectures on economics given by Professor T.E.

123. TRC 236, 1:2/15.
Gregory, who was about to accompany the egregious Niemeyer on his visit to Australia.124

Whilst in London Lloyd Ross was able to come into contact with a number of illustrious left-wing figures. He met G.D.H. Cole and R.H. Tawney and attended a discussion group conducted by Harold Laski.125 He toured the House of Commons in the company of the Melbourne-born historian and transient MP, Marion Phillips,126 while on 10 May he paid a visit to his father's old mentor, Tom Mann, who was living in Kent.127 Back in the metropolis he ran into another former Melbourne University Labor Club stalwart in the person of Macmahon Ball, who likewise was studying in London on a Rockefeller Scholarship.128

It was readily apparent, however, that the tide of events increasingly threatened to overshoot the neat categories deployed by the academic economists and social improvers whose collective expertise Lloyd Ross was so eager to draw upon. In his travels outside London and the Home Counties he was able to observe the growing impact of the Depression. He had already been struck by the high incidence of poverty and unemployment in Liverpool129 and

125. Ibid.; TRC 236, 1:2/15.
126. Lloyd Ross, 'An Australian Abroad', _UV_, 13 September 1930, p.4.
127. Lloyd Ross diary, 10 May 1930 and p.237; 'An Australian Abroad'.
128. Lloyd Ross diary, 15 June 1930.
129. 'A Young Australian on Manchester Experiences', _UV_, 19 April 1930, p.4.
the cotton towns of Lancashire but it was only after he visited the Rhondda coal district in Wales that he came to realise the full magnitude of the economic plight that had befallen the Western world. By 1930 almost half the population in the valley was dependent on the dole or relief work.

When the summer vacation came round, Lloyd and Stina toured the continent. Their itinerary took in Scandinavia (Stina's family was Swedish), Berlin, the passion play at Oberammergau, Socialist Vienna and the Salzburg Festival, Switzerland, Paris and the Netherlands. In Zurich Lloyd met the staff of the Socialist International and in Amsterdam he visited the headquarters of its trade union counterpart, the International Federation of Trade Unions. But it was already clear that the masses were beginning to look elsewhere for salvation from the Depression. Wherever the Rosses went in Europe the news bulletins were dominated by reports of the rapid rise of the Nazi Party in Germany. Lloyd Ross was visiting Geneva as a guest of the League of Nations when news was received that the Nazis had gained a dramatic

130. 'An Australian Abroad', ibid., 21 June 1930, p.8.
increase in their vote in the 1930 election for the Reichstag. It was evident that trouble was on the horizon. Earlier, during a hiking tour in Austria, Lloyd and Stina had encountered a group of young Nazi fanatics marching along in military formation. The young Australian couple, in their antipodean innocence, found the experience completely disturbing.

The Ross's year in England duly ended in December 1930. Stina returned to New Zealand via Melbourne while Lloyd spent the first six weeks of 1931 touring the United States. He spent a weekend at the Brookwood Labor College in New York state - where Mark Starr now taught - and later visited the socialist mayor of Milwaukee. Travelling ever westward, he reached New Zealand by way of Vancouver and the Pacific.

Lloyd Ross arrived back in Depression-stricken Dunedin with his ideological fervour thoroughly reactivated. In the light of mass unemployment and endless financial and political crises it seemed as if the days of capitalism were well and truly numbered. Throughout 1931 he awaited 'the collapse of the economic system that has existed for

133. TRC 236, 1:2/16.
three centuries'.  

In a newspaper interview on his return he noted that 'all shades of politics from Labor to Conservatism seemed to be caught in a whirlwind of economic change that threatened to destroy them'.

Responding to the situation, Lloyd Ross tirelessly attempted to convey his sense of crisis to everyone around him. Already an experienced broadcaster, he delivered a series of radio talks on Depression-related issues. He also presided over a WEA class which investigated the numerous proposals to reform the banking and credit system that were a feature of the Depression years. In the course of such activities the impartiality expected of a WEA teacher must have been hard to maintain at times. As a good socialist Lloyd Ross naturally assumed that any attempt to overcome the evils of the Depression while leaving the capitalist system intact was bound to be fraudulent. Warming to this theme, he eventually published a pamphlet in which he sought to expose the fallacies of Major C.H. Douglas, who headed the world-wide Douglas Credit movement, easily the most influential of the various credit reform movements at this time.

136. Lloyd Ross, 'Education of To-morrow', Kurow-Wharekuri Schools' Jubilee Souvenir, Kurow, 1932, p.18 (copy in NLA MS 3939, Box 41).
137. NLA MS 3939, Box 25, extract from untitled New Zealand newspaper, 18 April 1931.
138. Otago Daily Times, 8 April 1932 (in NLA MS 3939, Box 42).
Meanwhile, during odd gaps in his busy teaching programme, Lloyd Ross continued with the task of trying to complete his history of the Australian labour movement. Immediate publication was still out of the question, however. With the advent of the Depression the material that had to be encompassed was expanding all the time. In London C.M. Lloyd had suggested that Lloyd Ross should not publish anything until he had covered 'the important events in recent years'. Lloyd Ross accepted this advice, but he still chafed at the consequent delay. Eager to see his ideas gain some circulation, he eventually decided to publish selected aspects of his research on a work-in-progress basis. From mid-1932 onwards a series of articles incorporating his latest thinking on the political ramifications of the Depression began to appear in various learned journals in Australia and North America.

As an Australian living in New Zealand, and having recently toured Europe and North America, Lloyd Ross was in an excellent position to take a broad view of developments. Indeed at this stage he had every intention of undertaking a detailed comparative study of the world-wide response to the Depression. As a socialist he readily assumed that in their efforts to obscure the true significance of the Depression capitalist societies all over the world were

140. NLA MS 3939, Box 12, Lloyd Ross, curriculum vitae (1932).
bound to deploy a common set of stratagems. Credulity and charlatanism knew no territorial boundaries. But for the moment at least, given the complexity of the crisis, it was hard enough keeping up with events just on the local front. In his initial attempts to arrive at a systematic view of the Depression - in 1932 and 1933 - Lloyd Ross largely concentrated on developments in Australia and New Zealand.

The decision by Lloyd Ross to narrow his focus was eminently understandable. Although confining his attention to the antipodes he still found himself confronted with a complex web of events that needed to be disentangled. From the point of view of assessing how far the capitalist world was not adjusting to the realities of the Depression, New Zealand alone served as an excellent case study. In examining local developments Lloyd Ross boldly entered the field of political pathology, even though he scorned any pretence of clinical detachment. He approached the task of assessing Depression-style politics with a growing sense of urgency in the light of the willingness shown by many New Zealanders - including leading members of the Labour Party - to champion the Douglas Credit scheme. The search for a panacea, he also noted, was invariably accompanied by an attempt to create some scapegoat or whipping-boy to take

141. Cf. 'Mr. Lloyd Ross States His Case', New Zealand Worker, 12 April 1933 (photocopy supplied by National Library of New Zealand).
the blame for all the problems of the post-1929 era. In New Zealand the victim chosen for this purpose was the country's internationally renowned compulsory arbitration system. Set up in 1894, during an earlier depression, the arbitration system was now seen by the government of the day as bearing the responsibility for maintaining an artificially high level of wages and prices. Its future existence was in doubt at a time when fiscal restraint had become the order of the day.142

The reformist zeal of the 1890s, New Zealand being regarded as a social laboratory, had long since been disowned. Efforts by the state to bolster prosperity and security had led to the creation of an inert mass of self-satisfied small farmers and home owners who had little sympathy for those New Zealanders less fortunate than themselves. State intervention in the economy still flourished but it was no longer seen as a prelude to social reconstruction. It was instead regarded by most voters as simply a form of pork barrelling. In the light of such cynicism New Zealand's inherent British conservatism threatened to get out of hand. Already censorship and a pervasive mood of anti-communism had done much to stifle the expression of new ideas. 'A dull mud of uniformity and convention has spread across the land of the nineties that seemed so fertile for young and varied growth'.143

The situation in Australia, as depicted by Lloyd Ross, was just as uninspiring. As with New Zealand the pressure of events had, so far, done nothing to shatter long established political habits. The Depression rolled on but Labor - the only party remotely capable of bringing about radical change - was not prepared to abandon its fondness for reformism. Since 1930 zealots of all description - communist sympathisers, advocates of government planning and assorted currency reform fanatics - had gravitated to its ranks. The adhesion of these groups, when added to the existing motley elements already in the party - the liberals, the nationalists, the socialists, the opportunists - meant that Labor had to expend even more of its energy on simply keeping itself intact. Decisive action on its part was out of the question. The attainment of socialism was no nearer than before. Any impetus for change that could be detected had been created by the currency reformers: Labor's most considered response to the Depression was to demand the reorganisation of the nation's finances rather than the socialisation of industry.144

Unable to handle the contradiction between Labor's theoretical rejection of capitalism and its own practical compliance with the existing economic order, the Scullin government collapsed, making way for the conservative

government of Joe Lyons and the United Australia Party.145 The accompanying act of apostasy committed by Lyons was, Lloyd Ross noted, a Depression-style version of the familiar story whereby Labor leaders were discarded whenever their indifference to socialist principles became too blatant to be tolerated any longer by the rank-and-file.146 Scullin's real nemesis, J.T. Lang, was in much the same position himself. Despite his belligerent image, Lang's rearguard resistance to the demands of the London bondholders turned out to be purely symbolic. 'Labour is afraid of the political consequences of repudiation, although few have moral scruples'.147 The inactivity and inveterate caution displayed by Labor's parliamentary leaders - irrespective of their position in the factional spectrum - meant that they were becoming increasingly isolated from rank-and-file Labor supporters who for their part had been thoroughly radicalised as a result of having to contend with wage cuts and unemployment. The historic rift between Labor's socialist wing and the parliamentary leadership had never been wider. The growing polarisation helped to explain why, in several of the states as well as federally, major splits had developed in the Labor Party during 1931 and 1932.148

146. Ibid., p.206.
147. Ibid., p.211.
148. Ibid., pp.211, 214-215, 217.
Given his strong ideological bent, Lloyd Ross tended to believe that success in overcoming the Depression could only be achieved by means of policies which were directly related to a theoretical model of the economy. It hardly mattered what the model was, so long as it did not lose its original purity. Thus a recovery along capitalist lines would necessarily entail a greater acceptance by the voting public of the need for less government regulation of the economy. The only other conceivable way of dispelling the nightmare of mass unemployment was by creating a central authority with the power to implement a grand economic plan along Soviet lines.\(^{149}\)

There was, in Lloyd Ross's scenario, no viable middle course between the pure forms of socialism and capitalism. In reality, as he well knew, the rigid application of abstract formulae was foreign to the spirit of Australian politics. Labor was able to head off laissez-faire policies by threatening to mobilise working-class resentment at possible wage cuts, but its own commitment to achieving greater social control of the forces of production had long since been emptied of meaning as a result of the electorate's refusal to countenance any major overhaul of the existing economic and financial system.\(^{150}\) For his part Lloyd Ross - and in this regard


\(^{150}\) Ibid., p.197.
he was, in his own terms, a typical Labor man himself - was unable to come forward with any feasible suggestions for overcoming the stalemate. In the end he was reduced to fatalism. 'The extent of the capacity for human suffering will be the decisive factor', he mournfully concluded.151

If he could do little to solve the world's problems, Lloyd Ross at least was able to chart his own career. Towards the end of 1932 he put in an application when Sydney University advertised the vacant position of Resident Tutorial Class Lecturer at Newcastle, in whose care lay the responsibility for WEA activities in the Hunter River region. His success in building up the WEA in Dunedin and his trip abroad were regarded as 'exceptional educational achievements' and he was appointed to the post with effect from 13 February 1933.152 He spent his last summer in New Zealand preparing for the trip back to Australia. A host of friends and former students wished him well in his new job. On 12 January one of his former Dunedin students wrote to him expressing 'deep regret that N.Z. is to lose such a LIVE SPARK'.153 New Zealand's loss was Australia's gain. The enthusiasm that had been deployed to such good effect in Dunedin was about to be let

151. Ibid., p.198.
152. NMH, 6 February 1933, p.6; University of Sydney Archives, Senate Minutes, 6 February 1933.
153. NLA MS 3939, Box 12, James Turner to Lloyd Ross, 12 January 1933.
loose on the railwaymen, wharf labourers and metal workers of Newcastle and the coal miners of the surrounding area. In time the impact of this encounter would be felt far beyond the Hunter Valley.
From the outset Lloyd Ross entered into his adult education commitments in the Hunter Valley with characteristic exuberance. His teaching programme for 1933 was unveiled at a meeting of the Council of the Newcastle WEA held on 1 March where it was announced that the new tutor had assumed responsibility for classes in drama and economics and would also teach at Wallsend and the Broadmeadow railway workshops.1

Within a matter of days Lloyd Ross had begun to drum up support for his classes by means of press announcements. He was eager to cast as wide a net as possible, being quick to point out that no political group - whether Communist, Douglas Credit, Langite or UAP - could afford to remain aloof from the activities of the WEA given that they were designed to equip students with 'the knowledge of what is happening to man in the machine age'.2

1. NMH, 3 March 1933, p.8; AH, 10 March 1933, p.32.
On 11 March, the 400 persons who attended a special WEA symposium heard the new tutor give his opening public address in Newcastle. The lecture he delivered was entitled 'The Purpose and Method of History Teaching'. The need for history was the search for an integrating principle, was Lloyd Ross's message. Historians, he noted, besides striving for accuracy, had to select and arrange their material. The presentation of 'an organised sequence of cause and effect, justly proportioned' was the desired goal; various branches of knowledge had to be co-ordinated before historians could begin to delineate the required patterns of continuity and interaction. Pursued in this way, the study of history led to an increased understanding of current problems.

The question of relevance assumed extra significance for Lloyd Ross in the context of the Depression. Insecurity, he noted, tended to encourage dogmatism. Many of the leading scientists, economists and writers of the day were searching for some fundamental object of belief. The interpretation of history put forward by H.G. Wells exemplified this craving for order and unquestioned authority. For his part Lloyd Ross was ready to inform his audience that he would always put his trust in the materialist conception of history: 'it had to be recognised that many worthy ideals held could not find satisfaction if the economic environment were out of joint'. The purpose of the lecture, however, was not to belabour this point 'but to emphasise the need for realising

3. Reported in ibid., 13 March 1933, p.8. See also AH, 10 March 1933, p.32, 10 April 1933, p.46.
the interaction of studies'. Teachers of history should be free to put forward generalised views provided that by so doing they encouraged critical thinking and a tolerance of new concepts on the part of their students. 'History teaching', Lloyd Ross stressed, 'was merely another aspect of the discovery of truth through toleration and the clash of opinions'.

In Newcastle as in Dunedin Lloyd Ross was determined to do his utmost to promote his faith in the 'joyous and tolerant clash of ideas' and 'the fearless pursuit of truth'.4 He considered that these virtues were best personified by the British socialists G.D.H. Cole and John Strachey.5 In marked contrast, pro-labour spokesmen in Australia, who comprised the focus of his own research efforts, seemed completely devoid of the virtue of disinterestedness. Lloyd Ross remained unmoved when confronted with the successive attempts made by local labour men to put forward a coherent programme designed to overcome the economic crisis. Lang's critique of the financial system - which for the embattled Australian bourgeoisie epitomised the ALP's indomitable anti-capitalist spirit - signally failed to exhibit the same comprehensive viewpoint that was displayed by Herbert Morrison and Hugh Dalton when discussing the

4. 'Adventure of Adult Education'.
nationalisation of industry and related financial matters. Lang, for Lloyd Ross, was 'dangerous as [was] Hitler' primarily because he was 'a representative of rotten and sinister forces, not because of his plans'. He needed to be regarded 'as the worst enemy of the type of intellectual planning now expressed at its best by British Labor'.

Lloyd Ross was able to come up with ample evidence to back up his case. Towards the end of March 1933 he travelled to Sydney to attend a WEA-organised symposium at which the topic of discussion was the ALP's ever divisive socialisation objective. He was disturbed by the partisan point scoring. Nobody, it appeared, was prepared to stand back and take a broader view of the labour movement's long-term prospects. Two of the main participants at the conference - E.G. Theodore and Professor John Anderson - were usually noteworthy speakers. E.R. Voigt of the Labor Council and the left-wing ALP figure Bill McNamara were the other leading contributors. But nothing that was said at the conference struck Lloyd Ross as being in any way helpful in defining labour's ultimate goal. 'We heard a repetition of speeches that had been given on many an occasion before, and would be given frequently afterwards'. The speakers 'were too anxious to make debating points, had too many eyes on elections of some kind'. There was no give and take between the warring factions. Labor was accustomed to arriving at

decisions by resorting to the methods of expulsion and suppression rather than toleration and discussion. The party's left-wing critics, for whom Marxism was merely a form of dogmatic theology, or pro-Russian idolatry, were no better. Lloyd Ross found the lack of worthwhile debate at the conference completely dispiriting:

The absence of intelligent discussion, the ignorance of Labour of its own history and principles, and the bitterness of the faction fights increase one's doubt whether Labour can plan and scientifically evolve a path of a new social order.7

After he returned to Newcastle Lloyd Ross presented his own ideas on the significance of the socialisation objective in a public lecture delivered under the auspices of the WEA. In the first part of the lecture he summarised the history of labour's political aims, culminating in the adoption of the 1921 objective. Although the methods of achieving economic emancipation had since been reformulated, socialisation remained Labor's ideal. 'With the depression ...', he observed, 'the radical elements inside the Labour party were again making their presence felt'. Apart from being rejected by the Communist Party the pragmatism of E.G. Theodore was anathema to the 'Left Social Democrats' who figured in the Socialisation Committee which had operated in the New South Wales branch of the party since 1930. In contrast to Theodore's approach members of the Socialisation Committee were trying to formulate 'a comprehensive well-

thought-out plan to establish a socialist state by parliamentary action'. But their plans remained vague, and they still were closer to Theodore than to the Communists, who scorned any idea of achieving socialism through parliamentary majorities. The Socialisation Committee and its network of party units occupied an untenable position. The attempt to reconcile socialism and democracy, Lloyd Ross considered, ran counter to the trend of contemporary politics. 'Fascist developments', he commented, 'in all countries, including Australia, were driving the workers into the ranks of the Communists and making difficult any kind of change through democratic action'.

The collapse of the socialisation units in the ALP, although in a sense predicted in Lloyd Ross's lecture, came even sooner than he anticipated. By the time the WEA's symposium in Sydney got underway it was already widely known that Jack Lang intended to suppress the units. Having aroused widespread enthusiasm for the 1921 objective, the Socialisation Committee was now in a position to challenge Lang's dominance of the party machine. For socialism to mean anything the units had to expand their activities beyond education and agitation to take in organisational matters. Labor's socialists were seeking to elect left-wing candidates to the state executive. They were also increasingly eager to

8. NMH, 1 April 1933, p.12.
set up a network of socialisation cells in the trade unions. Sensing the threat to his authority, Lang proceeded to undermine the appeal of the units by launching his own socialist crusade, with the call going out for 'the socialisation of credit'. Barely a fortnight after Lloyd Ross's lecture, when the annual conference of the state ALP assembled, Lang's followers acted as expected. By a decisive majority the socialisation units were voted out of existence. Labor's socialists, hamstrung by the doctrine of party solidarity, were incapable of mounting any serious resistance. With the factional battle lost, they were immediately hard pressed to ensure that the resulting mood of disillusionment did not presage a full-scale retreat on the ideological front.

From his own experience Lloyd Ross must have realised that the fate of the socialisation units, and the giddy whirl of political life generally, was bound to leave the mass of the population unmoved. The programme of public lectures presented by the Newcastle WEA in the autumn of 1933 attracted 'very poor' audiences¹⁰ and there is no reason to believe that the response to Lloyd Ross's lecture on the 1921 objective was any different. It was hard to find political passion anywhere in the Hunter Valley. WEA classes in economics and international affairs likewise generated only a fitful interest.¹¹ This was only to be expected since a

¹⁰. AH, 10 May 1933, p.64.
¹¹. Ibid., 10 June 1933, p.80, 10 July 1933, p.95; NMH, 22 March 1934, p.9.
'paralysing indifference' in regard to the WEA was the norm.12 Expectations were low at the best of times in Newcastle and the Hunter Valley, with the Depression merely reinforcing existing attitudes. By 1933, having endured more than three years of intense political and economic gloom, Novocastrians wanted to put the experience of the Depression behind them, and to forget about the world's problems.13 They were stoical in the face of suffering.14

Confronted with the traditionally poor response to formal WEA lectures, Lloyd Ross cast around for alternative ways of attracting audiences. Understandably he looked to the methods that had worked so well in New Zealand.15 Thus from the start he considered that workshop classes at lunchtime provided an excellent means of getting more trade unionists involved in WEA activities. This was so obvious a solution, indeed, that such classes were already operating in Newcastle long before his arrival. They commenced in the late 1920s, when the district tutor was C.E. Martin,16 and continued to be held after Martin left the WEA to enter state parliament. The class at the Broadmeadow locomotive sheds that Lloyd Ross inherited in 1933 attracted the support of a

13. TRC 236, 1:2/18.
15. TRC 236, 1:2/18.
16. AH, 1 May 1927, p.51, 1 June 1927, p.70, 10 May 1930, p.143.
number of leading WEA personalities in the early 1930s, notably E.H. Burgmann, whose class studied 'Freud and many other social problems'.

Lloyd Ross quickly established a devoted following among the men at the Broadmeadow workshops. They found his enthusiasm irresistible. A leading member of the class was Tom Hickey, who years later outlined the hectic pace set by the new tutor:

Very soon Lloyd was welcomed to the class at Broadmeadow and we settled down to a stimulating programme on subjects such as economics, political history and current affairs.

The students in the railway class discussed the story of the medium of exchange ranging historically from cowrie shells to bills of exchange & cheques.

At other times the syllabus included an outline of the history of movements involved in the struggle for social reform.

We talked about famous identities from Spartacus to the figures in the Peasants Revolt. Later we gave attention to the utopians from Thomas More & many others who spoke & wrote about the hopes for a better society ... .

(Lloyd Ross himself considered that he had finally made his name at Broadmeadow after the workers voted to grant him an extension of time to complete a lecture on the life of Lenin).

17. Ernest Burgmann Papers, NLA MS 1998, Box 10, T. Hickey to E.H. Burgmann, 28 October 1937; Tom Hickey, 'Notes ... for the information of Mr Stephen Holt' [1985], pp.3-5 (in author's possession).
18. Ibid., pp.5-6.
The lunchtime class had flourished long before Lloyd Ross came on to the scene. But by way of contrast amateur theatre, the second device successfully used in Dunedin, hitherto had not figured prominently in adult education activities in the Hunter Valley. Lloyd Ross's drama class of 1933 was a new venture, 'previous classes being in English or art of expression'.20 In line with his interest in the subject, he delivered, on 24 April, a WEA lecture in which he traced the history of drama beginning with the ancient Greeks.21 His commitment was evident in other ways as well. On 24 June members of the WEA Debating Club staged a re-enactment of the meeting of the Second Congress of the Soviets, at which the formation of Lenin's government was announced.22 Using John Reed's Ten Days that Shook the World as his basic source,23 Lloyd Ross was able to produce a one-act play which allowed everyone present to be a participant: the speeches were interspersed with applause and interjections from the audience.24 WEA supporters were informed that the re-enactment was 'the first of a series of reproductions of important historical events to be given by the Debating Club'. It was proposed to build a stage so that a complete series of similar productions could be performed.25 Within a few weeks the Debating Club had

20. NMH, 22 March 1934, p.9.
21. Ibid., 24 April 1933, p.4.
22. AH, 10 July 1933, pp.95-96; NMH, 19 June 1933, p.6.
24. NMH, 8 November 1933, p.11.
25. AH, 10 July 1933, p.96.
staged a second re-enactment, this time of a plenary session of the League of Nations at Geneva.26

With work on the stage proceeding apace it was decided to establish a Newcastle WEA Drama Club. The group's inaugural performance took place on 26 August. A trio of plays was put on and more performances were promised for September and October.27 At the same time drama activities continued to flourish under the auspices of the debating club. On 19 September a repeat performance of The Second Congress of Soviets was staged at the Strand Theatre in Cessnock. Billed as 'the first working-class play that has ever been staged in Cessnock', the performance was arranged with a view to raising funds for the unemployed workers' movement. Apart from Lloyd Ross, the 'strong cast' included Jimmy Kidd, the former leader of the socialisation units in Newcastle.28 Kidd's involvement indicated that, so far as the socialists of Newcastle were concerned, the ideological enthusiasm that Lang had sought to stifle in April was now being channelled, under Lloyd Ross's direction, into left-wing cultural activities.

26. Ibid., 10 June 1933, p.80, 10 August 1933, p.115; NMH, 31 July 1933, p.6. Lloyd Ross had earlier staged a re-enactment of a meeting of the League of Nations in Dunedin (see NLA MS 3939, Box 42, N.Z. League of Nations Union (Otago Branch) Tenth Annual Report and Balance Sheet April 1931 to March 1932, pp.5-6). He was a keen supporter of the League of Nations Union in Newcastle (NMH, 7 March 1933, p.4, 10 June 1933, p.8).
27. AH, 10 August 1933, p.115, 11 September 1933, p.132; Hunter River Highway, 26 August 1933, p.5.
On 7 November another performance of The Second Congress of Soviets was arranged in a bid to commemorate the anniversary of the Russian revolution. Lloyd Ross's fame as a left-wing dramatist was growing all the time and his plans for the future were expanding accordingly. Using WEA drama activities as the starting off point, he proposed to forge an alliance between proletarian art and pro-labour politics. His ambition in this regard was boosted by a seemingly innocuous decision made in faraway England. In the middle of 1933 the British Trades Union Congress announced that it proposed to ensure that the centenary of the trial of the Tolpuddle Martyrs was duly commemorated. Working-class celebrations of this kind were Lloyd Ross's forte and adding an Australian flavour to the Tolpuddle centenary was a challenge that he could not resist.

The cult of the Tolpuddle Martyrs centred on six agricultural labourers from the village of Tolpuddle in Dorset who, in 1834, were sentenced to seven years' penal servitude in Australia for the crime of having administered secret oaths. Their real offence was to have dared to form a branch of the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers in an effort to block wage cuts. The treatment handed out to them provoked a storm of protest from trade unionists and radicals which did not let up until the six men were pardoned and allowed to return home.

29. NMH, 8 November 1933, p.11; The Soviets To-day, November 1933, p.15; RL, 27 September 1933, p.10.
30. LC, 31 August 1933, p.6.
In recognition of their ordeal, the men of Tolpuddle were posthumously given an honoured place in the annals of British trade unionism and working-class politics. Members of the early British Labour Party held their name in high regard, but the official act of canonisation did not come until their centenary year, at a time when the Labour Party's own fortunes badly needed restoring. Three years earlier the financial problems caused by the Depression had precipitated the apostasy of Ramsay MacDonald, who became the titular head of the Tory-dominated National Government. In the ensuing election Labour won less than a tenth of the seats; with conservatism in the ascendancy it was natural to assume that the expected sacrifices required for the sake of recovery should be borne by those least able to afford them. Against this background the TUC sought to rekindle working-class morale by reminding trade unionists of the heroism and fortitude shown by the men of Tolpuddle. A full round of centenary events was organised. A commemorative medallion was struck and an essay competition organised. Martyrological fervour culminated at the TUC's 1934 annual congress held at Weymouth in Dorset. During the celebrations, which commenced on 30 August, a memorial play commissioned by the TUC (Six Men of Dorset) was performed. Other items on the programme included folk dancing, a brass band contest, a grand procession through the streets of Dorchester (where the

trial was held) and the unveiling of assorted plaques and headstones.33 A mass meeting was addressed by the redoubtable Ernest Bevin.34

The TUC's enthusiasm for the Tolpuddle centenary gradually came under the notice of the labour press in Australia. Melbourne's Labor Call duly republished the English press report in which the forthcoming round of ceremonies was referred to.35 Early in 1934 the same newspaper published an official letter on the subject written by the secretary of the TUC (Walter Citrine) to his Australian counterpart (C.A. Crofts, secretary of the Australasian Council of Trade Unions). In the letter the ACTU was specifically encouraged to plan an Australian commemoration of the Tolpuddle Martyrs to coincide with the TUC congress.36

Unquestionably the TUC needed to actively promote the centenary for all it was worth. Martyrological enthusiasm was by no means universal in 1934. In England left-wing critics of the TUC - notably the Communist Party - felt uneasy about the cult of Tolpuddle. Idealising 1834, from their standpoint, was designed to distract attention from the TUC's unwillingness to take on the class enemy in

35. LC, 31 August 1933, p.6.
36. Ibid., 18 January 1934, p.6.
1934. The TUC paid homage to the 'respectability and moderate attitude' of the Tolpuddle men while ignoring the many contemporaneous acts of heroism displayed by the burgeoning urban proletariat. The Communist Party of Great Britain was prepared to insist that 'what is really important to the working class to-day is not simply who the Tolpuddle Martyrs were, but what was the movement of which they were a part'.

The situation was different in Australia. Local left-wing unionists, in contrast to their English comrades, had no need to distance themselves from the cult of Tolpuddle. In Australia the link between the Tolpuddle centenary and official trade unionism was exiguous at best. Despite the ACTU's awareness of the centenary, no high-level official trade union ceremony commemorating Tolpuddle took place in Australia in 1934. The door was instead left open for the militants to proceed with their own unofficial counter-celebrations. In time this opportunity was fully exploited.

At the start of 1934 left-wing workers in Australia already had on hand a campaign whose propaganda requirements had a place for the sacred name of Tolpuddle. The Communist Party organisation International Labour Defence had come forward with the claim that the New South Wales UAP government

was about to add to its armoury of reactionary legislation by enacting a Disloyal Organisations Bill under whose provisions it would be able to proscribe the Communist Party and its fraternal organisations in the trade union movement. It was in this context that the Communist Party sought to take over the myth of Tolpuddle. The aim of the impending legislation, anti-DOB spokesmen insisted, was to curtail the activities of trade union militants. It embodied the same vindictive spirit that had been displayed by the magistrates who sentenced the Dorset labourers to seven years' transportation. Workers should emulate the heroic qualities of the Tolpuddle Martyrs by joining in the campaign of resistance to the Disloyal Organisations Bill. The similarity between 1834 and 1934 was perfectly obvious. Trade union militants, like the six labourers before them, were organising resistance to depressed wages and conditions. In Victoria the striking Wonthaggi coalminers already had shown what could be done in this regard. The enemies of the Australian working class - Joe Lyons, Attorney-General Latham and the UAP Premiers of Victoria and New South Wales - seemed intent on forcing workers back to the conditions that prevailed at the time of Tolpuddle. The Crimes Act and the Disloyal Organisations Bill were the modern equivalents of transportation to the

39. WW, 15 September 1933, p.1, 29 September 1933, p.3; Australian Labor Defender, September 1933, p.3. The Communist Party's fears regarding the possibility of a Disloyal Organisations Bill being enacted were by no means groundless. See Joseph Lyons Papers, NLA MS 4851, Box 2, Folder 11, J.G. Latham to B.S.B. Stevens, 6 April 1933.
colonies. The only practical way to commemorate the men of Tolpuddle was through resolute industrial and political struggle.40

The full array of Communist Party fraternal organisations fell in behind the Tolpuddle campaign. On 8 April 1934 over 300 supporters of the Militant Minority Movement (which organised rank-and-file workers) gathered at the Eveleigh Social club in Castlereagh Street to commemorate the centenary of the trial of the 'six victims of early capitalism'. There was speechmaking and dancing, and a Balalaika orchestra was in attendance. During the course of the evening a left-wing spokesman (E.A. Knight) took the opportunity to reiterate the similarities between 1834 and 1934. Reaction was once more in the ascendance. 'We must', Knight stated, 'resist this by building the united front from below'.41

The burgeoning Tolpuddle cult was a perfect opportunity for Lloyd Ross to refurbish his own left-wing credentials. As a devoted student of history he instinctively supported the idea that it was important to commemorate heroic episodes in labour's past. By the spring of 1933 he was already using his influence to actively promote the centenary. This was some four months before the militants first lisped the name of Tolpuddle. Early in

41. WW, 13 April 1934, p.2; RL, 28 March 1934, p.10.
September it was announced that the Newcastle Council of the WEA had resolved to honour the men of Tolpuddle. A series of lectures would be organised in conjunction with an exhibition covering trade union history. The intention was to make the citizens of Newcastle more aware of the background, methods and purpose of trade unionism. As a prelude to the main event the WEA Debating Club proposed, sometime early in December, to enact a pageant depicting a series of famous episodes in working-class history.42

The idea of staging a pro-labour pageant came straight from Lloyd Ross. Swept along by pro-Tolpuddle sentiment, he readily assumed the responsibility for staging a theatrical production relating to the event. The form the play would take was already clear: Lloyd Ross hoped to come up with a left-wing counterpart to Noel Coward's 1931 play Cavalcade.43 Depicting the Great War's impact on a ruling class family, Cavalcade aroused a storm of patriotic fervour when it appeared on the London stage.44 Australian audiences were able to experience the delights of Cavalcade two years later, after the play was turned into a motion picture. Political passion again influenced the audience's reaction. A Country Party member of parliament was so moved

42. NMH, 4 September 1933, p.5; LC, 14 September 1933, p.3.
43. TRC 236, 1:2/21.
by the film that he wept.45 Conversely, the Communist Party ideologue Esmonde Higgins was extremely critical. He wrote a review in which he contrasted the film's technical excellence with its ideological backwardness.46

Lloyd Ross was eager to expand upon Higgins's remarks. A left-wing riposte to Cavalcade, while no doubt lacking the technical finesse of the original, would do much to show up its ideological failings. The anti-working class orientation of Cavalcade had to be rebutted. There could be no delay. At a meeting of the WEA drama class on 26 June Lloyd Ross delivered a lecture entitled 'Noel Coward and the Younger Set'.47 By early September rehearsals for his own left-wing pageant - which defiantly bore the title Labor's Cavalcade - were well underway.48

Even as Lloyd Ross was working on his play his friends in the Newcastle WEA, besides promising support for the venture, were laying the groundwork for the associated Tolpuddle centenary exhibition. During the spring of 1933 old minute books, emblems, banners and other union records and memorabilia were tracked down. Easily the most assiduous of the researchers was Alex McLagan of the Coal Trimmers' Union, who undertook to write a history of his union.49

46. RL, 14 June 1933, p.6.
47. NMH, 26 June 1933, p.3.
48. Ibid., 14 August 1933, p.6, 28 August 1933, p.6.
49. AH, 10 November 1933, p.15.
In line with the initial publicity Labor's Cavalcade was performed on Saturday, 2 December 1933. Staging the pageant turned out to be 'one of the most successful events in the history of the Northern Branch'. The cast came entirely from the WEA and the performance attracted a full house. The audience witnessed a sequence of choruses and dramatised scenes drawn from five centuries of working-class history. The various components of the play were linked together as follows:

1. Chorus - Pages from a Utopian Story Book.
   Episode 1. John Ball by the Market Cross.
   14th Cent.
   SCENE I. Diggers before Cromwell. 17th Century.
   Episode 2. Muir in Court.
4. Chorus - Lovett, Cobbett, Place and Owen.
   SCENE II. Tolpuddle Martyrs - 1834.
5. Chorus - Inventors - Metcalfe, Telford, Brindley and Stephenson.
6. Chorus - Unhappy England - "God Save the People".
   SCENE III. Between Two Worlds.
7. Chorus - Refugees.
   Episode 4. Eight Hour Day.
   SCENE IV. Eureka. 1854.
    SCENE V. Pioneers.

   FINALE. 51

50. Ibid., 10 February 1934, p.31; NMH, 22 March 1934, p.9.
51. Hunter River Highway, November 1933, pp.22-23 (copy in NLA MS 3939, Box 43).
A repeat performance of Labor's Cavalcade took place on 10 March 1934, just two days before the exhibition of trade union memorabilia got underway. On the day the exhibition opened the first of the public lectures on labour history and trade unionism were given by Lloyd Ross and another WEA stalwart, G.V. Portus. In his lecture Lloyd Ross examined the career of William Lane. The lecturer's purpose was frankly inspirational. Lane deserved to be revered. 'No other man', Lloyd Ross commented, 'has been able so to combine organising ability and theoretical knowledge, literary genius and deep idealism, love of humanity with a willingness to sacrifice all'. Following the oration the audience was free to peruse the exhibition. Much worthwhile material had been rounded up for their edification. Early union minute books, first editions of famous labour newspapers, autographed books, posters, cartoons and literary relics relating to William Lane were among the items on display. But despite the emphasis on working-class history only a few of the people who patronised the exhibition were trade unionists. Many unions, Lloyd Ross later complained, 'were so apathetic or tired or lazy as to ignore our invitation to send exhibits or attend'. Their apathy, he felt, was a further sign of the labour movement's

52 NMH, 10 March 1934, p.2, 13 March 1934, p.5; AH, 10 February 1934, p.31, 10 April 1934, p.63.
53. '"New Australia"', NMH, 14 March 1934, p.5.
54. AH, 10 March 1934, p.48; NMH, 13 March 1934, p.8.
55. Lloyd Ross and Alex McLagan, From the Martyrs to the Masses, Sydney, [1934], 'Introduction'.
demoralisation. 'Internal strife wastes the energies that might have been devoted for a day or so to recapturing the idealism of the past'.

The limited appeal of the exhibition failed to dampen Lloyd Ross's enthusiasm for cultural activities. In the weeks ahead he was able to arrange a Sydney production of Labor's Cavalcade. At the same time he set about producing a second working-class chronicle. A suitable subject already was at hand. One of the grievances of the Newcastle militants at this time related to the annual May Day festivity. In Newcastle the day was a public holiday, but left-wing workers felt that the way it was celebrated still left a lot to be desired. Under existing custom Newcastle's May Day holiday was celebrated on the first Monday in May and was thus treated as merely the pretext for yet another long Australian weekend. Affronted by such levity, Newcastle's militants wanted May Day to be converted into a genuine proletarian festival, with the break in the working week actually occurring on 1 May instead of the following Monday. Some time early in the autumn of 1934 the Newcastle and District May Day committee approached Lloyd Ross for suggestions as to how May Day could best be singled

56. Ibid., p.15.
57. Railroad, 10 April 1934, p.15; SMH, 21 May 1934, p.5; AH, 10 April 1934, p.63, 10 May 1934, p.77.
out as a day of celebration. Ever willing to oblige, Lloyd Ross promptly decided to come up with a May Day equivalent of Labor's Cavalcade. With this end in mind, he compiled another working-class chronicle; it bore the title May Day Through the Ages.59

After recruiting another cast from among WEA supporters in Newcastle (including railway employees drawn from his lunchtime class),60 Lloyd Ross pressed ahead with his accustomed vigour, completing his latest exercise in left-wing drama in the allotted time. There were three performances of May Day Through the Ages: on 28 and 30 April, and on 1 May.61 The play depicted the evolution of May Day from its origins as a medieval folk festival up until its conversion into a day of celebration throughout Soviet Russia. It comprised the following components:

Act 2 - May Day as the Struggle for Shorter Hours.
   Scene 1 - Convention of American Union, 1884.
   Scene 2 - Chicago Parade, 1886.
   Scene 3 - The Haymarket Riots.
   Scene 4 - Under the Shadow of the Gallows.
Act 3 - May Day is Proletarian.
   Scene 1 - Lenin Writes a Leaflet, 1896.
   Scene 2 - A Secret Printing Press.
   Scene 3 - To the Woods.
Act 4 - May Day is International.
   Scene 1 - The Second International.
   Scene 2 - The Radio Shows a United Front.
Act 5 - May Day Triumphant.
   Scene 1 - For a Trade Union Delegation.
   Scene 2 - To Moscow.
   Scene 3 - May Day in Russia.

59. TRC 236, 1:2/21; WW, 6 April 1934, p.5.
60. TRC 236, 1:2/21.
61. NMH, 28 April 1934, p.2; RL, 25 April 1934, p.2.
Scene 4 - Building.
Scene 5 - A Political Burlesque.
Scene 6 - To Lenin's Tomb.
Scene 7 - Tribute and Inspiration.62

May Day Through the Ages proved to be 'another dramatic success' and like Labor's Cavalcade it attracted an enthusiastic audience.63 For Lloyd Ross, the play's real success lay in its fusion of artistic endeavour, collective effort and social purpose. 'We took 40 people, few of whom had been on the stage before Labour's Cavalcade, and built up a play out of their daily experiences, their social emotions and their political sensitiveness'. A passion for drama, it was clear, could flourish alongside an interest in political and economic problems. It was possible to save workers from the sentimentality of Hollywood and the commercial theatre by developing their practical appreciation of the arts through organised activities at the workplace and in drama groups where participation and self-expression were encouraged. 'When the State (the producer) has withered away and the members run the play, the ideal class drama will have been discovered'.64

Lloyd Ross's intense involvement with the Newcastle WEA lasted barely a year. Early in March 1934 he was appointed to the position of Acting Assistant Director of

62. AH, 10 April 1934, pp.63-64, 10 May 1934, p.78.
63. NMH, 30 April 1934, p.4; AH, 10 May 1934, p.77.
64. Ibid., p.78.
adult education classes at Sydney University.65 Leaving Newcastle on 10 May,66 he arrived in Sydney with his enthusiasm unabated. There was no limit to what could be achieved. Adult education, he believed, while needing to seek greater popular support, still provided an unrivalled opportunity for dissenters and activists of all kinds to develop their ideas, especially when compared with the situation in their erstwhile haven, the trade union movement and working-class politics generally: 'the Workers' Movement', Lloyd Ross was later publicly to declare in 1934, 'has not been able to escape the stifling Australian attitude to things of the mind'.67 ALP-style reformism, which presupposed simple solutions and quick results, was inimical to critical thinking. Under its baleful influence the labour movement had become prey to the worst forms of philistinism. Vital energy was dissipated in routine trade union and parliamentary activities; factionalism and disunity led to cynicism and disillusionment; the leisure time of most workers was devoted entirely to watching sport and the cinema.68 It was up to the WEA to combat this mental inertia.69

65. Information supplied by Kenneth E. Smith, University Archivist, University of Sydney, 3 April 1984; NMH, 12 April 1934, p.6.
66. Ibid., 4 May 1934, p.8.
67. Martyrs to Masses, p.58.
68. Ibid.
69. Lloyd Ross, 'The Workers are Hungry', AH, 11 June 1934, pp.88-89.
A wider acceptance of new ideas involved constant struggle. Nothing could be taken for granted. Lloyd Ross at this time was worried that the despair of the Depression years might give way to a mood of complacency as the economic crisis eased. Seizing upon the lower levels of unemployment and a modest revival in business confidence, supporters of the status quo had proclaimed a 'recovery'. Against this background Lloyd Ross felt it necessary to counterpose the evidence of continuing discontent. Clergymen, trade union officials and the Labor Party, he noted, insisted upon drawing attention to the plight of the many Australians still unemployed.70

Lloyd Ross cited the emergence of factory newspapers and workshop committees, along with increased strike activity, as evidence that dissatisfaction was also affecting rank-and-file trade unionists.71 His criticism of trade union conservatism was enlivened by the belief that support for a more dynamic approach to industrial issues was building up all the time. As a result of his WEA experience in Newcastle he had encountered the enthusiasm of workers at first hand. He was prepared to look outside the formal trade union hierarchy for signs of new life. His expectations were high. Activists, he considered, enjoyed an unbounded opportunity to arouse widespread interest in labour's

70. Lloyd Ross, 'The Depression in Australia', University of Toronto Quarterly, vol.3, 1933-34, p.382.
71. 'Workers are Hungry', pp.88-89.
fundamental objectives. Aware of the futility of factionalism and bureaucracy, workers now demanded greater solidarity and militancy on the part of their officials. The WEA, Lloyd Ross considered, would gain new strength by building up its links with a radicalised working class that was hungry for ideas. 'The W.E.A. must go to the masses.'

Although expressed rather effusively, Lloyd Ross's ideas undoubtedly bore fruit at the practical level, being reflected in his day-to-day teaching activities. In Sydney he continued the practice of conducting lunchtime classes for workers, with the railwaymen again comprising his staunchest supporters. Besides running a WEA class at the university, he conducted lunchtime classes (in which he examined 'social problems') at the railway workshops at Chullora, Eveleigh and Enfield. Later he agreed to take charge of a speakers' class organised by the Australian Railways Union.

The most obvious sign of Lloyd Ross's willingness to encourage pro-labour enthusiasm remained his involvement in the Tolpuddle centenary celebrations. For the August issue of the WEA magazine *Australian Highway* he prepared a review.

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72. Ibid.
74. ABL, Australian Railways Union, NSW Branch, E89/7/1, Educational and Organising Committee Minutes (15 July 1932-16 August 1935), 28 September 1934, 14 December 1934.
of the special memorial volume put out by the TUC (*The Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle*), praising the work as 'a worthy record'. Revivalist history of this kind, as opposed to publishing dreary treatises on economics, was easily the best way to justify labour's cause: 'for those who know that Labour must constantly be renewing its mighty youth, the volume will serve as an inspiration'. Lloyd Ross himself was responsible for some of the research that went into the book. As a reward for his assistance, he received a copy signed by Walter Citrine; other labour supporters who contributed material to the book included Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Stafford Cripps, Harold Laski, G.D.H. Cole and George Bernard Shaw.

In a further move Lloyd Ross was responsible for arranging a production in Sydney of the commemorative Tolpuddle play. After obtaining the TUC's permission, he went ahead with the staging of *Six Men of Dorset* on 1 September, which coincided with the climax of the Dorchester festivities. The cast included his brother Edgar as well as Joe Bourke and Jack Sweeney, two young men who had formerly been associated with the socialisation units. The production, while perhaps not polished, was undoubtedly effective in drawing attention to the significance of the centenary. Although for the most part pleased with the response the play received, Lloyd Ross could not help observing that, as with

76. Lloyd Ross's copy is in NLA MS 3939, Box 61.
77. *NMH*, 20 February 1934, p.9.
all his previous Tolpuddle efforts, hardly any official trade union support for the project was forthcoming.78

At about this same time the final touches were being added to an official WEA commemorative Tolpuddle booklet. Entitled From the Martyrs to the Masses, this publication was intended to make some of the trade union documents exhibited in Newcastle earlier in the year more accessible to a wider public. From the Martyrs to the Masses was the joint effort of Lloyd Ross and his trade union collaborator Alex McLagan. McLagan contributed a chapter based upon information compiled from the early rule books of the Carrington Coal Trimmers' Union79 and in addition supplied material relating to the 1890 maritime strike. Lloyd Ross, besides preparing some editorial comments, provided material on the Tolpuddle Martyrs, early Australian trade unionism and the contemporary scene. There were several reasons why he and the WEA in general wanted to publicise the results of the Newcastle exercise in labour history: 'partly because they should be of interest to social historians, partly as an encouragement to others to find inspiration for the present by appreciating the ideals and struggles of the past; and partly as an expression of our adult educational theory of encouraging the

78. AH, 11 August 1934, p.126, 10 September 1934, p.142; SMH, 3 September 1934, p.5; statement by Lloyd Ross, 31 March 1984 (in author's possession).
79. Cf. ABL, Waterside Workers' Federation, Newcastle Coal Trimmers' Branch, E166/1/4, Minutes of Executive, 26 September 1933.
participation of workers in cultural and intellectual achievements.'80

Although designed to be a commemorative publication, the Tolpuddle booklet steered clear of hagiography. The British Communists had already proclaimed the limitations of the Tolpuddle cult when viewed from the standpoint of militant struggle. The concept of martyrdom, for similar reasons, did not go down well with Lloyd Ross either when he thought about the matter. Martyrdom implied isolated individuals suffering in the face of overwhelming adversity whereas trade union militants ('the masses') sought to organise collective resistance to the capitalist system. The cult of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, Lloyd Ross already had discovered, was rather too exotic for antipodean tastes. All attempts to convert the centenary into a popular festival had foundered upon the unimaginativeness of local trade union officials. 'It is', he was forced to admit, 'only through the English Labour Movement that the six Men of Dorset have exercised any influence on Australian working-class development'. Once they were transported to Australia, the Tolpuddle Martyrs dropped out of history. In their passivity they resembled the early convicts, who could be roused to rebellion, but not revolution. 'Until the development of capitalist methods in the towns, there is no trace of a radical movement lasting longer than the disconnected grievances of the passing moment'.81

80. Martyrs to Masses, 'Introduction'.
81. Ibid., pp.10-12.
The round of Tolpuddle celebrations organised by the WEA concluded on 22 September, when a conference on trade unionism was held at the Trades Hall. Most of the accompanying publicity material was written in Lloyd Ross's customary style. It was stated that the aim of the conference was to focus attention upon the labour movement's underlying continuity of purpose which tended to be obscured as a result of factionalism. Participants were expected to concentrate upon, and revitalise their belief in, the essential tenets of unionism: 'an attempt is to be made to recapture the first thrills of the formation of Unions, to separate the driving idealism from the daily personalities, and to revalue the fundamental principles of Trade Unionism.' 82

Unfortunately, the conference met a week after the 1934 Federal election in which Labor was beaten; arousing revivalist fervour at such a time was, understandably, no easy task.

The conference got underway with the Reverend A.J. Robertson delivering an oration on the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Other speakers discussed the subsequent history of trade unionism in Australia, and its current situation and immediate outlook. Ted Barker of the Australian Railways Union emphasised the continuing need for an aggressive form of industrial unionism, as did Bill Orr of the Miners' Federation. At the end of the conference Lloyd Ross summed up the ideas of the various speakers. He prefaced his

82. AH, 11 July 1934, pp.111-112.
remarks by referring to the lack of official trade union
support for the centenary celebrations. It seemed clear to
him that most trade union leaders had no desire to tap
working-class enthusiasm. So long as this continued to be
the case, unionism would remain at a low ebb. Recent
strikes, especially Wonthaggi, demonstrated that the only way
to overcome apathy was by a policy of aggressive industrial
unionism, which required initiative and involvement on the
part of the rank-and-file. 'If there is any chance of
reviving active and intelligent interest, this could be only
through the type of leadership and theory represented by Mr
Orr'. The militants' credo, he considered, should be 'Trust
in the creative powers of the masses.'83

Wherever he went at this time, Lloyd Ross dwelt upon
labour's need to regain its erstwhile radicalism. In October
1934 he attended an Education Week organised by the WEA in
Broken Hill. The city still was a Labor stronghold, but its
famed militancy was wasting away. Broken Hill, he was
saddened to discover, 'was no longer red, but a pale
pink'.84 Delivering a lecture on 'The Meanings of
Australian Socialism' to a local audience, he contrasted
Labor's current disarray with the achievements of Lenin and
the Bolsheviks. 'There was', he said, 'little doubt that
Russian Communism had gained tremendously because it had had
a comparatively clear theory of social change, just as, on the

83. Railroad, 10 October 1934, p.3.
84. BDT, 8 October 1934 (unpaginated).
other hand, Australian Labor had been weakened because it lacked a generally accepted theory'. The utopianism of William Lane and the socialist programme of 1921 belonged to a bygone era; currently the two major theoretical influences were Communism and Major Douglas. It was hard to imagine a coherent political outlook evolving out of such jarring elements.85

After completing his commitments in Broken Hill, Lloyd Ross moved on to a WEA weekend school held at picturesque Mootwingee. The labour movement's crying need for some great co-ordinating principle remained uppermost in his thinking. It seemed to him that the WEA, with its insistence upon strict impartiality, failed to cater for this need. Its famed non-partisanship appeared increasingly 'barren and uninspiring'. There had to be some alternative. Posing the question, 'What would you do?', he envisaged the formation of a band of left-wing artists and performers all of whom would be capable of expressing the desires and ambitions of a wider working-class audience. The idea would be to popularise the message of 'vital personalities' - a category which took in D.H. Lawrence as well as Lenin - by means of sketches, choruses, communal dances, plays, songs, posters, pictures, lectures and recitals.86

85. Ibid., 10 October 1934 (unpaginated).
86. Lloyd Ross, 'Moods at Mootwingee', AH, 10 November 1934, pp.23-25.
A few weeks later, in two complementary articles that appeared in the pages of the *Australian Quarterly* and *Economic Record*, Lloyd Ross expressed similar ideas more prosaically in the course of surveying the prospects facing Australia's left-wing unionists as the new year dawned. He noted that the struggle for improved conditions was intensifying because of the 'slight improvement' in the economy. But the demands of the militants, he was quick to point out, could not be confined to industrial and economic issues given that the demoralisation of official trade unionism - as revealed by a decline in membership and poorly attended meetings - had preceded the Depression. Opposition to capitalism necessitated a campaign against its ideological and cultural expressions as well no matter how trivial they might appear. Mass entertainment was designed to lure workers away from the class struggle. Unionists preferred to stay home at night and listen to the radio rather than attend meetings. 'The amusements of capitalism corrupt the men who would seek a cultural revival'. For the most part union officials had little conception of how mass communications could be used to bring trade union demands to the attention of the rank-and-file. 'Except for the agitations for increased wages through the courts, there

88. Ibid., p.186.
89. Ibid., p.189.
90. Ibid.
are few educational activities, no exploration of new forms of propaganda, no awareness of the undercurrent of unrest that will be exploited by fascism if trade unionism allows the opportunity to pass.'91

For Lloyd Ross the radicalism of the railwaymen92 and the Miners' Federation93 proved that it was possible for industrial militants to bridge the gap between socialist theory and trade union practice. Reformism had no future.94 The possibilities of renewal lay rather among the militants with their belief in rank-and-file participation. Acting in this spirit they organised strikes, distributed leaflets, formed shop committees and created united front organisations to deal with specific issues - anti-fascism, friendship with Russia, evictions, the plight of the unemployed.95 The Communist Party dominated the newer grassroots organisations though it attracted few direct recruits.96 Within the trade union movement Communists were in the forefront in facing up to the difficulty involved in choosing between reform and revolution. 'They must retain the sympathy of the worker by holding before him the prospect of immediate improvement, but their agitation would be defeated if improvement were really won'.97 Most trade

91. Ibid.
92. Ibid., pp.189, 191.
93. Ibid., p.190.
94. Ibid., p.192.
95. Ibid., pp.190-192.
96. Ibid., p.186.
97. Ibid.
unionists evaded this dilemma by scorning all pretence of consistency. The use of arbitration and informal agreements to secure 'increasing purchasing power' still was the preferred option but unions were always prepared to countenance strike action whenever a favourable opportunity arose. 98

Lloyd Ross used the perspective of history to drive home the lessons of the Depression. During earlier crises the accepted ideas and methods of the labour movement had had to be overhauled. The depression of the 1890s, together with Lane's socialist crusade in Queensland, encouraged labour men to sever their links with the liberal parliamentary groups and create a party of their own. 99 Likewise following the conscription controversy the goal of socialisation had gained acceptance. 100 The changes were never sudden, however. Initially, as Lloyd Ross readily acknowledged, 101 Labor's objective was limited to piecemeal reform and from the start the 1921 objective was evaded, with Labor not being prepared to advance beyond seeking monetary causes and cures for capitalism's ills. 102 But the ideal of socialism was not forgotten. It survived as a ghostly presence and as a result Labor was prevented from accepting a completely pragmatic approach. The socialists were the party's conscience: 'the

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98. Ibid., pp.184, 187-188.
99. 'Lane to Lang', p.49.
100. Ibid., pp.54-59.
101. Ibid., pp.53-54.
102. Ibid., pp.60-61.
most active and unselfish workers in the Labor Party are those who have studied and accepted some form of socialism'.

Although able to generate a constant stream of articles, lectures and book reviews, Lloyd Ross found it rather more difficult to complete the task of finalising his definitive treatise on labour politics, which now bore the title 'The Australian Labour Movement A History and an Analysis'. Having been persuaded by C.M. Lloyd not to publish, he brought his manuscript back with him to New Zealand. During 1931-32 he wrote a number of new chapters dealing with the Depression and the current state of the labour movement. The new material was added to the original section of his narrative which covered the history of Australian labour from the convicts and early trade unions up until the formation of Labor parties and governments, ending with an account of Labor's fortunes during the Great War and the post-war decade. After returning to Australia Lloyd Ross sought responses to what he had written from trade unionists and members of his WEA classes, a process which went on continuously throughout 1933 and 1934.

Lloyd Ross's manuscript comprised 'a history of the Australian Labour Movement and an analysis of its present

103. Ibid., p.62.
104. NLA MS 3939, Box 24, 'Australian Labour Movement', pp.6-7.
views and position'. As a contribution to labour history his account was, he hoped, 'comprehensive and complete'. The spadework accomplished by previous writers - notably Spence, Sutcliffe, Gordon Childe and George Black - was supplemented by original research of his own. The real value of the work was considered to lie elsewhere, however. Lloyd Ross believed that, in terms of political analysis, he had written something completely original: his was 'the first attempt made to explain the motivation and manifestations of the past and present doctrines and workings of the Australian Labour Party'.

Often enough in the past he had argued that Labor was repeatedly torn asunder and betrayed by its leaders mainly because it had no coherent political theory of its own. But he drew comfort from the idea that the movement was greater than the party. He was impressed by the success of the rank-and-file in maintaining its solidarity notwithstanding the deceitfulness and disunity of Labor politicians. Essentially he wanted to discover 'why the Labour majority backed by influential opinion can move easily and unitedly as a Movement, while sponsoring such a variety of divergent theories and while representing so many different interests'.

The task of political analysis was to locate the forces of regeneration within the labour movement. Once these were mobilised, the trauma of 1930-31 would be exorcised.

105. Ibid., pp.3-4.
106. Ibid., p.6.
The duty of the labour historian was to demonstrate that Labor's malaise existed long before the Depression thereby highlighting the need for more radical ideas and policies to be adopted. 'The chapters on the History of Labor', Lloyd Ross later wrote, 'showed that the clash of interests, added to the difficulties of trying to alter an economic system slowly and constitutionally, produced expediency, corruption and divisions'.

In rewriting labour history Lloyd Ross was especially anxious to rebut the reformist notion that Australians, because of their fondness for state intervention in the economy, were irrevocably headed in the direction of 'socialism'. This notion was dangerous since it ruled out the need for coherent thinking and decisive action on Labor's part. Various commentators led by W.K. Hancock, Gordon Childe and G.V. Portus had waxed eloquent on the 'socialistic' propensities of the Australian people.

For Hancock, State socialism was part of Australia's convict heritage, while for his part Portus considered that the constant replenishment of Australia's democratic heritage beginning with Scottish Jacobin exiles and Irish rebels followed by Chartist immigrants and the Tolpuddle Martyrs meant that much necessary reform had already been accomplished by liberal reformers with Labor only needing to secure a further series

107. Ibid., p.551.
108. Ibid., pp.14, 15, 18.
of incremental advances for complete social harmony and well-being to be achieved.\textsuperscript{110}

The iconoclasm of 'A Worker Looks at Australian History' was steadfastly repeated in Lloyd Ross's treatise. Australia's colonial heritage hardly posed a challenge to private ownership. An instinctively socialist community had not been implanted in 1788. The convict era had had no discernible effect on the nascent labour movement and should not be brought in to explain Australia's fondness for State-run enterprises.\textsuperscript{111} The picture presented by Portus and Hancock was false because it arose 'from the attempt to analyse Australian socialism, as something indigenous as the Laughing Jackass, instead of setting it in its proper place as a world movement with common sources of inspiration and provocation'.\textsuperscript{112} The neighbouring colony of New Zealand, which did not have a convict past, had embraced State socialism with an equal passion.\textsuperscript{113} State intervention in the antipodes needed to be examined in terms of 'fundamental factors in capitalism and democracy'\textsuperscript{114} and it always had to be differentiated from the desire for socialist reconstruction. In an attempt to elaborate on this latter point Lloyd Ross referred to the historical role of the small


\textsuperscript{111} 'Australian Labour Movement', pp.13-19.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., p.14.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., p.19.
farmer, whose dream of surviving as a private landowner helped to inspire a large body of progressive legislation in colonial Australia and in time facilitated the formation of the Labor Party. Labor's socialist adherents viewed popular grievances in terms of a coherent theory, but from the outset the party attracted many other groups as well including the nationalists, liberal reformers and union officials whose subsequent influence on Labor governments Lloyd Ross had long deplored. 'Those who found it easy to compel the State to carry out their desires, and those who had faith in the possibility of a New Order, joined together, because the interest of the one and the dreams of the other seemed to run along the same path'. Ever a source of unease, the contradiction between socialist aspirations and political pragmatism grew ever wider during times of crisis. The Depression was just such an occasion so that the ensuing collapse of party unity was only to be expected.

In his treatise Lloyd Ross touched upon two initiatives that he felt had to be taken before Labor could hope to more effectively pursue its socialist aims. Labor needed to end its fixation with monetary reforms; and it had to free itself from the grip of oligarchical 'Inner Groups'. In both respects the real object of Lloyd Ross's animus was J.T. Lang. The pervasive influence

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115. Ibid., pp.90-92.
116. Ibid., p.92.
117. Ibid., p.708.
wielded by Lang and his ALP cronies in New South Wales (who comprised the definitive Inner Group) was incompatible with rank-and-file initiative and in the absence of such a force the socialisation objective was bound to remain a dead letter. But Lloyd Ross did not despair. Notwithstanding Lang's dominance he felt confident that in the wake of the Depression a serious attempt to secure the adoption of more radical policies by the Labor Party was bound to be successful. Once the political climate became more conducive to change Labor's activists would compel the party to pursue socialist measures. Lang, with his call for the socialisation of credit, recognised the importance of appeasing Labor's left-wing conscience. For this reason, the Communists, while no doubt attaining considerable influence in the future, had no hope of capturing the leadership of the movement. Led by political calculators, of whom Lang was merely the most egregious, Labor would continue to stumble along, with its determination and integrity preserved by the resolute idealism of the rank-and-file:

So Labor keeps on because the men who run the Leagues and pay the subscriptions are tainted neither by the corruptness of the inner circles nor by the doubts of the administrators. The men who cheer Lang do so with memories in their hearts of William Morris, Walter Crane, Jack London, Swinburne, William Lane, Bellamy and many another. While the faith of the masses keeps aflame through failure and disappointment, the Party can survive its own foolishness and futility. The faith of the masses may be exploited by a Lang, but it even tends to purify a Lang and to make the individual influential, permanent, inspirational, and desirable because he is transfigured by the ideals of his followers.

118. Ibid.
119. Ibid., p.710.
The presence of Labor's socialist minority thus served to redeem the party, at least in Lloyd Ross's estimation. Despite the disappointment suffered by his father after 1921, he still felt that it was possible to speak of Labor's obtaining 'complete victory' - that is, socialist reconstruction - although the party's lack of coherent policies meant that he could not specify how and when it would 'win in the end'. Victory, however far away, would bring Labor's travail to an end. The party would no longer have to corrupt itself by promising the electorate better conditions under capitalism. The periodic desertion of Labor by its parliamentary leaders testified to their inability to satisfy the remorseless demands of the rank-and-file; that such men were entrusted to lead the party in the first place was a further reflection of Labor's refusal to take the socialisation objective seriously. It was up to the party's activists to end this impasse. Only then would the real history of the Australian Labor Party commence.

At the end of 1934 Lloyd Ross dispatched his manuscript to the University of Otago with a view to its being examined as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Letters. He then turned to another project that he had on hand. His continuing involvement with adult education meant that the only time he had for prolonged research and writing was when the university was on vacation. He used this asset

120. Ibid., pp.5-6.
to the full during the summer of 1934-35 when most of his working hours were devoted to preparing an account of the life and times of his father's hero William Lane. 121

His latest project would perpetuate the ideological link between the Ross and Lane families. Twelve months earlier, in the course of preparing his WEA lecture on Lane and his career, Lloyd Ross had contacted Ernie Lane, from whom he received helpful words of encouragement and advice. 122 Thereafter his intentions became steadily more definite. During September he was in contact with a number of other researchers who were engaged in tracking down references to Lane's activities. 123 By the start of the new year he was busily engaged in research himself. 124 Eventually in the course of his investigations he came across a valuable cache of Lane material in the Mitchell Library. 125

Through his access to the inner circle of Lane's surviving associates Lloyd Ross was able to supplement his library research with anecdotal material as well as an

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122. NLA MS 3939, Box 32, Ernie Lane to Lloyd Ross, 25 January 1934.
123. NLA MS 3939, Box 32, Alex McLagan to Lloyd Ross, 24 September 1934, Jeanie Rankin to Lloyd Ross, 27 September 1934.
124. Extracts from magazines published in January 1935 which contain references to Lane are in NLA MS 3939, Box 32.
125. William Lane, 'Preface'.

additional array of contemporary documents. Early in 1935 he visited Ernie Lane and another surviving brother, John Lane, in Queensland; as a result of long conversations with the two men — and with their wives as well — he gained a greater insight into the mood of the 1890s. In like manner he had 'an informative discussion' with the AWU stalwart, Senator Arthur Rae. Mary Gilmore was another old Lane associate who was forthcoming with information; earlier she had extended a friendly welcome to 'Bob Ross's son Lloyd' upon his return to Australia. Bob Ross himself had often spoken of his early friendship with Lane and had left behind some manuscript material.

During the first half of 1935 academic advancement paralleled Lloyd Ross's burgeoning literary career. On 4 March he was confirmed as Assistant Director of Tutorial Classes. Shortly thereafter he was entrusted with the editorship of the Australian Highway. He was successful in obtaining his higher degree from New Zealand. After being revised at the insistence of G.D.H. Cole, who acted as one of the examiners, his thesis managed to earn for him the degree

126. Ibid.
127. Ibid., p.355.
128. NLA MS 3939, Box 21, Bookplate given by Mary Gilmore to Lloyd Ross, 22 February 1933.
129. William Lane, pp.323-332.
130. Information supplied by Kenneth E. Smith, University Archivist, University of Sydney, 30 April 1985.
of Doctor of Letters. Henceforth the newly created Doctor Lloyd Ross was able to take pleasure in citing Cole's assessment of his contribution to Australasian scholarship: 'by far the most authoritative and accurate account yet given of the Labor Movement'.

By the beginning of May 1935 a typescript version of the monograph on Lane was receiving stylistic and grammatical emendations from Lloyd Ross's university colleagues. Literary excitement abounded. In a letter written to Esmonde Higgins on 17 June Lloyd Ross assessed the publishability of his two completed manuscripts:

I sent Lane away, but will keep at it so that when one publisher rejects it, I will have a better job available for the next in the series. I got my "History & Labour" thesis back, but want to spend the vacation on this, before I submit it to a publisher - probably in two parts - Past & Present.

These plans were precariously based, however. Lloyd Ross's desire to unite theory and practice - or 'Past and Present' - was ultimately at variance with his burgeoning academic career. His university position allowed him to take


133. Railroad, 10 September 1935, p.11.

134. Esmonde Higgins Papers, ML MSS 740/12/19-21, Lloyd Ross to Esmonde Higgins, 3 May 1935.

135. ML MSS 740/12/25.
a broad view of trends within the labour movement. But the study of labour history, as he conceived it, necessarily lacked the aura of academic detachment since its purpose was to criticise Labor for failing to harmonise its political operations with its socialist ideology. Working in adult education meant that, in his own sphere, he too was required to treat ideas and practice as separate entities. As a WEA tutor he accepted 'very conscientiously the view that the tutor should be above the battle ... although I insisted on describing what the battle was and what the issues were'. Acting in this spirit he turned down invitations to join both the ALP and the CPA.136 That these offers were made in the first place, however, adequately testified to the warmth of his political feelings.

In the light of his well-known strong pro-labour position Lloyd Ross's relationship with the WEA always was bound to be problematical. Moving to Sydney further intensified the underlying pressure. Notwithstanding the WEA's insistence that its activities were non-partisan, political differences in the past had invariably frustrated its attempts to build up a closer relationship with the local trade union movement. The Labor Council had long distrusted the class loyalties of the WEA on account of its close connection with the university and this attitude had not softened with the passing of time. In fact the opposite was the case. Sustained by memories of the pro-conscriptionist

136. TRC 236, 1:2/22-23.
stance adopted by members of the university staff during the Great War, trade union animosity towards the WEA and academics in general flared up again during the Depression, following calls for lower wage levels from Professors Giblin, Brigden and Copland, and the Queensland WEA Director B.H. Molesworth. In the wake of the Premiers' Plan academic economists were denigrated by militant trade unionists because of their obvious subservience to the capitalist class.137

Lloyd Ross's instinctive response to left-wing criticism of the WEA was to spring to the organisation's defence. The Labor Party, he was able to point out, had no immediate plans to create a socialist society, so that for the foreseeable future workers would still obviously need to know how capitalism functioned. For this reason they were well advised to study standard economic theory, in which the continuance of the capitalist system was taken for granted. By attending WEA classes workers would be introduced to the ideas of the best academic economists. They had to master the assumptions of mainstream economic thinking before they could hope to develop an adequate answer to the employers' instinctive demand for wage cuts. The labour movement carried out few worthwhile educational activities of its own and showed little interest in new ideas. The WEA, by way of contrast, offered an open forum where facts and problems could be debated and discussed without rancour and

137. NLA MS 3939, Box 52, Lloyd Ross, 'The W.E.A. and the Australian Crisis' [c.1931], p.1.
prejudice. Involvement in adult education activities gave workers an opportunity to form their own ideas untrammelled by the restraints of party discipline. All in all the WEA served a valuable purpose.138 'The hope of the world', Lloyd Ross once exclaimed in a burst of enthusiasm, 'lies in syntheses that will come from the exchange of ideas between the professors and the workers'.139

Despite this enthusiasm, Lloyd Ross still faced a major obstacle. His concept of the WEA's role ran directly counter to the thinking of the key WEA identity Dave Stewart, who from 1913 onwards had served as the organisation's combined 'secretary, organiser, book-keeper, clerk, and office-boy'.140 It was wrong, in Stewart's eyes, to regard the WEA as an integral branch or component of the organised working-class movement; provision of a forum where labour's ideas could be thrashed out was, he considered, more the function of a Labor College.141 From the start Stewart was 'delighted' but 'teased' by the frantic efforts being made to revitalise his beloved organisation. He made it known that he was not prepared to accept closer contacts between the WEA and trade union activists if this in any way threatened the WEA's 'non-partisan education principles' and caused it to become too identified with 'a particular set of

138. Ibid., pp.2-5.
139. Ibid., p.7.
141. See pencilled comments, probably by Dave Stewart, 'W.E.A. and Australian Crisis', p.2.
doctrines'. The 'set of doctrines' in question was of course Marxism, as Lloyd Ross pointed out when, in a letter written to Esmonde Higgins on 18 March 1935, he criticised Stewart's position:

He refuses to admit that there has been any change in the W.E.A. over 21 years, but realizes that we have lost contacts with the workers and wants to get those contacts. But he has a complex against Communists, though he is anxious to get their help. He is too prone to say that the W.E.A. has the educational facilities and that it cannot be blamed, if the workers will not accept them ...

Lloyd Ross intended to 'ginger up' the WEA by means of a series of editorials in the *Australian Highway*. But the growing divergence of opinion with Stewart was apparent even before the first editorial appeared. At a conference of WEA tutors held on 23 February Lloyd Ross challenged his colleagues to deny his assertion that the WEA was 'not a working-class but an adult educational movement, with numbers as the only criterion of success'. In ensuing weeks he elaborated upon this argument in his *Australian Highway* editorials. The trouble with the WEA, he claimed, was that it had lost its primitive zeal. The original aim of the organisation had been to prepare militant trade unionists for the task of socialist reconstruction by

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143. ML MSS 740/12/9.
144. Ibid.
immersing them in the social sciences, especially economics. But subsequently this ideal had lost a lot of its appeal. Many contemporary WEA classes were given over to the study of modernist literature and psychology, with radical change being conceived in purely individualistic terms. Lloyd Ross considered this to be a deplorable development at a time when it seemed obvious to him that 'only by the activity of the masses can society be saved from the immediate dangers of war and unemployment'. The WEA, he insisted, had to show that it still believed in social and political change by reorganising its classes so that they again appealed primarily to trade unionists. As a first step Lloyd Ross wanted more lunchtime classes. He hoped to see the number of railway workshop classes expand from the existing 5 to at least 6 or 7. He already had entered into an understanding with Esmonde Higgins to the effect that, if the changes he envisaged went ahead, he would use his influence to ensure that Higgins was given some of the expanded teaching load.

Despite being distracted by the odd side-issue – in April a controversy blew up after a birth control advertisement appeared in Australian Highway – Lloyd Ross, 'Plan or No Plan in Adult Education', ibid., pp.72-74. Lloyd Ross, 'We Demand from Literature!', ibid., 11 March 1935, p.49. 'Plan or No Plan in Adult Education', p.74. ML MSS 740/12/1, Lloyd Ross to Esmonde Higgins, 1 January 1935. Higgins, Stewart, p.63; AH, 15 April 1935, p.80.
Ross persevered with his belief that there was a point in challenging 'complacency and timidity' in the WEA.\textsuperscript{151} He still thought it possible for the WEA to strengthen its links with working-class activists while at the same time maintaining its 'impartial and non-political' status.\textsuperscript{152} But his hopes in this direction were ill-founded. On 18 May a special conference was held in an attempt to clarify whether indeed the policy and methods of the WEA needed revision. The official topic for discussion summed up Lloyd Ross's doubts about the WEA: 'Are the principles which have hitherto governed the W.E.A. policy sufficient for present-day working-class needs?'\textsuperscript{153} After the discussion concluded, the conference voted narrowly to reject a declaration that the WEA should 'abandon its claim to be a non-political body and adopt a policy that will achieve a socialist state of society by education'.\textsuperscript{154} The majority position was summed up by Dave Stewart when he maintained that 'an educational movement cannot be the instrument to bring about social change in the sense that the industrial movement, the political movement, either Labour or Communist, or the co-operative movement can'. The WEA was not 'a directive agency working out a policy and programme for other organisations to carry out'.\textsuperscript{155} The best way it could hope

\textsuperscript{151} Lloyd Ross, 'A "Highway"-Man At Bay', ibid., 15 May 1935, p.81.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., pp.81-82; ML MSS 740/12/17, Lloyd Ross to Esmonde Higgins, 3 May 1935.
\textsuperscript{153} AH, 11 March 1935, p.64.
\textsuperscript{154} Higgins, Stewart, p.63.
\textsuperscript{155} D. Stewart, 'Working-Class Education (I)', AH, 10 February 1936, p.37.
to have an impact on workers was by reminding its affiliated unions that 'workers' education is their job, and not the responsibility solely of a W.E.A. or a Labour College'.

Although the final decision at the conference had gone against him, Lloyd Ross could still draw some comfort from the proceedings. As a direct result of the conference special WEA trade union committees were set up in Sydney and Newcastle. Comprising union representatives on the local WEA councils as well as trade unionists drawn from outside the WEA, the two committees were expected to develop and organise educational schemes suitable for trade unionists. Lloyd Ross had already suggested an initiative along these lines and his support was forthcoming from the start. As a first step plans were made to publish a series of pamphlets dealing with trade union issues. Lloyd Ross wrote to Guido Baracchi and John Curtin to ask whether they were interested in contributing to the series. In the event, however, little was achieved. Baracchi, it seems, was willing to be of assistance, but his proposed topic - 'Trade Unionism in Russia' - was never brought to finality. In the case of Curtin the response was even more disappointing. Late in July Curtin informed Lloyd Ross that the subject he

156. D. Stewart, 'Working-Class Education (II)', ibid., 10 March 1936, p.52.
159. Higgins, Stewart, p.63.
160. Guido Baracchi Papers, NLA MS 5241, Folder 5, Lloyd Ross to Guido Baracchi, July 1935.
was expected to write upon - 'Politics & Trade Unionism in the moulding of a New Social Order' - was simply not worth considering: 'Labour's politics in Australia are governed by Trade Unionism & the latter will spend thousands & thousands of Lsds on its routine administration & not a farthing to mould the New Social Order'. The man who was about to become the federal leader of the ALP had long since ceased to be a zealot.161

Having himself frequently accused most trade union officials of being narrow and unimaginative, Lloyd Ross was in no position to dispute Curtin's comments. The WEA's modest experiment in workers' education clearly enjoyed little support. Neither party seemed particularly perturbed about the gulf that existed between workers and education- \*ists. 'The difficulty that the W.E.A.T.U.C. has to face', Lloyd Ross later admitted, 'is that the Trades Unions themselves are not really concerned with education, and that many of the members of the W.E.A. themselves are not particularly desirous of obtaining Trades Union support'.162

The trade union committees found themselves in an impossible position. In a moment of decisiveness the Sydney committee announced that it proposed to accept applications from WEA members wishing to conduct study circles in factories and workshops. This move aroused immediate opposition from Dave

161. NLA MS 3939, Box 30, John Curtin to Lloyd Ross, 30 July 1935.
Stewart. In his view the committee should have realised that its sole function was, as he had stated before, to 'propagate within the trade union movement the idea that working-class education should be the concern of the trade union movement itself'. In the event nothing more was heard of the proposal.

Lloyd Ross's activist zeal was in no way impaired by his being on the losing side in the internal politics of the WEA. By the latter half of 1935 opportunities for 'working with the masses' were opening up all the time. The easing of the Depression together with the dramatic emergence, after 1933, of Nazi Germany gradually helped to produce a new ideological climate. Issues associated with diplomacy and war, rather than finance and economics, increasingly dominated the political agenda. The left responded accordingly. The Communist Party faithful, in association with their sympathisers among the industrial militants, were required to take cognisance of the increasingly anti-German orientation of Soviet foreign policy. The fierce sectarianism that characterised the Communist Party's political outlook during the Depression years - when the Labor Party was stigmatised as the 'social fascist' enemy - was toned down in line with the overriding requirement to create an effective coalition comprising all the anti-fascist and anti-war elements in the community. Unity at all costs was the order of the day. Increasingly after 1934 emphasis was placed on the importance

163. Higgins, Stewart, pp.63-64.
of attracting support from outside the ranks of the party. Against this background the desirability of gaining the services of a highly presentable and well-placed non-party activist of the calibre of Lloyd Ross was undeniable.

For his part Lloyd Ross was favourably disposed to accepting an overture from the left. His desire to combine pro-labour theorising with political struggle facilitated a wholehearted acceptance of the value of united front agitation. Even before he set out singlehandedly to reform the WEA he had begun to respond to the anti-war and anti-fascist demands of the trade union militants. Enlivened by memories of the wartime crusade against conscription, anti-militarism formed an important part of his socialist heritage. As the son of Bob Ross, his anti-war credentials were impeccable. For having tried to outflank the Communist Party in 1921 the VSP's ideologue was classified forever as an enemy of the party but left-wing animosity towards his son on this account was confined to Melbourne and even at this residual level it hardly counted given the ecumenical climate prevailing in 1935.

Lloyd Ross was able to make full use of his inherent advantages. When he first appeared on the scene in Sydney the anti-war movement needed all the help it could muster. The Communist Party had, in 1933, set up an appropriate body to supervise this side of its activities in the form of the

Council Against War. In line with the changing political climate the new organisation was speedily converted into the Movement Against War and Fascism (MAWAF). By mid-1934, however, hardly any progress had been achieved. Inadequately staffed and financed, poorly organised at the local level and with few trade union affiliates, MAWAF had fallen far short of its goal of converting anti-war sentiment into an effective political movement. Its ability to enlist support from other anti-war activists, Labor Party members and sympathetic churchmen was severely restricted because of its obvious subservience to the CPA and its frank espousal of Leninist ideology. Its failure was accepted as further evidence of the evils of sectarianism.165

Anti-war activity remained at a low ebb in Sydney until late in 1934, when the intense period of excitement associated with the celebrated visit of the Czech journalist and anti-war crusader Egon Kisch got underway. Certainly in the case of Lloyd Ross a definite alignment with the anti-war movement did not occur until after Kisch made his presence felt in Australia. Before Kisch came Lloyd Ross had already made his debut as an anti-war speaker166 - and as a consequence his name had been entered on the nation's security files167 - but it was amidst the controversy of

165. ABL, James Normington Rawling Collection, N57/492, Minutes of New South Wales Conference Against War, 28 July 1934.
166. WW, 27 July 1934, p.6.
the Kisch affair that the association was sealed. Like so many of Australia's intellectuals, Lloyd Ross was quickly caught up in the furore that erupted in November 1934 after it became known that the Federal government intended to prevent Kisch from entering the country. On 10 November he was one of a group of Labor parliamentarians, trade unionists and academics who remonstrated with Defence Minister Archdale Parkhill in Sydney over the treatment of Kisch and his anti-war comrade Gerald Griffin.168 Two days later he signed a letter of protest emanating from a contingent of Sydney academics who were eager to align themselves with the Western Australian professors F.R. Beasley and Walter Murdoch whose criticism of the government's treatment of Kisch had already appeared in the press.169

On 15 November Kisch finally reached Sydney. The police prevented Lloyd Ross from clambering aboard the ship that had brought his hero half-way around the world,170 but his disappointment on this score was short-lived. The irrepressible Kisch eventually managed to get ashore and thus became even more of a celebrity. The left was jubilant. Lloyd Ross attended a rally held in Kisch's honour at the Australia Hall. A keen supporter of the Kisch-Griffin Defence

168. LD, 12 November 1934, p.6; RL, 14 November 1934, p.4; AA, Department of Immigration, CRS A446, Correspondence Files, 1953- , File 57/21371.
169. LD, 13 November 1934, p.6; NLA MS 3939, Box 26, Lloyd Ross to David Stewart, 5 May 1950.
170. Extract from Sun, 15 November 1934 in ABL N57/255.
Committee, he was allowed on to the stage where he mingled with spokesmen from the Australian Railways Union, the Miners' Federation, the Labor Council and the Communist Party. Kisch did not disappoint his supporters when he came to speak; he delivered 'a stirring address to the tense audience'.

It was well known that Kisch intended to publish an account of his adventures in the antipodes once he returned to Europe. Background information was fed to him by John Fisher and Rupert Lockwood, while assistance also was forthcoming from 'our Sydney friend, Lloyd Ross', whose knowledge of the history of Australian trade unionism clearly impressed the celebrated Czech. On 21 February 1935, in recognition of his sterling support, Lloyd Ross presided at the farewell dinner organised in Sydney by the Kisch-Griffin Defence Committee. The 125 guests included representatives of a wide array of organisations: the Miners' Federation, the ARU, Douglas Credit, the CPA, MAWAF, and the Fellowship of Australian Writers, while Senator Arthur Rae also was in

171. By early December Lloyd Ross was on the committee, as revealed by the letterhead on its stationery. See AA, Personal Papers of Robert Gordon Menzies as Attorney-General (1934-39), CP 450/6, Bundle 2, Item 29.

172. WW, 23 November 1934, p.2; SMH 21 November 1934, p.13.


174. Ibid., p.211.
On the previous day the death had occurred of the president of MAWAF, Arthur Chapman, who besides holding this position had also been the state secretary of the ARU. Lloyd Ross used the occasion of the dinner to praise the work Chapman had done for the anti-war movement. On the day following the banquet, along with Kisch and a contingent of left-wing union officials, he attended Chapman's funeral service at the headquarters of the Sydney ARU, Transport House.

Lloyd Ross's growing association with the ARU militants in anti-war agitation strengthened the connection that had already sprung up between them in the course of his earlier WEA activities. In this latter regard there was no looking back. By the middle of 1934, as a result of their earlier collaboration, Lloyd Ross had in effect assumed his father's old mantle as unofficial historical adviser to the railwaymen of Sydney. At the end of August a group of unionists, led by some left-wing ARU men, 'suggested that Mr Lloyd Ross be communicated with in regard to arranging a tableau of the Tolpuddle Martyrs'. The idea was to arrange something suitably dramatic for a planned demonstration against wage cuts. In the event the demonstration had

175. RL, 27 February 1935, p.11.
177. ABL, E89/7/1, Minutes of Meeting of Representatives of Various Organisations to Arrange an Industrial Demonstration on Sunday, September 2, 1934, 23 August 1934.
to be cancelled because of rain, but it was obvious that in the future Lloyd Ross was again going to be called upon to come up with suggestions for enlivening ARU demonstrations. This form of activity was considered important. A few weeks later, when the Labour Day march occurred, the ARU contingent earned praise in the left-wing press for its 'outstanding working-class tableaux'. The burden of history weighed just as heavily upon other unionists as well. No political demonstration was complete at this time without the presence of the tramway employees on account of a large banner they possessed which vividly portrayed the lack of contrast between the working conditions of 1834 and those of 1934. 'A chain gang was shown at work, under conditions which applied at penal settlements a century ago, while the remainder of the banner was devoted to "slavish conditions" during the economic depression.'

Lloyd Ross first set foot inside Transport House on 27 September, when he took part in an ARU-sponsored debate on the Douglas Credit movement. Accompanied by the WEA Drama Club, he returned on 6 December to present a repeat performance of Six Men of Dorset. He again had to contend with the weather. Heavy rain set in on the evening that the...
play was staged so that the size of the audience was 'only moderate', but nevertheless the play, all those present agreed, was 'excellently produced'.

The steady growth in left-wing drama activities enabled Lloyd Ross to maintain his close contacts with the ARU militants of Newcastle. When May Day was celebrated in 1935, he returned to the Hunter Valley. On the afternoon of 1 May he attended a rally at the Newcastle Sports Ground while in the evening ARU militants and local WEA Drama Club members combined to present excerpts from the previous year's May Day play.

Tom Hickey, Lloyd Ross's chief supporter in the Broadmeadow class, was determined to do his utmost to promote the cause of proletarian drama in Newcastle. Inspired by his mentor's two working-class chronicles of 1933-34, he went on to write a left-wing play himself. Hickey's play was first staged in Newcastle in August 1934, and later received a repeat performance on 13 April 1935. Entitled Yellow

182. AH, 10 November 1934, p.29; Railroad, 10 November 1934, pp.5, 17; ABL, E89/12/1-6, E&O Cttee Report to State Council, 15 November 1934, 21 February 1935; E&O Cttee Minutes, 2 November 1934, 14 December 1934. It should be noted that Harry Brooks, the co-author of the play, was a member of the British equivalent of the ARU.
183. NMH, 2 May 1935, p.8; RL, 8 May 1935, p.4.
184. Railroad, 10 June 1935, p.15; RL, 8 May 1935, p.11.
Passport, the play depicted 'the persecution of the JEWS under CZARISM and their LIBERATION by the SOVIETS'.  

Hickey's exertions amply justified Lloyd Ross's faith in proletarian drama. His efforts in encouraging participation in this form of activity had not been in vain. He was more than willing to press on with his own involvement as a result. On 29 May 1935, Peace or War, an American anti-war play, was staged at the Railway and Tramway Institute in Sydney. Lloyd Ross was the producer. The audience numbered 500 and proceeds went to MAWAF. As part of the publicity arrangements for the play the following precis was prepared:

The theme of the play centres around the anti-war activities in the universities and shows the link at present being forged between the workers by brain and hand, by the university students holding a demonstration demanding assistance and support to the waterside workers and seamen who are on strike because they refuse to load ammunition.

The winter of 1935 saw a flurry of anti-war and anti-fascist agitation in which Lloyd Ross figured prominently. On 29 June, at a conference held under the auspices of the Newcastle Anti-War Council, he criticised various official attempts to suppress the distribution of

185. AH, 10 September 1934, p.143; NMH, 15 April 1935, p.3; Railroad, 10 May 1935, p.5, 10 October 1935, p.6; RL, 24 April 1935, p.5.
187. Railroad, 10 May 1935, p.3.
pro-Soviet literature.188 Shortly afterwards in Sydney he
presided over a public meeting of young people at which the
participants were called on to protest against the evils of
war and fascism.189

Sunday, 4 August, was set aside as the main anti-
war day, with Lloyd Ross being one of the speakers who
addressed a peace rally in Sydney. The anniversary of the
declaration of war in 1914 was commemorated in order to
remind Australians of the horror that ensued thereafter.
Militant unionists, Communists and fellow-travellers joined
forces in anti-war demonstrations organised in the nation's
major cities; the march in Sydney was preceded by the brass
band of the ARU.190 In another anti-war gesture, further
performances of Peace or War went ahead, again under Lloyd
Ross's guidance; the play was staged in Sydney on 10
August191 and at the ARU Hall in Newcastle a week
later.192

Lloyd Ross's association with the New South Wales
militants was becoming closer all the time. Indeed by the
middle of 1935 it was being freely tipped that he was about
to become the new secretary of the New South Wales branch.

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188. RL, 10 July 1935, p.5; NMH, 1 July 1935, p.3.
189. RL, 17 July 1935, p.9, WW, 19 July 1935, p.2; Working
Woman, August 1935, p.21.
192. Ibid., 16 August 1935, p.4.
Rumours to this effect had begun circulating when he turned up at Arthur Chapman's funeral accompanied by a group of ARU stalwarts led by the State branch president, Ted Barker.\footnote{193}

The rumours were well-founded. Lloyd Ross was unquestionably the front runner. Initially the acting secretary, Jack Chappie, had considered that the Communist Party's research officer Jim Rawling might be the best choice\footnote{194} but this proposal came to nothing once it became clear that the Communists and their left-wing allies had their eye on a different candidate. One of the first to 'sound out' the idea of nominating Lloyd Ross was Tom Hickey, who told his mentor that he could count upon the firm support of all his fellow militants. Later Lloyd Ross informed Hickey that 'he was considering the position & had been approached about it'.\footnote{195} Once his agreement was forthcoming the campaign to elect him swung into action; it was organised by a group of Communists and left-wingers led by H.B. (or 'Mick') Martin.\footnote{196}

The 1935 state conference of the ARU - where the election for secretary was due to take place - was scheduled to open in Orange on 2 September. On 29-30 August the regular quarterly meeting of the branch state council took place

\footnote{193. TRC 236, 2:1/10.}
\footnote{194. ABL, N57/13, Autobiographical fragments by J.N. Rawling.}
\footnote{195. Hickey, 'Notes', pp.11-12.}
\footnote{196. TRC 236, 2:1/5; 'NSW Branch, ARU', October 1973, p.2.}
preparatory to the conference. The council provided the railway militants with a venue where they could reaffirm their political and industrial programme. The opportunity was not wasted. The delegates resolved that efforts to secure closer unity among the different railway unions should be stepped up; they protested against the recent reported retrenchment of a number of married men employed in the industry; postal bans placed on pro-Soviet material were denounced; and perhaps most significantly for the future, the delegates deprecated Italy's belligerent attitude to Abyssinia and indicated their support for economic sanctions should an invasion occur.197

On 2 September the twenty delegates who comprised the state council made way for the fifty conference delegates who were entrusted with the task of electing a new branch secretary. The militants held sway in both the council and the conference; they controlled ARU policy and were determined to appoint the right man to administer that policy. Lloyd Ross's supporters had the position well and truly sewn up. He knew few of the delegates,198 but he enjoyed the backing of the key ARU activists. There was a plethora of candidates199 none of whom posed a serious

197. SMH, 2 September 1935, p.16; WW, 3 September 1935, p.3; Railroad, 10 October 1935, p.18.
198. TRC 236, 1:2/23.
199. Some 65 in point of fact. See 'Applications for Position of State Secretary' dated 29 August 1935, held with ARU State Council Minutes, New South Wales Branch Head Office, 333 Sussex Street, Sydney.
threat to Lloyd Ross's chances. The main moderate candidate, Walter Butler, was doubly unacceptable in the eyes of the militants since he was both a salaried officer and a former Langite member of state parliament. Only one ballot was required, with Lloyd Ross receiving 36 votes to Butler's 11.

Lloyd Ross's victory, while notable in itself, formed part of a wider struggle. Armed with a new slogan - 'unity from above' - the left was on the march. Increasingly its apologists were becoming trade union spokesmen. The ARU militants' proud reaffirmation of their radicalism was paralleled by events in the other main left-wing union at this time, the Miners' Federation. On 4 September the central council of the Miners' Federation appointed Lloyd's brother Edgar to be assistant editor of its long abandoned but now to be revived newspaper Common Cause. The union, unhappy at the silencing of Lang's left-wing critics, wanted to return to the situation that existed in the pre-Lang era, with Common Cause serving as a vigorous left-wing purveyor of political and trade union news and socialist thought.

201. WW, 6 September 1935, p.3.
202. Ibid.
Following the initiative on the part of the Miners' Federation an impressive symmetry was created. The ARU and the Miners' Federation formed the vanguard of left-wing unionism in New South Wales and key positions in the two unions were occupied by Lloyd and Edgar Ross. The family pledge taken after Bob Ross's death in 1931 had, for the moment at least, been more than adequately fulfilled.
PART TWO

1935-1938

WORKING FOR THE ARU
Beginning in the spring of 1935 Lloyd Ross entered the arena of trade union struggle with a vengeance. As New South Wales secretary of the Australian Railways Union he inherited a peculiar burden. In the world of railway unionism at this time appearance and reality were often far apart. It was his duty to end the division.

In terms of its resoluteness in dealing with the railwayman's employer, the Commissioner for Railways and through him the state government of New South Wales, the ARU's bark was far worse than its bite. Ideologically, the state branch was undoubtedly left wing. It was favourably disposed to Russian Communism - in 1931 it led the way in pressing for ARU affiliation with the Moscow-based Red International of Labor Unions and supported the anti-war movement. It was opposed on principle to all attempts by ALP politicians to water down the socialist component in

1. ABL, Australian Railways Union, National Office, N5/898 (file on affiliation with RILU).
Labor's political programme. The capitalist system and conservative politics were regarded with detestation.

The ARU's radicalism lacked a strong industrial component, however. In the wake of the Depression the ARU militants displayed their deep hostility to wage cuts and retrenchments by arranging rallies and demonstrations at night and on Sunday afternoons in the Domain. But their opposition never proceeded beyond these purely political gestures. A policy of arousing and mobilising anti-capitalist disaffection at the workplace may have been contemplated, but it certainly was never practised. As a result the ARU's chorus of criticism inevitably lacked substance. The ARU's ineffectiveness, furthermore, was structural and certainly could not be attributed to the faults and failings of particular individuals. The state branch's lack of fighting resolve easily predated the advent of mass unemployment in 1930, a development which precluded industrial militancy so far as most trade unions were concerned. From its emergence in the 1880s - when it had displayed none of the evangelistic fervour associated with the 'new unionism' of the period - railway unionism had been a decidedly feeble entity. The Depression, which saw the declining standard of living of the railwayman juxtaposed

3. See chapter 4, infra.
against the futile protests of the ARU, was merely a further chapter in a dismal saga of failure.

Upon assuming office Lloyd Ross was expected to investigate the causes of, and then remove, the dichotomy between the state branch's political rhetoric and its actual industrial performance. The former task, being the easier assignment, was soon accomplished. In his inaugural report to the state council, Lloyd Ross proceeded to sum up the difficulties of the ARU by comparing its position with that of the other great left-wing union of the time, the Miners' Federation. In the case of the railwaymen solidarity was far harder to maintain. Unlike the miners, who lived together in closely-knit communities based on a single industry, railwaymen were, by the nature of their employment, geographically dispersed. They were scattered throughout the community; they did not form communities of their own. Members of the state branch were to be found in camps, gangs, workshops, stations and depots scattered throughout New South Wales and south-eastern Queensland. The hours they worked were irregular, with railway employees often finding themselves absent from home for prolonged periods. Many ARU members lived and worked in country areas where they were subject to the full brunt of rural hostility to trade unionism. Maintaining proper levels of organisation and

5. ABL, E89/12/1-6, State Secretary's Report to State Council, 21-22 November 1935, p.4.
participation was thus no easy task. Conducting routine union affairs entailed a major logistical and administrative effort. The prospect of mounting a full-scale industrial campaign was even more daunting.

Another difficulty facing the ARU related to the issue of trade union coverage. The Miners' Federation covered most workers in the coal mines whereas a large proportion of railwaymen were not in the ARU. The ARU dreamt of becoming a fully-fledged industrial union embracing the entire railway service, but the reality of the situation was otherwise. With some 18,032 members at the end of 1935, the New South Wales branch of the ARU was the biggest single industrial organisation in the state. Nevertheless its membership still represented only a minority of the some 40,000 persons who comprised the wages and salaried staff of the New South Wales Commissioner for Railways. The ARU was one of a host of unions which sought the allegiance of these employees. Two other 'service unions' - the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen and the Railway and Tramway Officers' Association - operated in the industry. In addition it was estimated that at least 46 other unions had members working in the railway service, ranging from the

Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Federated Ironworkers' Association in the case of tradesmen employed in the railway workshops to the AWU, which looked after the men who worked in the railway construction gangs. Any industrial campaign involving railway workers presupposed a high level of consultation and collaboration between the officials of the various unions concerned. The scope for delay and indecision was obvious. This undoubtedly was one of the reasons why, from the late 1920s onwards, tradesmen employed in the railway workshops sought to deal directly with management by means of a network of shop committees which circumvented the formal union structure.10

The ARU's problems were compounded by occupational divisions. Internally the union was highly fragmented. Its membership was drawn from the three main sectors of the railway workforce: the engineering division (tradesmen employed in the railway workshops); way and works (the fettlers and other men employed in repair and maintenance gangs); and the traffic section (porters, cleaners, guards, signalmen, shunters and ticket collectors). These different occupational groups tended to have their own separate concerns. The workshop employee and the rural fettler lived in different worlds.11 At all times ARU officials had their work cut out persuading the various occupational

divisions that they indeed shared a common destiny on account of their having to combat the same employer.

There was another notable contrast between the railway workers and the miners that the ARU militants were aware of. Railwaymen, it was readily agreed, suffered from a degree of 'snobbery' which muddied their class consciousness. It was not just the aristocrats of the AFULE who displayed this failing. Members of the ARU, although constantly having to face adverse economic and political pressures, refused to forget that, as railway workers, they were government employees and as such were entitled to certain privileges. For a start they had a greater guarantee of security of employment than most other manual workers. A superannuation scheme, long service leave and travelling concessions were other benefits that came with the job. These advantages were widely envied. In the Hunter Valley it was not unknown for hard-pressed miners to be urged by their wives to 'get a job on the railway ... or at Newcastle'. The realisation that working in the railway service amounted to a modest step upwards was bound to act as a brake on industrial militancy.

The ARU resembled the Miners' Federation in at least one important respect. Both unions were haunted by the past. From 1933 onwards, under the leadership of Bill Orr and Charlie Nelson, the miners set out to atone for the defeats they had suffered in previous industrial encounters, particularly the great lockout of 1929-30. The ARU, too, possessed a collective memory, although in its case the knowledge of past defeats served as a disincentive to action rather than as a spur. Involvement in the great strike of 1917 had left the railwaymen of New South Wales completely traumatised. On 2 August 1917, ever alert to the introduction of 'speed up' methods, tradesmen employed in the railway and tramway workshops went out on strike in protest at the introduction of time-cards. On the following day fellow members of the Amalgamated Railway and Tramway Service Association (ARTSA) stopped work in sympathy while on 5 August a mass meeting of the union voted in favour of strike action. Thereafter the strike escalated, taking in other transport unions and the miners as well. With the Great War raging, allegations of 'disloyalty' inevitably surfaced. The state government sought to bring the strikers to heel as quickly as possible. The railwaymen received no quarter. Even in less stressful times their action would have been seen as reprehensible. By tradition railway employees were

servants of the crown, employed on the same anti-union footing as policemen and soldiers. Thus the men of 1917 were considered to be mutineers rather than striking workmen. They had committed a gross act of betrayal. The baleful influence of pro-German conspirators and the IWW was obviously at work. Determined to stop at nothing in combating the forces of subversion, federal and state authorities commandeered vital supplies and called for volunteers to work alongside the stubborn minority of railwaymen who refused to strike. Trade union officials were arrested and the 20,000 striking railwaymen received dismissal notices. Faced with this pressure, the unions were forced to surrender. In the case of the railwaymen severe retribution followed. Those employees whom the Railways Department deigned to reinstate lost their old jobs and were put on lower pay. The value of obedience was underlined. Loyalty was the right path and, when displayed, was fully rewarded. In the inter-war period every non-Labor state government was pledged to protect the specially formed 'loyalist' railway unions which were formed to cater for the strikebreakers of 1917.

The cosy arrangement reached between the federal and state governments at the time of the 1917 strike encouraged railway unionists to seek a similar level of co-ordination in their own activities. The tenets of industrial unionism were taken up with renewed enthusiasm. In 1920 ARTSA was converted into the New South Wales branch of the Australian Railways Union, which came into being as a result of the amalgamation of the five general state railways unions which had hitherto operated in eastern Australia.20

In the event the decision to amalgamate did little to alleviate the New South Wales railwaymen's post-1917 plight. The ARU was essentially a confederation in which the state branches were largely allowed to carry on as before. There was no instant transformation. Thus in the case of New South Wales ARTSA's legacy of defeat was inherited to the full. In the early 1920s the New South Wales branch of the ARU subsisted in a state of chronic disarray, indebtedness and demoralisation. The state government's policy of victimisation discouraged participation in the branch's affairs. It proved impossible to recruit responsible and effective officials. The situation became so bad that the federal ARU, in a rare show of activity, was forced to intervene in 1924. The existing branch office holders were

20. Australian Railways Union (Victorian Branch), 50th State Branch Annual Conference 10 October 1962, Melbourne, 1962, pp.8-10 (copy in NLA MS 3939, Box 2); Australian Railways Union (NSW Branch), 25th Anniversary Souvenir, Sydney, [1945], pp.16-17 (copy in ibid., Box 45).
suspended and on 2 September Arthur Chapman was installed as the new secretary. He was expected to conduct a complete overhaul of the administration of the branch.21

In a situation where a new broom was required, Chapman was the right choice. He was undoubtedly a radical. 'He belonged to no political party, and so was able to make militant unionism his main test of behaviour. He was suspicious of politicians and trade union bureaucracy'.22 Befitting his status as an uncorrupted outsider, Chapman was not an Australian, being instead an English-born disciple of Tom Mann and Keir Hardie - an 'imported agitator' in point of fact. Although heavily involved in the shop steward movement in wartime England, he was, at the time of his ARU appointment, 'almost unknown' in Sydney, none of his earlier pro-labour activities having been chronicled in the local labour press. Having no previous ties with the state branch, he was not held back by unhappy memories of the railwaymen's post-1917 difficulties. He immediately set about improving the union's administration and building up its organisational structure.23

Chapman did not proceed with his improvements unaided. Notwithstanding his suspicion of politicians, he

22. 'NSW Branch, ARU', September 1973, p.2.
eventually was able to benefit from the changing political scene in New South Wales. On 17 June 1925 Jack Lang commenced his first premiership. A series of pro-union reforms soon followed. Prominent among these was a directive from Lang to the Commissioner for Railways, who was instructed to restore the seniority of all the railwaymen who had been demoted following the 1917 strike.24 In a subsequent move legislation outlawing the 'loyalist' railway unions was drawn up.25

The rehabilitation of the 1917 strikers went ahead with the interests of the AFULE - and the tramwaymen - foremost in mind,26 but nevertheless the ARU partook of the benefits. In line with the rapidly improving political climate the state branch gained a major infusion of new members. During Chapman's first three years in office membership of the state branch rose from 10,885 to 18,563 and revenue from contributions increased from £4,437 to £10,086.27 It became possible to finance a wider range of union activities. Chapman appointed a team of full-time organisers who scoured the state in pursuit of yet more

24. SMH, 16 July 1925, p.11.
25. The legislation was defeated in the Legislative Council, however. Patmore, 'Origins of NUR', p.47.
members. The state branch also was able (in 1927) to establish and maintain its own newspaper in the form of Railroad.

In the autumn of 1932, with the ARU's membership and revenue suffering as a result of the Depression, Lang for the second time came to the union's rescue. Towards the end of his second premiership he instigated a policy of compulsory union membership in the railway service. This decision was a godsend to the hard-pressed ARU. During 1932 its membership rose from 14,239 to 16,739 and contributions increased from £9,286 to £20,456. Every effort was made to capitalise on the improved financial position. In the course of the year Transport House - 'the most up-to-date union building in the State' - was fitted out as the state branch's new headquarters.

The ARU's period of consolidation was short-lived, however. After the anti-Labor parties assumed office in New South Wales in 1932 a determined effort was made to cut the accumulated railway deficit by more than half: 'much of this saving was to come from staff dismissals, reduced wages and salaries, and lengthened hours of work'.

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formal entitlement to security of employment was once again subordinated to government policy. The ARU's protests were all in vain. Far from being able to alleviate the situation, it was forced instead to wind back its own activities. With its financial position deteriorating all the time, it was unable to maintain a team of full-time organisers. Chapman himself was a broken man. By the end of 1933 his health was so bad that he was required to take a year off work.

After recuperating in England Chapman returned to the ARU in December 1934. But there had been no real improvement in his health: he died less than three months later. During his absence and following his death the responsibility for administering the state branch fell to ARU National Secretary Jack Chapple and State President Ted Barker. Under this interim arrangement the ARU's fortunes began to slowly pick up. During 1935 pre-Depression award conditions were restored and a 44-hour week was instituted for all railwaymen. Thereupon the ARU proceeded to draw up a set of demands for further improvements, including increased annual leave and paid sick leave.32 These demands already were being circulated by the workshop committees, whose importance had grown during the Depression in response to the obvious ineffectiveness of the trade union movement.33

32. WW, 6 September 1935, p.3; 'NSW Branch, ARU', September 1973, p.2.
The immediate task facing Lloyd Ross following his election was to ensure that the ARU's official list of demands was backed up by resolute action on the part of the rank-and-file. Given the past record of the state branch, this was easier said than done. The combined legacy of the 1917 strike and the Depression weighed heavily on the ARU. In itself Lloyd Ross's appointment was an eloquent testimony to the poor position in which the union found itself. Morale was so low that most members were glad that their new secretary was an outsider; they were 'very uncertain, very divided, very fearful of any sort of activity' and as a result felt certain that no ARU man could be trusted to run their affairs.\(^{34}\) Lloyd Ross, like his predecessor, was chosen in the expectation that, not having an intimate association with the state branch, he would be better able to improve its effectiveness by means of a thorough overhaul of existing practices. Essentially the railwaymen needed a 'stirrer' who would jolt them of their demoralisation. After years of study and teaching Lloyd Ross 'still had boundless energy and confidence - sparked by an idealistic belief in the power and aims of the working-class movement'.\(^{35}\) He fitted the bill perfectly.

Lloyd Ross intended to enliven the men of the ARU just as he had previously sought to breathe new life into the WEA. 'I very quickly saw', he later recalled, 'that my

\(^{34}\) TRC 236, 1:2/19,23.
\(^{35}\) 'NSW Branch, ARU', October 1973, p.2.
main job was to lift their morale. The way you lifted their morale was partly by an intensive education and propagandist campaign, into which I entered'.36 From his standpoint the diverse problems facing railway workers had to be transmuted into a simple set of industrial demands that could serve as a basis for common action against the Commissioner for Railways. The union's fighting spirit had to be brought up to scratch. Lloyd Ross regarded this as his greatest challenge yet. 'For the Railway worker', he asserted, 'the future must be one of struggle - or the acceptance of lowered conditions'.37 In government circles at this time it was freely admitted that the impact of the Depression was still being felt.38 The need to clamp down on improvements in wages and conditions had only been marginally reduced. In this climate notions of capitalist exploitation could readily be presented in dramatic and easily understood terms. Lloyd Ross was determined to make the most of this opportunity.

The opening round in the first Lloyd Ross-led industrial campaign got underway on 31 October 1935 when the body responsible for the state branch's propaganda activities, the Educational and Organising Committee, agreed to the following resolution: 'That a campaign for a 40 hour week, £4/15/- weekly wage, be immediately commenced per medium of pamphlets, leaflets, stickers and other means of

38. SMH, 13 June 1936, p.18.
propaganda'. In practical terms, of course, the fragmented state of railway unionism meant that any form of instant action was precluded, but nevertheless efforts already were underway to bring about the necessary degree of inter-union co-operation without which there could be no effective campaign. At the end of November a combined conference was held in Melbourne comprising delegates representing three transport unions (the AFULE, the ARU and the Tramways Union). The conference resolved upon a joint union campaign to secure the following demands: a wage increase of 25%; a 40-hour working week; full sick pay; and a 'general levelling up of working conditions'. Clearly there was a desire for co-operation. In the event, however, the conference was not followed up by concerted action. 'With the exception of Queensland, the organisational and agitational work was allowed to lag'.

During the summer of 1935-36 Lloyd Ross proceeded to develop the ARU's basic programme of demands by incorporating additional claims, originally put forward by the shop committees, relating to the weekly payment of wages and the lifting of an official ban on the holding of meetings on railway premises. After being widened in this way, his latest

39. ABL, E89/7/2, E&O Cttee Minutes (20 September 1935-28 August 1936), 31 October 1935. £4/15/- was the basic rate paid to railwaymen in 1929 before the wage cuts of the Depression.

version of the railwaymen's list of demands was unveiled at the February meeting of the ARU state council. The union's industrial programme now comprised the following items:

- 40 hour week
- higher standard of real wages
- the right to hold meetings on the job
- sick pay
- three weeks holidays
- extension of pass entitlements
- weekly payment of wages.

At this stage it still was envisaged that these demands would serve as the basis for an inter-union campaign. ARU sub-branches were expected to form local combined organising committees which would draw upon the support of all the various railway unions. Even if co-operation at the inter-union level proved unsatisfactory it was hoped that progress might yet be achieved. The added recognition given to the demands of the shop committees was designed to strengthen the co-operation that already had been established in the workshops.

The fighting programme that Lloyd Ross was able to put together comprised a rather curious package. The goal of

41. E&O Cttee Minutes, 18 February 1936; State Council Minutes, 22 February 1936, p.16.
42. Cf. Central Council of Railway Shop Committees Papers, NLA MS 2673, Box 1, CCRSC Minutes, 5 October 1935.
'increasing purchasing power', which represented the final formulation of the demand for higher wages, was a traditional Labor shibboleth whose validity had been questioned by Lloyd Ross in his more theoretical moments. Similarly the call for a 40-hour week could scarcely be regarded as a realistic objective in the immediate sense. After an 11-year struggle the ARU had just won a standard 44-hour week for railwaymen and the union was still in the process of trying to secure revised rosters to obtain the full benefit of the shorter working hours. The union's state council previously had lodged a claim with the railways department for sick pay and three weeks annual leave and the request had been summarily turned down. The department proved to be equally peremptory in its attitude to the demand for liberalised pass facilities and the weekly payment of wages. These initial rebuffs were hardly fatal, however. The so-called immediate demands of the ARU represented rather the opening salvo in a propaganda campaign designed to overcome the railwaymen's diffidence in matters of industrial disputation. Accomplishing such a radical shift in the basic attitude of railwaymen could hardly be achieved overnight.

43. 'Dilemma of Trade Unionism', p.184.
44. LD, 7 March 1935, p.7; SMH, 1 April 1935, p.10; WW, 6 September 1935, p.3. The 40-hour week was not introduced until 1947.
45. LD, 17 October 1935, p.8; Railroad, 10 October 1935, p.23.
46. LD, 10 January 1936, p.8, 7 May 1936, p.9.
The task of building up the ARU's morale was a team effort from the start. Having no prior knowledge of detailed industrial matters, Lloyd Ross necessarily relied upon the backing of a corps of knowledgeable colleagues. He 'joined, co-operated [with], and was advised on major decisions' by the junta of ARU stalwarts and Communist railway activists who had engineered his appointment. This band of 'minders' basically comprised Mick Martin, Jack Ferguson, Stan Wyatt, Ted Barker, Harry Jones and Norm Garvey. Close collaboration with these men soon ripened into friendship. Left-wing notions of comradeship and solidarity took on an added emotional intensity. Too valuable an asset to be disbanded, Lloyd Ross's campaign committee was promptly converted into an informal task force or inner circle which in turn was connected to an outer network of railway activists who conveyed union policy to ARU members on the job. In this way an effort was made to bridge the longstanding gap between the 'militant and active leadership' of the union and the membership at large, whose 'backwardness and apathy' no one was allowed to forget.

Under Lloyd Ross's direction a determined effort was made to tighten the connection between the union's official class war position and the specific concerns of railwaymen. 'We can', Lloyd Ross told his fellow militants, 'make our

47. 'NSW Branch, ARU', October 1973, p.2.
48. Ibid.
49. State Secretary's Report to State Council, 21-22 November 1935, p.3.
talks and lectures more vivid by introducing the job examples that are known to all members'.50 With a view to highlighting the urgency of their demands railwaymen were encouraged to provide Transport House with detailed accounts of bad conditions and undesirable employment practices. The information thus obtained was publicised in a variety of ways. In the interests of greater topicality the union newspaper Railroad was converted from a monthly into a weekly publication,51 while job information likewise figured in a stream of reports, leaflets and bulletins that began to appear with increasing frequency once Lloyd Ross was entrenched in Transport House.52 Immediate contact was sought wherever possible. Possession of a motorbike and sidecar (dubbed 'The Red Terror') allowed Lloyd Ross and ARU organiser Jack Ferguson to travel out to workshops and work sites where they discussed grievances at first hand and explained in detail what the union proposed to do about them.53 Another ARU zealot, Stan (or 'Windy') Wyatt, performed a similar function, concentrating upon the men working along the Sydney–South Brisbane line.54 As in the past organising and finance were closely linked. No serious union campaign could be mounted without there being a fighting fund at hand. In this regard a determined effort needed to be made to reverse the situation whereby only a

52. TRC 236, 1:2/32; 'NSW Branch, ARU', October 1973, p.2.
53. Ibid.
quarter of ARU members were financial. An arrears officer was appointed and the importance of achieving one hundred percent financial unionism was proclaimed.55

From early 1936 onwards Lloyd Ross organised a series of sectional conferences in an effort to focus attention upon the particular grievances of the different occupational groups in the ARU. Invariably a committee was appointed to maintain interest by means of additional meetings and pamphlets. The first such conference, arranged for signalmen, was held at the end of January.56 A guards' conference went ahead on 1 March.57 Thereafter similar meetings highlighted the grievances of the porters, the cleaners and the fettlers.58 A further series of conferences dealt with the plight of casuals employed in the railway service. To sustain interest in the issue Lloyd Ross published a pamphlet in which he attacked the practice of retrenching permanent employees and re-employing them as casuals, with a consequent loss of the protection they were entitled to under industrial awards.59 The tramway line repair men, a particularly downtrodden group in the union,

57. Railroad, 4 February 1936, p.3.
59. Lloyd Ross, Railway Workers Who Are Buffeted About at the Whim of the Department, Sydney, [1936] (copy in ABL, National Union of Railwaymen of Australia, E80/57/31).
also came in for special attention. At Lloyd Ross's urging a
job committee was appointed. Les Austin, the designated ARU
activist among the men, was instructed to draw up a leaflet
incorporating a set of specific demands around which a
campaign could be mounted.60

The ARU militants sought to provide for every
eventuality. There was one area where they considered
themselves to be especially vulnerable. Traditionally the
wives of unionists could be counted upon to oppose industrial
militancy since strikes and stoppages played havoc with their
domestic arrangements. The predominant feeling was that
'industrial matters are only men's concerns and that women
should not interest themselves in such things'.61 Eager to
reverse this attitude, the railway militants already had
instigated appropriate action. Two years earlier an ARU
women's auxiliary had been set up with the aim of drawing the
wives and daughters of railwaymen into the union's struggle
against wage cuts. Local branches were formed in Sydney,
Newcastle and Cootamundra and in the following year a capable
secretary, Alice Holloway, was appointed.62

By 1936 the auxiliary had participated in several
campaigns covering such issues as the employment of married

60. The A.R.U. Explains, no.3, 30 October 1935; State
Secretary's Report to State Council, 21-22 November
1935, p.7.
61. RL, 14 November 1934, p.12.
62. SMH, 5 March 1934, p.10; LD, 5 March 1934, p.6;
Railroad, 21 September 1937, p.5.
women and equal pay. It was ready to play an active part in supporting Lloyd Ross's programme of demands. Beginning on 18 April the auxiliary staged its inaugural state conference. On this occasion the delegates were joined by women members of the ARU, most of whom were employed in the railway refreshment rooms. The conference lasted for three days, and included a picnic, a dance and a theatrical evening as well as two working sessions. The significance of the event was not missed by Lloyd Ross. It was, he declared, 'the first attempt of any Trade Union in Australia to bring together the women related to the industry, either through their husbands employed in the Service, or through their own industrial activity'.63 The delegates endorsed the ARU's fighting platform and went on to discuss further grievances of their own, in particular the poor working conditions of the female staff employed in the railway refreshment rooms (irregular hours, poor accommodation, insecurity of employment) and the lack of decent housing for fettlers working in outlying areas of the state.64

On the final day of the conference a deputation from the auxiliary presented senior railway officials with a list of standard ARU demands, with particular emphasis being placed on the proposal that wages should be paid weekly.65 It was clear that the ARU militants had succeeded in enlisting

63. ABL, E80/57/26, ARU Circular, 24 March 1936.
64. SMH, 18 April 1936, p.17, 20 April 1936, p.4.
65. DT, 21 April 1936, p.8; LD, 7 May 1936, p.9.
the support of their wives. In the aftermath of the conference the network of ARU activists expanded dramatically. Between April 1936 and September 1937, when the second ARU women's conference was held, new branches of the auxiliary were set up in a number of railway centres: Bathurst, Goulburn, Taree, Narrabri West, Dubbo, Blayney and Orange. In Wagga the auxiliary was the backbone of the local ARU while in Casino its activities benefitted from the zeal of Lucie Barnes. Eventually the work of the auxiliary was covered in a regular column in Railroad prepared by the newspaper's assistant editor Eileen Powell, who as part of the new order under Lloyd Ross was entrusted with the task of organising the refreshment room women.

Having assembled all its forces, the ARU, in the autumn of 1936, proceeded to launch its new programme of demands. The Sunday after May Day was nominated as the day on which the campaign was to get underway. Sub-branches were expected to call special meetings open to 'all interested people' and a Domain rally was arranged. On 24 March Lloyd Ross issued a circular setting out the ARU's seven-point programme. Shortly afterwards he published a

67. Ibid., p.280; Railroad, 23 June 1942, p.1; Wendy Judge, 'Eileen Powell - a real pioneer of better conditions for women', ibid., May-June 1986, p.4.
68. Ibid., 25 February 1936, p.1; E&O Cttee Minutes, 18 February 1936.
69. A copy is in ABL, E80/57/28.
pamphlet and a set of speaker's notes in which the demands were justified on economic grounds as well as in terms of the well-being of railway employees. In a further effort to generate interest copies of the ARU circular were distributed to railway commuters.

Notwithstanding Lloyd Ross's frenetic activity, the ARU campaign got off to a disappointing start. The rally in the Domain aroused little interest and enthusiasm at the local level similarly was lacking. A bare handful of the sub-branches - notably Auburn, Newcastle and Cootamundra - were able to arrange successful campaign meetings and pursue follow-up action in the form of representations to the railways department and further public meetings. Only patchy support was forthcoming from the other railway unions. Faced with what was just another ARU political campaign, the railways department was put under no pressure whatsoever and acted accordingly. Towards the end of July the department informed the Auburn sub-branch that it had no intention of granting any of the ARU's package of demands.

74. Ibid., 21 July 1936, p.1.
So in the short run nothing was achieved. But from the ARU's standpoint the real battle had only begun. Every moment in the class struggle presented a new opportunity. For all the deficiencies in the militants' programme and performance, UAP and Country Party ministers could always be relied upon to come forward with some anti-labour measure against which a concerted campaign could be mounted. Obnoxious labour laws were a godsend to trade union agitators. This certainly proved to be the case in 1936. In April a contentious piece of legislation was introduced into state parliament in the form of the Government Railways and Transport Amendment Bill. The legislation was controversial in as much as the railways unions were convinced that it was designed to adversely affect the tenure of employment and compensation entitlements of railway and tramway employees. A concerted campaign against the proposed legislation, endorsed by all the relevant unions, was immediately instigated. The barrage of adverse publicity that the ARU had begun to direct against the state railway authorities was, for as long as this new campaign lasted, subsumed by it.

The task of co-ordinating trade union opposition to the Government Railways and Transport Amendment Bill was entrusted to an existing joint trade union committee which had originally been set up to deal with compensation cases involving railwaymen (the so-called 'Section 100(B) committee'). During April and May there was a flurry of activity. The joint committee issued a series of press statements and organised a number of protest meetings. A
detailed list of suggested amendments to the proposed legislation was drawn up while for its part the ARU published a leaflet setting out the unions' case against the bill. To further assist the campaign, Clive Evatt KC provided the joint committee with valuable legal advice based upon his extensive experience in handling compensation cases. Evatt's involvement in the campaign culminated when he appeared at the bar of the Legislative Council to state the unions' objections to the bill.

On 2 June, following successful negotiations between the railway authorities and Ted Barker of the ARU and Bob Winsor of the Officers' Association, the state government announced that it was willing to revise the offending legislation in order to overcome the objections of the unions. In view of this announcement the campaign against the legislation was called off. After two months of heated debate the Government Railways and Transport Amendment Bill completed its passage through state parliament. Although the legislation had been suitably amended the railway unions were not inclined to class the campaign as a complete

75. State Secretary's Report to State Council, 21 May 1936, pp.8-9; LD, 18 April 1936, p.6.
77. SMH, 27 May 1936, p.10.
79. SMH, 3 June 1936, p.13.
success. Hostility to the legislation had been evident among the railway unions, the shop committees, members of parliament and the Labor Council. From the outset the need for co-operation had been recognised. Nevertheless the baleful influence of inter-union rivalry could not be suppressed. Towards the end of May, in reporting on the progress of the campaign to his state council, Lloyd Ross complained bitterly that the only two unions fully prepared to support the campaign were the ARU and the Officers' Association. All the other unions had fallen by the wayside.80

The endless complications of railway unionism served to strengthen Lloyd Ross's faith in the virtues of old-style industrial unionism. He took up the principle of 'closer unity' with added enthusiasm. The need to create 'a grand union of all railwaymen' inspired him to write two ARU pamphlets81 in which the absurdity of having the railway workforce divided among 49 unions was harped upon. Railway unionism was hopelessly fragmented. The amalgamation of the ARU and the AFULE, it was suggested, would act as a splendid example to the other unions.82 The craft unions' traditional misgivings regarding amalgamation were summarily dealt with. Lloyd Ross was ready to defend the fighting heritage of industrial unionism against all comers. 'Militant

80. State Secretary's Report to State Council, 21 May 1936, pp.8-9; State Council Minutes, 21 May 1936, p.3.
82. Closer Unity, p.53.
action does not mean that the A.R.U. wants to pull all railwaymen out on strike to-morrow, but it does mean that we believe in industrial and political struggle as the only means of defending the standards of our members'.

Elsewhere the heroic union-building activities of William Lane and W.G. Spence were referred to in glowing terms.

For all his eloquence, Lloyd Ross's plea for unity fell on deaf ears. The AFULE had no intention of being swallowed up by the ARU. At the union's 1936 state conference, which opened on 29 September, the unwanted advance was rudely rebuffed. By 33 votes to 2 the delegates reaffirmed their opposition to the principle of amalgamation. Nevertheless an attempt was made to soften the blow. Although rejecting amalgamation, the delegates proceeded to announce the necessity of achieving closer co-operation with other transport unions in matters of common concern.

The ARU was ready to take the AFULE at its word. The road to unity had not been totally closed off. An organised attempt to capitalise upon the growing demand for more effective co-operation was soon underway. Early in 1937, at the instigation of the Queensland railway unions, an inter-state conference of transport unions, comprising representatives from fourteen railway and tramway unions, was held at Transport House. It was readily acknowledged by the

83. *Cause of Closer Unity*, p.4.
84. *Closer Unity*, pp.18-23.
participants that the unions represented at the conference had common demands and that in the past collaboration had been lacking. The delegates underlined the failure of the November 1935 conference of transport unions by dutifully reaffirming the same four immediate demands that had been agreed to on that occasion. The significant decisions at the conference concerned organisational matters. Ignoring objections from the Officers' Association the conference decided to set up a national council of transport union representatives with a view to achieving a co-ordinated campaign on behalf of their common demands. The delegates also decided to establish equivalent bodies at the state level.86

The inaugural meeting of the New South Wales combined unions' council took place on 11 February. The occasion was invested with great significance, being regarded as the 'first serious attempt since the 1917 strike to evolve a common policy for the transport unions'.87 The standard four-point programme was adopted and a provisional committee elected, with Lloyd Ross agreeing to act as secretary. But as ever the impetus for change was quickly frustrated. Vested interests were too strong. By the end of the year it was being openly acknowledged that the combined council had


87. SMH, 12 February 1937, p.8.
no future. It had failed to build up support among craft union officials, whose fear of possible ARU empire-building proved insurmountable. It was widely felt that the extensive informal co-operation that already went on between members of different unions - notably in the form of the Section 100(B) committee and the workshop movement - was adequate for all practical purposes.

Ironically, the only group of railway unionists to embrace amalgamation in the 1930s turned out to be the members of the various pariah unions that had emerged from the 1917 strike. By 1932 the original loyalist railway unions (including an anti-AFULE body) had come together to form the National Union of Railwaymen, which went on to gain registration under the New South Wales Industrial Arbitration Act. Federal registration, unsuccessfully sought in 1933, was not obtained until the end of the decade, but otherwise the new union was able to consolidate its position. During 1932 its membership climbed above the 5,000 mark, with 1,500 new members being enrolled midway through the year following Premier Lang's decision to order compulsory union membership in the railway service. Lang's directive was meant to harm rather than assist the NUR, but in the event it was hardly surprising that so many of the trade union conscripts of 1932 should have chosen to enlist in the NUR in preference to the left-wing ARU. Having forsworn ambitious schemes of political

and social reconstruction, the NUR necessarily made fewer demands on its members. It was able to subsist upon lower membership fees and did not have to exact special levies.90

The enmity between the ARU and the NUR entered a new phase following Lloyd Ross's election. The ARU's increasing determination to encourage militancy at the workplace necessarily entailed a renewed attack on the NUR, whose raison d'être was opposition to industrial disruption. It was obvious that no ARU member was likely to support strike action if he thought that there was the slightest possibility of an NUR loyalist being called on to take over his job. The survival of the NUR ensured that in practical terms no New South Wales railwayman could ever forget the failure of the 1917 strike. The ARU militants were eager to escape from the shadow of the NUR. Lloyd Ross's agenda as ARU secretary was determined accordingly. As one of his initial propaganda duties he undertook to prepare a pamphlet detailing the peculiar origins of the NUR.91

To prevent the ARU from seizing the initiative in the ideological struggle, the NUR decided to attack first. In line with their anti-IWW origins, the railway loyalists were ever alert to the baleful influence exerted by 'disruptive elements', which in the context of the 1930s

91. State Secretary's Report to State Council, 21-22 November 1935, p.9; NSW Head Office ('Large Box 1'), Jack Ferguson to Lloyd Ross, 30 January 1936.
meant that they were devoutly anti-communist. In October 1935 the official journal of the NUR drew attention to an article first published in the Orange Advocate in which it was stated that during their state conference in the town ARU delegates had refused to drink a toast to King George V, choosing instead to sing 'The Red Flag'. The question of 'loyalty' remained a readily available shibboleth separating the two rival unions. The New South Wales secretary of the NUR, William Fletcher, was determined to keep the issue alive. Speaking to Dubbo railwaymen on 19 October, he reiterated the need for a strictly non-political form of unionism. The ARU, he asserted, 'was not only affiliated with the Lang A.L.P., but was an ardent admirer and supporter of every movement which had for its objective the uplift of Communism'.

Forced for tactical reasons to abandon his proposed overview of NUR activities, Lloyd Ross proceeded to answer each attack on the ARU as it arose. He responded to Fletcher's Dubbo speech by issuing a circular in which he rejected the obvious imputation that the ARU's support for socialist causes meant that it paid less attention to ordinary trade union matters. The ARU's diligence in securing material benefits for railwaymen was emphasised,

93. Dubbo Liberal, 22 October 1935 (in ABL, E80/60/22).
94. NSW Head Office ('Large Box 1'), J. Chapple to Lloyd Ross, 16 March 1936.
with special mention being made of the assiduousness with which Appeals Board and compensation cases were pursued.\textsuperscript{95} Undaunted, Fletcher replied by issuing a pamphlet in which ARU members were urged to show their disgust at Lloyd Ross's left-wing stance by resigning en masse.\textsuperscript{96} Lloyd Ross immediately hit back with a pamphlet of his own in which he reiterated the advantages of being an ARU member. 'The aim of the A.R.U.', he wrote, 'is to educate and organise its members, so that they can take their part in the Labor Movement, which is pledged to a new economic system. People may not like our ideals, but they have no right to misrepresent our policy in the way the N.U.R. is trying to do'.\textsuperscript{97} Feeding off itself, the war of words between Ross and Fletcher spilled over into the columns of a number of local newspapers published in railway towns, notably the \textit{Junee Southern Cross} and the \textit{Cootamundra Herald}.\textsuperscript{98}

As was acknowledged at the outset of their verbal duel, obtaining benefits for its members was the ARU's most effective way of replying to NUR criticism. With his mind wonderfully concentrated as a result of the ceaseless rivalry, Lloyd Ross was forced to abandon his grandiose ideas

\textsuperscript{95} LD, 4 November 1935, p.6.
\textsuperscript{96} William Fletcher, \textit{Shall Communism Rule Australia -?}, n.p., [1936] (copy in ABL, N.G. Butlin Collection, P9/1/16).
\textsuperscript{97} Lloyd Ross, \textit{52,000 Members In Australia!}, n.p., [1936] (copy in ABL, E80/44/3).
\textsuperscript{98} Extracts from these newspapers containing ARU-NUR polemics are at NSW Head Office ('Large Box 1') and in ABL E80/60/23.
of union amalgamation and mass agitation in favour of far more specific campaigns designed to secure tangible benefits for particular segments of the railway workforce. The need for class struggle had been well and truly highlighted; what had to be done next was to launch carefully planned attacks based upon control of strategic points in the industrial battleground.

By the early months of 1937 the concerted effort to strengthen the ARU's resolve was beginning to pay off. Increasingly it was possible for the union to posit a connection between industrial campaigns and improved working conditions. On 9 February, after having met a deputation of railwaymen, the Commissioner for Railways (T.J. Hartigan) conducted a highly publicised inspection of the line between Newtown and Petersham with a view to gaining first-hand knowledge of the hazardous working conditions of inner city fettlers.99 A few weeks later the fettlers were given an increase in the allowance they received for working in a danger zone.100 With the issue of safety left untouched, the agitation continued.101 Shortly afterwards, in an effort to fend off a renewed call for increased annual leave for railway workers, Hartigan announced that henceforth all his employees would be entitled to a certain amount of paid

100. Ibid., 10 March 1937, p.12; LD, 10 March 1937, p.7.
sick leave. Another victory was achieved when nighttime tramway repair work in Cleveland Street was curtailed following an intimation from the ARU that it intended to move against the practice.

Governing the ARU's strategy at this time was the knowledge that at the end of the year the union would be entitled to lodge a new log of claims with the federal arbitration court. The task of drawing up demands and gathering evidence was stepped up accordingly. Using material obtained from ARU organisers and union members, Lloyd Ross supervised the publication of a stream of pamphlets in which the industrial grievances of the various occupational groups in the union were spelt out in graphic detail. Several of the pamphlets were particularly noteworthy. *Cleaning Up Darling Harbour* dealt with the effect of staff shortages and erratic working hours on the porters employed at the Darling Harbour goods shed while *Memoirs of a Shunter* contained a vivid description of the dangers faced at the various railway marshalling yards, where shunters were forced to ignore safety requirements because of understaffing. Another pamphlet, *The Siberia of the Service*, featured the grievances of the workers in the carriage cleaning sheds, where conditions were so depressing that the department had fallen into the practice of assigning

malcontents to work there as a form of punishment (hence the title). Lloyd Ross's publicity blitz was a source of deep concern to the railway authorities. On 21 October 1937 Commissioner Hartigan hit out at the 'malicious propaganda and criticism' being circulated among railway employees. The official view was that railway workers were contented with their lot; their alleged grievances had been fomented by a handful of left-wing agitators. Whatever its source, however, the pressure could not be ignored. One issue in particular threatened to get out of control. In July 1936 the ARU lodged a claim for 'bank-to-bank' conditions for New South Wales fettlers whereby their working day would begin when they left their camp rather than when they reached the job as was the existing procedure. Following a delay of over a year in processing the claim the threat of direct action was at last deployed. On 22 September 1937, after listening to an address from Jack Ferguson, the fettlers of Broken Hill

105. Lloyd Ross, The Guards Prepare for the New Award, Sydney, [1937].
107. Lloyd Ross, The Union in the Tram Per-Way, Sydney, [1937].
reaffirmed their demand for bank-to-bank conditions.110 The department responded by offering them a time allowance of fifteen minutes. Dismissing this concession as inadequate, the Broken Hill fettlers announced that they intended to leave their trolleys on the line at the end of the first shift in November if a better offer were not forthcoming by that date. Thereupon Transport House swung into action. Jack Ferguson made arrangements for feeding and housing the men in the event of their threat having to be carried out. In a decisive move he obtained the backing of the Barrier Industrial Council at the very outset of the campaign. Railroad publicised the issue and ARU sub-branches flooded the department with telegrams of support. On 21 October, after consulting with the local ARU sub-branch and the BIC, Lloyd Ross returned to Sydney where he entered into direct negotiations with senior officers of the department secure in the knowledge that the Broken Hill fettlers did not intend to cave in. By 28 October acceptable bank-to-bank conditions had been obtained not just for the fifty men directly involved in the dispute but for the entire 3,000 fettlers in the state. This result was hailed as a tremendous victory for militant unionism. 'It is probable', Lloyd Ross later commented, 'that this is the first genuine attempt for many

110. BDT, 23 September 1937, p.4; Barrier Miner, 23 September 1937, p.3.
years that has been made to compel the Railway Department to give way'.

The victory at Broken Hill whetted the ARU's appetite. It was eager to encourage direct action elsewhere. By now, after more than two years of processing the grievances of ARU members, Lloyd Ross had evolved a standard set of tactics capable of being applied to particular cases as they arose. Union officials investigated job grievances at first hand, making night visits if necessary; a list of specific demands, with supporting evidence, was compiled; letters and articles highlighting the issue were published in Railroad and fed to a wide range of country and metropolitan newspapers; frequently a pamphlet appeared; petitions and letters to the department were drawn up and deputations and meetings organised; and the momentum was kept up after the initial burst of enthusiasm through the creation of job committees and by means of daily bulletins and leaflets. For the most part the gains that resulted from each individual campaign were obtained after direct negotiations with officers of the railways department rather than through the industrial courts.


Throughout 1937 and 1938 Lloyd Ross carefully publicised the successes that had been achieved in order to show that industrial action brought results. The various ARU pamphlets invariably referred to recent gains, with railway workers being urged to aim for ever greater victories in the struggles that lay ahead. For the ARU state conference of September 1938 Lloyd Ross compiled a list of benefits obtained by the more downtrodden members of the ARU during the previous year and a half. Thus in the case of the tramway line repair men the following basic improvements were noted:

[Within] narrow limits, members select their own holiday period; certain workers have won the right to wash their hands in departmental time; adequate shelter for gangs is being provided; improved lavatory arrangements; re-introduction of bubblers to all gangs; improvement of working conditions in the cement department at Wolli Creek; provision of seniority lists for employees; issue of overalls for top dressing gangs; private correspondence to be forwarded to employees in sealed envelopes; recognition of the rights of Union representation at major inquiries.113

In the case of the women working in the railway refreshment rooms the benefits were equally tangible:

**Moss Vale:** Fireplaces were not provided and girls had to chop wood for baths, etc. The A.R.U. has obtained approval for the supply of chopped wood for the bath heaters. Provision is being made for a suitable rest room for the male staff and heating facilities will be provided therein.

**Mount Victoria:** Re the practice of booking off girls without notice. Suitable instructions have been given and the Department states that no further trouble should be experienced.

113. Ibid., p.46.
Yass Junction: Girls required to sign on for seven shifts in six days. A complaint regarding the working of seven shifts has been attended to and adjustments made.

Wellington: Complaints regarding washing facilities and other matters have had investigation and the necessary adjustments have been made.

Cootamundra: Approval was obtained for the erection of additional sleeping accommodation for the staff.

DEFENCE OF WORKERS' RIGHTS: We have obtained many transfers for girls. We have defended girls against unfair sub-managers.114

The 1938 state conference met in the aftermath of the most notable single industrial campaign to have occurred since Lloyd Ross took over. During June and July the union's attention was fixed on the Enfield marshalling yards. The connection between understaffing and unsafe work practices had long been insisted upon by union spokesmen.115 The ARU activist Mick Martin was a member of the local sub-branch; through him there was a direct link between the Enfield shunters and Lloyd Ross. On 17 June Martin visited Transport House where he demanded immediate action in regard to the staffing situation at the yards.116 His sense of urgency was soon vindicated. At 12.45am on Sunday, 19 June, an Enfield shunter, Tim Dwyer, was crushed to death between two vans.117 He was the fifth shunter to be involved in a

114. Ibid., pp.44-45.
fatal accident since January.\textsuperscript{118} Over the next two days Lloyd Ross, Mick Martin and Jack Ferguson inspected the site of the accident.\textsuperscript{119} On the following Sunday a meeting of shunters called upon Commissioner Hartigan to receive a delegation from Enfield to discuss the need for extra staff, shorter hours and additional safety precautions. The Commissioner was given a fortnight in which to reply. In an effort to apply some immediate pressure the men decided to adopt the tactic of working according to rule. Not all the regulations were fully enforced from the outset and the resulting delays did not affect passenger traffic since Enfield was a goods yard.\textsuperscript{120} It was realised from the start, however, that railway traffic would be completely disrupted if the other marshalling yards in the city came out in support.

Although refusing to receive a deputation from Enfield, Commissioner Hartigan was prepared to grant some of the men's claims. He promptly announced that working hours at Enfield would be reduced from 88 to 84 a fortnight as soon as extra staff was available.\textsuperscript{121} Despite this concession, the men decided to continue working to rule. They were anxious to know the details of the new rostering system that would accompany the reduction in hours and were

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{118} \textit{AW}, 13 July 1938, p.7.
  \item \textsuperscript{119} \textit{Railroad}, 5 July 1938, p.6.
  \item \textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 28 June 1938, p.1, 5 July 1938, pp.6, 7; \textit{SMH}, 27 June 1938, p.13.
  \item \textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 30 June 1938, p.7; \textit{Railroad}, 5 July 1938, p.7.
\end{itemize}
determined 'to remain solid until the whole thing was cleared up'. They were strengthened by the knowledge that they enjoyed the full support of other railwaymen. On 3 July a mass meeting of metropolitan shunters threatened to extend the dispute to the Darling Harbour and Sydney City yards. The Labor Council called on Hartigan to receive a deputation, either from the men themselves or the ARU.

The shunters gradually stepped up the pressure. As from 12 July a complete work to rule situation came into force at the Enfield yards. Two days later Commissioner Hartigan announced that he was willing to meet a deputation from Enfield, albeit with the proviso that it contained no representatives from the ARU. On 17 July a meeting of shunters from all over the state voted to extend the dispute to the Darling Harbour yards in the event of there being no satisfactory result forthcoming from the meeting, which was set down for the following day. At 3.00pm on Monday, 18 July, the final act in the drama was played out. Upon filing into the Railway Commissioner's office the deputation of shunters immediately asked Hartigan to lift his ban on the ARU. After resisting for some time Hartigan relented. Thereupon Lloyd Ross — who with a group of shunters was

waiting outside the building - was allowed into the room. 'When news was received that Mr. Lloyd Ross would be admitted, he was lustily cheered'. From then on he was a silent but watchful observer as the negotiations proceeded. Eventually the shunters declared themselves satisfied after Hartigan told them that he intended to ask officers of his department to investigate conditions at Enfield and submit a report based on their findings. It also was announced that the shorter working week at Enfield would be introduced at the end of the month. The dispute was effectively at an end.128

By August a number of basic improvements had been introduced at Enfield. In addition to the reduction in hours the new work practices included the appointment of extra shunters and the introduction of better training and safety provisions.129 Lloyd Ross was in a triumphant mood. 'The recent regulations strike at Enfield', he declared, 'not only won a shorter working week, more staff, gloves and improved lighting for the shunters, but has strengthened the union'. The ARU no longer was seen by its members as remote and bureaucratic; it 'was with the railway man wherever he happened to be struggling for better conditions'.130 When the state conference met in September he was eager to remind

128. DT, 19 July 1938, p.5; LD, 19 July 1938, p.2; Railroad, 19 July 1938, p.1; SMH, 19 July 1938, p.12.
130. Ibid., 26 July 1938, p.1.
the delegates of the fruitful relationship that had developed between the men at Enfield and ARU officials:

A shunter is killed; a rep. informs the State Secretary; the State Secretary sends an organiser immediately to the scene of the accident; officials inspect the job; a meeting is called and organised by activists in the yard; resolutions are prepared and submitted to the meeting; general discussion follows; the resolution is altered to satisfy the different ideas expressed in the discussion; solidarity is strengthened and loyalty pledged. Men on the job act; head office issues publicity to the press; material is forwarded from members for the issue of a daily bulletin; the bulletin is distributed; the State Secretary and the organisers regularly visit the job throughout the night; a flow of members, giving advice and information, passes through head office; letters are sent to the Department and the replies given to the Enfield shunters at mass meetings. Interest and solidarity are evidenced. The tempo of activity is widened. Demands and power gather force. Men, who see the Union at work, come to the Union. Metropolitan shunters attend meetings on Sunday afternoons. The Trades and Labour Council gives its assistance; pledges of solidarity arrive from near and far. Every new move is deliberated by officials, by men - by the Union.

Sub-branch Secretary Stan. Jones seized the opportunity of a large meeting at Eveleigh addressed by Mr J. Beasley, M.H.R., to distribute 1,000 copies of the special Enfield poster, "They Await Your Safe Return." A letter was forwarded to all country newspapers explaining the reason for train delays; circulars were being sent to all safety first reps. when the dispute was settled.

Thus everyone co-operates - for that is the Union at work. This is how hours were reduced, the staff increased, and conditions improved. This is the Union at work.131

The Enfield dispute reinforced Lloyd Ross's faith in the value of publicity. His resourcefulness was unbounded. At the height of the dispute he dispatched a film unit to the

131. Achievements of ARU, pp.41-42.
scene. Shots were taken of the men's activities, both on the job and at meetings. During the next few weeks the unit filmed other scenes of railway life, notably fettlers at work in the danger zone and a railway camp flooded by rain. For the first time a trade union in New South Wales was prepared to use film as part of its industrial armoury. As a result of Lloyd Ross's initiative the ARU's recent victory could be relived and displayed to a wider audience.132

Enfield was a case study in solidarity. The shunters prevailed because they were a cohesive band of workers who occupied a strategic industrial position and shared a common purpose. There were no inter-union divisions among the shunters and the NUR had no influence. The resolve shown by the one hundred or so shunters served to further demonstrate that, as with any trade union - or any organisation for that matter - the ARU's strength and effectiveness was not to be judged solely in quantitative terms. For all the hard work put in by the ARU militants, the union's membership at this time, after a slight rise in 1935-36, was again in a state of decline. In December 1938 the state branch had 17,005 members, which represented a loss of some one thousand members as compared with the situation when Lloyd Ross took over.133 The size of the railway

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workforce was static and a good proportion of the new workers who entered the service joined the NUR. The underlying reasons for the NUR's survival - its abjuration of left-wing politics, its fewer financial demands (the ARU's revenue rose even as its numbers fell), its cosy relationship with the state government and railway authorities - had been amply reinforced as a result of the increased assertiveness displayed by the ARU since 1935.

Lloyd Ross and his fellow militants remained firmly wedded to the idea of industrial struggle. There could be no lasting peace in the class war. In practical terms the ARU's legacy of defeat still needed to be fully exorcised. The Enfield and Broken Hill disputes were memorable because they were atypical. Most railway workers in New South Wales were far more circumspect in the way they sought to redress their grievances. In the upper echelon of the union a more cautious approach was favoured as well. In the course of 1938 the federal leadership of the ARU decided that the new log of claims upon which so much effort had been expended by the New South Wales branch would not be formally lodged until all the various applications to alter existing railway awards and agreements had been processed. A considerable delay was expected.134

134. Australian Railways Union, Biennial Report ... to the Fourteenth Meeting of the Australian Council at Sydney, March 11, 1940, Melbourne, 1940, p.39; LD, 28 September 1938, p.5.
The New South Wales militants chafed at the limitations on their freedom of action. Being old-style industrial unionists at heart, they dreamt of extricating the ARU from the trammels of the conciliation and arbitration system even as they were forced to master its intricacies. They readily acknowledged that they were trapped. To withdraw from the existing system and instead pursue a policy of direct action was out of the question. The reasons were plain enough: the existence of the NUR, the chronic disunity displayed by the 49 unions with members in the railway service and the political conservatism of many ARU members. Well aware that the ARU could not hope to dramatically improve its position in relation to its trade union competitors (let alone its employer) until its own house was in order, the New South Wales militants, from 1936 onwards, proceeded to unleash a political and ideological crusade directed against the enemy within.

135. SMH, 6 May 1937, p.12.
Left-wing politics in the ARU displayed an inherent contradiction. Most ARU members had a fairly straightforward approach to trade unionism. A union, for them, existed to defend and, where possible, seek improvements in the wages and conditions of its members. The ARU's militant wing viewed matters in a completely different light, however. Success in securing material improvements as a result of trade union activity was, from a left-wing standpoint, merely the first round in an escalating struggle. Industrial agitation, as the militants conceived it, necessarily culminated in full-scale class war and, once victory was achieved, in socialist reconstruction. 'Before the railway worker', Lloyd Ross insisted, 'is the track to socialism. At the main terminal of our path to progress are security, prosperity and culture'.\(^1\) The ARU's ultimate objective was not an ever higher level of 'increased purchasing power'. Rather it sought the abolition of the capitalist system in its entirety and its replacement by the dictatorship of the

\(^1\) *Railroad*, 3 March 1936, p.4.
proletariat. Industrial campaigns were not intended to be an alternative to radical social change but were instead seen as providing a valuable training in socialist activism.2

The differentiation between immediate and ultimate aims implied a thoroughgoing politicisation of the ARU's activities. Placing full value on the ARU's status as an affiliated union, the railway militants were prepared at all times to assist in any move designed to prevent a further watering down by the ALP of its 1921 socialisation objective. Their commitment to socialist reconstruction demanded as much.

The process of politicisation culminated in a desire to master all the details of Labor factionalism. In line with their commitment to radical change the railway militants were unable to share in the widespread adulation for Labor's great leader, Jack Lang, for whom scientific socialism was ever a closed book. Lang's efforts whilst in government to improve the status and conditions of railwaymen led to his being revered by most ARU members, a feeling which lingered on long after he had ceased to be a dynamic political force.3 For their part, however, the militants always regarded Lang as just another Labor reformist and reformism, for them, was invariably 'spurious'. Neither Lang nor his federal rival Scullin had any intention of attacking the

3. TRC 236, 2:1/16-17.
deep-seated problems of capitalism. 'The Premier', Arthur Chapman told the men of the ARU in 1932, 'showed more daring than the Federal leaders, but neither would take them very far. Both policies were based on the idea of reforming the system of exploitation, which was tottering to its downfall'. It was simply unrealistic, Chapman believed, for railwaymen to expect to receive an endless stream of favours from Labor governments.4

The limitations of reformism became steadily more obvious once Lang's political fortunes began to decline. Following his dismissal from office in May 1932 the era of favours was officially suspended. There was no longer any point in the ARU's maintaining an association with the Lang Labor machine. The union's willingness to seek a divorce quickened the following year after Lang abruptly terminated the existence of the Socialisation Committee and the supporting network of socialisation units. Lang's decision to press for 'the socialisation of credit' underlined the division in Labor's ranks between those who favoured the socialisation of private industry and those who chose to overlook the 1921 objective. The ARU from 1930 onwards had strongly supported the attempt by the Socialisation Committee to breathe new life into the 1921 objective. Following the 1933 state conference the fast dissolving socialisation units looked to the railwaymen and the miners to provide an

4. SMH, 21 April 1932, p.9.
organised centre of left-wing resistance to Lang. In the event nothing concrete was achieved, but from now on it was increasingly obvious that, in factional terms, Lang and the ARU militants were on a collision course. Reconciliation was ruled out from the start. During the remainder of 1933 the breach was consolidated as a result of Chapman's close association with the anti-war movement: the Inner Group sternly rejected all forms of united front activity.

The falling out between Lang and the railway militants paved the way for a steady increase in Communist involvement in the ARU political scene, culminating in the election of Lloyd Ross. But in marked contrast to the success that crowned its efforts, the Communist Party's involvement got off to a rather hesitant start. Lloyd Ross's campaign committee was in part the lineal descendant of a Communist Party political committee which operated in the union in the early 1930s. Given Arthur Chapman's intense radicalism, this committee had little option but to adopt a largely passive role. It looked on approvingly as the state branch, without any prompting from the Communist Party, cheerfully adopted a seemingly endless series of left-wing resolutions covering the whole range of anti-war and anti-fascist concerns. Apart from happily observing this situation the committee had few other duties to perform.

5. Ibid., 24 April 1933, p.9, 26 April 1933, p.8.
6. WV, 6 October 1933, p.1.
In point of fact up until 1934 there was hardly any organised Communist Party activity in the ARU worth speaking of. Communist railwaymen were an active force, but they refused to operate in the union movement. In the immediate wake of the Depression, Communist railwaymen gravitated instead to the network of railway shop committees. They chose to steer clear of the major railway unions, whose signal lack of effectiveness since 1929 aroused their deepest contempt. This attitude prevailed until midway through 1934, when it was modified at the behest of the Communist Party hierarchy in line with the overall attempt to eradicate sectarianism. The policy of 'unity from above' was applied in detail to the ARU. A recently formed Militant Minority railwaymen's section was entrusted with the task of building up Communist influence in the union. Communists who belonged to the ARU were urged to pay greater heed to their role as union members. They were expected to become financial, regularly attend sub-branch meetings, and vote for approved candidates for the state council. In this way, after a long period of non-participation, a Communist presence finally emerged in the ARU.

At the outset of their involvement Communist railwaymen had to contend with two other organised groups

already active in the ARU's affairs. On their right was a knot of Labor Party stalwarts led by Ted Barker, Stan Wyatt and Jim Holt. On their left was Arthur Chapman, who had built up a strong personal following since coming to the union. During his absence in 1934 his faction was led by the state president, A.J. McAllister, who in turn was associated with H.A. Harvey and Jack Ferguson (who had earlier been involved in Communist activities 'for a little while' but had drifted away since becoming an ARU activist).10 J.F. Goldspink was another prominent pro-Chapman spokesman.11 Inspired by Chapman's fundamentalism, these four men helped to keep alive the traditions of old-style syndicalism. As befitting his seniority, McAllister led the way in this regard. An acerbic socialist, he distrusted all political parties, believing instead that unions should pursue their own agenda untrammelled by outside influences.12

The formation of the Communist faction, together with Chapman's prolonged absence abroad, seriously weakened the position of the ARU's pre-communist left-wing faction. In May 1934 Ted Barker replaced McAllister as state president. The Communists in the ARU, while initially wary,13 soon accepted this new arrangement. Having been deeply involved in the work of the Socialisation Committee,

12. Ibid.
13. RL, 20 June 1934, p.3.
Barker now was definitely an anti-Lang man. The informal association was further consolidated after a pro-Lang ticket decided to contest - unsuccessfully in the end - the annual election for positions in the Miners' Federation. Both the anti-Lang Labor men and the Communist faction felt certain that, given the right circumstances, the Inner Group would seek to mount a similar challenge in the ARU. They were prepared to sink their remaining differences in order to repel the common enemy.14

The rapprochement between the two leading ARU factions forced the pro-Chapman group to reconsider its position. Broad left-wing unity was the order of the day. Ideological purity was no longer a supreme necessity. Faced with this situation, Chapman's leading disciples parted company. McAllister and Goldspink still sought to maintain their ideological independence - and for this reason dropped out of the mainstream of state branch politics - whereas Jack Ferguson, whose skill as an organiser was widely acknowledged, allowed himself to be absorbed into the new ruling circle. In June 1934 the Communist Party still regarded Ferguson with suspicion,15 but by the end of the year he was back in its good books. His rehabilitation was sealed following a speech he delivered at the 1934 ACTU congress in support of a motion by Bill Orr attacking the arbitration system.16

14. SMH, 2 November 1934, p.11.
15. RL, 20 June 1934, p.3.
Throughout 1935 the old ARU factional divisions steadily faded away. By the middle of the year, when the militants were able to organise Lloyd Ross's election, the ruling circle in the ARU presented itself to the outside world as the 'all-embracing Left'. A discreet silence regarding its formation from three rather disparate elements was maintained. Unity was everything. For his part Lloyd Ross was well aware of the importance of preserving the cohesiveness of the ARU's inner circle. As a result of its activities he was guaranteed a solid majority on the state council and at state conferences. There was no reason to disturb this cosy arrangement.

The state conference which elected Lloyd Ross went on to restate the ARU's radicalism in terms of the particular factional circumstances of mid-1935. It renewed the union's affiliation with the Labor Party but at the same time condemned the state executive's action in opposing the demand for a united front against war and fascism. Ringing declarations of solidarity with the Communist Party and its fraternal affiliates MAWAF and FSU (Friends of the Soviet Union) were intended to display the union's unswerving support for these organisations at a time when united front activities faced an uncertain future. On 22 August, in accordance with the provisions of the Crimes Act, the

19. SMH, 7 September 1935, p.18; WW, 10 September 1935, p.3.
Commonwealth Attorney-General (R.G. Menzies) instituted proceedings in the High Court designed to secure the issuing of a declaration to the effect that the FSU and the CPA were unlawful associations. The application failed, but only after a long delay (the case did not come to an end until 20 May 1937), during which time the CPA had to devote much of its attention to coping with the threat of imminent illegality.

MAWAF likewise, in the spring of 1935, was headed for troubled waters. It was required to keep abreast of overseas developments at a time when the impending Italian invasion of Abyssinia had thoroughly destabilised the international situation. In the light of the growing menace of war and fascism Communists and their sympathisers found it increasingly difficult to maintain their ideological consistency. As the Abyssinian crisis deepened the USSR looked to the League of Nations - hitherto regarded as a tool of imperialism - to act as a rallying point against fascist aggression. MAWAF was forced to frame its agenda accordingly. At the end of August it dispatched an open letter to Prime Minister Lyons in which stress was placed on the need for the British government 'to urge the League of Nations to impose its will on Italian imperialism for the purpose of guaranteeing the complete sovereignty of Abyssinia'. Embarrassingly the letter to the UAP leader was signed 'Yours fraternally'.

with the Lyons government left the anti-war movement wide open to criticism from its working-class constituency. In any case there was simply no question of its being in a position to express mainstream Labor thinking on the issue. The ALP was wedded to a policy of strict isolationism. It firmly opposed Australian involvement in the Abyssinian crisis.21

The factional implications of the divergence of opinion over Abyssinia were fully exploited. The initiative in this regard was seized by Jack Lang, who was determined to capitalise on the unpopularity in ALP circles of his left-wing opponents' position. In a speech delivered on 4 September he set out the case for non-intervention in the Abyssinian crisis. Sanctions, he insisted, would inevitably lead to war and war in turn would be accompanied by conscription, a policy which ran counter to Labor's most hallowed traditions.22

Lang's anti-sanctionist rhetoric was backed up by the weight of numbers. Non-intervention was the creed not only of the ALP but of the labour movement in general. The Trades Hall Council in Melbourne was firmly anti-sanctionist23 as was its New South Wales counterpart. On 26 September the Labor Council endorsed Lang's position.

Attempts by Lloyd Ross and other like-minded delegates to block the move were sternly rebuffed.24

The left-wing internationalists of New South Wales occupied an increasingly embattled position. They faced hostility on two fronts. They continued to incur the displeasure of UAP governments - a 'Hands Off Abyssinia' meeting planned for 15 September was banned on the orders of the Chief Secretary of New South Wales25 - and were now in the process of being officially repudiated by the labour movement. The only two unions at the state level to endorse the call for sanctions were the Miners' Federation and the ARU.26 Even at this level there were difficulties, with the railwaymen, as usual, failing to match the commitment and solidarity displayed by the miners. Embarrassment was caused when the state branch's stand on sanctions was publicly rejected by the Lithgow sub-branch, whose secretary, Bill O'Neill, was a staunch supporter of Jack Lang.27

In addition to encountering grassroots opposition, the New South Wales militants had to contend with strong anti-sanctionist sentiment in the other ARU state branches. On 22 October the Victorian branch executive carried a resolution rejecting sanctions. The vote was 6 in favour

26. WW, 4 October 1935, p.3.
27. Lithgow Mercury, 21 October 1935, p.3.
and 4 against. The union found it hard to make up its mind on the issue. At the end of November the national council of the ARU endorsed the call for sanctions by the equally narrow margin of 8 votes to 6. During the debate the Queensland delegates advocated a strongly left-wing anti-sanctionist position.

Given the strength of the opposing forces, complacency was a luxury that the sanctionist camp could not afford. From the start Lloyd Ross was unsparing in his efforts to publicise the proper internationalist response to the Abyssinian crisis, both in his capacity as editor of Railroad and as a willing purveyor of quotable opinions to the major metropolitan newspapers. In a number of press statements and other public comments he freely criticised labour's isolationist wing, with the views of Lang and his immediate followers coming in for special attention. At the end of September he issued a leaflet to ARU members defending the state branch's stand on the issue. Eventually he organised a meeting of ARU members at which he repeated his condemnation of the labour movement's action in refusing to accept the argument for sanctions.

32. WW, 22 October 1935, p.9.
In presenting the case for sanctions Lloyd Ross was very largely preaching to the converted. His internationalism, while endorsed by the ARU, continued to attract only limited support elsewhere in the labour movement. Isolationist sentiment was in the ascendancy. At the end of November the ACTU held a national congress in Melbourne specifically for the purpose of setting out the trade union movement's official position on sanctions. The congress was attended by all the up-and-coming industrial militants - notably Lloyd Ross, Bill Orr and the FIA's Ernie Thornton - but from the outset the proceedings were controlled by the ACTU executive, which was firmly isolationist. Sanctions were equated with conscription, imperialism and war.

In rejecting sanctions the ACTU executive claimed to be carrying out the principles enunciated in the pamphlet Labor's Case Against War and Fascism. This document had been prepared by the Labor Anti-War Committee in Victoria and the congress was expected to accept it as the definitive statement of the ACTU's response to the threat of war. This was not a foregone conclusion, however. The presentation of the anti-war case in the pamphlet failed to satisfy an important section of anti-sanctionist delegates whose anti-war ardour was so strong that, not content with repudiating all overseas wars, they were prepared to renounce the idea of defending a capitalist Australia as well. A section in the pamphlet which pledged trade union support for the defence of Australia in the event of its being menaced by 'predatory Imperialism' aroused widespread suspicion. Had
not Australia's costly involvement in the Great War been justified on precisely these grounds? When a division was called for the words in question were only narrowly endorsed - by 58 votes to 54.33

The ACTU executive was under far less pressure, however, when the delegates turned their attention to the specific issue of sanctions. The link between anti-war and isolationist sentiment was unyielding. The sanctionist minority at the congress had to contend with the accusation that it was more concerned with defending distant Abyssinia than with looking after the interests of the Australian working class. Lloyd Ross and his internationalist comrades were easily outvoted - by 78 to 41 - when a vote was taken on a recommendation from the executive which provided for 'uncompromising opposition to the policy of applying sanctions'.34

At no stage were the militants able to capitalise on the strong anti-war mood of the delegates. Lloyd Ross was particularly at fault in this regard. His youthful enthusiasm proved to be a mixed blessing. During the debate on whether trade unionists should support the defence of Australia he emerged as a vigorous exponent of the creed of revolutionary defeatism. 'He supported a revolutionary

33. ABL, ACTU Congress Papers, S784, Box 1, 1935 Congress Minutes, pp.5-9.
34. Ibid., pp.12-16; LD, 29 November 1935, p.7.
working-class policy that would overthrow capitalism, and when the time came they could turn an imperialistic war into a civil war'. 35 Although avowedly Leninist, his sentiments in this regard were widely shared. As the subsequent vote revealed, many anti-sanctionists had similar misgivings regarding the executive's willingness to support the 'adequate defence' of a capitalist Australia. However the sense of convergence was rudely shattered when, during the course of his speech, Lloyd Ross proceeded to brand the entire anti-sanctionist camp as 'cowardly and anti-working class'. There was no question of his being allowed to get away with such a foolish remark. At various times during the remainder of the debate he found himself attacked as a middle-class interloper who had no right to impugn the working-class credentials of any delegate. 36

Later on during the congress Lloyd Ross was subjected to further sniping after he delivered another speech in which he called on the trade union movement to be more forthcoming in its support for MAWAF. His comments provoked a vigorous response from the THC's Don Cameron, who insisted that it was impossible for trade unionists to countenance the idea of a united front in view of the Communist Party's evident determination 'to force the capitalist policy of sanctions down the throats of the workers'. 37 Like the other anti-sanctionist critics

36. LD, 27 November 1935, pp.1, 8.
37. Ibid., 28 November 1935, pp.1, 7.
Cameron refused to accept Lloyd Ross as a true labour man, viewing him instead as a besotted middle-class ideologue. A few days later he set out his attitude in a private letter to the Labor journalist E.J. Brady:

Most of the representatives of the A.R.U. and the Miners' Union - including Lloyd Ross, led the way against defence of Australia and supported the application of sanctions. To my way of thinking they have all a great deal to learn from the world's greatest teacher - Practical Experience. Lloyd Ross was very disappointed - naturally, and to me, seemed to allow his feelings to run away with his head. It would not take much in my opinion to make him wildly hysterical and stupidly fanatical. His book knowledge apparently has yet to be fortified by the lessons of practical experience.38

At times Lloyd Ross's impetuosity annoyed his own left-wing comrades as well. On the second day of the congress, in a moment of exasperation, he proposed an amendment to Labor's Case Against War and Fascism whereby the delegates were asked to express their sympathy for the people of Abyssinia 'in their attempt to defend their Country against exploitation by imperialist nations'. The proposed amendment was rejected by 64 votes to 47.39 The militants dutifully supported the amendment, but behind the scenes they were furious. On the eve of the congress the delegates from the ARU and the Miners' Federation had held a caucus at which the tactics to be followed during the ensuing week had been hammered out.40 By coming forward with an amendment that

38. E.J. Brady Papers, NLA MS 206/7/404, Don Cameron to E.J. Brady, 5 December 1935.
40. LD, 26 November 1935, p.5.
had not been agreed to by the caucus Lloyd Ross effectively undermined the militants' solidarity and exposed them to an unnecessary defeat.41

Lloyd Ross easily withstood his rough initiation at the ACTU congress. He felt, when the proceedings concluded, as if he had been crushed by an 'industrial steam-roller',42 but he had no intention of giving up the struggle. Following the debate on sanctions he attended a meeting organised by the Victorian branch of MAWAF at which he proudly reaffirmed his internationalist faith.43 In the weeks that followed he was at pains to point out that, despite outward appearances, the militants' defeat had not been total. Apart from its emphasis on the need for national defence, Labor's Case Against War and Fascism was, he insisted, a perfectly acceptable statement of anti-war theory. It was up to the militants to ensure that its precepts were properly understood and implemented.44

The reaction to the Abyssinian crisis effectively dispelled any doubts that might still exist as to where Lloyd Ross stood on the political spectrum. Some time towards the end of 1935 he decided to become a member of the Communist

43. WV, 6 December 1935, p.4.
44. Lloyd Ross, 'The Australian Trade Union Congress and War', Trade Union Leader, January 1936, p.128.
The debate over sanctions formed the immediate backdrop to this decision. The ALP, both federally and at the state level, had shown itself to be staunchly anti-sanctionist. It preferred to ignore what was happening in Abyssinia. By contrast the Communist Party had called for international unity in the face of fascist aggression, a position which was strongly endorsed by the new ARU secretary. His joining the party allowed him to further distance himself from pro-isolationist Labor spokesmen, who for their part were ever willing to bolster their case by resorting to anti-communist rhetoric.

Lloyd Ross's decision to join the Communist Party took on an added factional significance when related to the internal politics of the ARU. Lloyd Ross's closest political advisers in the union were Mick Martin and Jack Ferguson. Martin, like Ferguson, had abandoned the dogmatists of the old pro-Chapman faction in order to remain in the ARU's ruling circle. Ferguson himself formally joined the Communist Party along with Lloyd Ross. In the case of both men it was recognised that the independent non-party socialist had little immediate future in the ARU. Regimented

47. Railroad, 20 July 1937, p.11.
factions were the order of the day. Lloyd Ross had to have a network of reliable supporters at his command if the pro-Lang forces in the union were to be kept at bay. In the case of the ARU this essential asset existed in the form of the powerful Communist faction. For the moment, with its support, control of the state branch was guaranteed. At this level at least the left was definitely in the ascendancy. Lloyd Ross's election was speedily followed up by an organised attempt on the part of the ARU militants to consolidate their position on the incoming state council.49 In the event a pro-Ross majority was achieved, with Jack Ferguson and Tom Hickey being among the successful candidates.50

In essence, then, Lloyd Ross's decision to join the Communist Party was very much a political act. The Communist Party, guided by the spirit of united front politics, was prepared to look kindly on a potential ally while for his part Lloyd Ross relied on Communist activists to help him manage the affairs of the state branch. The Communist Party's internationalist stance helped to seal the alliance. In all other respects ideology was not a decisive factor. Lloyd Ross had not embarked on a new faith.

Formally enrolling in the Communist Party was, for Lloyd Ross, merely one of the conditions attached to his

49. SMH, 28 September 1935, p.18.
new job. As an act of prudence it was decided to keep his status as a party member secret since to do otherwise would obviously detract from his usefulness as a united front apologist. Moreover in recognition of the party's doubtful legal status he was given a false name - 'Mr. Duncan'. But otherwise there was no drama or ritual surrounding his admission to the CPA. Everything was kept low-key. He did not have to face a formal interrogation to determine the soundness of his political views since it was readily agreed by all concerned that his grasp of Leninist theory was likely to be better than that of anyone who might be called on to examine him. It was implicitly recognised that he would be allowed to set his own agenda within the broad parameters created by the drive for a united front against war and fascism. There was no suggestion at all of his being issued with detailed lists of instructions or requests to regularly attend party headquarters.

A further stage in Lloyd Ross's growing identification with united front politics occurred at the beginning of 1936 when MAWAF staged a national anti-war congress - the third to be held since 1933 in point of fact. On the opening day of proceedings Lloyd Ross was installed as president of the organisation in succession to the late Arthur Chapman. In this capacity he delivered the opening and closing addresses at the congress besides acting as chairman.

52. Lloyd Ross, conversation with author, 10 October 1985.
The delegates heard the new president emphasise the need for the anti-war movement to be placed on a proper united front footing. After referring to the decision by the left-wing parties in France to form a popular front he went on to allude to his father's success in building up a broad anti-conscriptionist coalition during the Great War:

He would remind the rank-and-file of the A.L.P. that its leaders had supported the last war, a great internal struggle was necessary before they could be induced to oppose conscription, they had libelled the leaders of the Soviet Union throughout, and during the recent days had wallowed in loyalty to a political throne. Could they blindly follow such leaders in any situation?

Lloyd Ross became the titular head of the anti-war movement at a time when its prospects for success were about to undergo a rapid change. During the first half of 1936 the position of labour's internationalist wing reached a new low, but the suddenly improved. Early in the year, following on John Curtin's election as Labor's parliamentary leader in Canberra, formal unity was restored between the Federal ALP and the New South Wales branch of the party. Curtin accepted Lang back into the fold, with the former followers of the Federal ALP in New South Wales being completely left out in the cold. Lang's dominance was confirmed. The act of capitulation failed to bring peace, however. Even before the

54. ABL, N5/983, National Report, 1936 MAWAF Conference, p.3.
55. A reference to the death of George V and the accession of Edward VIII.
56. CC, 1 February 1936, p.5.
act of surrender was finalised a renewed round of factionalism had erupted among New South Wales labour men. Following reunification it was widely assumed that Lang intended to move into federal politics. Rumours to this effect immediately served to destabilise existing factional arrangements. As in 1933, when the prospect of Lang's going to Canberra had similarly arisen, relations between the Inner Group and the left-wing trade unions suddenly deteriorated. Lang's post-1927 alliance with the officials of the Labor Council and the affiliated unions, while being eminently desirable in the narrow realm of labour politics, was too much of a liability in terms of broader electoral considerations.

At the end of January 1936, when the annual ballot for Labor Council positions was held, Inner Group supporters led by the Langite trade union official Alan McNamara secured the election of a number of pro-Lang candidates. A rival left-wing ticket suffered a humiliating defeat. The two sides had come to the parting of the ways. War was formally declared on 5 March, when Lang's erstwhile Labor Council ally Jock Garden unsuccessfully sought to block the appointment of a special four-man committee with power to investigate the policies and administration of the Labor Council's most valuable material asset in the form of the

57. Truth, 8 March 1936, p.10.
59. SMH, 31 January 1936, p.11, 14 February 1936, p.12, 28 February 1936, p.15.
trade union broadcasting station 2KY. The committee speedily drew up a report which provided for bodies other than the Labor Council to have a say in the running of 2KY. This proposal aroused widespread alarm in Labor Council circles. It was assumed that Lang intended to gain total control of 2KY. Left-wing delegates, who already opposed the Inner Group, were joined by moderates who wanted to preserve the status quo. After a struggle lasting some two months the anti-Lang delegates managed to push through a resolution which ensured that 2KY would continue to be controlled by a wireless committee drawn exclusively from the Labor Council. Furthermore the resolution stipulated that the station was 'not to be sold, leased or formed into a company' if seven affiliated unions objected. Angered by this act of recalcitrance, the Inner Group promptly retaliated by securing the expulsion of Jock Garden from the ALP, thereby rendering him ineligible for further pre-selection for his safe federal parliamentary seat.

Other anti-Langites were able to enjoy the spoils of victory to the full. Lloyd Ross stood out in this regard. A steadfast left-wing supporter and loyal signer of anti-Lang manifestoes during the entire 2KY dispute, he was well looked after in the final settlement. Early in June, when the election for the new wireless committee was held, he was

61. SMH, 19 May 1936, p.11.
62. Ibid., 24 April 1936, p.11.
included on an anti-Lang ticket, along with J.J. Maloney, H. Fountain and Jock Garden. The four men were easily elected. Lloyd Ross's standing as a good labour man, hitherto the subject of some dispute, was inevitably boosted.

The gulf between Lang and his opponents was widening all the time. The attempt by his followers to take over 2KY was paralleled by a simultaneous move on their part to strengthen their position in relation to the labour movement's second great capital investment and propaganda outlet, the mass circulation newspaper the Labor Daily. Lang, already entrenched as the newspaper's mortgagee, was determined to bring out a Sunday edition of the Labor Daily. Early in April the pro-Lang majority on the board of directors of Labor Papers Ltd came out in favour of amending the company's articles of association in order to facilitate the issuing of 20,000 additional shares to fund the venture. For the most part the unions with existing shares in the company dismissed the proposal as a crude attempt to smuggle in a large number of pro-Lang shareholders. E. Magrath of the printers' union, Labor Council Secretary Bob King, and Oscar Schreiber of the trade union secretaries' association led the chorus of criticism. Buoyed up by the block vote of the Miners' Federation, which owned 10,000 shares, the shareholding unions were able to frustrate the proposal.64

63. Ibid., 6 June 1936, p.17; CC, 13 June 1936, p.2.
However Lang had no intention of giving in. An attempt to regain the initiative was soon underway. Early in June he presided over the formation of a brand new company which was entrusted with the responsibility for publishing the proposed Sunday newspaper - to be known as the Sunday Express - with the printing and distribution being undertaken by the Labor Daily. The shareholding unions immediately swung into action. They insisted that a special meeting of shareholders should be convened for the purpose of instructing the board of directors not to have anything to do with the new company. In due course the meeting went ahead. Lang's opponents, led on this occasion by J.J. Maloney, were outvoted. A subsequent postal ballot failed to settle the issue either way. Towards the end of the year a quartet of anti-Lang candidates began canvassing support in anticipation of the forthcoming election of a new board of directors. On 24 December the rival Langite ticket was declared elected at the annual general meeting of Labor Daily shareholders. Alleging electoral malpractice, Lang's opponents felt compelled to institute legal proceedings.

65. SMH, 10 June 1936, p.13; Walker, 'Fall of Labor Daily', p.70.
66. SMH, 18 June 1936, p.9, 19 June 1936, p.11.
67. Ibid., 18 August 1936, p.11.
68. Industrial News, 29 October 1936, p.2.
69. 'State Labour Party'.
70. Walker, 'Fall of Labor Daily', pp.70-71; SMH, 19 December 1936, p.17.
71. Ibid., 30 December 1936, p.12.
As with the battle for 2KY, Lloyd Ross at first was only a minor participant in the struggle for control of the Labor Daily. Indeed initially the ARU did not have any shares in Labor Papers Ltd. But somehow a small parcel of seventy shares was obtained thus enabling the ARU to be classed as one of the shareholding unions. In this capacity it firmly supported the anti-Lang cause. Early in May Lloyd Ross was one of a group of trade union secretaries who signed a circular letter setting out the objections to Lang's initial proposal and several weeks later he affixed his name to the petition which led to the convening of the special meeting of Labor Daily shareholders.

Notwithstanding his initial unimportance in the Labor Daily dispute Lloyd Ross came to occupy an increasingly prominent place in Inner Group demonology once the war of words between the pro- and anti-Lang camps began to intensify. Fundamental to pro-Lang propaganda at this time was the assertion that Lang's various schemes regarding 2KY and the Labor Daily had been thwarted because of opposition from a group of 43 Communist delegates on the Labor Council. Lloyd Ross, with his fervent advocacy of united front policies, was bound to be singled out on this account. In the middle of May the Labor Daily depicted Bill Orr and

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73. SMH, 7 May 1936, p.11; Truth, 10 May 1936, p.14.
74. SMH, 19 June 1936, p.11.
Lloyd Ross as tools of 'the subversive strategy and tactics of the Communist Party' following a WEA conference at which the two men, along with Maurice Blackburn, J.J. Maloney and Bob King, had spoken on the need for an 'inclusive mass movement' to defend democracy. Their association with the shareholding unions, it was asserted, demonstrated the strong anti-Labor bias of Lang's trade union opponents.76

The responsibility for directing the anti-communist witchhunt of mid-1936 formally lay with Alan McNamara and another Langite unionist, F.D. Kelly. Originally Kelly and McNamara were members of the committee set up to investigate 2KY,77 but with Lang's newspaper ambitions becoming an issue as well they were encouraged to widen their activities and assume a new guise. For the purpose of attacking the shareholding unions they set themselves up as, alternatively, the Anti-Communist Defence Committee78 and the Labor Daily Advancement Committee.79 'Do you realise', the two men wrote in one of the circulars they addressed to the Labor faithful, 'that a snap vote on either the Labor Council or "The Labor Daily" board elections would put Communists in control, and so open the way for the Lyons Government to suppress both your newspaper and your wireless station as

76. Ibid., 19 May 1936, p.4; SMH, 18 May 1936, p.10.
unlawful organisations?' Elsewhere it was claimed that the only interested parties likely to suffer as a result of Lang's attempt to expand his newspaper activities were the Communist Party and the major capitalist newspaper proprietors. It was up to all good Labor people to oppose this nefarious combination.

Following the decision to set up the *Sunday Express* newspaper company Lang's trade union committee underwent yet another metamorphosis. On 17 June, in his new capacity as secretary of Express Newspapers Limited, Frank Kelly issued a public appeal to the labour movement to show its support for the venture by purchasing 100,000 £1 shares in the company. At a meeting of local ALP branch presidents and secretaries a fortnight later the new company received its formal baptism at the hands of Jack Lang. Embracing the slogan 'One share for every member of the Labor Movement', the meeting proudly endorsed the new company and went on to condemn the capitalist press, the Communist Party and 'disgruntled individuals' for standing in the way of the project. Barbed references by Lang to the political and journalistic activities of Oscar Schreiber, Jock Garden, Charlie Nelson, Bill Orr, Lloyd Ross, E.G. Theodore and Frank Packer were designed to expose the wildly incongruous elements of the reputed anti-*Sunday Express* alliance.

80. Ibid., 13 May 1936, p.5.  
81. Ibid.  
82. Circular and prospectus in ABL N57/261.  
83. LD, 2 July 1936, p.1.
There were no prominent trade union spokesmen present at the public launching of the *Sunday Express* venture. In this regard the meeting set the tone for the entire campaign. Well aware that it was unrealistic to expect any form of official support, whether financial or otherwise, to be forthcoming from the Labor Council and its affiliated unions, Lang's *Sunday Express* committee, in addition to exploiting its ALP contacts, proposed to raise the necessary finance by appealing directly to rank-and-file members of the shareholding unions. During July pro-Lang speakers - led by Lang himself - addressed a series of mass meetings in an effort to drum up support at this level. The railwaymen figured prominently in the campaign, with Lang addressing lunchtime meetings at the Clyde and Chullora railway repair shops.84 Every effort was made to ensure that the momentum was not lost. Armed with the slogan '1000 shares for 1000 A.R.U. men', railwaymen from various metropolitan ARU sub-branches had already formed a pro-*Sunday Express* action group, with J.H. Stone of the Liverpool sub-branch acting as its secretary.85 With the backing of Stone and his associates the latest Langite crusade went ahead among the railwaymen on a duly organised basis.

For their part the ARU militants were determined not to concede any ground to Lang's minions. At a meeting of the

state council held at the end of July the union's anti-Lang stance was reaffirmed. A motion expressing the ARU's condemnation of the *Sunday Express* proposal was endorsed by 13 votes to 6. In a related move the council, by 15 votes to 5, accepted an invitation to be represented at a special conference that had been arranged by the Labor Council with a view to discussing ways of freeing the Labor Party from Lang's control.86

Supported by more than thirty unions, the Labor Council's conference went ahead on 1 August in open defiance of the ALP state executive. A number of proposed anti-Lang reform measures were endorsed. The delegates readily agreed that local ALP branches should again have full control of pre-selection ballots and that unions and electorate councils should be granted direct representation at the annual state conference. The shortcomings of the existing system of group representation were amply highlighted by Jim Holt of the ARU. 'He claimed that although the A.R.U. had a membership of between 15,000 and 17,000, three small unions in the land transport group, by combining, could prevent the railwaymen from having direct representation'.87

The proposed reforms were indignantly rejected by the ALP state executive, which had no intention of committing political suicide. Eager to show its displeasure, the

executive proceeded to annul the party membership of the leading participants. The expelled Labor men comprised sixteen trade unionists (including Stan Wyatt of the ARU) and five state members of parliament, led by Bob Heffron.88

At all levels of the labour movement Lang's supporters were expected to carry the fight up to the enemy. The Langite minority in the ARU was no exception. At a meeting early in August of Sunday Express supporters the ARU's alignment with the anti-Lang cause was condemned by a quartet of railwaymen (J.H. Stone, D.V. Delmege, Denis Kilmartin and E. Williams).89 In the weeks ahead, with Lang being able to ward off his opponents in the Labor Daily dispute, the impulse to establish a Sunday newspaper was less pressing, but as a result of the pro-Sunday Express efforts of Stone and his colleagues a loyal and experienced corps of pro-Lang activists now existed in the ARU.

In the event Stone and his associates were soon in action again. Early in October, when the names of the candidates in the forthcoming election for the ARU state council were announced, it was revealed that a pro-Lang ticket had been nominated in opposition to the dominant left-wing faction. Two months of hectic electioneering followed. Eager to build on the enthusiasm that had been evident at Lang's recent lunchtime meetings, Inner Group

89. LD, 4 August 1936, p.5.
organisers tirelessly canvassed ARU members, 'giving a great deal of attention to country centres'.\textsuperscript{90} As part of the campaign railwaymen at Nyngan and Orange received the following anti-Ross pasquinade:

\textbf{Phew ARU COMMUNIST INNER GROUP}  
\textbf{Brain Trust}

Lord Ross, Secretary. Senator Barker, President.  
Old Man Holt Bolshie Ferguson Greasy Goldspink  
Hairy Legs Turner\textsuperscript{91} Half Wit McEncroe\textsuperscript{92} Slim  
Phillips\textsuperscript{93} Bott Martin Hum Harper\textsuperscript{94} Bladder  
Head Barrow\textsuperscript{95} windy Wyatt Shifty Harvey.  
The Rank and File Members would like to know who are the others that bludge on Union funds.  
Why £700 was borrowed on Red Headquarters (Transport House) from the Capitalist Banks.  
What happens [to] the thousands of pounds paid by the Rank and File members.  
How long the "Red Rules" of the ARU will be the same as the Communist Politician.  
Lord Ross and the Red Rag Railroad tells how to summons the workers on £3.10.0. a week so he can sponge on them at £10.0.0. a week besides keeping his Comrades palms greased as well.  
Wake up to this push.  
Read the Unfinancial parrot cry.  
Read the squeals and bluff in the Red Rag printed by Bruxners United Country Party paper Land Newspapers Ltd. 59 Regent St Sydney.  
Hear Red Headquarters Hymn of Hate composed by Lord Ross.\textsuperscript{96}

Already a bumper year in terms of Labor factionalism, 1936 drew to a close amidst a welter of political manoeuvring involving the Inner Group and its ARU opponents. From late October until the middle of December a series of allegations

\textsuperscript{90. SMH, 4 November 1936, p.15.}  
\textsuperscript{91. Member of the NSW state council.}  
\textsuperscript{92. State branch returning officer.}  
\textsuperscript{93. Communist railway activist.}  
\textsuperscript{94. Member of the NSW state council.}  
\textsuperscript{95. Vice-president of state branch, 1934-35.}  
\textsuperscript{96. ABL, E80/57/27.}
and denials were exchanged after the Labor Daily accused the directors of 2KY of seeking to undercut the wages of the station's employees. The pro-labour credentials of the wireless committee, and the Labor Council as a whole, were clearly at stake. It fell to Lloyd Ross, as part of his 2KY duties, to rebut the charge, which he sought to do in his joint capacity as a Labor Council delegate and Railroad commentator.97

Factionalism was similarly well to the fore when the regular November meeting of the ARU state council came round. A verbal report from Jim Holt relating to the Labor Council's political conference was adopted by 15 votes to 6. Likewise a motion protesting against the expulsion of the twenty-one Labor men was carried by 14 votes to 7.98 The militants were determined to press on with the struggle. In the light of the impending Labor Daily election Lloyd Ross was duly authorised to cast all the ARU's votes for the four anti-Lang candidates.99

A further outburst of partisanship involving the ARU occurred during the annual election of the ALP state executive. On 23 November the ballot for the three positions reserved for the land transport group of unions was held.

97. LD, 26 October 1936, p.4, 5 December 1936, p.8, 10 December 1936, p.8, 18 December 1936, p.8; Railroad, 15 December 1936, pp.4,5.
98. Ibid., 26 January 1937, p.10.
99. Ibid., 2 February 1937, p.11.
Amidst 'stormy scenes' the 200 delegates who took part in the ballot elected a trio of anti-Lang candidates. A protest was immediately lodged on behalf of the unsuccessful pro-Lang ticket. It was alleged that dual voting and impersonation had taken place. Four days later, after the disputes committee had investigated the matter, the state executive upheld the protest and called for another election. "Vigorous condemnation was voiced of the action of the A.R.U. It was pointed out that it had advertised for members to attend outside the Trades Hall on the night of the ballot "to receive their instructions." The second ballot went ahead on 7 December and was accompanied by an even greater amount of rowdy behaviour. At the end of the night the three anti-Lang candidates were again declared elected. Apart from this setback, the election as a whole went according to plan. Of the thirty-one members of the incoming executive only four (including two ARU men) were definitely opposed to Lang.

With the advent of 1937 there was a scaling down of the conflict between Lang and his labour opponents. A federal election was due by the end of the year and as a result the federal ALP was eager to bring about some semblance of unity between the party and the unions in New South Wales. Eventually a compromise was arrived at. Moves to secure the readmission of the expelled Labor men were set

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100. SMH, 24 November 1936, p.11, 28 November 1936, p.18.  
102. SMH, 1 December 1936, p.11, 8 December 1936, p.11.
in train while for its part the Labor Council for the time being abandoned its demand for internal party reform. Despite the truce, however, the underlying hostility between the two sides was as strong as ever, with the continuing dispute over the Labor Daily being enough to ensure that there could be no real reconciliation.

The ARU was necessarily involved in the limited truce of 1937. It was readily acknowledged by all concerned that the militants were entrenched in the state branch of the union in the same way as the Inner Group was entrenched in the state branch of the ALP. Early in January the poll was declared in the election for the incoming state council. From the results it was clear that the pro-Lang ticket had been decisively rejected. Only one pro-Lang councillor of any consequence was returned (namely the Lithgow stalwart Bill O'Neill). The Inner Group's intervention had backfired.

Notwithstanding the left's sweeping victory, the basic structure of ARU factionalism remained intact. As the Sunday Express controversy had demonstrated, the Langites in the union were perfectly capable of stirring up disaffection at the grassroots level. Their full potential as trouble-makers could still only be guessed at. Complacency was certainly out of the question. The scope for factionalism at this time was unbounded. Contentious issues were arising all

103. Ibid., 7 January 1937, p.12, 11 January 1937, p.5.
the time. Ideologically a major shift was underway in the trade union movement. From mid-1936 onwards, following the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, the cause of left-wing internationalism at last started to gain momentum. Many of the anti-sanctionists of 1935 proceeded to abandon the isolationist cause. Spain and Abyssinia were regarded as separate issues. The Abyssinian crisis had been widely seen as just another case of inter-imperialist rivalry whereas from the outset it was far easier for the ACTU to regard the civil war in Spain as a straightforward case of aggressive fascism seeking to overthrow a democratic regime.104

Countervailing pressures were soon at work, however. In particular labour's internationalist wing had to contend with a resurgence of religious sectarianism. The Roman Catholic church was directly involved in the Spanish crisis. From the outset it sided with Franco. Catholics throughout the world were told that the civil war was a crusade against atheism. For Catholic trade unionists in Australia, especially those enrolled in left-wing unions, this vision of events readily explained much that was happening on the local scene. Ideologically the struggle between Lang and his factional opponents involved one being either for or against working-class internationalism. When viewed in these terms, there was no doubting which side most Catholics supported.

Befitting his status as a master of united front apologetics, Lloyd Ross was particularly responsive to the new climate of opinion created by the Spanish Civil War. He eagerly embraced the Republican cause. The prospect of being caught up in a world-wide democratic crusade aroused his ideological ardour. At times he was euphoric. He regarded the swing away from isolationist attitudes in the labour movement as 'amazing'. He was pleased to see that most of his fellow trade union activists were 'horrified' by the attempt to abort Spain's experiment in democracy. 'They believed that similar things might happen in Australia, and felt, therefore, that there was a call for international working class solidarity'.

He was determined to publicise Spain's plight using all the means at his disposal. By August 1936 material relating to the civil war was being featured in the columns of Railroad and in programmes on 2KY.

The task of co-ordinating support for the Madrid government in Australia was entrusted to the Spanish Relief Committee, whose formation took place on 26 August 1936. The committee's personnel and resources were drawn, by courtesy of the Communist Party, from the existing united front organisations MAWAF and International Labor Defence.

108. ABL, Phil Thorne Collection, P15/5/1, Circular signed by P.T. Thorne and S. Smith, 24 August 1936.
Lloyd Ross, as national president of MAWAF was thus linked with the activities of the SRC from the outset. There were other connections as well. He had in the past provided bail for a number of ILD activists. In recognition of his past services he was made a trustee of the new organisation. In addition his standing as a leading left-wing speaker was duly recognised. The initial work of the SRC involved the sending of four Australian nurses to Spain. A public campaign was organised. On 22 September Lloyd Ross addressed a fundraising rally at the Paddington Town Hall. A month later Transport House was 'packed to the brim' when a reception was held in honour of the four nurses, who were about to depart for Spain. Thereafter the ARU's headquarters served as a regular venue for SRC activities. On 16 February 1937 the first anniversary of the election of Spain's Popular Front government was commemorated at a Transport House function while in May a reception was held for another party of nurses - this time from New Zealand - who had decided to go to Spain.

Lloyd Ross was an assiduous SRC speaker. In the first months of the organisation's existence he spoke on the civil war at meetings and functions arranged by the Writers'

110. WW, 18 September 1936, p.4.
111. Ibid., 27 October 1936, pp.2, 4.
112. Ibid., 19 February 1937, pp.1, 4.
League, the Hurstville branch of the ALP, MAWAF and at the left-wing social centre, Mooney's Club. As well he addressed students at Sydney University on the issue. By early 1937 a complete calendar of pro-Spain activities had evolved. Towards the end of February Stina Ross invited Miles Franklin to attend a pro-Spain evening at her home. 'Next Saturday night', she told Franklin, 'my husband and I are having a few friends along to see a film on recent Spanish happenings, hear a short talk by my husband and generally enjoy ourselves'.

Protecting the good name of the Spanish Republic was usually a far more strenuous affair, however. With the emergence of the sectarian issue the SRC was immediately placed under intense pressure. For his part Lloyd Ross was eager to meet the challenge head on. He first became aware of the extent of Catholic unease when the campaign to send the four nurses to Spain began to run into 'considerable trouble' on account of hostile 'Catholic propaganda'. He was greatly annoyed to discover that for 'a large section of the Unions the conflict was being viewed less as a struggle between the Right and the Left than between Catholicism and

114. Ibid., 10 November 1936, p.4; ABL, P15/3/1, SRC Minutes, 11 November 1936.
115. ABL, P15/5/10, unsigned circular dated 9 December 1936.
116. WW, 21 May 1937, p.4.
117. Ibid., 22 January 1937, p.4, 5 March 1937, p.4.
118. Union Recorder, 15 April 1937, p.45.
Atheism'.120 Other SRC stalwarts felt the same way. At a public meeting in Melbourne Maurice Blackburn was concerned to point out that 'Catholics and non-Catholics were united in Spain against the landlords and oppressors, just as they had been in Ireland in the days of Parnell'. In the light of their fighting Irish heritage it would be bitterly ironic if Australian Catholics came round to accepting the anti-communist version of events in Spain.121 Eventually in June 1937 the Melbourne MAWAF branch published a pamphlet, Catholics Speak on Spain, which sought to highlight the views of some notable Catholic supporters of the government in Madrid. Eager to drive the message home, Lloyd Ross provided a few introductory comments in the course of which he insisted that the events leading up to the civil war were 'not religious, but political and economic'.

One of the Catholics quoted in the MAWAF pamphlet was British (John McGovern of the Independent Labour Party), but significantly there were no Australian contributors. It was all too apparent that local Catholics were largely unsympathetic. MAWAF was forced to admit that, from the point of view of enlisting Catholic support, there was a crying need to 'bring about in Australia what has been brought about in Spain'.122 Lloyd Ross found it especially

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120. NLA microfilm G7251, Diaries of Jay Pierrepont Moffat, 23 October 1936.
121. ABL, N57/470, L.P. Fox to J.N. Rawling, 14 December 1936.
122. 'Why This Book Is Published', Catholics Speak on Spain.
distressing that there were hardly any Catholics active in the Australian labour movement who shared his views on Spain. The Queensland secretary and federal president of the ARU, Tim Moroney, fell into this category, but he had few companions.123

Leaving aside his role as an acknowledged SRC spokesman, Lloyd Ross, because of his position in the ARU, would in any case have been preternaturally sensitive to the sectarian ramifications of the war in Spain. He was well aware that ever since the 1917 strike religious rancour had been an important feature of railway unionism. The code of 'loyalty' espoused by the various post-1917 anti-strike railway unions contained ecclesiastical as well as political elements. Support for the King of England was buttressed by allegiance to the Protestant religion. By the mid-1930s nothing much had changed in this regard. The survival of the NUR meant that the sectarian issue was kept alive. In line with its pro-British origins, the ARU's right-wing rival was largely Protestant in membership and certainly anti-Catholic in outlook. The two main NUR spokesmen, Bill Fletcher and Walter Skelton, supported the activities of the Loyal Orange Institute of New South Wales.124 In addition Skelton, in the 1920s, had twice been elected to the New South Wales parliament as a representative of the Protestant Independent

Labor Party. Catholic railwaymen understandably steered clear of the NUR. They were expected to join the ARU even though they were unlikely to have much sympathy for its left-wing political position. As a result the ARU, notwithstanding its outspoken commitment to socialism, at all times contained a sizeable right-wing element, based on this unassimilated Catholic component. Lloyd Ross's abiding interest in the Spanish Civil War was, to say the least, hardly likely to bring about an improvement in this inherently unstable situation.

Sectarianism, as ever, marched hand in hand with factionalism. Despite the firm anti-fascist stance now adopted by the trade union movement at large Lloyd Ross's Langite opponents still had hopes of being able to capitalise on his obsession with Spanish politics. Certainly the possibilities in this regard were endless. A skirmish along these lines occurred early in 1937 when the Labor Daily and Bill O'Neill joined forces in criticising the priorities of the ARU state council after it donated £25 to the Spanish Relief Committee while at the same time allocating a smaller sum to assist the families of men killed in a mining disaster at Wonthaggi. As a result of their comments Lloyd Ross felt obliged to draw up a detailed defence of the state council's action.

125. Ibid., p.29ff.
126. LD, 19 February 1937, p.8; Railroad, 6 April 1937, p.6.
The abiding threat of a Langite counter-offensive kept the ARU militants well and truly on their toes. At times their vigilance was undoubtedly excessive. Their horrified reaction to the formation, during the autumn of 1937, of a special association catering for Catholic railway-men (the Catholic Transport Guild) was a case in point. The Guild was completely apolitical, but in the period immediately following its formation the railway militants felt thoroughly menaced. The ARU, they fervently believed, was about to be encircled by a secret band of Catholic fanatics marching to the beat of Lang's anti-communist drum.

The increasing tension finally boiled over at the regular August meeting of the ARU state council after Bill O'Neill and another Langite stalwart, T.V. Ryan, called on the council to endorse a protest emanating from the Darling Harbour sub-branch in relation to a recent state branch decision whereby the New Theatre League had been allowed to perform a trio of left-wing plays at Transport House. Despite the superficially exotic subject matter, the debate on the motion was a highly serious affair. The militants felt certain that O'Neill, along with Ryan, was making yet another none too subtle attempt to whip up anti-communist

129. State Secretary's Report to State Council, 27 May 1937, p. 3; CCRSC Minutes, 14 June 1937, 3 July 1937.
sentiment among the ARU's Catholic minority. A bold counter-stroke was immediately launched. Usually it was considered bad form to impute religious motives in trade union debates. However the growth of factionalism in the ARU had caused this principle to lose some of its force. Back in May, in the wake of the formation of the Catholic Transport Guild, the state council had formally denounced religious sectarianism. Following this precedent Lloyd Ross now decided that the time had come to act decisively against the Langites on the issue. Accordingly he asked the state council to adopt an amendment to the motion from Ryan and O'Neill whereby the ARU solemnly reiterated its condemnation of all forms of religious sectarianism. 'We believe', the amendment stated, 'that Trades Union officials should be tested by their application of working-class principles and that working-class issues should be judged, not on religious, but on political and economic grounds'. With factional loyalties to the fore the amendment was carried by 18 votes to 3. For good measure Lloyd Ross decided to pass the resolution on to the Labor Council, which likewise endorsed it.

While being ever watchful for signs of dissent within their own organisation, the ARU militants were still determined to press on with the task of promoting their anti-war and anti-fascist programme. By mid-1937 their

131. Ibid., 10 August 1937, p.6.
132. Ibid., 19 October 1937, p.11.
133. SMH, 3 September 1937, p.12; ABL, Labor Council of New South Wales, M59, TLC Minutes (microfilm), 2 September 1937.
immediate objective was to secure the formal endorsement of the internationalist creed by the wider trade union movement as represented by the ACTU, whose next national congress was scheduled for the end of July. At the ARU state council in February a special committee led by Lloyd Ross was appointed for the purpose of drawing up a definitive statement of the ARU's attitude to defence and foreign policy issues. The correct ideological basis for such an exercise was of course already well established. As May Day drew nearer the ARU's commitment to working-class internationalism was proudly reaffirmed. On 16 March Lloyd Ross presided at a MAWAF meeting in Sydney and shortly afterwards he began a weekly series of pre-May Day broadcasts on 2KY. His efforts were adequately rewarded on the actual day of the demonstration. The 500 ARU members who took part in the May Day march and rally comprised the biggest single contingent. Lloyd Ross was one of the official May Day orators, along with Bob King, Donald Grant, Tom Wright and Jock Garden. The message of working-class unity was preached, but hardly practised. In obedience to their master's wishes Lang's Labor Party followers refused to have anything to do with the day's events.

Lloyd Ross was now ready to unveil the ARU's statement on defence issues. The venue chosen was the

134. Railroad, 23 March 1937, p.3.
135. WW, 12 March 1937, p.4.
137. WW, 4 May 1937, p.1; SMH, 3 May 1937, p.9; CC, 8 May 1937, p.5.
union's 1937 state conference, which began its deliberations on the day after the May Day demonstration. Internationalist fervour was still very evident. Early on in the conference a resolution was passed reaffirming the state branch's support for the Spanish Republic. In other moves the delegates voted to send 'an accredited representative of railwaymen' to Russia on a good-will visit and voiced regret at the ALP's continued refusal to enter into an electoral pact with the Communist Party.

The delegates were presented with Lloyd Ross's statement on defence policy on the final morning of the conference. After making due reference to the aggressive intentions of the fascist powers, the statement proceeded to repeat the standard left-wing demand for the creation, on the domestic front, of a broad anti-fascist coalition involving all the various working-class organisations in Australia. The statement listed a number of objectives which Lloyd Ross saw as essential to any united front programme that might be agreed to:

(a) The activisation of the masses against war.
(b) The opposition to the re-armament policies of Baldwin and the Lyons Government.
(c) The support of a policy of collective security through the League of Nations.
(d) The democratisation of the army inside Australia. Included in this is opposition to conscription and labor camps.

138. Minutes of State Conference of the Australian Railways Union N.S.W. Branch ... May 3, 4, 5 and 6, 1937, Sydney, 1937, pp.7-8.
139. Ibid., pp.21-23.
140. Ibid., p.22.
With only one delegate voicing dissent, the conference duly endorsed the statement. Lloyd Ross was rapidly becoming the man of the hour. Now bearing the imprimatur of the ARU, his statement was passed on to the Trades Hall with a view to its being endorsed by the Labor Council. A motion to this effect came before the Council on 27 May. In the event the delegates were happy to accept the statement provided a few amendments were made. A majority of delegates favoured a 'united effort' for peace rather than a 'united front' and, when it came to involving 'the masses', 'organising' rather than 'activisation' was the preferred method. Other changes were made as well, but they were all equally cosmetic. Having amended Lloyd Ross's statement accordingly, the Labor Council unanimously resolved that the matters it referred to should be raised at the forthcoming ACTU congress.

There was no stopping the rising tide of internationalism. On 27 May, a few hours before the Labor Council voted on Lloyd Ross's statement, the ARU state council resolved to pass the state conference's declaration of support for the Spanish Republic on to the ACTU. The only councillors to oppose this move were Bill O'Neill and T.V. Ryan.

142. Ibid., 27 July 1937, p.1; TLC Minutes, 27 May 1937; WW, 1 June 1937, p.3.
143. Railroad, 27 July 1937, p.11.
The ACTU congress opened in Melbourne on 19 July amidst a flurry of anti-fascist enthusiasm. The first anniversary of the Spanish Civil War had come round and, moreover, only a few days earlier Japan had invaded China. Both events served to fuel left-wing ideological passion. On the eve of the congress the Spanish Relief Committee held a public meeting at the Lyceum Theatre. The audience, although sizeable, consisted 'mostly ... of the faithful'. Nettie Palmer brought along some lantern slides and Lloyd Ross delivered a fiery address.144 His commitment to the cause was unbounded. In the days ahead, during breaks in the congress, he was able to fit in a number of additional appearances as an anti-fascist public speaker.145

The international situation came up for discussion on the last two days of the ACTU congress. The debate began with Bob King formally calling on the delegates to accept the Labor Council's endorsement of the doctrine of collective security. Notwithstanding its sympathy for the Spanish Republic the ACTU hierarchy did not intend to abandon its isolationist stance without a struggle. ACTU president Albert Monk and secretary Crofts sought to head off the Labor Council's demand by calling for a reaffirmation of the policy agreed to at the 1935 congress. They were joined by Don

144. WV, 17 July 1937, p.1; SRC leaflet in ABL, N57/450; Vance and Nettie Palmer Papers, NLA MS 1174/16/19, Nettie Palmer diary, 18 July 1937.
145. WV, 28 July 1937, p.4; Victorian MAWAF leaflet in ABL, N57/481; WW, 3 August 1937, p.3; Farrago, 27 July 1937, p.1.
Cameron, who again accused the internationalists of being prepared to force Australian workers to take part in overseas wars involving rival capitalist states. Cameron's views were echoed by the left-wing Seamen's Union official W.J. Clarke, who declared that he had no intention of being 'deluded ... by loquacious Communists'. The task of defending the Labor Council's resolution was taken up by Bill Orr, Ernie Thornton and Lloyd Ross, with valuable support coming from Jock Garden (who was allowed to move a token amendment). The gulf between the Communist faction and the Labor Council that had existed at the time of the Abyssinian crisis was a thing of the past. As a result, as W.J. Clarke later lamented, the isolationists found themselves overwhelmed by 'a grand united popular front' involving 'all the Labor fakirs and Communist comrades'.

When a vote was taken on whether to uphold the wishes of the ACTU hierarchy and reaffirm the 1935 position the internationalists prevailed by 79 votes to 48. The Labor Council's resolution, as amended by Jock Garden, was then adopted without a division being called for. Shortly afterwards the delegates unanimously endorsed the ARU's declaration of solidarity with the Spanish Republic.

The congress's decision to align itself with the cause of left-wing internationalism stamped Lloyd Ross as a

146. University of Melbourne Archives, Stan Willis Collection, Box 69, W. Clarke to E. Watkins, 5 August 1937.

147. ABL, S784, Box 1, 1937 ACTU Congress Minutes, pp.22-28; Age, 24 July 1937, p.26; Argus, 24 July 1937, p.15.
major architect of ACTU policy. He was the original progenitor of the ACTU's radically new anti-war position. Nevertheless the struggle was not yet over. The resolution of 23 July did not bind the political wing of the movement. As John Curtin was quick to point out, ALP policy was determined solely by the party itself. A few months later Curtin fought - and lost - the 1937 federal election on a staunchly isolationist platform.

The ALP's implacable hostility to united front policies had already forced the internationalists to modify their tactics. Needing to break down the political barriers that surrounded them, they had deliberately set out to establish closer links with audiences outside their immediate trade union constituency. Victoria, where the labour scene was dominated by the right-wing THC-state ALP axis, necessarily led the way. In March 1937 the state branch of MAWAF agreed to hand over the responsibility for conducting anti-war activities in the state to the Victorian section of the International Peace Campaign, an umbrella organisation which had been established at an anti-war conference in Brussels the previous year. From the start the Victorian ALP viewed the International Peace Campaign in a hostile light and refused to have anything to do with its Victorian devotees, but otherwise the new organisation rapidly attained wide community acceptance. Support for the IPC in Victoria

148. LD, 26 July 1937, p.5.
was forthcoming from academics, clergymen, schoolmasters, trade unionists, university students, women's groups and youth workers.150

The IPC's anti-war predecessor MAWAF had failed to take off to any extent because of its close links with the Communist Party. Consequently the party hierarchy was particularly anxious to avoid doing anything that might give rise to the impression that the new organisation was just another Communist front organisation. Ralph Gibson was named as the party's representative on the IPC executive and his wife Dorothy served as assistant secretary but otherwise direct Communist involvement in the running of the organisation was deliberately curtailed. MAWAF's national secretary, Jim Rawling, although a veteran of the anti-war movement, was precluded from playing any major role in IPC activities because he was an avowed Communist.151 Lloyd Ross, the nominal head of MAWAF, was treated differently, however. It was still not publicly acknowledged that he was a member of the Communist Party. He could thus be associated with the new organisation. From its formation in mid-1936 until the end of the year he headed the New South Wales

section of the IPC.152 In July, along with Jim Rawling, his brother Edgar Ross and another ARU man, H.B. Turner, he spoke at a MAWAF reception held for his old friend Ralph Gibson, who was about to leave for the Brussels anti-war conference.153 Six months later, as part of Gibson's schedule following his return from Europe, the ARU invited him to address the Labor Council on the significance of the conference.154

In the middle of September 1937 the Australian IPC staged its first (and only) national congress. Lloyd Ross was invited to attend in his joint capacity as national president of MAWAF and New South Wales secretary of the ARU. Given his standing as the architect of the ACTU's new anti-war policy, he inevitably was one of the leading participants. He certainly intended to exert an influence commensurate with his status. On the day before the conference got down to business he presided over a caucus of MAWAF delegates at which he laid down the proper ideological line that had to be followed. The other delegates to the conference, he insisted, had to be constantly reminded that the struggle against war could not be separated from the struggle against fascism: 'the factors that brought about Fascism were the factors which brought about war'.155

152. Ibid., p.302.
153. WW, 28 July 1936, p.4.
154. Ibid., 26 January 1937, p.3.
Lloyd Ross's warning was well-based. Throughout the three days of the congress representatives of the anti-fascist camp encountered a decidedly cool response on the part of many delegates. Guided by Lloyd Ross and other ARU spokesmen, the 100 or so trade union delegates remained true to the tenets of left-wing internationalism. However in overall terms a majority of delegates preferred to follow a completely different ideological approach. The hordes of high-minded Protestant clergymen, school teachers, women's representatives and assorted liberal idealists who flocked to the congress were heavily imbued with pacifist sentiment. They hated war far more than they hated fascism and for this reason they were unable to share the left's enthusiasm for the doctrine of collective security. The rift was especially noticeable at the opening session of the congress. To honour the occasion a series of keynote addresses was arranged, with the speakers being Arthur Henderson of the British Labour Party, Professor L.F. Giblin of Melbourne University, Lloyd Ross and the Reverend Eric Nye. Lloyd Ross's speech took the form of a fiery anti-fascist oration. The left-leaning intellectuals in the audience - irrespective of whether they were Communists (Ralph and Dorothy Gibson) or not (Nettie Palmer) - were roused to a

157. ML MSS 740/7/380, Esmonde Higgins to Jack and Edna Ryan, 9 December 1937.
158. Ralph Gibson, My Years in the Communist Party, Melbourne, 1966, pp.63-64; Ralph Gibson, One Woman's Life A Memoir of Dorothy Gibson, Sydney, 1980, p.52.
159. NLA MS 1174/16/19, Nettie Palmer diary, 16 September 1937.
high pitch of ideological fervour. Earlier, however, these same people had reacted rather differently to Professor Giblin's speech. Because he hated war so intensely Giblin, it was clear, was prepared to accept appeasement as a legitimate policy. His refusal to condemn fascist aggression gravely disappointed Nettie Palmer and the Gibsons. A similarly shocked reaction was forthcoming from Nettie's brother Esmonde Higgins, who promptly reaffirmed his belief in 'straight Leninist anti-militarism'.160

Following the IPC congress Lloyd Ross went directly to Adelaide, which for three days beginning on 21 September hosted the ARU's biennial national conference. Having bravely accepted the pallid idealism of the IPC Congress, he now was able once again to luxuriate in a healthy atmosphere of socialist fundamentalism and militant anti-fascism. On 22 September the ARU delegates endorsed the stand adopted by the ACTU in regard to defence and foreign policy issues.161 Political caution and high-minded idealism together represented powerful obstacles that still had to be overcome but within the trade union movement there was no disputing that left-wing internationalism had become the accepted way of thinking. When Lloyd Ross next came to prepare his regular quarterly report for the ARU state council he was able to derive considerable satisfaction from the progress made during the previous few months:

160. ABL, N57/186, Esmonde Higgins to Nettie Palmer, 29 September [1937].
161. NLA MS 3939, Box 1, 1937 ARU Australian Council Minutes, pp.13-14.
... the decisions that have now been endorsed by the A.C.T.U., the Trade Union Commission of the World Peace Congress, the Australian Council [of the ARU], and the Trades and Labor Councils of three States originated at the A.R.U. State Conference held in May 1937; ... the policy of the Trade Union Movement is the policy which was first brought before the public by such State Conference.162

Furthermore, Lloyd Ross could have noted, the internationalist cause was expanding all the time. Apart from their success in highlighting the plight of the Spanish Republic the anti-fascist crusaders of 1937 were able to pick up additional support as a result of the wave of revulsion generated by Japan's invasion of China. On 30 September the Labor Council in Sydney set up an appropriate co-ordinating body, the Hands Off China Committee, which acted as the pro-China counterpart of the SRC.163 At the end of October the national executive of the ACTU called on Australian consumers to boycott Japanese goods. At the same time the executive appealed to the federal government to place a ban on the export of scrap iron to Japan. Left-wing unionists, while insisting that all exports should be banned, were prepared for the time being to accept the executive's more moderate request, the more so since, in terms of its stand on the issue, the ACTU was far in advance of the ALP, which sternly rejected all talk of boycotts and bans.164

162. Railroad, 8 February 1938, p.4.
164. Ibid., 30 October 1937, p.17, 1 November 1937, p.11; WW, 2 November 1937, pp.1, 4.
The trade union campaign against Japanese militarism was fully supported by the ARU. Lloyd Ross was a founding member of the Hands Off China Committee under whose aegis funds were raised to send an ambulance to China. To the same end he encouraged ARU members not to buy Japanese-made Christmas toys and was responsible for getting the Labor Council to condemn a forthcoming good-will visit from a Japanese delegation. The federal officers of the union were equally sympathetic. Late in November Jack Chappie conveyed the ARU's best wishes to the newly elected federal secretary of the Waterside Workers' Federation, Jim Healy. The waterside workers, Chappie noted, had a vital role to play in relation to 'the developing tension in International affairs and, possibly, the need for imposing the boycott in the transport of munitions of war'. Chappie's expectations in this regard were speedily fulfilled. In January the Sydney branch of the Waterside Workers' Federation decided to impose a ban on the loading on to Japanese ships of scrap iron and other war materials.

165. Ibid., 5 October 1937, p.1.
Although the waterside workers' ban went ahead with the official blessing of the trade union movement, the attitude of the ALP remained unchanged. It was hard to avoid noticing the growing divergence of opinion. Late in January 1938 the Labor Council adopted a resolution endorsing the stand taken by the waterside workers. A pledge of 'wholehearted support' also was forthcoming. It was hard to determine what these words actually meant, however.

Protestations of solidarity at this time were bound to sound hollow in view of the labour movement's divided response to the issue of bans and boycotts. Merely by considering the resolution the Labor Council provided a venue for factional spleen to be vented. During the debate a right-wing delegate was quick to point out that the ARU, for all its vaunted internationalism, had yet to initiate a course of action similar to that adopted on the waterfront. Lloyd Ross was in attendance as a delegate and not surprisingly he felt bound to answer the challenge. 'Unfortunately,' he lamented, 'in the railway service we are confronted with a tremendous amount of division which precludes the possibility of any real co-operation on these issues'. The ARU's internationalist position was a source of much factional and inter-union rancour, with this situation, he added for good measure, being 'carefully fostered by the "Inner Group" of the Labor Party in this State'. Lloyd Ross was determined to do his utmost to discredit his ALP opponents. In another debate

at the Trades Hall a fortnight later he went back on to the attack. This time his specific target was the Labor Daily, which, he insisted, deserved to be condemned by all good trade unionists because it 'sneered at internationalism' and was suffused with 'rotten jingoism'.

From Lloyd Ross's standpoint - and he was hardly unique in this respect - the anti-fascist programme adopted by the ARU militants necessarily presupposed, as its immediate objective, the overthrow of Jack Lang and his Inner Group henchmen. The urgency of the task was all the more apparent when seen against the background of the stubbornly conservative attitudes so characteristic of many railwaymen, for whom Lang remained the heroic saviour of 1925 and 1932. In the long run increased political and industrial assertiveness on the part of the ARU could proceed unhindered only when Lang's mythic status was shattered. Lloyd Ross and his left-wing comrades were eager to take on the challenge. Rewriting labour's folklore for their own purposes was entirely consistent with the ARU's traditional policy of aggressively promoting socialist culture and ideology, which in turn represented the third arm of old-style industrial unionism.

The 'track to socialism' that the railway militants were seeking to construct headed in more than one direction. It did not just point towards the future. It lay behind them as well, thereby ensuring that their industrial and political demands, no matter how immediate, remained connected to labour's heroic past. In the various campaigns that Lloyd Ross was involved in with the ARU the authority of the past was freely invoked.

The ARU's faith in working-class mythology was something that Lloyd Ross could fully share in. His contacts with the railway militants had, by 1935, already been greatly strengthened as a result of their joint involvement in the Tolpuddle celebrations. The Tolpuddle centenary demonstrated that Lloyd Ross, like his father before him, belonged 'to the fore in all workingclass celebrations'. His outstanding qualities as a pro-labour propagandist served to further stamp him as Arthur Chapman's rightful successor.

During Chapman's term of office the ARU's interest in cultural and ideological matters developed apace. Under
his direction the Educational and Organising Committee was entrusted with the task of co-ordinating the union's propaganda and agitational activities. As an immediate step a concerted attempt was made to establish Railroad as a staunch purveyor of socialist ideology. A labour journalist of distinction (and a graduate of the Central Labour College in London), Chapman was able to turn Railroad into 'the leading Trade Union paper in Australia' when viewed 'from the angle of educational and economic thought'. By means of a stream of articles and commentaries he sought to familiarise railwaymen with the tenets of anti-capitalist economics, left-wing politics and working-class history. To the same end he hired a former VLC tutor to teach economics to ARU members and assisted in the establishment of a lending library which featured both the Marxist classics and the standard texts in Industrial History.

'Our purpose', Chapman wrote on one occasion, 'must be to cater more and more for the cultural and social side'. The ARU hoped to inculcate a greater sense of solidarity within the highly variegated railway workforce by encouraging a wide range of group activities in addition to promoting the usual round of industrial concerns. Following its purchase in 1932, Transport House, with its commodious facilities, provided an excellent venue for dances, concerts, films, theatrical performances, debates, lectures, evening

1. 'NSW Branch, ARU', September 1973, p.2.
3. Railroad, 10 August 1930, p.21, 10 February 1931, p.10.
classes and study circles. In this way a regular ARU social calendar evolved. Outside activities similarly flourished, with participation in team sports, notably cricket, football and tennis, being encouraged. The formation of the women's auxiliary, along with the establishment of the ARU Hall at Newcastle and the development of sub-branch activities in some of the country centres further extended the 'cultural and social side' of the ARU.

With their fondness for 'workingclass celebrations', the activists of the ARU could be counted upon to assume a prominent role in the cycle of rallies and marches that made up the Australian trade union calendar. 'Things spectacular always appealed to Arthur Chapman, and the many and varied displays which were features of our street processions were largely of his creation'. Through the use of placards and colourful tableaux the ARU was able to convey its undying hatred of the capitalist system. Whenever Sydney's annual May Day and Eight-Hour Day processions came round, the union invariably succeeded in enlisting a large and well-presented contingent of marchers. Eventually the ARU decided to form its own brass band, thereby adding to the mood of revivalist fervour.

7. SMH, 3 August 1934, p.19, 3 December 1934, p.10; DT, 31 October 1934, p.8, 3 December 1934, p.5.
Long before the Tolpuddle centenary the ARU was fond of employing vivid historical imagery in its famous tableaux. For the 1929 Eight-Hour Day procession the union decided to feature the Eureka Stockade. Realising that Bob Ross was 'the only man in the field with regard to Eureka', the railway militants, led by Chapman, Stan Wyatt and W. O'Connor, carefully studied his book on the subject 'in order to prepare an accurate picture'. As a result of their efforts, it was agreed, the union managed to mount a particularly effective tableau. A team of railwaymen was decked out as a group of sorely oppressed yet defiant Ballarat miners. The idea was to highlight the repressive nature of the federal government's industrial relations policies as an accompanying placard made clear:

EUREKA - 1854
SYDNEY - 1929
Will Bruce drive us back to this.  

Chapman's enthusiasm for working-class propaganda was unwavering. While recuperating in England in 1934 he participated in the TUC's Tolpuddle celebrations. When Six Men of Dorset was performed at Transport House at the end of the year he was on hand to deliver a brief address in which he discussed his pilgrimage to Dorchester.

8. Railroad, 10 November 1929, pp.10,17; UV, 9 November 1929, p.2; SMH, 8 October 1929, pp.11, T4; LD, 8 October 1929, pp.1,5.  
9. AH, 10 November 1934, p.29; Railroad, 10 November 1934, p.5; E&O Cttee Minutes, 2 November 1934.
Towards the end of February 1935, as Chapman's death drew near, arrangements were set in train to ensure that the union carried on his good work in the educational field. Before leaving England for the last time Chapman had purchased a portable projector along with a series of slides featuring a range of topics relating to trade union history, working-class education and the co-operative movement.10 In the week before he died, the ARU asked Lloyd Ross to prepare a set of lecture notes to accompany the slides.11

Thus well before September 1935 Lloyd Ross was firmly installed as the ARU's unofficial historical adviser. In the months leading up to his election nothing occurred to disturb this arrangement. At the 1935 performance of *May Day Through the Ages* by members of the Newcastle branches of the WEA and ARU Lloyd Ross was on hand to deliver an address in which he referred to the birth of the modern May Day ceremony in the 1880s.12 As had been the case earlier with his father, there was, in the ARU, no disputing his authority as 'the only man in the field' when it came to commemorating working-class anniversaries.

Lloyd Ross's support for the ARU's cultural activities accelerated from the moment his appointment as

12. RL, 8 May 1935, p.11; Railroad, 10 June 1935, p.15.
secretary was announced. At a meeting of the Educational and Organising Committee held on 20 September the possible components of a full-scale ARU educational programme were examined. Ways of popularising left-wing ideas were considered, with reference being made to wireless talks, a correspondence course and an evening class (the previous class had lapsed). It was envisaged that these activities would augment the union's forthcoming industrial campaign.13

Progress in the desired direction was soon underway. The evening class was quickly established. Similarly, the idea of an ARU correspondence course aroused enough interest for Lloyd Ross to begin looking around for possible subjects. Eventually three topics were suggested: 'The History of the Australian Working Class Movement', 'Theories of Leninism in the Modern World' and 'Working Class Economics'. At the same time sub-branches were urged to make use of Arthur Chapman's projector and slides along with Lloyd Ross's lecture notes; a visiting speaker could be provided if required. In another move, three boxes of study material suitable for classes in the country were prepared and circulated.14

The enthusiasm for education displayed at Transport House was equally evident at the ARU's September 1935 national council. Acting on the initiative of the Queensland branch,

14. 'Year of Controversy', p.19; Railroad, 10 October 1935, p.11.
the delegates decided that the time had come for members of
the ARU to be provided with 'suitable up-to-date Text Books
[and] Study Courses, covering Economics, History, Philosophy,
etc.' To promote this objective, a federal ARU education
committee, comprising the four delegates from New South Wales
(Ross, Ferguson, Barker and Goldspink) was established.15
The committee met for the first time on 8 November.
Following its deliberations it was announced that the ARU
intended to arrange for the preparation and distribution, on
a national basis, of two correspondence courses. The topics
chosen were 'The development of the Labor Movement in
Australia' and 'The State in theory and practice'.16 The
details of the proposal were entrusted to Lloyd Ross, who
decided to concentrate on the labour history course, using
his thesis as his main source of material.

The ARU's concept of working-class education was
based on the classical tenets of industrial unionism, with
educational and propaganda activities complementing political
and industrial agitation in a three-pronged attack on the
capitalist system. Lloyd Ross, through his father, was
steeped in this creed and was exceptionally well-equipped to
breathe new life into its traditional precepts. Whether at
mass meetings or in lecture halls, his ability as a left-wing
speaker was one of his undoubted assets. On 9 September,

just a week after his election, he was co-opted on to the Defend Democratic Rights Committee, a body which had been set up by the Labor Council in order to co-ordinate trade union opposition to the federal government's attempt to ban the CPA and FSU. As part of its efforts the committee staged a protest rally - at which Lloyd Ross gave a stirring address - and dispatched a delegation to Canberra. The committee also issued a pamphlet entitled Defend Democratic Rights which dwelt on the anti-democratic nature of the Crimes Act with due reference being made to the connection between its legislative history and the climate of repression brought about by the Great War and the Great Depression. Trade unionists were called upon to defend the rights and liberties that had been extorted from the capitalist class as a result of Tolpuddle, Chartism, Eureka and the wartime campaign against conscription. Eager to drive this point home, the ARU contingent at October's Eight-Hour Day procession marched behind Lloyd Ross's 1934 Tolpuddle tableau.

As well as the Crimes Act the militants invariably cited the Transport Workers Act of 1928 and the amended Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1932 as the worst examples

18. Soviets To-Day, November 1935 (unpaginated); WW, 4 October 1935, pp.1,4; ABL, Jack Kavanagh Collection, P12/4/17, Jack Kavanagh to Edna Ryan, 8 [October 1935].
20. LD, 8 October 1935, p.5; SMH, 8 October 1935, p.10.
of anti-working class legislation on the statute book. Their hostility to this battery of legislation was easily rekindled. A fresh barrage of criticism sprang up late in 1935, after rank-and-file members of the Seamen's Union went out on strike following the handing down of an unpopular industrial award. Their action led to the licensing provisions of the Transport Workers Act being invoked. The Miners' Federation and the Labor Council supported the strikers, as did the ARU - Lloyd Ross delivered another fiery oration at a Labor Council rally21 - but otherwise solidarity on the part of the trade union movement was distinctly lacking. The Seamen's Union itself was badly divided. Defeat, when it came in February 1936, was total.22

In the wake of the seamen's strike the campaign against the Crimes Act and the Transport Workers Act was stepped up. The secretary of the CPA, J.B. Miles, addressed a series of protest rallies in the course of a nationwide tour. The slogan 'Defend Democratic Rights' was ritually invoked.23 'The traditions of the masses of the Australian people', a Workers' Weekly editorial stated on 31 March 1936, 'are democratic traditions'. The founders of a free Australia - W.C. Wentworth, Robert Lowe, J.D. Lang, Henry Parkes and

the Ballarat diggers - were revered by the working class and its Leninist vanguard. 'The Communists', the party insisted, 'want to protect and guard the Australian democratic culture'.

The CPA's readiness to embrace 'democratic culture' was part of a major ideological shift that was underway at this time. Moscow's formal endorsement of the policy of 'unity from above' was announced in August 1935, at the seventh world congress of the Communist International. The highlight of the proceedings came when the Comintern spokesman G.I. Dimitrov delivered a lengthy report in which considerable stress was placed on the proposition that the anti-fascist struggle had to be extended beyond the political sphere. Ideological and cultural questions were at stake as well. Communists needed to concern themselves 'with every important question, not only of the present and the future, but also of the past'. The fascists, Dimitrov noted, were 'rummaging through the entire history of every nation so as to be able to pose as the heirs and continuators of all that was exalted and heroic in its past'. In the face of such falsification united front propagandists were required 'to link up their present struggle with [the people's] revolutionary traditions and past'. Communists, while continuing to oppose 'bourgeois nationalism', were expected to avoid the equally pernicious path of 'national nihilism'. Proletarian internationalism needed to be acclimatised in each particular national setting. Henceforth in the West the
struggle against fascism was to be equated with the redemption of the nation and its cultural heritage.24

Dimitrov's abstract formulae influenced the political vocabulary of Communists throughout the democratic world. The Communist Party in Australia was no exception. Sometime after September 1935 its leading researcher in the form of Jim Rawling was instructed to set about the task of popularising Dimitrov's precepts. It was now de rigueur, Rawling was informed, 'for the Communist Party to take a position of patriotism itself, and they were to put forward that they were the real patriots and the propaganda of the Party had to find a big place for episodes in the history of our own country, in which the people in mass movements took part, such as the Eureka episode in Victoria'. The CPA needed to be portrayed as 'the successor of such people who had struggled for freedom and other things in the past'.25

Already a devoted student of working-class history, Rawling was given free rein to expound his knowledge of the subject. From late 1935 onwards he produced a steady stream of historical articles for the party press in which the great events in Australia's democratic past - convictism, Eureka, the strikes of the 1890s, the anti-conscription movement - were documented and discussed.

In historiographical terms, Rawling was definitely in the mould of the VSP. He embraced Communism in the early 1920s after a period as a rationalist during which time he was loosely associated with Bob Ross's anti-church activities. In 1922, at the height of his atheistic fervour, Rawling obtained a copy of Bob Ross's book on Eureka, which he treasured for the rest of his life.\textsuperscript{26} His pro-Eureka attitude was consistent with general party thinking at this time. The Communist Party, in its first few years of existence, was just another trade union faction. Working through the Labor Council, it shared most of the attitudes of the other industrial militants, including a reverence for Eureka along the lines developed by Bob Ross.\textsuperscript{27}

In 1930, following intervention from Moscow, the Communist Party was reconstituted along the lines of a strict Leninist sect, complete with a new set of officials. The turnover among the membership at large was equally drastic. After the mid-1920s the party shed its Labor Council and trade union connections while during the Depression years most of the recruits who joined its ranks were drawn from the unemployed.\textsuperscript{28} These new-style Communists did not share

\textsuperscript{26} See James Normington Rawling Papers, ML MSS 1326, Box K21941.
their predecessors' faith in Australia's democratic heritage. Australia, for them, was just another capitalist state, replete with 'wage-cuts, dole-cuts and repression'. The broad sweep of working class history was largely equated with the rise and triumph of Soviet Communism. Local radical traditions were disowned. Following Dimitrov's revaluation of national sentiment (as opposed to nationalism), most Communists had to be reintroduced to the traditional Labor concept of Australia as the proud possessor of a fighting left-wing heritage. Jim Rawling came into his own again as a result of this development. He was expected to assume the pedagogical burden made necessary by the shift in the party's ideological direction.

So by 1936 Bob Ross's ghostly presence effectively animated the CPA as well as the ARU, with Jim Rawling having joined Lloyd Ross in the task of inculcating a greater working-class awareness of Australian history. There were undoubtedly subtle ideological differences between the two men. Thus Lloyd Ross, as a daily participant in the class struggle, never fully shared Rawling's enthusiasm for invoking the spirit of national unity by equating Australian society with its supposed proletarian essence ('the toiling masses are the country and the custodians of its ideals and

29. RL, 2 November 1932, p.4.
30. See WW, 13 December 1929, p.2 where the slogan 'The Spirit of Eureka still lives' is described as a 'meaningless bleat'; cf. Peter, 'Social Aspects of Depression in NSW', pp.385,417.
But when it came to the details of working-class historiography, the two men were as one. Lloyd Ross kept abreast of Rawling's historical articles—and praised their author in public—while for his part Rawling showed a keen interest in the ARU correspondence course in Australian labour history, the first instalment of which appeared in Railroad at the end of February 1936. In the succeeding weeks further instalments were issued in leaflet form. The topics Lloyd Ross dealt with covered the convict era and the emergence of classes and class conflict after 1788, the emergence of trade unions, the Wakefield scheme, Chartism and the drive for reform, Eureka and labour's role in late colonial society and politics.

Originally Lloyd Ross had intended to cover the entire field of Australian working-class history in his

31. 'Australia's Fights', February 1936, p.44.
32. Copies of the Communist Review from 1935 onwards, with articles by Rawling being invariably annotated, are in the Lloyd Ross Pamphlet Collection, NLA, and in NLA MS 3939, Box 21.
33. WW, 4 May 1937, p.1.
34. Lloyd Ross, A.R.U. Correspondence Courses The Development of the Australian Labor Movement, Sydney, [1936]. Copies of the first five instalments are in the Rawling Papers, ML MSS 1326, Box K21941.
35. 'Class Struggles in a New Land'.
36. 'Early Trade Unions'.
37. 'Marx Analyses the Squatters' Apologist'.
38. 'Forces for Labor Agitation' and 'Australian Liberalism'.
39. 'Gold and Rebellion'.
40. 'Trade Unionism Grows' and 'The Labor Movement Before the Nineties'.
correspondence course. There were to be twenty-four instalments, culminating with a survey of the Depression years and the political factionalism of the 1930s. But after producing nine instalments, and having set the scene for the great strikes of the 1890s, he promptly abandoned the project. Although widely circulated among railwaymen at large, the correspondence course came to grief as a result of ideological differences between the state branches. The Queensland branch of the ARU - whose radicalism was adamantine - refused to accept Lloyd Ross's fondness for labour history. In its estimation ARU members needed to study 'Marxian Economics' and the theory and practice of imperialism to the exclusion of all other subjects. Labour history was best left to the WEA and the midnight lucubrations of the old-style exponents of working-class autodidacticism. At the instigation of state secretary Moroney the Queensland branch appointed an education officer, Gordon Crane, who was requested to prepare an alternative ARU study course. Lloyd Ross had been effectively by-passed.

Even before its untimely end, however, the ARU's correspondence course had became a monument to the vagaries of left-wing opinion. The ideas and assumptions that helped to shape the content of the course were taken straight from

42. TRC 236, 1:2/44.
Lloyd Ross's doctoral thesis. They embodied, in an embalmed form, the youthful historical scepticism of the author. The result was a curious amalgam of old and new attitudes. Iconoclasm hardly fitted in with the romanticised left-wing view of Australian history whose delights had been so recently rediscovered by united front apologists. Inevitably Eureka was the touchstone. 'The rebellion', Lloyd Ross once again insisted, 'was neither Laboristic nor Socialistic'; Eureka in fact represented the last gasp of the small-time capitalist in the mining industry. It was only in terms of its impact on later generations of labour men and women that the event took on a socialist significance.44

Ultimately in seeking to reaffirm the relevance of labour's heroic traditions Lloyd Ross had to be able to show that there was a definite link between the cultural ferment of the 1890s - in the course of which the Eureka myth had taken off - and the left-wing internationalism of his own day. However, as he well knew, the 1890s, besides witnessing the development of socialist ideas, had also seen the birth of racist and nationalist attitudes which were anathema to the internationalists of the 1930s. The complexities of pro-labour traditionalism were not easily suppressed.

The appearance, early in 1936, of P.R. Stephensen's nationalist tract *The Foundations of Culture in Australia*

44. 'Gold and Rebellion', pp.7-8.
served to underline the difficulties attendant upon any attempt to glorify Australia's radical past. Stephensen's aim in publishing this pamphlet was to get Australians to realise that their lack of a separate cultural identity meant that their formal state of political independence was necessarily a sham. The basic problem, Stephensen argued, dated back to 1914 and Australia's subsequent involvement in the Great War. The thriving native literary culture of the pre-war era had been blighted by the flood of imperialist sentiment that was released in 1914. The steady decline in the fortunes of the British Empire in the years since the war meant that a reaffirmation of Australia's pre-war state of nationalist innocence had become a political necessity. Cosmopolitan tendencies had to be eschewed at all costs. When viewed against long-term historical trends the militant internationalists of the Communist Party were revealed in their true anti-national colours, being just as reactionary as the diehard supporters of the British Empire who dominated the Australian scene. On both the left and right wing of politics the intention was to maintain Australia's emotional dependence on the outside world.

As an avowed leftist Lloyd Ross of necessity viewed events differently to Stephensen. He was able to set out the precise differences in a review of Stephensen's pamphlet which was included in the June 1936 issue of *Australian Highway*. Stephensen's sense of urgency, he argued, was perfectly explicable. The world undoubtedly was in a state of crisis. The spectre of fascism and war was looming larger
all the time. However despite Stephensen's asseverations the proper response to this situation was not cultural and political separatism, but proletarian internationalism: 'Out of the events will come a Socialistic Australia, a part, but a subsidiary part, in a world commonwealth of Socialist States'. As a result of his nationalist creed, Stephensen was aligned with the same local radical tradition that the Communist Party had recently rediscovered: from W.C. Wentworth to anti-conscription via Eureka and Henry Lawson. For Lloyd Ross, however, nationalism and socialism, in the Australian context, marched in different directions, although given Dimitrov's rejection of 'national nihilism' he found it necessary to choose his words carefully:

It is admitted that literature and the fight for a new world were linked in the 'nineties, so they will be linked again when we take seriously the struggle to-day for a new social order. That order will come not through tariffs, but through Socialism; not by economic self-sufficiency, but by international proletarianism. The attempt to stress the national in literature to-day can be only at the expense of distortion, and I will admit that any attempt to ignore national traits will also produce distortion. My argument, however, is that the class-relations and the social disorders following therefrom constitute a far more important influence on life than the national divisions.45

The study of labour history clearly belonged to the emerging proletarian culture that Lloyd Ross was seeking to nurture. With the rise of fascism the need to overcome the chronic apathy and ignorance surrounding past working-class

struggles had never been greater. Notwithstanding the fate of the ARU correspondence course, Lloyd Ross still hoped to achieve something in this direction. Beginning in March 1936, in the pages of Trade Union Leader (a modified version of the militants' former newspaper Red Leader), he reprinted a series of historical documents relating to key issues in Australian labour history, ranging from Eureka through William Lane to the anti-war movement of 1914-18. In addition he supplied some editorial comments in which the inspirational side of labour history was well to the fore. William Lane may have deserted the labour movement, but the influence he exerted in the 1890s lived on. 'He gave the unskilled confidence. He circulated ideas on socialism'.46 Similarly the Eureka rebellion, while perhaps not inspired by socialists, 'was important in building up the popular democratic and the working-class movements'.47 The strikes of the 1890s were defeated, but at least this failure persuaded labour to enter politics.48 Things usually turned out for the best in working-class history.

Lloyd Ross, in the mid-1930s, was a working-class dramatist as well as a labour historian. He already had explored the celebratory aspects of the Eureka myth and the legend of the nineties in Labor's Cavalcade and he was eager to press on with similar ventures. His association with the

46. Trade Union Leader, March 1936, p.172.
47. Ibid., May 1936, p.220.
48. Ibid., August 1936, pp.4,21-22.
cause of proletarian drama was easily able to be fitted into his schedule of ARU activities. The possible formation of an ARU drama group was included among the list of proposed educational initiatives discussed in September 1935. There had indeed been a recent attempt to establish an ARU drama group in Sydney, but the project had fallen through. This time around far more effort was put into developing the idea. Lloyd Ross was convinced that the previous experiment had failed because the would-be proletarian players had not been provided with material tailored to their specific requirements. Trade union and left-wing activists who valued 'plays with a purpose' had access, at this time, to a growing body of imported left-wing plays and sketches with American items predominating. Lloyd Ross himself, during the winter preceding his election, had fully exploited this repertoire in the course of his continuing involvement with proletarian drama activities in both Sydney and Newcastle. With a view to facilitating the formation of a Sydney ARU drama group he promptly decided to turn his hand to the task of putting together local versions of this American material.

The precise nature of the ARU's latest cultural initiative was revealed in the October issue of Railroad,

which featured two short dramatic compositions written by Lloyd Ross. Both pieces were designed to be chanted by soloists accompanied by a mass chorus of workers. The purpose was to create a feeling of irresistible left-wing fervour. One of the items was entitled 'Free Thaelmann'. It dealt with the plight of the imprisoned leader of the German Communists and began thus:

Leader: A man is in prison.
Chorus: A man is in prison.
Leader: Catch a glimpse of the man as he walks in the courtyard of his prison.
Chorus: In the courtyard of a prison.

Despite being confined to a narrow cell, Thaelmann was revered throughout the world, as the chorus made clear in a crescendo of left-wing passion:

Leader: Workers standing in breadlines. Workers trailing for the dole. Workers in prison.
Chorus: Snarl the name of Thaelmann.

Members of Chorus:
1. Send a greeting to Thaelmann.
2. A message to Thaelmann.
4. We think of you.
5. We call and agitate for Thaelmann.
6. Our demand will pierce his lonely cell.
7. Our demand will reach terrified Hitler.
8. Our call will gather strength from all corners of the earth.

Chorus: Free Thaelmann!
Free Thaelmann!

The second of Lloyd Ross's dramatic pieces comprised a series of choruses celebrating Lenin and the Russian revolution. The Bolshevik leader was undoubtedly one of the

author's heroes. Lloyd Ross had already dramatised the events of 1917 in *The Second Congress of Soviets* and for *May Day Through the Ages* he had written a hymn of praise to Bolshevism. His fondness for Lenin was unbounded. During 1935 a group of his WEA students were encouraged to write a collective play focussing on Lenin's life and times. It was Lloyd Ross's intention that the proposed new ARU drama group should begin its activities by staging a performance of this play. The five choruses that appeared in *Railroad* were designed to accompany the action and build up the excitement. The language was suitably messianic:

Chorus: A man has come.
No. 1: Across the steppes and down the rivers runs a message.
All: A man has come.
2: A man from the Volga.
3: A man called Voloyda.
All: Lenin-Ilytch-Voloyda-Comrade Lenin.

It was impossible to suppress the gospel of Leninism:

First Chorus and Second Chorus combine:--

1: What must I do? Where shall I go?
2: Nightly meetings are being held.
3: Let us go.
4: Bread and peace.
5: Power to the Soviets.
6: Power to the proletariat.
7: Power to the masses.
8: Seize power!
All: Let us go, we will march all night.

With the promised land of socialism already within sight, Leninists everywhere were yearning to fulfil their master's wishes:

Lloyd Ross's enthusiasm was duly rewarded. By early 1936 Railroad was able to report that an ARU Drama Group had been established in Sydney.56 The troupe made its debut at MAWAF's national conference in January, with 'Free Thaelmann' and one of the Lenin chants being staged for the edification of the delegates.57 During the succeeding weeks the ARU Drama Group presented two more public performances of the Thaelmann chorus and took part in a function organised by the Seamen's Relief Committee.58

For Lloyd Ross, deeds always needed to be backed up by words. In the six months after April 1936 he delivered a number of public lectures in which he examined the emergence of proletarian drama with particular attention being given to recent left-wing cultural developments in the United States and the Soviet Union.59 He spoke with the authority of someone who practised what he preached. During this period the ARU Drama Group staged three performances of the Lenin

55. Ibid., 10 October 1935, p.17.
56. Ibid., 18 February 1936, p.2.
58. Railroad, 18 February 1936, p.2; CC, 29 February 1936, p.4, 14 March 1936, p.3.
59. WW, 17 July 1936, p.4, 14 August 1936, p.4, 21 August 1936, p.4, 9 October 1936, p.4; Railroad, 7 April 1936, p.3, 5 May 1936, p.4; Honi Soit, 6 August 1936, p.3.
play written by his WEA students. The group was expanding its activities all the time. In August it performed in Newcastle while on another occasion it provided a striking accompaniment to one of Lloyd Ross's lectures.

The ARU Drama Group's services were fully utilised on the evening of 8 July, when an 'E.A. Chapman Memorial Night' was organised by the state branch in an effort to raise money for its late secretary's widow. From 8.00pm onwards the Drama Group, under the direction of Edgar Ross, performed a series of mass recitations and choruses, interspersed with items from assorted soloists and vocalists and the ARU band. The evening concluded with the audience singing the 'Internationale'. All but one of the choruses came from the pen of Lloyd Ross, who in an effort to assist the audience's understanding defined the concept of a working-class chorus in a programme note:

The Working-Class Chorus is an example of the work from the Agit.-Prop Theatre. At street corners, at meetings, on the picket line, during strikes, the workers of America discovered a method of presenting their ideas in vivid dramatic dialogues, staccato thrusts and choruses. Untrained masses adapted the minstrel show, the vaudeville, the song and the pageant to working-class needs. In America and Europe, the play and the chorus are being used widely for working-class propaganda. Can we not link more closely the arts with the Labor Movement in Australia?

60. CC, 5 September 1936, p.7.
62. WW, 21 August 1936, p.4.
63. NLA MS 3939, Box 51, 'Souvenir Programme'; CC, 4 July 1936, p.2, 18 July 1936, p.2.
Another notable public performance by the ARU Drama Group occurred on 18 July, when J.B. Miles returned to Sydney after his nationwide political tour. In the evening a reception was held in the Town Hall. As well as the usual speeches there was a full programme of theatrical items. The ARU Drama Group, again led by Edgar Ross, joined forces with FSU members and the New Theatre League to put on a trio of mass choruses: 'Defend the Party', 'Free Thaelmann' and 'The Masses in Motion'.64 This last item came from a play bearing the same title which Lloyd Ross had just written. An extract from The Masses in Motion had already been performed at the previous week's ARU memorial night.65 No doubt it was the same extract that had been chosen for the Town Hall performance. The play itself represented a notable advance in Lloyd Ross's work as a dramatist. Consisting of four acts interspersed with choruses, The Masses in Motion dealt with a number of key events in Australian working-class history - William Lane and the socialist fervour of the 1890s; wartime political dissent; the dismissal of Jack Lang; and the reaction of trade unionists to the world crisis of the 1930s. In the concluding chorus (which was the item performed at the 'E.A. Chapman Memorial Night') the names of Lenin, Tom Mann, Tom Mooney, Thaelmann, Lane and Lawson were invoked in a hymn of praise to left-wing internationalism. Through his play Lloyd Ross hoped to exorcise the isolationist

64. WW, 21 July 1936, p.1.
65. See NLA MS 3939, Box 50, 'A Call to Action'.
66. The full text of which is in NLA MS 3939, Box 23. Cf. WW, 29 September 1936 p.3.
strain in Australian radicalism. Although firmly set in Australia, *The Masses in Motion*, he noted, was dedicated to expounding the twin propositions that 'Australia is listening in to the world; and the Australian movement is a particular example of the world movement of the masses.'

*The Masses in Motion* was never performed in its entirety. When it came to celebrating labour's heroic past more orthodox methods - meetings, conferences, rallies and processions - were relied upon. Within these limits, however, activity was intense. The outstanding Australian working-class anniversary of 1936 was celebrated at the end of October, when the twentieth anniversary of the first conscription referendum fell due. In commemorating the anniversary much more was at stake than mere historical sentiment given that the isolationist position of the ALP and the ACTU, as set out during the Abyssinian crisis, was couched in heavily anti-conscriptionist terms. Collective security meant war, war meant conscription, and conscription affronted labour's holiest traditions. To advance their cause the militants had to break this association of ideas. They were required to demonstrate that anti-fascist internationalism was the 1930s' equivalent of the wartime crusade against conscription.

The anniversary of the defeat of conscription was duly commemorated in each of the major Australian cities. Melbourne led the way, with the organisers arranging an historical exhibition as well as public meetings, a march and
a rally on the Yarra bank. The various rival factions (notably the THC and the Communist Party) suspended their hostilities for the duration of the festivities. This splendid example was not followed in Sydney, however. The struggle between Lang and the Labor Council went ahead unabated. No labour anniversary in Sydney at this time was complete without factionalism being fully on show. Early in October the supporters and opponents of Jack Lang marched in separate contingents in the Eight-Hour Day procession. Already both groups were planning to celebrate the defeat of conscription by organising rival rallies. To assume the mantle of the anti-conscriptionist tradition was the mutually exclusive aim of both factions.

The Labor Council formally endorsed the idea of holding a commemorative ceremony after a resolution favouring such a move was submitted by the ARU on 10 September. At the instigation of Ted Barker a special committee was set up to look after the details. The intention was 'to revive the militant anti-war spirit of the hectic days of 1916 in Australia as a means of intensifying the present struggle against the forces making for war and Fascism'. Consistent with this united front approach, the committee, it was hoped, would actively co-operate with 'all working class organisations in the State' in publicising the anniversary.

67. WV, 16 October 1936, p.1.
68. SMH, 6 October 1936, p.11.
69. TLC Minutes, 10 September 1936; CC, 19 September 1936, p.2, 26 September 1936, p.6; WW, 15 September 1936, p.4.
In the six weeks or so leading up to the anniversary the industrial militants strove to tighten the connection between united front politics and anti-conscriptionist sentiment. The Communist Party acted as their ideological vanguard in this exercise. A series of anti-conscriptionist editorials appeared in the *Workers' Weekly*, which sought to further rekindle the excitement of the war years by featuring left-wing propaganda from the period. Likewise the October issue of the *Communist Review* was entirely devoted to the question of conscription. Articles highlighting the work of some notable anti-conscription campaigners - Henry Boote, Arthur Rae, Ernie Lane, Percy Laidler - appeared alongside official party commentaries prepared by the exegetes Reg Dixon and J.B. Miles. Jim Rawling contributed some further historical material while Lloyd and Edgar Ross published an article in which their father's contribution to the success of the anti-conscription campaign was evaluated. The two men also made sure that the anniversary was well publicised in *Railroad* and *Common Cause*.

The Communist Party's bold attempt to commandeer the anti-conscriptionist tradition was highly contentious. In point of fact it was the isolationists of the Labor Party, comprising such VSP alumni as John Curtin and Don Cameron, who had the strongest claim on the anti-conscriptionist tradition. Certainly no single group had a monopoly of virtue. Even the despised UAP, because of Joe Lyons's
presence, was dominated by anti-conscriptionist attitudes.\textsuperscript{70} The UAP's lack of conscriptionist fervour demonstrated the extent to which anti-militaristic rhetoric served as a cloak for labour factionalism, with the Communist Party's attempt to act as the protector of the traditions of 1916 being open to challenge from all quarters.

Undoubtedly the shrillest of the Communist Party's anti-conscriptionist critics was the former suffragette and VSP activist, Adela Pankhurst Walsh, who along with her husband Tom had swung sharply to the right in 1929 following the latter's defeat in a factional struggle in the Seamen's Union. Thereafter she acted as a bulwark of the Australian Women's Guild of Empire, specialising in anti-communist propaganda. Every opportunity was taken to expose the forces of subversion, with Lloyd Ross and the ARU naturally being put into this category.\textsuperscript{71} Acting in this spirit Mrs Pankhurst Walsh, in July 1936, agreed to take part in a radio debate with Lloyd Ross, the topic being the recent banning of the left-wing American play, \textit{Till the Day I Die}.\textsuperscript{72} A few weeks later, after reading Lloyd and Edgar's article on their father in the \textit{Communist Review}, she drafted a letter to the editor attacking the two men for daring to trade on the good name of Bob Ross and the VSP. 'I cannot comprehend', she

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{71} Empire Gazette, 28 February 1934, pp.10-11, 31 October 1935, pp.4-5.
\item \textsuperscript{72} WW, 28 July 1936, p.1, 4 August 1936, p.1.
\end{itemize}
wrote, 'how a party which proposed intervention in the Abyssinian war and is urging that British and French armies should take part in the civil war in Spain can claim the support of pacifists'.

On the actual night of the anniversary (28 October) factionalism was well to the fore. An official ALP anti-conscription rally was held at the Paddington Town Hall with the pro-Lang forces being in full control. Apart from the 'Big Fella' himself, the only speakers invited along were the Victorian import Frank Brennan and Jack Beasley, who was too young to have played any notable part in the stirring events of 1916. Lang used the occasion to denounce his trade union opponents as agents of the Soviet Union. Like the conscriptionists of 1916, the industrial militants were all too willing to subordinate Australia's interests to those of a foreign power.

Even as Lang was speaking the rival anti-conscription rally organised by the Labor Council was in full swing. The mood at this second meeting was emphatically left wing. The most noteworthy of the speakers was J.B. King, an IWW veteran who had recently returned from the Soviet Union, where he had become an exemplary Communist. Sitting alongside him on the platform were five other ex-IWW luminaries, two of whom (Bob

73. Thomas Walsh and Adela Pankhurst Papers, NLA MS 2123, Folder 18.
74. LD, 29 October 1936, pp.1,4.
Besant and Charlie Reeve) joined King in addressing the meeting. Other speeches were given by Mrs N. Rickie of Victoria, Harry Scott Bennett, Lloyd Ross, Arthur Rae, Reg Dixon of the CPA and Bob King of the Labor Council. A message of solidarity from Henry Boote was also read out. 'Reminiscences of the anti-conscription campaign, discussions on the present-day problems confronting Australian democracy, and the urgent need of creating a strong united labor movement were the central points of the ... addresses'.

On the following Sunday afternoon an anti-conscription rally was held in the Domain. The 10,000 demonstrators who turned up were addressed by a succession of speakers: Bob King, J.F. O'Reilly of the Hairdressers' Union, Henry Boote, Donald Grant, Arthur Rae, Charlie Reeve, Lloyd Ross, J.B. King, Reg Dixon and Jock Garden. In his address to the faithful Bob King alleged that the Labor Daily had tried to sabotage the demonstration by refusing to print any reference to the day's activities. The Inner Group's divisive tactics were completely disgraceful. 'It was', King noted, 'only the united efforts of those opposing conscription during the war which enabled victory to be achieved'. In line with the spirit of 1916 Lloyd Ross was introduced to the rally as the son of the great Bob Ross. The labour movement's noble traditions, it was clear, were well and truly alive.

75. WW, 30 October 1936, p.1, 3 November 1936, p.3; SMH, 2 November 1936, p.11.
76. WW, 3 November 1936, pp.1,3.
There were hardly any gaps in Lloyd Ross's busy schedule. Within a matter of days he enjoyed a further opportunity to express his fondness for working-class anniversaries. On 7 November the international celebration of the anniversary of the Russian revolution came round. The festivities in Sydney centred on a performance by the ARU Drama Group of the WEA students' Lenin play.\textsuperscript{77} There was another performance of the play a week later at the ARU Hall in Newcastle.\textsuperscript{78}

The Lenin play was the ARU Drama Group's swansong. At the end of 1936 a scheme was agreed to whereby the drama clubs of the ARU and FSU amalgamated with the North Sydney Educational Players to form the Australian Society of Drama.\textsuperscript{79} Its name notwithstanding, the new organisation did not specialise in theatrical activities. It operated more along the lines of an all-purpose left-wing cultural society, arranging lectures, socials and film screenings as well as staging the occasional play. In the winter of 1937 Lloyd Ross was responsible for a production by the society of the left-wing play \textit{Florisdorf}, which dealt with the suppression of the workers of Vienna in 1934.\textsuperscript{80} Thereafter the Australian Society of Drama quickly faded into oblivion. Lloyd Ross's vision of an emerging proletarian theatre was

\textsuperscript{77} Railroad, 27 October 1936, p.2; WW, 6 November 1936, p.4.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 10 November 1936, p.1; NMH, 16 November 1936, p.3.
\textsuperscript{79} WW, 29 January 1937, p.4.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 25 June 1937, p.4.
speedily crowded out as new and more immediate issues—notably Spain and the revolt against the Inner Group—gained momentum. Moreover following the formation (in January 1936) of the New Theatre League a specialised group now catered for the demand for left-wing theatre. Lloyd Ross, as a result, no longer needed to involve himself so heavily in this form of activity.

From another perspective, however, it is obvious that Lloyd Ross's dramatic bent was bound to remain as strong as ever. The only real change that was likely to occur related to the way this propensity was expressed. The unfolding propaganda battle against Lang proved decisive in this regard. By June 1936 the Labor Council had consolidated its hold over radio station 2KY and Lloyd Ross was installed on the council's wireless committee. Increasingly he saw radio rather than the theatre as the means to dramatise labour's message. A far larger audience could be reached more quickly and at less cost.

Beginning in the winter of 1936, Lloyd Ross gained increasing prominence as a 2KY broadcaster and script writer as well as being involved in administrative matters. On 28 July a radio play dealing with the Labor Council went to air81 and in August he commenced a weekly news commentary session.82 Late in September he wrote the script for a

82. Ibid., 11 August 1936, p.4.
programme commemorating the eight-hour day movement.83 Thereafter historical material loomed large in his broadcasting activities. Relying on the resources of the 2KY Players, he succeeded, over the following twelve months, in putting together a trio of weekly radio serials. Entitled respectively 'The Heroes of Labor', 'May Day Through the Ages' and 'Labor Marches On', these serials were in effect the radio equivalent of his earlier working-class chronicles.84 Among the historical figures to appear were Blanqui, Thomas Muir, the Chartist poet Ernest Jones and the unionist Ben Tillett.85 An excellent broadcaster in his own right, Lloyd Ross in time became recognised as a left-wing radio celebrity. His fame was sealed after he began broadcasting a weekly literary programme designed for women listeners.86

By late 1936, given the range of propaganda outlets at its command, the left's antiquarian fervour was easily discernible. In particular the revived cult of Eureka was in full swing. Lloyd Ross's speech at the Sydney anti-conscription rally concluded with the following invocation: 'We must continue and increase these celebrations and demonstrations - next month there is another

83. Ibid., 22 September 1936, p.1.
85. The scripts of the programmes concerned are in NLA MS 3939, Box 25.
86. Radio Pictorial, 1 May 1937, p.16; Australian, 11 February 1965, p.10; TRC 236, 2:1/30.
great victory of the Australian workers to be commemorated, the Eureka Stockade'. 87 Early in December the sacred anniversary was duly commemorated in the pages of Railroad. Two pro-Eureka poems by Henry Lawson were featured, along with an extract from Eureka Freedom's Fight of '54. 'The Diggers of Ballarat', Lloyd Ross editorialised, 'fought for mixed motives and under confused leaders, but the course of history has purified their motives and united their leaders'. 88

With his historical fervour unabated, Lloyd Ross inevitably remained a prey to literary ambitions. Apart from the growing list of unacted plays he had on hand - a play dealing with Eureka89 followed hard on the heels of The Masses in Motion - there was still the question of what to do with his two major unpublished historical works. In the case of his doctoral thesis events had largely decided the issue. As a busy union secretary Lloyd Ross did not have enough free time at his disposal to be able to undertake the laborious task of converting the thesis into a publishable manuscript. 90 Students of Australian labour history who had read the work admired it greatly - in March 1937 Esmonde Higgins informed Nettie Palmer that 'Lloyd Ross's thesis & Rawling's articles' together embodied the best research on the subject91 - but publication was out of the question.

87. WW, 3 November 1936, p.3.
89. Two copies of which are in NLA MS 3939, Box 23.
90. Lloyd Ross, conversation with author, 17 February 1986.
91. NLA MS 1174/1/5250.
The Lane book, being a smaller work, fared better. It was finally printed and published in 1937, although the initial obstacles of which Lloyd Ross had been so keenly aware were not mastered, but merely circumvented. The leading book publishers at this time tended to think twice before accepting manuscripts which dealt with Australian history and biography. Books on these subjects were not considered to be commercially viable. From mid-1935 onwards, in line with his original intention, Lloyd Ross bravely submitted the Lane manuscript to a number of commercial publishing houses, including the Labour Publishing Company in England and Angus and Robertson in Sydney. Invariably the only response he managed to elicit was a rejection slip.92

The impasse was finally resolved in the autumn of 1937, after Lloyd and Stina Ross decided to subsidise the publication of the manuscript using their combined personal savings. In an effort to cut costs the scholarly references that formed part of the manuscript were omitted in their entirety.93 In this truncated form copies of the book, modestly bearing the title William Lane and the Australian Labor Movement, were produced at the Forward Press, the Communist Party's printery in Sydney. Review copies were sent out but otherwise distribution arrangements were primitive. A year later the novelist Marjorie Barnard had to conduct an exhaustive search lasting ten days before she was

92. Lloyd Ross, conversation with author, 22 May 1984.
93. Ibid.
able to track down a copy of the book; it had to be obtained from the printer, whose premises were located in a back street in Surry Hills.94

The effort involved in getting hold of Lloyd Ross's book was more than adequately rewarded, however. His treatment of Lane easily managed to transcend the banal circumstances that accompanied the book's publication. William Lane and the Australian Labor Movement presented a vivid portrait of a genuine Australian labour hero. 'Our interest in Lane', Lloyd Ross informed his readers, 'is very much like that which we feel in the activities of the pioneers of exploration and discovery'.95 Lane's life as a socialist crusader bore all the hallmarks of an enthralling odyssey.

From the author's standpoint William Lane's contribution to early Australian socialism took on an added significance when viewed in relation to the renascent enthusiasm of labour's latest crop of radical activists - the post-Depression militants with whom he collaborated on a daily basis. Any parallels that might exist needed to be fully explored. Lloyd Ross readily acknowledged that few of his comrades were aware that their crusading zeal had been prefigured by an earlier generation of socialists. Lane had long since been relegated to oblivion. His idealism could

94. NLA MS 1174/1/5415-6, Marjorie Barnard to Nettie Palmer, 7 August 1938.
95. William Lane, pp.80-81.
hardly be expected to set off reverberations among the tired cynics who comprised the established leadership of the labour movement while for their part the trade union militants, to whom his energy and enthusiasm ought to appeal, regarded him as irrelevant because they had no faith whatsoever in the degenerate offspring of his crusading zeal, the ALP and the AWU.  But Lloyd Ross was out to prove that, despite outward appearances, the militants of his own day and the socialists of the 1890s had much in common. Both groups sought to break the spell of entrenched ideas and institutions - which by the mid-1930s included the doctrines and practices of the Australian Labor Party. The militants were imbued with the same fierce sense of comradeship that animated the writers and journalists of the 1890s, as exemplified by Henry Lawson - 'the poet of thwarted democracy' - and William Lane, who unionised the men who appeared in Lawson's poems and stories. The activists of the 1930s were breathing new life into a noble tradition. Lane's selflessness was sure to become a living force again given the strength of their determination to restore the labour movement's integrity. 'Lane lives in the ideals that he later repudiated, and in the people's movement that he lived to disown'.

In the immediate term the militants' undoubted ignorance of their socialist heritage was simply unforgive-

96. Ibid., pp.356-357, 365-366.
97. Ibid., pp.3, 5, 18, 20-21, 366.
able. 'A social movement to be great must have some link with the past, some hero or leader from whom it can draw renewed hope and inspiration'.98 William Lane was just such a hero. Lloyd Ross regarded him as 'the most outstanding figure in the history of the Australian Labor movement'.99 His career repaid close study because it showed what happened when industrial struggle and ideological enthusiasm were fused and then divorced. 'Like Lenin, Lane realised that theory was incomplete without practice'.100 Confronted with the clash between labour and capital, Lane gave up a highly-paid career as a newspaper columnist to become the first editor of the Worker.101 Relying on nothing more substantial than the power of his personality, he was able to exert enormous influence on the labour movement in Queensland. 'One man living in the city was able to link the energy of the bushman with the plans of the intellectuals so that for a while nobody could resist their pressure'.102 There was no need for Lane to create a Lang-style political machine to enforce his will. He wrote and spoke at a time when pro-labour zealots did not have to contend with the philistinism that set in once the trade union movement became an established force in the land.103 Hundreds of men and women eagerly responded when Lane finally

98. Ibid., p.364.  
99. Ibid., pp.249-250.  
100. Ibid., p.360.  
101. Ibid., pp.77-78, 94-95.  
102. Ibid., pp.48, 103, 107-108.  
declared that the time had come to establish a model community in distant Paraguay.

Disillusionment soon followed. 'Capitalism, with its cycle of comfort and restrictions, was more attractive than the ruthless pressure of the forest in Cosme'.104 Lane's socialist colony was a dismal failure and the man who inspired it felt compelled to end his connection with the labour movement. In the years that followed he took up the unheroic life of an Auckland journalist. His despondency lasted until war broke out in 1914 whereupon he became a fervent pro-war propagandist. He died in 1917, in the camp of the enemy.105

For Lloyd Ross, Lane's startling metamorphosis in no way detracted from his standing as an exemplary figure in working-class history. The man was not just another W.M. Hughes. In abandoning the labour movement Lane was motivated by the same zeal that made him leave Australia for Paraguay in 1893. Intuitively he knew that all his energy and passion meant little to a trade union movement that had embraced the dreary cause of parliamentary socialism. 'He saw corruption among Labor politicians, bureaucratisation of his own unions, pandering to anti-Labor interests, repudiation of Socialism, the supremacy of gambling interests, apathy of the rank-and-file, vested interests among all groups'.106 Lane the

104. Ibid., p.293.
105. Ibid., pp.340, 347.
socialist prophet looked on broken-hearted as Labor gradually succumbed to the same spirit of reformism that confronted the militants of the 1930s. By drawing inspiration from the heroic period in Lane's life - and taking heed of his subsequent downfall - the militants would be strengthened in their determination to redeem the labour movement. They needed to revere Lane, despite his being a utopian, a racist and a jingoist.

Lloyd Ross's bold attempt to restate Lane's importance could hardly be ignored by the critics and commentators. In a review in the Sydney Morning Herald his book was described as 'reasonably impartial on a theme which lends itself to partisanship and even to bitterness'. Lloyd Ross's abiding interest in Lane and utopian socialism had become the subject of barbed comments from his ideological opponents. The right-wing convert Tom Walsh considered Lloyd Ross's endless talk about 'the heroes of labour' to be sheer humbug. 'Mr. Lloyd Ross, who writes with the cocksure ease of the youthful bookworm, is the successor of a long line of superior people whose "plans" have become historical debris, sometimes soaked with human blood.' His spiritual forbears - Owen, Lane, Bellamy, Blatchford - had helped to pave the way for the mad excesses of Joseph Stalin.

108. NLA MS 2123, Folder 21, Thomas Walsh, 'Planning' (dated 26 January 1936).
Following the actual publication of the Lane book Walsh's point was taken up by that other ex-leftist, P.R. Stephensen, who reviewed the book for the nationalist journal Publicist. Stephensen ridiculed the author's brave attempt to immortalise 'that fantasy-thinker, escapologist, Bellamyite, idealistic, pommy new Moses named William Lane'. The left-wing tradition that the author had uncovered was hardly inspiring. Lane's vision of a South American paradise foreshadowed the demoralisation of Australian radicalism in the years since the Russian revolution. Ever since its formation the Communist Party had refused to face up to the realities of the Australian political and economic scene, preferring instead to indulge in wild fantasies centring on a distant Soviet utopia.109

The irritation felt by Stephensen in relation to Lane's incurable utopianism, and Lloyd Ross's treatment of the issue, was expressed, albeit more mutedly, by a Victorian Communist reviewer as well.110 Generally speaking, though, the left was unstinting in its praise. The book was hailed as a valuable initiative in the struggle for ideological mastery being waged within the labour movement. The tone was set by Edgar Ross, who considered that his brother had made 'an important contribution not only to the bookshelves of Australian history but to current political controversy'.111

109. Publicist, 1 July 1937, pp.11-12.
110. WV, 12 June 1937, p.4 (L. Barnes).
111. CC, 21 August 1937, p.2.
Right-wing Labor men likewise agreed that the book was a tract for the times, although they could hardly accept its anti-reformist message. Speaking for the Queensland AWU, the Worker indignantly denied the charge that the labour movement had quickly gone astray once Lane ceased to take an active interest in its affairs. 'William Lane', the paper observed, 'is still revered in Queensland; the principles he laid down are faithfully adhered to'.112 These remarks in turn provoked a rejoinder from Ernie Lane, who unlike his brother had never lost his socialist faith. Writing in the Communist Review, Ernie insisted that his brother's name was 'almost unknown to the new generation'. Workers would be well advised to read Lloyd Ross's book because it helped to expose 'the hollow pretence of so-called Labor leaders of today'.113

The debate over the merits of Lloyd Ross's book coincided with the final phase of the militants' campaign to secure ACTU endorsement for the policy of collective security. Their success in this regard, as measured by the resolution of 23 July 1937, gave them an enhanced ideological standing. Lloyd Ross's close identification with the internationalist cause had been vindicated by the course of events. Henceforth, no matter what his critics might say, there was no disputing his importance as a shaper of mainstream labour opinion. Left-wing internationalism was

112. Worker, 8 June 1937, p.19.
clearly a force to be reckoned with. Isolationist sentiment was a declining force. The link between anti-communism and the sacred cause of anti-conscriptionism had been effectively severed.

Having secured the ultimate trade union imprimatur for their views, labour's internationalists necessarily appropriated the movement's distinctive rhetoric as well. The entire range of anti-conscriptionist and pro-Eureka imagery was at their disposal. By the end of 1937 the sixty or so Australian members of the International Brigade in Spain were being hailed as the spiritual heirs of the men who defended democracy at the Eureka Stockade.\textsuperscript{114} The waterside workers, once they emerged as the vanguard of trade union opposition to Japanese militarism, were portrayed in similar terms. Jim Healy was a good Eureka man,\textsuperscript{115} as was the wharfies' best-known sympathiser, Sir Isaac Isaacs.\textsuperscript{116}

The left's determination to harness the power of local historical imagery helped to further consolidate Lloyd Ross's position as a leading labour propagandist. He remained well to the fore when it came to invoking the authority of the past. Thus on 11 November 1937, with his anti-war sentiments no doubt enlivened by the special significance of the day, he secured the adoption of a

\textsuperscript{114} Railroad, 23 November 1937, p.1.
\textsuperscript{115} AW, 14 December 1938, p.14.
\textsuperscript{116} Sir Isaac Isaacs, Australian Democracy and Our Constitutional System, Melbourne, 1939, p.25.
resolution by the Labor Council whereby the imminence of the twentieth anniversary of the 1917 conscription referendum was noted and the continued relevance of the anti-conscriptionist tradition reaffirmed. 117

There could be no excuse for ignoring labour's sacred heritage. Early in December, in his by now annual Eureka Day message to Railroad readers, Lloyd Ross restated his faith in the importance of working-class anniversaries. Among other things he alluded to his father's role in helping to organise Broken Hill's Eureka jubilee of 1904. By way of contrast, he added, the modern Labor politician tended to be suspicious of organised working-class celebrations because Communists were likely to be involved. Such an attitude was highly regrettable. 118

Lloyd Ross was comforted by the knowledge that his fellow leftists were unlikely to be deterred by the Labor Party's attitude. By late 1937 their antiquarian zeal had never been higher. A major public display of historical fervour on their part was about to get underway. 1938 was Sydney's sesquicentennial year. An elaborate round of commemorative ceremonies had been organised to mark the occasion. The Communist Party and its trade union allies had no intention of ignoring the ballyhoo. An appropriate reply was planned. In this regard a clear precedent existed. The

Victorian centenary celebrations of 1934 had been loudly denounced by local radicals as a crude attempt to infect the community with a strong dose of right-wing patriotism.\textsuperscript{119} From the outset their Sydney counterparts regarded the 'sesqui' in a similar light. The challenge could not go unanswered. By way of response the trade union militants of New South Wales intended to mount a full-scale alternative festival - 'Labor's Own Sesqui' in point of fact.

The official round of 'sesqui' celebrations was, without doubt, riddled with ideological flaws when seen from a left-wing point of view. The festivities commenced on Australia Day, when a gigantic historical pageant ('The March to Nationhood') was staged, and continued past the Easter holidays (when an equally enormous 'March of Commerce and Industry' took place), with the final event being the annual Anzac Day ceremony. Over a period of some 89 days every conceivable tribute was paid to the British colonisers of Sydney. In the words of the American observer C. Hartley Grattan, 'Australia's Britishness [was] Australia's proudest boast'.\textsuperscript{120} The cultivation of pro-Empire sentiment was given top priority by the civic dignitaries, big retailers and UAP politicians who determined the tone of the celebrations. Honouring the exploits and achievements of Arthur Phillip, Lachlan Macquarie and John and Elizabeth

\textsuperscript{119.} Joyce Manton, \textit{The Centenary Prepares War}, Melbourne, [1934].
Macarthur gave them free rein to indulge in a hymn of praise for the 'great Imperial design' into which Australia fitted.  

Pride in the nation's progress spilled over into a feeling of gratitude for 'the British genius for colonisation'.

The official version of events since 1788, as presented in the March to Nationhood, overlooked the existence of any unruly, disreputable or embarrassing elements in Australian history. The aborigines, the convicts, the Eureka rebels, labour agitators and the unemployed were either ignored or treated as harmless oddities.

Besides being ideologically unsound the sesqui was enormously popular - the March to Nationhood was witnessed by some 750,000 persons so that it stood doubly condemned in the eyes of that self-appointed guardian of the people, the Communist Party. As soon as the forthcoming 'sesqui' programme was announced the party's ideologues sprang into action, using the vocabulary pioneered in Victoria in 1934. The anniversary celebrations were clearly intended to boost the popularity of the British Empire in Australia, with imperialist sentiment and pro-war hysteria going hand in hand. The anti-war movement planned to reinforce this


122. B.S.B. Stevens, 'Foreword' (dated 16 October 1937), 150 Years in Australia Official Souvenir Programme for the National Celebrations to be held from Jan 26 to Apr 25 1938, Sydney, 1937.

123. DT, 27 January 1938, p.9.
association of ideas by means of a concerted propaganda campaign.

The decision to launch a 'counter-sesqui' was formally announced at a meeting of MAWAF's national council in April 1937. As a first step the indefatigable Jim Rawling set out to highlight 'the important developments in Australia's history from the standpoint of freedom, democracy and Australian independence' by means of a series of public lectures and articles in the party press. Moreover he agreed to publish a history of the Australian people since 1788 written from the same perspective. The full support of the party was readily forthcoming. The Workers' Weekly entered the fray in August 1937; during the following five months it published a series of 'anti-sesqui' commentaries and editorials, along with countless documents and articles relating to early Australian history. The CPA was convinced that, as with the Victorian centenary, 'the subjects of the present celebrations are as inadequate as their declared purpose is false and the manner of their performance is mercenary and militaristic'. What was needed instead was the intervention of the 'working and democratic masses' in order to ensure that in commemorating 1788 pride of place was given to the nation's real founders - the toiling masses of Australia.

124. CC, 17 April 1937, p.7.
125. WW, 4 June 1937, p.3.
In due course 'anti-sesqui' enthusiasm spread from the Communist Party to the left-wing unions, not least of all the ARU. It could hardly have been otherwise. The ARU's well-known anti-fascist and anti-capitalist stance obviously ran counter to the official 'sesqui' view of Australian history, with its emphasis on the nation's unimpeded progress towards domestic harmony and prosperity. Lloyd Ross's own long-term involvement in working-class historical activities effectively ensured that opposition from the union would be readily forthcoming. There certainly was no question of its point of view being reflected in the March to Nationhood and the accompanying ballyhoo. The ideological gulf was amply demonstrated on the eve of Australia Day in 1938 when the Sydney Morning Herald put out a special sesquicentenary supplement. Being an undoubted authority on the subject, Lloyd Ross was invited to contribute an article on Australian trade unionism. In the form in which it was allowed to be published, however, the article was decidedly innocuous. It focussed on the unionism of the pre-1890 era, when widespread prosperity produced a climate favourable to piecemeal reform and social harmony. The depression years of the 1890s, the formation and corruption of the Labor Party, the emergence of socialist ideas and the anti-conscription movement, although referred to in passing, were not discussed in any detail. The Depression of the 1930s did not even rate a mention.128 If the ARU militants wanted these aspects of Australian

Within his own journalistic domain, as editor of Railroad, Lloyd Ross was able to escape the inhibitions of the capitalist press. In approaching the task ahead he was no doubt heartened by the knowledge that, in the trade union sphere, others shared his zeal. Already in the pages of Common Cause his brother Edgar had pointed to deficiencies in the orthodox Australia Day version of events since 1788. By late 1937 'anti-sesqui' ideas were being vigorously promoted in both journals. Late in November, in a Eureka Day message, Edgar suggested that the hallowed memory of Peter Lalor and his Ballarat comrades needed to be refurbished so as to counteract the 'jingoistic pageantry' that was about to be unleashed by the 'sesqui' organisers. A similar pronouncement was forthcoming from the ARU. Writing in Railroad on 14 December, Lloyd Ross called on his readers to become involved, albeit on their own terms, in the anniversary celebrations. A strictly working-class and left-wing view of the 'sesqui' had to be presented at all times: 'we celebrate not the Governor but the convict governed; not the English statesman, but transported workers; not the English gentry but the Australian masses who developed the continent'. The 'sesqui' provided the labour movement with an unrivalled opportunity to draw

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129. CC, 16 January 1937, p.5.
130. Ibid., 27 November 1937, p.1.
attention to Australia's stormy progress from convictism to capitalism.131

As a result of Lloyd Ross's involvement the effectiveness of the left's 'anti-sesqui' campaign was greatly enhanced. Hitherto Sydney's left-wing propagandists, while having consistently adopted a firm 'anti-sesqui' stance, had contributed to a chorus of criticism that would have been heard in any event. It was hard to avoid noticing the 'sesqui's' highly selective view of Australian history. At times the rumblings of dissent brought about by this situation could not be contained. In the spring of 1937 the Sydney Morning Herald joined the Workers' Weekly in criticising an official decision (later modified) to rigorously exclude all references to the convict era from the March to Nationhood;132 in like manner P.R. Stephensen joined the left-wing Labor Council spokesman Tom Wright in condemning the action of the organisers in wilfully ignoring the plight of the Australian aborigine.133 Against this background Sydney's leftists needed to make a determined effort if they wished to be seen taking the initiative in the somewhat crowded field of 'anti-sesqui' agitation. It was not enough merely for historical lectures to be given and for learned commentaries to be featured in the Communist Party press. A message so conveyed would be ignored by everyone except the party faithful. This was where the left-wing

132. SMH, 9 October 1937, p.16; WW 17 September 1937, p.2.
unions came into their own. They alone were capable of converting 'anti-sesqui' ideas into a series of public events. Their involvement was crucial.

The decisive move in this regard occurred during the second week of 1938, with Lloyd Ross acting as the catalyst. At a meeting of the Labor Council held on 13 January he proceeded to call upon the delegates to officially condemn the 'sesqui'. His indictment took the form of a lengthy resolution which detailed the 'sesqui's' deficiencies when judged from the standpoint of working-class internationalism. The resolution began as follows:

That, in connection with the 150th Anniversary Celebrations, this meeting of the Trades and Labor Council of Sydney declares that all which is best in Australian history and traditions has been the product of the activity of democrats and the working class - that at every stage in our history the people have been opposed by the propertied classes - by the imperialists in the demand for self-government; by the squatters in the agitation of the people for the cessation of transportation; by the employers in the demands for a shorter working week - and so on. The Trade Union Movement is as loyal to the history of Australia as any other section of the community - but we are loyal to the masses and not to the exploiters.

We believe that the present sesqui-celebrations are being used to develop an incorrect view and an anti-working-class view of Australian history and of Australian loyalty. We see in the celebrations the preparation of the Australian people for imperialistic war, as well as attempts to boost the Stevens [UAP] Government, and also preparations to use patriotism in the interests of Fascist legislation and policies.

The need for independent pro-labour 'sesqui' activities was then set out:
We seize the opportunity to draw the attention of the Government and the people to the tragic position of the aboriginals, and declare that immediate attention must be given to their needs. We demand that the perversion of history in the celebrations should cease and a correct view be given of the treatment of the aboriginals, the place of the convict, and the role of the masses. We appeal to the Trade Unions to feature working-class history and analysis in their journals and meetings.134

In speaking to the resolution Lloyd Ross underlined the importance of developing a coherent 'anti-sesqui' outlook. 'It was a responsibility of Labor to see if it could not build up an alternative psychology to that which would be fostered by the Governments, employers and Imperialists'. The 'sesqui' ignored Eureka and the conscription referenda, preferring instead to glorify an odd assortment of squatters, mineowners and colonial governors. The organisers clearly hoped to infect the nation's youth with a strong dose of pro-capitalist ideology.135

These comments from Lloyd Ross led to a rather desultory debate after which the delegates voted to endorse his resolution. It was accepted that the Labor Council's annual May Day demonstration formed the obvious setting for any pro-labour 'sesqui' activities. In the preceding week the nation would be called upon to honour the men of Anzac. In past years the proximity of Anzac Day and May Day had proved a boon to left-wing agitators; it was possible to reply to

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the anti-class war doctrines put forward on 25 April within a matter of a week or so. In 1938, with Anzac Day forming part of the 'sesqui', the customary juxtaposition took on an even greater significance.

The Labor Council's decision was duly highlighted in both Railroad and Common Cause, with the latter publication also giving prominence to a similar resolution adopted by the THC in Newcastle. Lloyd and Edgar Ross clearly intended to do their utmost to publicise the 'anti-sesqui' case. In response to the March to Nationhood there was a flurry of 'working-class history and analysis' in both their journals. The first issue of Railroad to appear after 26 January contained an eight-page 'sesqui' supplement in which there were references to Eureka, Rothbury, the aborigines and the shearers' strike of 1891. In the same spirit Common Cause roundly condemned the March to Nationhood. The whole event was seen as a 'tawdry display of artificial sentiment and superficial jingoism'.

Given that it bore hardly any relationship to historical reality, the March to Nationhood was undoubtedly an easy target to aim at. Yet the alternative that was being offered by the left, the May Day demonstration, was still some three months away. Throughout this period the official

137. CC, 22 January 1938, p.2.
138. Railroad, 1 February 1938, pp.3-10.
139. CC, 5 February 1938, p.4.
'sesqui' would continue to run its course. The 'anti-sesqui' organisers needed to come up with a matching series of attractions in order to capitalise on January's upsurge of left-wing comment. In the event action along these lines was forthcoming. MAWAF set the pace, with a national anti-war congress being scheduled for the forthcoming Easter break. The endless display of sesqui-style patriotism would not go unanswered.

Other united front organisations were equally helpful. The third week of February was designated by the Spanish Relief Committee as 'Spain Week'. The intention was to commemorate the second anniversary of the election of Spain's Popular Front government. The week's activities got underway on 13 February, when a demonstration was held in the Domain. In the evening Lloyd Ross delivered a lecture on the latest situation in Spain. For the next four nights films depicting the civil war were screened at the Railway and Tramway Institute. On 19 February a special conference was held at which a number of speakers referred to the good work being done by the Spanish Relief Committee. Lloyd Ross delivered a passionate anti-fascist oration which he proceeded to top off by reciting a poem written by Langston Hughes.

140. WW, 4 January 1938, p.2.
141. Ibid., 8 February 1938, p.1, 11 February 1938, p.4, 22 February 1938, p.4.
By the end of February preparations for the forthcoming May Day demonstration were well in hand. As in previous years, a special committee of the Labor Council was entrusted with the details. In line with the resolution of 13 January, the main task facing the committee was to ensure that an appropriately historical flavour was given to the day's events. On 3 March, when it reported back to the full council for the first time, the committee emphasised its efforts in this regard. 'A special appeal was being made to the Unions to arrange floats presenting some phase of Australian Labor development, such as the Eureka Stockade, the early strikes, the anti-conscription campaigns etc.' In a second report a few weeks later further progress was noted. It was now envisaged that ten historical tableaux would be featured in the May Day demonstration at an estimated cost of £100. An appeal for funds was already underway. The New Theatre League was willing to supply the necessary sets and costumes and a publicity campaign was being arranged in the form of a series of talks over 2KY.

In a further bid to promote the 'anti-sesqui' cause, the Labor Council decided to organise a special conference on the eve of the May Day demonstration involving trade union delegates from throughout New South Wales. Ideological

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143. Ibid., 6 April 1938, p.14.
144. Railroad, 5 July 1938, p.10; AW, 16 March 1938, p.14; WW, 1 April 1938, p.1.
fervour was to be the order of the day. It fell to Tom Wright to stress the conference's direct relevance to the growing 'anti-sesqui'movement. It was intended, he told the Labor Council, 'that the conference should review trade union development in Australia as a counter-blast to the presentation of history from the point of view of the ruling class - which was the keynote of the official sesqui-centenary celebrations'.

During April the various anti-war organisations got into the act. Apart from MAWAF, there was the International Peace Campaign to be reckoned with. MAWAF's national congress was preceded by an IPC women's anti-sesqui conference which ran for five days beginning on 5 April. Some 150 delegates attended and the keynote address was given by Jessie Street.

A week later, on 16 April, MAWAF's Easter congress duly got underway. There were no imported 'stars' present since the 'sesqui', unlike the Victorian centenary, lacked royal patronage: Egon Kisch was the anti-war movement's answer to the Duke of Gloucester. The main speeches were prepared by the local identities Lloyd Ross, Bill Gollan, Jim Rawling and Len Fox. Assistance also was forthcoming

146. WW, 12 April 1938, p.4.
147. LD, 7 April 1938, pp. 4,5,7, 8 April 1938, p.8, 9 April 1938, p.8, 11 April 1938, p.9; SMH 7 April 1938, p.9; WW, 8 April 1938, p.4, 12 April 1938, p.4; World Peace, May 1938, p.80.
148. ABL, N57/468, Minutes of Fourth All-Australian Congress Against War and Fascism. See also Century, 26 August 1949, p.5.
from the New Theatre League which put on two plays - Remember Pedro Cito and Eureka - for the edification of the delegates. Remember Pedro Cito was a left-wing Spanish play while Eureka (which was written by Diana Reeve) was the first play featuring an episode from Australian history to be performed by the troupe.149

From the moment the congress opened, 'anti-sesqui' feeling was well to the fore. As national president Lloyd Ross was called upon to give the keynote address. He proceeded to present the delegates with a synoptic view of Australian history since 1788. His speech touched upon 'the first settlements, the growth of the pastoral industries, exploration, the discovery of gold, the starting of large-scale industries, with their parallel development of the exploitation of the masses and the gradual concentration of economic power into the hands of small groups of finance-capital'. Only after the dynamics of Australia's development as a class society were understood, he argued, could 'the struggle for ever-widening liberty, democracy and peace' be seen in its true light. Internationalist attitudes had a long history in Australia, starting with the early trade unions and later surfacing at Eureka and during the agitation against the Boer War and the struggle over conscription. The delegates upheld a noble tradition. By way of conclusion

Lloyd Ross stressed 'the necessity for them to carry on along similar lines, but to adapt their policy and slogans to the ever-changing situation'.

The anti-war movement was suffused with antiquarian zeal. Originally the MAWAF organisers had hoped to stage a full-scale historical exhibition at the same time as the Easter congress. The intention was to come up with a left-wing alternative to the official historical exhibition being sponsored by the 'sesqui' authorities. The idea was not followed through, but the delegates were still able to find other ways of expressing their historical fervour. Their pro-Eureka enthusiasm was irrepressible. During the course of the congress they resolved that there should be an official anti-war badge consisting of the Southern Cross on a blue background. In a related move the national executive of MAWAF was asked to consider the desirability of coming up with a new name for the anti-war movement. It was felt that the existing name failed to adequately convey the anti-war movement's growing enthusiasm for Australia's democratic traditions. By mid-1938 the desired change had been effected. MAWAF was replaced by the League for Peace and Democracy. Apart from the new name, however, the organisation remained the same. Like its predecessor, the

150. CC, 23 April 1938, p.8.
151. WW, 7 December 1937, p.14; CC, 2 April 1938, p.8; WV, 6 April 1938, p.3.
152. World Peace, May 1938, p.69.
153. Ibid.
LPD enjoyed no independent existence, being firmly under the control of the Communist Party. Certainly in terms of personnel no attempt was made to disguise the basic continuity. Lloyd Ross agreed to stay on as the nominal head of the LPD while the administrative and research burden was taken up by his MAWAF associate Jim Rawling.

MAWAF's Easter congress served as a fitting prelude to the final phase of the 'anti-sesqui' campaign. On 21 April the May Day committee was able to inform the Labor Council that its work was 'practically finalised'. The task of preparing the array of tableaux was almost complete. Every effort was being made to drum up support among rank-and-file unionists. A circular setting out the importance of the demonstration had been sent out to shop stewards and workshop committees. The committee also hoped to distribute some 20,000 copies of a May Day poem written by Henry Boote. It was readily acknowledged that in certain quarters there was a distinct lack of enthusiasm for the forthcoming festivities. The state branch of the ALP had been officially invited to participate in the day's events, but so far no reply had been received. The Langites had boycotted the previous year's May Day demonstration; apparently their attitude had not changed.

155. WW, 19 April 1938, p.4.
157. Ibid.
On 30 April the Labor Council's special trade union conference went ahead according to plan. Some forty trade unions and assorted provincial councils were represented. As at the MAWAF conference a fortnight earlier the proceedings began with Lloyd Ross delivering an 'anti-sesqui' oration. The past and the present remained locked together. 'Mr. Ross', it was reported, 'stated that after the strike struggles of the 90's, the Labor Movement decided to implement its struggle by political action. That same political action was needed urgently to-day, but had to be based on unity and a strong united trade union movement'.158 The issues discussed at the conference included workers' compensation, the 40-hour week and national insurance,159 but as anticipated labour's high-flying orators proceeded to canvass broad ideological topics as well. In a debate on the government's defence policy Lloyd Ross vigorously reasserted the need for international unity in the face of fascist aggression. 'We must', he said, 'discriminate between wars for the workers and wars for the capitalists. We cannot oppose all wars. We must support some wars. We must support the Spanish workers and the Chinese workers. Their fight is our fight.'160

On the following day, Sunday, 1 May, 'Labor's Own Sesqui' came to a triumphant conclusion. At 2.00pm

158. LD, 2 May 1938, p.1.
159. AW, 4 May 1938, pp.18-19.
160. SMH, 2 May 1938, p.11.
participants in the Labor Council's May Day demonstration began to march up George Street after assembling near the city markets. Over half a mile long, the procession was hailed by Henry Boote as 'one of the largest and most enthusiastic demonstrations ever held in Sydney'. Some twenty metropolitan unions were officially represented in the march, as were a variety of fraternal groups and organisations: anti-fascist migrants from Spain and Yugoslavia, unemployed workers, anti-Lang ALP activists, the Aborigines' Progressive Association, MAWAF (with the anti-war women being marshalled by Stina Ross), the ARU Women's Auxiliary, the Spanish Relief Committee, the CPA and the Young Communist League.

The May Day procession represented the left's definitive response to the political and historical solecisms of the official 'sesqui.' 'The procession was designed to illustrate important stages in the history of the Australian Labour movement and to warn people against the evils of Fascism and war.' In line with the original plan, the march was organised around a sequence of special 'anti-sesqui' tableaux. The first tableau had as its subject the transportation of the early convicts. A man in convict garb was tied to a tree after which he was subjected to a mock

161. AW, 4 May 1938, p.7.
162. LD, 29 April 1938, p.5, 2 May 1938, p.5; WW, 3 May 1938, p.1; ABL, N57/467, MAWAF National Executive Minutes, 29 April 1938.
163. SMH, 2 May 1938, p.15.
flogging. There was an appropriate inscription: 'He Tried to Form a Union'. In the next tableau the ghastly fate of the aborigines was highlighted. Elsewhere in the procession the story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs was re-enacted by members of the New Theatre League. The remaining tableaux covered a variety of issues and events. Eureka, the Spanish Civil War, the anti-conscription movement of 1916-17, the push for a 40-hour week and the war in China.164

The procession ended with the marchers filing into the Domain where they were addressed by a battery of speakers: Tom Wright, Abner McAlpine of the Labor Council, the left-wing ALP activist Bill Evans, Lloyd Ross, Eileen Powell, Jock Garden, E.A. Knight, Donald Grant and Bill Ferguson of the Aborigines' Progressive Association. 'The meeting, which was marked by sustained interest and enthusiasm, closed with the singing of the "International"'.165 At night, for those who wished to recharge their proletarian ardour, there was a New Theatre League production of the militants' old Tolpuddle favourite, Six Men of Dorset.166 When the curtain came down May Day - and with it 'Labor's Own Sesqui' - was at an end. All the effort involved in preparing the day's events had been amply rewarded. The May Day procession had provided, as a Communist Review commentator noted, 'an

164. AW, 4 May 1938, p.7; CC, 7 May 1938, p.5; LD, 30 April 1938, p.1, 2 May 1938, p.5; WW, 3 May 1938, pp.1,4.
165. Ibid., 3 May 1938, p.4.
166. Ibid., 29 April 1938, p.4.
excellent means of replying to the reactionary "historical" hodgepodge of the Sesqui organisers with a real presentation of the true history of Australia - the history of its people'.167 The spirit of the anti-sesqui resolution of 13 January 1938 had been well and truly fulfilled. Lloyd Ross, as the author of that resolution, had seen his faith in the practical importance of 'workingclass celebrations' triumphantly vindicated.

PART THREE

1939-1942

THE RAGE OF FACTIONALISM
Always a highly politicised event, 'Labor's Own Sesqui' was, by the time it drew to a close, barely distinguishable from the more explicitly factional activities of the Communist and left-wing majority which effectively controlled the Labor Council of New South Wales. With the falling out between Lang and the Labor Council the internal Labor political scene was thoroughly polarised. The pressure steadily mounted during the first half of 1938 with the Labor Council resolving on a decisive move against the Inner Group. The trade union activists who participated in the anti-sesqui pageant of 1 May 1938 were equally unstinting in their support for the renewed anti-Lang crusade. The two campaigns proceeded simultaneously with Lloyd Ross, as a leading militant, being equally active on the factional as well as the ideological front.

The factional situation in New South Wales was indeed explosive. After having been curtailed in the autumn of 1937, internecine warfare broke out again in the latter half of the year. The imminent federal election (23 October
was the date eventually chosen) may have brought about a formal truce between Lang and his trade union opponents, but it did nothing to remove the basic ill-feeling. Effective co-operation was impossible. A clear indication of the lack of goodwill occurred in July 1937 when the ALP state executive turned down a request from the Labor Council for Jock Garden to be given another chance to gain parliamentary pre-selection following his readmission to the party.1 Garden's trade union supporters were deeply affronted and responded accordingly. On 8 July the Labor Council announced that it did not intend to contribute to an election fund that the state executive had just set up. Any money raised for electoral purposes would instead be sent directly to the federal party.2

The state executive planned to raise £10,000 for its war chest and to this end called on the unions to donate generously.3 But inevitably the response varied according to factional considerations. This was particularly evident in the case of the railway unions. The AFULE, being a staunch pro-Lang union, immediately contributed £50 to the fighting fund.4 The ARU, not surprisingly, was far less forthcoming. Hating Lang as they did, the ARU militants could hardly be expected to relish the prospect of his being given a £10,000 war chest. Their reluctance to assist the

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1. SMH, 3 July 1937, p.18.
2. Ibid., 9 July 1937, p.11, 10 July 1937, p.17.
4. Ibid.
state executive was no doubt strengthened by continuing evidence of Inner Group displeasure at their entrenched position in the state branch. In June the Labor Daily gratefully published a number of letters sent in by disgruntled ARU members who were convinced that the ARU was ignoring standard trade union concerns in its enthusiasm for exotic left-wing causes.5

Rejecting the criticism out of hand,6 Lloyd Ross proceeded to highlight the split with the Inner Group. On 16 July, when he came to set out the ARU's response to the state executive's fundraising efforts, he chose to adopt a distinctly chilly tone. 'The amount of financial assistance will be discussed at forthcoming meetings of the finance committee and State council'.7 Eventually on 27 August the council authorised a donation of £150 to the ALP war chest. In a trial of strength the pro-Lang councillors were defeated by 14 votes to 7 after they called for the donation to be increased to £500.8

Lang did not intend to let his opponents stand in his way. As with the Sunday Express campaign of 1936, he hoped to outflank his trade union detractors by appealing directly to the rank-and-file for financial support. Individual trade unionists and ALP supporters were invited to

7. Ibid., 19 July 1937, p.5.
contribute to the party's victory fund. An appropriate jingle - 'The way to win - a shilling in!' - was devised in an effort to help the campaign along. A team of Labor speakers addressed fundraising meetings at various factories and workshops in Sydney. As in 1936 particular attention was paid to the railwaymen. Lang himself addressed separate meetings at Eveleigh on 21 and 22 July.

The effort expended in the campaign was eventually rewarded. By early August Lang's target of £10,000 had been reached. His followers hailed this accomplishment as a tremendous victory. The Labor Council had been circumvented as had the affiliated unions. The ARU stood out in this regard. The Langites derived particular satisfaction from their success in attracting contributions from Sydney's railwaymen. 'A feature of the response to the appeal ...', the Labor Daily proudly noted, 'was the manner in which the employees of the Chullora, Eveleigh and Clyde Waggon workshops rallied to the support of the party'.

The fundraising campaign in the railway workshops went ahead under the supervision of an ad hoc body, the ALP Railway Committee, which in turn operated under the aegis of the main Inner Group fundraising body, the Trades Union ALP Committee. The Railway Committee's obvious effectiveness

12. Ibid., 27 August 1937, p.12.
as a pro-Lang organisation was of great concern to the ARU militants. After touring the Eveleigh workshops in August, Jack Ferguson came to the conclusion that the committee had replaced the NUR as the chief generator of anti-ARU sentiment among railwaymen.13

The organisational framework created by the Langites during the 1936 pro-Sunday Express campaign had obviously not been allowed to waste away. The same team of activists swung into action in July 1937. The overlap between the two pro-Lang campaigns was particularly obvious in the case of the Sydney Parcels Office, where some fifty ARU members handed in their 1/- contribution to the ALP Railway Committee.14 The committee's Central Station representative was J.H. Stone, the former secretary of the pro-Sunday Express group in the ARU. There was no doubting Stone's enthusiasm. He was ready to promote the Langite cause by means of anti-Ross polemics as well as through fundraising activities. By mid-1937 Stone was already faced with a summons to appear before the ARU state council on disciplinary charges as a result of his having publicly attacked its anti-Lang stance in the course of the previous year's factional manoeuvres.15

13. NSW Head Office ('Large Box 1'), J.A. Ferguson to Lloyd Ross, 13 August 1937.
Realising that his breach with the state branch was irreparable, Stone was ready to step up the pressure. Along with another ARU dissident, G.H. Clements, he was involved in the production of a newssheet, Railway Review, which was designed to highlight supposed deficiencies in Lloyd Ross's administration of the union. To this end Stone attacked the ARU for its reluctance to contribute to the ALP victory fund. The union's involvement in the campaign against the board of directors of the Labor Daily was likewise criticised. In a further move Railway Review drew attention to an embarrassing court action involving the ARU and two rival life assurance companies.16

Following the emergence of Railway Review Lloyd Ross sought to bring Stone's political activities to a speedy end. At the August state council Stone and Clements were branded as disruptive elements; as a punishment their suspension from the ARU was agreed to.17 Three months later, with no act of contrition having taken place, the council passed a resolution expelling the two men from the union.18 The Langites had their first ARU martyrs.

Anti-Lang factionalism entered a new and more adventurous phase following Labor's defeat in the 1937 federal election. On 28 October, at its first meeting after

17. State Council Minutes, special meeting, 27 August 1937.
18. Railroad, 15 February 1938, pp.8,10.
the election, the Labor Council announced that it intended to convene a special political conference in order to focus attention upon Lang's role in contributing to Labor's continuing unpopularity.19 The need for drastic remedial action was stressed. Reunification on Lang's terms had brought no obvious benefits. There seemed little likelihood that Labor would fare any better at the forthcoming New South Wales election. The party machine, dominated as it was by Lang, could not be expected to remedy the situation. As a result it was up to the unions to restore Labor's electoral appeal. The Labor Council felt no qualms at invoking the sacred name of electoral success. The left-wing unions were prepared to abandon some of their dearest shibboleths, and to accept any ally, in line with their determination to build up an effective anti-Lang coalition.

Three weeks later, on 18 November, the special political conference duly went ahead. The 350 delegates who turned up solemnly repudiated the Inner Group. Lang was considered to be solely responsible for Labor's chronic disunity and woeful electoral performance. The divergence between his fervent isolationism and the internationalist stance of the ACTU formed part of the indictment. The Labor Party in New South Wales, it was clear, needed to undergo a thorough overhaul. To this end the delegates agreed that a broader conference, consisting of trade union and ALP branch

delegates, should be held in January. A committee of seven, with Bill Evans as secretary, was empowered to look after the details.20

In line with his strong anti-Lang position, Lloyd Ross resolutely supported the rebels from the start. Called upon to address the November conference, he vigorously asserted that Labor would have won the election had it championed the cause of collective security.21 His ideological enthusiasm was easily converted into organisational support. The ARU was the first major affiliated union to endorse the defiant stand taken by the delegates. On 25 November, with only two dissentients (including Bill O'Neill) voicing objection, the ARU state council carried a motion of no-confidence in Lang's leadership. It was readily agreed that the state branch should be represented at the forthcoming January conference.22

Lang's opponents were confident of attaining victory. Lang was clearly a spent force. Evidence of his decline was accumulating all the time. On 10 December 1937 the litigation over who was to control the Labor Daily came to an end, with the rival factions being given four seats

20. SMH, 19 November 1937, p.12; AW, 24 November 1937, pp.8,14,16.
22. Railroad, 8 February 1938, p.4, 15 February 1938, p.2; SMH, 26 November 1937, p.11.
each on the board of directors. The result was thus a stalemate, but the shareholding unions were confident that matters would be put right once the next election for the board of directors, now already overdue, was held. They controlled a majority of the shares and had been denied victory only because of a legal technicality. Lang, too, realised that the struggle was over. Deciding to cut his losses, he proceeded to hand the Labor Daily over to the shareholding unions after they agreed to repay the debenture that was owing to him. The change of ownership took place on 21 February 1938 whereupon the anti-Lang unions immediately installed a new set of journalists and staff members. Under the new arrangements Edgar Ross was called in to write the Labor Daily's editorials. For a time his brother, using the pseudonym 'John Demos', contributed a regular column on international affairs. Old-style isolationism henceforth was the preserve of the Langite newspaper, Century, which made its debut on 27 May.

Unaffected by the levity of the season, the anti-Langites went ahead with their 'all-in' conference during the weekend preceding Australia Day, 22-23 January. Some 400 delegates representing five Labor Councils, seventy affiliated unions and sixty-two local party branches were in attendance. After listening to further condemnation of the Inner Group's baleful influence the delegates endorsed a recommendation whereby it was asserted that the conference

23. Ibid., 11 December 1937, p.11.
represented 'the only true expression of the Labor Movement in New South Wales' and should be recognised as such by the federal executive. Warming to this theme, Jack Hooke of the Moulders' Union and Bob Heffron, who headed the anti-Langite faction in the state parliamentary caucus, called upon the delegates there and then to set up a brand new Labor Party in New South Wales. This suggestion was rejected, however. The delegates decided to heed the advice of Lloyd Ross, who together with George Bass of the Newcastle THC contended that 'the workers did not want two Labor Parties'. The proper course for the conference, they insisted, was to preserve party unity while at the same time isolating the Inner Group. With this end in mind, a provisional executive was appointed, comprising fifteen representatives each from the unions and the local party branches. Its immediate task was to secure the re-election of the handful of avowed anti-Langite MLAs in the forthcoming state election.24

Lloyd Ross joyfully added his voice to the chorus of anti-Lang criticism at the January conference. His enthusiasm was unbridled. At last an opportunity had arisen to create the 'clean and democratically controlled Labor party' that he had dreamt of for over a decade.25 The primitive energy of Labor's rank-and-file was about to be freed from the shackles imposed by Lang. The reorganisation

of the party would open the way for a complete acceptance by Labor of the militants' anti-fascist programme. Enormous progress had been achieved in the previous two years; soon the anti-Lang activists would be strong enough to eliminate the Inner Group, whose narrow fixation with state-run lotteries, greyhound racing and the menace of Communism effectively prevented Labor from realising its potential as a force for good in the crusade against fascism. Determined to underline the ARU's position, Lloyd Ross, along with Eileen Powell, agreed to serve on the new thirty-member anti-Lang steering committee.

With the renewed anti-Lang crusade now underway, the fundamentalist fervour of labour's militants, already enlivened as a result of the sesqui, was able to be fully expressed. Lloyd Ross's boast at the January conference that the assembled delegates, in seeking to reform the ALP, stood 'four-square upon the traditions of the Labor Movement' was not idly made. Together with his fellow activists, he was eager to renew the party's lost innocence. The left needed to emulate the heroism of the 1890s, when an earlier band of enthusiasts had assisted in placing the labour movement on a proper political footing. References to labour's glorious past had never seemed more apposite.

27. SMH, 29 January 1938, p.11.
Since the days of the Tolpuddle centenary Lloyd Ross's value as a practitioner of the arts of historical allusion and imagery had been freely acknowledged by his fellow militants. Hardly needing to be prompted, he immediately sought inspiration from the great names in labour's pantheon once it became clear that, with Lang under siege, a decisive moment in the movement's history was at hand. His literary enthusiasm and political passion marched hand in hand. Above all, his fondness for Henry Lawson, which dated back to his VSP childhood in Melbourne, was refurbished to meet the special circumstances of 1938. The radicalism of Labor's laureate had long been pointed out to the ARU militants. It required little effort to convert Lawson into the poetic voice of the anti-Lang movement. On 10 January, in his capacity as a guest of the School of Modern Writers, Lloyd Ross delivered a lecture in which he stressed Lawson's faith in socialism. The lecture was printed a few weeks later in Railroad. The balladist was duly depicted as the patron saint of every Australian who fought against imperialism and social inequality.

During the autumn of 1938 the anti-Lang campaign proceeded to gain momentum. On 26 March the Stevens-Bruxner

29. In 1914 Lloyd Ross received a copy of Lawson's In the Days When the World Was Wide and Other Verses from his parents as a birthday present. NLA MS 3939, Box 58.
30. During his first weeks as an ARU official Lloyd Ross found time to lecture on Lawson. Railroad, 10 August 1935, p.21, 10 November 1935, p.2.
31. WW, 7 January 1938, p.4, 14 January 1938, p.2.
32. Railroad, 1 February 1938, p.2.
government was re-elected in New South Wales. As a result Lang's political authority sank even lower. For the third time in a row he had lost a state election. His enemies were quick to capitalise on this situation. Following the election the rebel executive announced that it proposed to hold a second broadly based political conference. Describing the event - which was eventually set down for June - as a 'unity conference', the executive promptly invited its Langite counterpart to send along a group of delegates. This offer no doubt was made facetiously, since the purpose of the conference was to provide a counterblast to the impending Easter Conference of the Labor Party, where the Inner Group would be in full command. Right from the start indeed the June conference was widely billed as a 'counter conference'.

Nothing was left to chance in the run up to the conference. On 19 April, two days after the Langites had dispersed, a preparatory meeting of rebel delegates reviewed the proceedings of the Easter Conference in an effort to uncover the Inner Group's latest stratagems. At the same time a concerted effort was put into ensuring that the propagandist zeal of Labor's anti-Lang activists was properly utilised. With this end in mind the provisional executive appointed an education committee under whose auspices classes

33. LD, 2 April 1938, p.1; SMH, 2 April 1938, p.11.  
34. Ibid., 19 April 1938, p.12.  
35. Ibid., 19 April 1938, p.12, 20 April 1938, p.18.
in public speaking, economics and labour history were organised at Transport House, with the tutors being W.P. Booth, C.E. Martin, J.O. Bourke and S. Taylor.36 Educational material also appeared in the Labor Daily.37 The classes at Transport House were seen as the prelude to a far more ambitious enterprise. The education committee hoped to set up an entire network of suburban classes whose members would be instructed in the mysteries of economics, Australian politics and the history of trade unionism.38

True to their revivalist tendencies, the anti-Lang activists embraced the study of Australian labour history with great enthusiasm. Early in May Edgar Ross put together a suggested course of reading for trade unionists who wished to know more about the subject.39 It was important to ensure that the antiquarian zeal generated by 'Labor's Own Sesqui' was kept alive.

Lloyd Ross naturally shared his brother's enthusiasm for the task at hand. Throughout the autumn of 1938 his own highly imaginative approach to working-class history continued to figure prominently in left-wing propaganda activities. In particular he remained a tireless devotee of the cult of Henry

37. LD, 16 April 1938, Week-End Magazine Section, p.1.
38. LD, 2 May 1938, p.8.
39. CC, 7 May 1938, p.6.
Lawson; in April he attended an ARU conference in Newcastle where he delivered a lecture on Lawson as 'the poet of the trade unions and the Labor Movement'. Such antiquarian zeal was fully in accord with the anti-Lang stance adopted by the revered Labor stalwarts Arthur Rae and Henry Boote. Ernie Lane, with his favourable review of *William Lane and the Australian Labor Movement*, had earlier fulfilled a similar role in bolstering the Labor rebels' sense of legitimacy.

Without doubt the spirit of the 1890s was once more abroad in the land. Following hard upon the publication of Lloyd Ross's book on Lane the labour press was also able to announce the appearance of a new edition of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*. A new edition of W.G. Spence's *Australia's Awakening*, with its first-hand account of early trade union and Labor Party history, was likewise greeted with enthusiasm. In the ensuing months sales of Spence's book were promoted by the AWU and the Miners' Federation for palpably political reasons. In the second week of May Henry Boote received a letter of encouragement from another anti-Lang stalwart, the Milk Employees' Union official Albert W. Thompson. The continuing relevance of Spence's book, Thompson assured Boote, was readily acknowledged in the anti-Lang camp:

43. Ibid., 4 August 1937, p.3.
44. Ibid., 11 August 1937, p.8, 2 February 1938, p.6; *CC*, 5 March 1938, p.7.
Acting on your advice I used Spence's "Australia's Awakening" as the basis of a lecture at Auburn on Monday night entitled "An outline of the history of the Australian Labor Movement", & I was congratulated & informed that I had achieved one of my most commendable lectures.

I am making same a standard lecture to the branches being reformed in the A.L.P.

The book is a mine of valuable information, & inspires one with the romance & spirit of the great cause.

As the winter months drew near the left's antiquarian zeal was boosted by the anti-sesqui nature of the May Day festivities of 1938. In the case of Lloyd Ross the resulting surge of ideological energy was easily transferred to the anti-Lang cause. On 2 May he proudly reaffirmed his left-wing inheritance in a letter written to the old-time socialist and Lawsonian E.J. Brady. The literary heritage of the 1890s, he noted, still operated as a dynamic force because it had the capacity to inspire later generations of Labor activists. The situation in 1938 exemplified this process. Given the rising tide of labour fundamentalism, there was now every likelihood that at last 'a good working-class book on Henry Lawson as a revolutionist' would be written. In the absence of such a publication Lawson's significance as a proletarian artist was likely to be 'destroyed by [his] middle-class admirers'. He considered that writing on international affairs for the Labor Daily was a comparable exercise in helping to restore Labor's radical

heritage. For Lloyd Ross no condemnation of the ALP's isolationist stance could be too harsh. 'It seems', he told Brady, 'that many of the leaders of Labor have to be shown the urgency of the present situation demanding working-class unity both internally and internationally'.

By mid-1938 the anti-Langites had shaken off all traces of the diffidence displayed at the January conference. They were now ready to set up a rival political organisation, replete with all the trappings of a Labor Party: a platform, an executive, a conference, a parliamentary caucus, local branches and affiliated unions, as well as a team of officials and organisers. The formal launching was due to take place at the June conference. Given firm support from the left-wing unions, a smooth take off was guaranteed. In the case of the ARU this expectation was readily fulfilled. Bill O'Neill continued to oppose the union's alignment with the rebel cause, but his protestations were swept aside. On 27 May, when the state council voted on the issue, Lloyd Ross was duly authorised to attend the conference.

The left's revivalist fervour steadily intensified as the proceedings drew nearer. On the day the conference assembled (25 June) Lloyd Ross published an article in the Labor Daily in which he laid stress on the happy proximity between Henry Lawson's birthday - 17 June - and the convening

46. NLA MS 206/7/456-7.
47. Railroad, 16 August 1938, p.9.
of the unity conference. The rebirth of the Labor Party in New South Wales was well underway. 'If the People's Poet were still alive, to-day's Unity Conference would provide for him the type of inspiration which produced his greatest work'.

Meeting at the Majestic Theatre in Newtown, the delegates quickly got down to the business of setting up a new political party. By 643 votes to 7 they declared themselves to be the New South Wales branch of the Australian Labor Party. The provisional executive was transformed into the new state executive. Evans stayed on as secretary. The existing party constitution, although devised by the militants' immediate post-war predecessors, was entirely disowned. It was taken for granted that Lang's power ultimately rested on his ability to stack ALP conferences through abuse of the collegiate system. By way of ending this situation the unity conference duly came out in favour of direct trade union and branch representation at the annual conference together with the restoration to caucus of the power to choose the parliamentary leader. If one of these reforms did not end Lang's power, then the other surely would. Despite having assisted in the birth of the Inner Group, the affiliated unions now sought to terminate its existence in the name of 'democracy'.

49. SMH, 14 June 1938, p.12.
Given that it sought to operate as a true Labor Party, the anti-Lang movement inevitably took the form of a coalition of disparate interests. The trade union militants were able to seriously challenge Lang's position only because other important sections in the ALP and the trade unions had been alienated as well. The delegates to the unity conference had little in common other than a determination to get rid of the Inner Group. Bill McNamara of the old Socialisation Committee sat on the organising committee alongside Jock Garden and Jack Hooke, who had coldbloodedly supported Lang's attack on socialism in 1933. Among the delegates there were known Communists (Charlie Nelson of the Miners' Federation), ex-Communists (Bob Heffron and Harry Denford of the FIA) and anti-communists (the Labor Daily director E.C. Magrath).

The Langites naturally stressed the unity conference's diverse composition. It was a 'strange conference' indeed which saw Charlie Nelson and the Domain orator Stan Moran rubbing shoulders with the rough hewn John Bailey, the former strongman of the rigidly anti-communist AWU. Lloyd Ross's presence attracted similar barbed comments, which in itself represented a grudging acknowledgement that he had indeed been able to play some part in helping to weld the anti-Lang cause together.

52. Ibid.
In line with his strong sense of history Lloyd Ross was ever prepared to stress the connection between traditional Labor concerns and the latest policies being advocated by the trade union militants. Acting in this spirit, he concentrated on ideological matters at the unity conference, participating in debates on the role of the Labor Daily and the true meaning of Labor's anti-conscriptionist position. A week after the conference broke up he sought to reaffirm the legitimacy of the militants' Labor credentials by delivering yet another address on Henry Lawson. The venue chosen for the lecture was the district headquarters of the Communist Party. Within a fortnight the hospitality had been reciprocated: beginning on 18 July a Communist Party district conference was held at Transport House. For their part the Langites were determined to highlight the friendly relationship between the ARU, the CPA and the new anti-Lang Labor organisation. In a story appearing in Century it was announced that at one of the secret sessions of the Communist Party conference Lloyd Ross had been elected to the district committee. No attempt was made in Railroad to refute the veracity of this statement.

Lloyd Ross was not afraid of incurring the wrath of the Langites. He was determined to see to it that the new anti-Lang Labor Party was fully supported by the ARU. On 18

54. WW, 1 July 1938, p.4; LD, 4 July 1938, p.5.
55. WW, 8 July 1938, p.2.
56. Century, 29 July 1938, p.11.
August the state council decided to recommend to the forthcoming state conference that the union's affiliation should be transferred from the Lang party to the rebel organisation. It was pointed out that already the ARU had ceased paying capitation fees to the Inner Group. On 28 September, after a lengthy debate, the state conference adopted the recommendation by 41 votes to 17. On the following day a motion from Bill O'Neill calling for a plebiscite to be held on the issue was rejected by 37 votes to 20. From the Langites' point of view the action taken by the council and the conference was clearly 'undemocratic' and they immediately set out to publicise any evidence of grassroots resentment arising from the refusal to hold a plebiscite.

As is usual in such situations factional requirements played havoc with semantics. In the ALP, where the Inner Group was in control, extolling the delights of 'democracy' was an anti-Lang tactic whereas in the ARU Lloyd Ross and the militants had set up their own 'inner group' and it was the Langites who comprised the aggrieved minority faction.

Well aware that their future in the ARU was extremely problematical, the more fervent members of the Langite faction had already begun to look to their friends in

57. SMH, 19 August 1938, p.11; Railroad, 27 September 1938, p.8.
58. LD, 29 September 1938, p.6; Minutes of State Conference of the Australian Railways Union N.S.W. Branch ..., September 26, 27, 28 and 29, 1938, Sydney, 1938, pp.21-24.
60. Ibid., 9 September 1938, p.23, 28 October 1938, p.25.
the ALP to bail them out should the struggle in the union eventually have to be abandoned. At the 1938 Easter Conference an attempt was made to amend the party's rules in order to allow pro-Lang ALP members employed in the railway service to join unions other than the ARU and the equally disreputable FIA without at the same time jeopardising their party membership (under the existing rules all ALP members had to belong to the particular union covering their trade or profession). Naturally the proposed amendment was fiercely criticised in the press by Lloyd Ross. The move obviously represented a serious threat to the ARU. As matters turned out, however, the amendment was not proceeded with. The very idea of 'splitting', with a worker's trade union allegiance being determined by political considerations, was anathema to the entire trade union movement. Certainly Lang was determined not to offend the unions on this account. When he came to address the Easter Conference he sought to effect a graceful retreat. Although prepared to lambast Lloyd Ross as a Communist, he proceeded to inform the ARU Langites that the best way to combat Communist influence in the union was by continuing to fight on as an internal opposition group.

No ammunition was spared as the struggle between the rival Labor factions intensified. Allegations of disloyalty

61. SMH, 18 April 1938, p.6; LD, 18 April 1938, p.5; Railroad, 26 April 1938, p.2.
63. SMH, 18 April 1938, p.6.
and improper behaviour abounded. The Inner Group, whose own standards of honesty had long been questioned, was itself perfectly willing to raise the issue of 'corruption' in an effort to discredit the anti-Lang cause. The rebels were undoubtedly vulnerable on this score. They obviously needed to attract a fair amount of finance if they wished to operate as a viable political party and in some cases the money that was received came from rather dubious sources. Jack Metcalfe, a 'big-time sanitary contractor and a highly suspect figure' was a particularly generous donor.64 Financial assistance also was forthcoming from the Bank of New South Wales, whose board of directors allowed the rebels to keep the Labor Daily afloat by means of a large overdraft.65

Together with his brother Edgar, Lloyd Ross in time became caught up in the wheeling and dealing. Edgar was one of Jack Metcalfe's acquaintances and as such got to know about the man's 'grandiose visions' at first hand.66 Lloyd's financial contact was Sir Alfred Davidson, the general manager of the Bank of New South Wales. The two men first met at an Australian Institute of Political Science summer school and thereafter kept in touch: Sir Alfred had a

64. Ross, Storm and Struggle, p.69; Century, 30 July 1943, p.4.
66. Ross, Storm and Struggle, p.69.
high opinion of the younger man's abilities. Lloyd later prevailed upon Sir Alfred to intercede with his board of directors on at least two occasions when the bank was seeking to tighten its control over the Labor Daily.67

The connection between the anti-Lang rebels and the world of high finance, while unavoidable, was duly seized upon by the Langites, who insisted that their factional opponents had sold themselves out to Labor's ancestral enemy, 'the money power'. In time the spotlight came to rest on Lloyd Ross. It was common knowledge that he was a friend of Sir Alfred Davidson. The Langites naturally sought to portray the association in sinister terms. It fell to Jack Beasley to bring the issue out into the open. The first public reference by Beasley to the Ross-Davidson connection occurred in the course of an address delivered at a Langite political conference late in October 1938.68 His major effort on this front, however, took place on 9 November when he delivered a speech in federal parliament in which he proceeded to 'bucket' Lloyd Ross for his role in facilitating the 'unholy alliance between Sir Alfred Davidson and the Heffron party'.69

The growing rift between Lloyd Ross and the Langites inevitably led to an intensification of factional activity in

68. Century, 4 November 1938, p.18.
the ARU. Within the union's Langite minority it was increasingly felt that a bold anti-Ross thrust was certain to be backed up by the full weight of Lang's political machine. By the beginning of 1939, following the ARU's decision to affiliate with the rebel ALP organisation, there no longer seemed any point in holding back. On 6 January a number of disgruntled ARU men, led by the Langite stalwart J.H. Stone, proceeded to register themselves under the Trade Union Act as a railwaymen's union and promptly launched a membership drive. Formally dubbed the New South Wales Railways Operating Employees' Union, the new organisation was designed to attract ARU members who could no longer brook their union's left-wing stance. The founding members of the ROEU planned to 'resist by all possible means anything restricting the individual rights of members and the propagation within the service of the doctrines of Communism'.

Befitting its status as a Langite union, the ROEU, during its first weeks of existence, attracted a barrage of favourable publicity in the pages of Century. But from the outset its viability was always in doubt given the widespread hostility to 'splitters'. Towards the end of

70. Century, 27 January 1939, pp.3,9. It is pertinent to note here that a few weeks before the ROEU was formed the NUR succeeded in obtaining registration under the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act largely on the strength of 'the belief of [its] members that the Australian Railways Union has become committed to an adherence to communism of the Russian school, and prefers the settlement of industrial disputes by means other than conciliation and arbitration'. 40 CAR 290.
January anti-Langite observers were able to report that the enemy camp was in a state of some confusion. Whatever his ROEU minions might say, Lang himself, it was clear, had 'no sympathy' for the new organisation. His supporters were being advised to stay on in the ARU.71 Certainly the leading Langite in the union, Bill O'Neill, had little time for the ROEU. On 23 February he formally announced his opposition to 'breakaway factions'.72 On the following day the new union held its inaugural general meeting. The presence of a contingent of ARU observers turned the proceedings into a fiasco.73

The ARU's efforts to discredit the ROEU went ahead against the background of the ever widening struggle between Lang and his political opponents. By the autumn of 1939 the struggle for supremacy was on with a vengeance. On 18 March voters in the electorate of Hurstville were due to go to the polls in a by-election in which the real contest was between candidates from the two rival labour camps. The anti-Langite nominee was Clive Evatt KC, who as a result of his 'many triumphant legal battles' in the compensation area could count upon receiving the support of the 'large body' of railwaymen who resided in the Hurstville electorate.74 The ARU officially endorsed Evatt's candidature, with Lloyd Ross

73. Ibid., 28 February 1939, p.1.
74. DN, 27 February 1939, p.5.
going on to ensure that the publicity resources of 2KY were fully deployed during the campaign.\textsuperscript{75} Taking up the challenge, the ROEU proclaimed its support for the pro-Lang candidate, Alderman J.K. McGrath.\textsuperscript{76}

In the event Clive Evatt easily won the Hurstville by-election. The result served to underline the dramatic decline in Lang's political fortunes. At all levels his faction was in disarray. On 7 April a delegate from the ROEU appeared at the annual conference of the pro-Lang party. His bona fides were immediately challenged by Bill O'Neill. 'The majority of railwaymen', O'Neill claimed, 'stand solidly behind the Labor party, but we don't want another union. Let us stay in the A.R.U. and wage our fight from within'. The matter was referred to the appeals committee, which proceeded to uphold O'Neill's challenge. The conference then instructed ROEU members to disband their union and return to the ARU.\textsuperscript{77} Lang's authority, however, was so diminished that not even this simple request was fully complied with. J.H. Stone promptly abandoned his ROEU activities but the organisation was kept alive, for purely personal reasons, by the Langite Denis Kilmartin, who took over as secretary.

On 22 April, in another crucial by-election involving the two labour groups, the electors of Waverley

\textsuperscript{75} Railroad, 28 March 1939, p.9; AW, 7 June 1939, p.14.  
\textsuperscript{76} SMH, 27 February 1939, p.12.  
\textsuperscript{77} Century, 14 April 1939, p.19; DN, 8 April 1939, p.5, 10 April 1939, p.5.
plumped for Clarrie Martin, the anti-Langites' nominee. On the grounds of electoral expediency, if for no other reason, the argument for recognising the rebel organisation as the official ALP branch in New South Wales now seemed unanswerable. Within a fortnight federal intervention had been decided upon. With a view to reconstituting the state branch a unity conference was scheduled for the end of August. In determining the procedure for electing the delegates great care was taken by the federal authorities to ensure that the affiliated unions were adequately represented. Lang's demise was thus sealed.78

The summoning of the unity conference marked a new phase in the development of united front politics. As viewed by Lloyd Ross and his fellow militants, the post-1936 campaign to restructure the Labor Party in New South Wales brought with it the prospect of their being able to go on and change the policies of the party as well. The militants intended to bring in new measures as well as new leaders. In seeking to discredit Lang they necessarily had to attack the isolationist position with which he was closely identified. By mid-1939 the doctrine of collective security as presented by the militants already enjoyed the endorsement of the ACTU, the Labor Council and a number of major individual unions. Against this background - and with another world war now looming - the left-wing internationalists of New South Wales

intended to press on with the task of converting the ALP to their position. Along the way it was hoped to influence broader public opinion as well.

The internationalist cause continued to benefit from Lloyd Ross's energetic advocacy. Despite the dissension that was aroused, he could still count upon the ARU's being prepared to maintain (though not necessarily widen) its longstanding involvement in the field of anti-war and anti-fascist agitation. Armed with the union's authority, he was a frequent speaker at the Labor Council, where foreign affairs remained his forte. Acting at his instigation, the council testified to its internationalist faith by passing a motion repudiating the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia at Munich.79 Likewise Hitler's persecution of the Jews80 and Japan's continued aggression in China81 were solemnly condemned. In this way Lloyd Ross was able to combat the federal government's relentless efforts to stifle discussion of the international situation. He was unstinting in this regard. Reflecting his involvement, internationalist ideas continued to be heavily promoted in both the pages of Railroad and in 2KY broadcasts. The setting up midway through 1938 of a Sydney branch of the London-based Left Book Club provided him with an additional congenial forum where he could express his ardent anti-fascist principles.82

82. AH, 10 October 1938, p.ii; Australian Left News, December 1938, p.7.
Lloyd Ross's audiences did not always consist of true believers, however. His being middle class meant that he was able to obtain a wider hearing. Organisations as respectable as the Australian Institute of Political Science and the *Sydney Morning Herald* saw nothing untoward in his being given an opportunity to publicise left-wing ideas on defence and foreign policy issues. Since joining the ARU in 1935 Lloyd Ross had invariably been the first trade union official contacted whenever it was a question of getting someone to present a labour viewpoint to a non-working-class audience. In this regard he was able to develop a further important set of contacts following his growing involvement in the activities of the recently established Australian Institute of International Affairs. In September 1938 a pretentious talkfest - the Second British Commonwealth Relations Conference - was held at Lapstone, with the AIIA being the organising body. Lloyd Ross was included among the assorted dignitaries from all over the British Empire who converged on the Blue Mountains to discuss the problems of the world. A few months later the same organisation invited him to comment upon the action of the Port Kembla waterside workers in refusing to load pig iron for Japan. The resulting vindication was duly published.

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83. For Lloyd Ross's role at the 1938 AIPS summer school see *Australia's Foreign Policy*, pp.33-34, 156-157, 206.
In advocating collective security, Lloyd Ross was required to conduct a propaganda war on two fronts. Within the labour movement the Langites remained firmly opposed to internationalism, with the ARU continuing to be criticised in Century for favouring a pro-war 'sanctionist' position.87 At the same time the formal political adversary, the Lyons government, insisted upon loyally following the British policy of appeasement in relation to Germany, Italy and Japan. Logically the creed of anti-fascism culminated in full support for a national defence effort. However for the militants the policy of appeasement necessarily meant that any form of co-operation with the federal government was out of the question. Lloyd Ross eloquently expressed their feelings on the issue. 'Much as we feel called upon to defend Australia and would be prepared to spend money on arms, we cannot strengthen the power of Lyons because this also means a strengthening of the class power opposed to us'.88 Appeasement, for the left, was no aberration; such a policy was only to be expected of the reactionary UAP government, whose position was threatened more by working-class radicalism than by fascist diplomacy.

Without doubt the trade union movement in general was deeply suspicious of the government's bona fides. Midway through 1938 the ACTU turned down an official invitation to

87. Century, 26 August 1938, p.27.
be represented on a Trade Union Advisory Panel whose intended function was to assist in formulating plans for the effective disposition of manpower in the event of war.\(^{89}\)

Lloyd Ross loudly supported the ACTU's decision. At a conference of New South Wales trade unionists called to discuss the proposed boycott he proceeded to flay the federal government with a vengeance. Lyons, he asserted, was intent on 'demoralising the Labor Movement and tricking it into support of a foreign policy that is pro-Fascist in character'. The call for 'sacrifices' was fraudulent; trade unionists should instead seek the adoption of a genuine anti-fascist defence policy based on collective security.\(^{90}\) 'Labor', Lloyd Ross later insisted, 'is ... not inconsistent when it emphasises that a Labor government would spend money on defence but at the same time is opposed to the Lyons defence agitation'.\(^{91}\)

Although clearly not without its problems, the doctrine of collective security now operated as the dominant creed of the trade union movement. Its orthodoxy was readily reaffirmed at the 1939 ACTU Congress, which opened in Melbourne on 6 March. The militant unions were not required to overly exert themselves during the proceedings since it

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91. 'Defence of Australia', p.4.
was obvious that, so far as the defence issue was concerned, there was no organised body of dissenting opinion to contend with. The need to support some form of collective security went unquestioned by the vast majority of delegates. At the same time, however, it was readily conceded that beyond the confines of the trade union movement internationalism remained an embattled creed and certainly was not in accord with official government thinking. Militant anti-fascism hardly held sway at this level. Spain, China and Czechoslovakia, the militants considered, had been betrayed in the name of appeasement, which likewise posed a threat to the future existence of the Soviet Union. Lloyd Ross joined in the resulting chorus of condemnation at the congress. When the issue of national defence came up for discussion, he delivered a forceful address in which he set about 'ripping the hide off armchair socialists, Lyons, Chamberlain and Hitler with ascending degrees of intensity.'

The ACTU executive favoured a resolution which envisaged the unions supporting a range of defence measures designed to enhance the nation's capacity to ward off a possible fascist invasion. At the same time it was emphasised that the trade union movement's traditional opposition to conscription remained intact. The left-wing unions came up with a number of amendments, all of which were accepted by the executive. The official resolution was

then passed without further ado. In the debate on the resolution the extent to which the militants were ready to become patriots was starkly revealed. Although stressing that collaboration with the Lyons government was out of the question, the left-wing unions went on to vigorously reject the proposition, still put forward by a few maverick delegates, that the working class should refuse under all circumstances to participate in the nation's defence effort. Fascist aggression, the militants contended, was 'definitely' a danger; a broadly based defence effort was 'vitally necessary'. According to Lloyd Ross, 'Labor was the only body that could adequately defend Australia or end War.'

The stand taken by the ACTU was formally approved by the Labor Council on 30 March. At the anti-Lang faction's annual conference the following week Lloyd Ross called for the ACTU's position to be adopted by the Labor Party as well. Rejecting a number of unofficial left-wing amendments, he called on the delegates to recognise that, despite whatever faults it might have, the ACTU's position still represented the best working-class defence policy currently available. It was important to show the appeasers that labour meant business. 'The foreign policy of Australia', Lloyd Ross insisted, 'must be settled by Australians and not by people overseas'. The delegates

accepted his line of reasoning - indeed his remarks were 'warmly applauded' - and the amendments were summarily rejected.96

For the time being, of course, Labor's left-wing patriots were not yet in a position to determine the defence policy of their own party, let alone the policy of the government. Theirs was more a negative capability. In immediate political terms the aspect of their defence policy that really mattered was their decision not to co-operate in any way with Lyons and, after his death in April 1939, with his successor, the hated Menzies.

The autumn of 1939 witnessed an intensification of the anti-UAP animus of the trade union movement following the introduction into federal parliament of the National Registration Bill, which authorised the setting up of a national manpower register. As portrayed by the government the bill marked a vital stage in the mobilisation of Australia's defence resources. For ALP and trade union spokesmen alike, however, the defence argument was merely a smokescreen designed to cover up another motive. The proposed register, they immediately assumed, was meant to prepare the way for the imposition of an integrated form of industrial and military conscription in Australia. For this reason the legislation was highly objectionable.97

96. DN, 8 April 1939, p.2; SMH, 8 April 1939, p.17.
The National Registration Bill, whose introduction was foreshadowed in February, was finally unveiled in federal parliament on 11 May by which time the trade union movement had long since come out in opposition to the measure. In Sydney the ARU was an active opponent from the start. On 30 March, armed with a defiant resolution from his state council, Lloyd Ross requested the Labor Council to officially condemn the idea of a national register. Opposition to the proposal, he told the delegates, 'provided another means of destroying the influence and morale of the Lyons Government'. However his eloquence lost its persuasiveness upon its being pointed out that the intended legislation had yet to see the light of day. A motion to put off making a decision was carried narrowly.

A fortnight later, when the Labor Council next met, Lloyd Ross's motion was the main item on the agenda. During the course of the debate it was suggested that a future Labor government would greatly appreciate having a manpower register at its disposal. Another delegate insisted that no decision on the matter should be made until it was known for certain whether the rank-and-file was willing to support a major campaign against the register. These remarks merely reinforced Lloyd Ross's determination to press ahead. 'The fundamental principle in Labor's defence policy, now adopted by the A.C.T.U. Congress, was no co-operation with the

98. Railroad, 7 March 1939, p.6.
Government, whose policy they had analysed time after time as reactionary, and opposed to their interests'. In the end he was able to get his way even though the details of the legislation were still not known. By 46 votes to 21, the delegates rejected another attempt to postpone a decision on the matter. Lloyd Ross's motion was then agreed to.100

At the national level the campaign against the national register was co-ordinated by the ACTU, whose involvement increased rapidly once the legislation began its passage through federal parliament. On 25 May, following upon an ACTU recommendation, the Labor Council announced that the national register, if proceeded with, would be subjected to a boycott, with trade unionists being counselled not to supply any of the required information. Short of this ultimate sanction there were plenty of other initiatives that the Labor Council intended to take. Until the legislation was actually on the statute book the campaign was to consist of meetings, demonstrations and intensive lobbying.101 In the weeks that followed 25,000 copies of an anti-register leaflet were printed and distributed, as were some 250,000 stickers. Radio broadcasts were also arranged.102 The first major rally in the campaign went ahead on 14 June at the Sydney Town Hall. The speakers included Lloyd Ross, Jim Healy of the Waterside Workers' Federation and Clarrie Martin.103

100. Ibid., 19 April 1939, p.14.
The Labor Council's plans were soon thrown awry however. The Labor Party in Canberra, while firmly opposing the enactment of the National Registration Bill, was simply not prepared to support a boycott once the bill became law. Curtin stated his position in an address to caucus on 15 June in which he emphasised that 'it was treading dangerous soil to lay down a policy of revolt to a law'.

Curtin's comments signally failed to impress the trade union wing of the anti-register movement. On 22 June, with parliament having finally passed the National Registration Bill, the Labor Council reaffirmed its support for the proposed boycott. At its next meeting a week later the matter was again discussed. Some 24 hours earlier the federal executive of the ALP had endorsed Curtin's position on the matter. Refusing to budge, the Labor Council delegates decided to press ahead with a mass demonstration in support of the boycott. The date chosen for the demonstration, 23 July, was the Sunday preceding the final day for submitting national register forms.

The ALP and the trade union movement seemed headed for a major collision. There was no talk of compromise. On

105. DN, 23 June 1939, p.3.
106. SMH, 29 June 1939, p.9.
13 July the Labor Council convened a special conference of trade union and workshop representatives. The delegates were asked to consider yet another pro-boycott recommendation emanating from the ACTU. When a vote was taken, the recommendation was endorsed by all but half a dozen of the 400 delegates present. A number of the dissentients had the temerity to suggest that a boycott might easily backfire on the ALP. There was every possibility that a snap election would be called on the issue. These comments attracted a barrage of left-wing criticism to which Lloyd Ross strongly contributed. Labor could not afford to temporise when matters of high principle were at stake, he told his fellow delegates; on such occasions short-term electoral considerations hardly mattered.108

Outwardly at least, the Labor Council seemed determined to press on. On the appointed day, 23 July, its anti-national register demonstration went ahead. The panel of trade union luminaries who addressed the demonstrators in the Domain sought in various ways to dramatise the significance of the campaign. The President of the Labor Council, J.R. Hughes, referred to the bravery of the men at Eureka. The secretary, Bob King, stressed how important it was to uphold Australia's proud anti-conscriptionist record. Lloyd Ross and Jim Healy spoke in a similar vein. The climax of the demonstration occurred when historic scenes associated with the Eureka Stockade were re-enacted, after which Charlie

Nelson called on the demonstrators to repeat Peter Lalor's famous oath ('We swear by the Southern Cross to stand truly together and fight to defend our rights and liberties'). A resolution pledging unwavering opposition to the national register was greeted with a roar of approval. The demonstrators then quietly dispersed.\(^{109}\)

The left's brave orators were soon forced to eat their words, however. On 25 July Curtin finally prevailed. After a weekend of hectic negotiations the ACTU decided to abandon its proposed boycott after Prime Minister Menzies accepted a proposal whereby private members would be allowed to introduce legislation to amend the National Registration Act so as to remove any objectionable provisions.\(^{110}\) On 27 July, only four days after the big demonstration in the Domain, Labor Council delegates were officially called upon to abide by the ACTU's decision. A lengthy debate ensued. For many left-wing delegates compromise was still out of the question. Led by Tom Wright and Lloyd Ross, the militants insisted that Menzies could not be trusted. But when a vote on the ACTU's recommendation was taken, they were outvoted, albeit narrowly: by 52 votes to 48.\(^{111}\)

The left's defeat was especially discomforting for Lloyd Ross. Shortly after the crucial vote was taken he

\(^{109}\) WW, 25 July 1939, p.3; DN, 24 July 1939, p.5; SMH, 24 July 1939, p.11; CC, 29 July 1939, p.4.

\(^{110}\) SMH, 26 July 1939, pp.15-16.

\(^{111}\) DN, 28 July 1939, p.2; SMH, 28 July 1939, p.11; AW, 2 August 1939, p.14.
discovered that the Communist Party hierarchy planned in any event to advise the militants to 'fall in line with the decisions of the leading trade union organs and preserve unity'. The ACTU executive was not to be flouted. His last ditch stand had all been in vain. The entire labour movement was still opposed to the national register in its existing form, but the basis for a purely parliamentary solution had been thrashed out. The heat had gone out of the issue. On the following Sunday the only Domain orators who supported the idea of a boycott were a couple of Trotskyite agitators from the Communist League of Australia.

The anticlimactic ending to the national register campaign only briefly obscured the ever brightening political outlook enjoyed by the militants. By mid-1939 the end of the Lang era was at hand. During the last weekend in August, at the Majestic Theatre in Newtown, the New South Wales Labor Party's long awaited unity conference was held. For most of the time Lang's opponents were in complete control. All the crucial votes went in their favour. By 205 votes to 166 caucus was empowered to elect a new state parliamentary leader (when the ballot was held, on 5 September, William McKell was chosen). The Langites earlier on had been defeated just as heavily when the conference came to vote on the decisive question of the rules to be followed in electing

112. WW, 4 August 1939, p.1; Lloyd Ross, conversation with author, 20 February 1985.
the incoming state executive. When the actual ballot was held, anti-Lang candidates were elected to 30 of the 32 available positions. The key men on the new executive were Bill Evans, the secretary, and the branch president, J.R. Hughes. As former members of the old Socialisation Committee both men no doubt relished the piquancy of the situation whereby Lang's anti-socialist coup of April 1933 had been well and truly avenged.114

The legitimacy of the anti-Langites' victory was beyond question. Before the proceedings got underway the right of every delegate to attend the conference had to be personally approved by federal ALP president C.G. Fallon, who was brought in to chair the conference. True to his right-wing AWU background, Fallon rigorously 'weeded out' any prospective delegate whom he suspected of being a Communist.115 Charlie Nelson was excluded for this reason. In like manner the eleven member delegation from the ARU was systematically culled with Tom Hickey, Jimmy Littler and Lloyd Ross being debarred from participating in the conference. In Lloyd Ross's absence the task of leading the delegation fell upon Ted Barker, who went on to become the ARU's representative on the new state executive.116 Like Lang himself, the ARU's spiritual leader was obliged

to witness the deliberations of the unity conference from the public gallery. 117

The unity conference dealt solely with organisational matters. It was enough for the time being to have ended Lang's viselike grip on the Labor Party. The issue of collective security did not come up for discussion. Such a move would have caused unnecessary complications at a time when the international situation was in a state of considerable flux. In Europe history was being made by the hour. On 24 August Russia and Germany signed their infamous non-aggression pact. Poland was invaded eight days later. On 3 September Britain declared war on Germany. Australia's involvement in the war followed automatically.

The militants at first supported the war. Their attitude was formally set out at a meeting of shop steward and union representatives convened by the Labor Council on 14 September. The full significance of the deal between Russia and Germany had yet to sink in and as a result anti-fascism was still naively equated with anti-Hitlerism. Acting in this spirit the meeting duly proclaimed that the trade union movement fully supported the United Kingdom. The Australian working class, it was agreed, had a 'definite interest in the defeat of Fascism'. Although pro-war, the delegates were determined not to be misconstrued. They took particular

117. Ibid., 18 February 1941, p.2.
care to reaffirm their unwavering opposition to conscription and the Menzies government.118

Following the partition of Poland it became increasingly clear that Russia and Germany were working in unison. The militants were accordingly forced to redefine their position. The same ideological categories were deployed, but their relationship was radically altered. Anti-fascism no longer was directly equated with anti-Hitlerism. Indeed it soon seemed difficult to imagine how such an equation could ever have been made in the first place. 'Fascism', as Edgar Ross had already pointed out, 'was not a German but a capitalist product'.119 By the final week in October the militants had come round to directing their anti-fascist zeal solely against their own capitalist government to the exclusion of all other considerations. The flurry of support for the United Kingdom vanished, leaving opposition to conscription as the sole determinant of the militants' official attitude to the war.

The Labor Council's change of heart was largely brought about through the efforts of Tom Wright, who formed the link between the left-wing unions and the Communist Party hierarchy, which naturally had a particular interest in the international situation. It was Wright who initially arranged

119. Ibid.
the official chorus of pro-war sentiment, and the subsequent retreat to an anti-war position was performed at his instigation as well. It was only by being admitted to Wright's confidence that some inkling could be obtained of what was going on. Edgar Ross acted as Wright's adjutant at Labor Council meetings and as such needed to be kept informed of current party thinking. His brother, by way of contrast, was treated in a distinctly offhand manner. Aggressively proletarian in outlook, Wright had long resented the presence of intellectuals in the party and fraternal organisations generally. Lloyd Ross knew that Wright 'hated' him for precisely this reason. Their association was purely political at the best of times and throughout the spring of 1939 it no longer functioned even at this level.

Despite some misgivings Lloyd Ross accepted the left's initial pro-war stance - an editorial to this effect appeared in Railroad on 5 September - but thereafter he was studiously kept in the dark. He first learnt about the new anti-war 'line' at a trade union retreat held under the auspices of the WEA during the weekend of 20-22 October. The purpose of the gathering was to give leading trade union executives a chance to discuss the likely impact of the war

121. 'Fergie & I argued with Lloyd, convincing him - as I thought - that the war against Hitler had to be supported'. Eileen Powell, letter to author, 1 November 1987.
on their activities.123 During the Sunday morning session Wright summed up the militants' new position on the war in the following blunt terms: 'the attitude of Australian trade unionists would be one of opposition'.124 Afterwards Edgar Ross expressed a similar point of view. Stunned by the apparent radical change in direction, Lloyd quizzed his brother as to whether it was still permissible to uphold the 'old' objective of 'defending democracy against fascism'.125 Thereupon tempers appeared to have become somewhat frayed. Certainly in the Trotskyite press it was later pointed out with some glee that Lloyd and Edgar had eventually 'got into holts' at the weekend school.126

Following the revelation of 22 October Lloyd Ross manfully defended a policy that he had in no way helped to frame. He remained loyal to the spirit of working-class solidarity. The first meeting of the ARU state council after war was declared took place at the end of November. The task of ensuring that the union fully endorsed the latest set of anti-war principles was duly attended to. After reiterating the importance of 'genuine collective security' Lloyd Ross called on the council to condemn the war in the name of Australia's sacred anti-conscriptionist heritage. Under the Menzies government, he argued, the defence effort was

123. AH, 15 October 1939, p.ii.
125. Militant, November 1939, p.4.
126. Ibid.
necessarily pursued with the interests of British imperialism and domestic capitalism uppermost in mind. The British government was eager to turn the war into a crusade against the Soviet Union; collaboration with Menzies and Chamberlain was clearly out of the question. The delegates accepted this line of reasoning and endorsed Lloyd Ross's anti-war resolution.127

The ARU state council met on the eve of the Russian invasion of Finland. Following the news of this event Lloyd Ross experienced no difficulty in defending Russia's action whilst at the same time advocating an anti-war position on the domestic front. On 5 December, in a Railroad editorial, he set out to show that the invasion of Finland, whilst certainly by no means a welcome development, could nonetheless be amply justified. In an imperfect world, he argued, the Soviet Union was obliged at times to be ruthless in its defence of international socialism. Invading Finland guaranteed Leningrad's safety. A counter-revolutionary assault engineered by the Allies was a distinct possibility so far as Lloyd Ross was concerned. 'We are', he insisted, 'as concerned with the preservation of socialism in Russia as we are with the defence of Australia'.128 In the following week's Railroad similar sentiments were likewise expressed: 'We are for the Soviet, while the reactionaries of the world are against socialism'.129

127. Railroad, 12 December 1939, p.11.
128. Ibid., 5 December 1939, p.1.
129. Ibid., 12 December 1939, p.6.
The Railroad editorials on Finland were written in defence of a deeply unpopular point of view. Most Australians, had they read what Lloyd Ross had to say, would have found his line of reasoning completely unintelligible. Certainly by the end of 1939 the militants of the ARU, along with their comrades in the other left-wing unions and the Communist Party, were deploying a peculiar political vocabulary. Although war had been declared on Nazi Germany, they saw the fascist enemy elsewhere. Lloyd Ross's vision was so skewed that he was prepared to defend the bombing of Helsinki even though he was the nominal head of the Australian peace movement. In the months ahead this contradiction would be unravelled, but at a tremendous cost.
At the end of 1939, with his initial misgivings having been overcome, Lloyd Ross was fully in accord with the Communist Party's revised attitude to the war in Europe. Having publicly defended the Soviet invasion of Finland, he could now surely be relied upon to staunchly support a pro-Soviet line in the future as well. Against the background of the increasingly repressive atmosphere of wartime Australia the controversy he already generated as an advocate of left-wing ideas expanded proportionately as the anti-war movement, in which he figured prominently, steadily gained momentum.

Throughout the summer of 1939-40 Lloyd Ross tirelessly championed the cause of pro-Soviet internationalism. On Friday, 15 December, he attended a special executive meeting of the League for Peace and Democracy. Along with the other leading lights of the organisation he proceeded to endorse the Communist Party's action in suspending the appointment of the LPD secretary, Jim Rawling, who had refused to accept the official party line on Finland. The
forthcoming January edition of the LPD journal had had to be pulped because it featured openly heretical views on the subject.¹

Although stunned at Rawling's sudden fall from favour - he had nothing but admiration for the man's work both as a scholar and political researcher² - Lloyd Ross dutifully carried out his allotted task. In his capacity as national president of the anti-war movement he signed the official letter in which it was announced that the LPD no longer required Rawling's services.³

In advocating pro-Soviet views Lloyd Ross continued to benefit from capitalist patronage. In the eyes of many influential non-Labor people he remained left-wing trade unionism's only presentable spokesman. From 17 December onwards he had his own column in the Sunday Telegraph. The proper tone was established in his very first contribution. Many trade unionists, he observed, firmly opposed the pro-war stance adopted by John Curtin and the Federal parliamentary party. Curtin had been a staunch isolationist up until 3 September 1939. Since then, however, he had steadfastly supported Australia's involvement in a foreign war. The left-wing proponents of collective security were unimpressed: 'those who demanded action for Czechoslovakia are likely to

1. Royal Commission Inquiring into Communist Party in Victoria, Minutes, pp.2505-10; Tribune, 19 December 1939, p.3.
2. Lloyd Ross, conversation with author, 12 October 1983.
influence the Labor Movement to become more and more critical towards the aims and methods of the present war'. The Labor Council demanded a statement of war aims and favoured the calling of a peace conference. Despite the clash between pro-war and anti-war attitudes, the labour movement could be relied upon to act as a single cohesive force whenever it was a question of opposing the unceasing efforts on the part of the federal government and employers to curb the civil liberties and standard of living of the Australian people.4

The left at this time firmly believed that a concerted attempt to undermine established civil liberties was underway. On 24 December Communist speakers in the Domain were menaced by a group of 200 off-duty soldiers and their supporters. During the course of the fracas a Communist Party flag was desecrated. A similar disturbance occurred the following week.5 The need to defend the right of free speech in the face of such open provocation seemed obvious. On 4 January, at its first meeting for the year, the Labor Council announced that, in line with the spirit of working-class solidarity, it intended to do all it could to uphold the right of Communist Party members to speak in the Domain. In accordance with this decision Lloyd Ross, Jim Healy, Ernie Thornton and Albert Thompson agreed to speak from the Communist Party platform in the Domain on the

following Sunday afternoon. In the event the four men did not experience scenes similar to those of the two previous weeks since there were fewer soldiers around on holiday leave. There was no scope for complacency, however. In a letter to the press Lloyd Ross foresaw similar jingoistic attempts to silence left-wing and working-class groups. Trade unionists had to be ever alert. 'A victory for freedom won now - before the profiteers, militarists and reactionaries gather their strength - will mean a triumph for us all'.

The miniature free speech campaign of January 1940 was Lloyd Ross's opening left-wing engagement for the year. Other indications of his steadfastness were soon forthcoming. On 15 January he attended a full meeting of the national council of the LPD at which Rawling's suspension was made official and moves set in train to expel him from the organisation. A fortnight later Lloyd Ross travelled to Canberra to attend the annual Australian Institute of Political Science summer school. Whilst in the national capital he did nothing to diminish his reputation as the organisation's favourite left winger. The immediate question at hand, he informed fellow members, was whether, in the midst of a national crisis, the working class could afford to trust the federal UAP government given that it was tied in with 'monopolies, vested interests and outworn ideals'. With

6. *AW*, 10 January 1940, p.4; *Tribune*, 5 January 1940, p.1, 9 January 1940, pp.1,3; *SMH*, 8 January 1940, p.11.
8. ABL, N57/469, Minutes of National Council, Australian League for Peace and Democracy, 15 January 1940.
the Depression barely behind them workers were now expected to make further sacrifices even though the war's real purpose was completely obscure. Disaffection was inevitable.9

Lloyd Ross's resourcefulness in promoting left-wing ideas was a source of endless irritation to his ideological opponents. The Langites were incensed at the Sunday Telegraph's action in providing him with the chance to become a newspaper columnist.10 A further outburst of factional rancour was occasioned after the Labor Council decided to include Lloyd Ross in a forthcoming delegation to the International Labour Organisation in Geneva.11 The Langites' displeasure on this account was alleviated shortly afterwards when it became clear that the trip was not feasible because of the exigencies of the war.12 Within the security service considerable satisfaction was generated when it was learnt that for once the plans of 'the directing brains of the CP. of A.' - as Lloyd Ross was now labelled13 - had been thwarted.

There was an industrial counterpart to Lloyd Ross's detachment from the war effort. Throughout the first half of

9. For the official transcript of Lloyd Ross's various comments at the 1940 AIPS summer school see Australian Institute of Political Science Papers, ML MSS 1835, Box Y12907.
11. AW, 7 February 1940, p.9; Century, 9 February 1940, p.2.
12. SMH, 28 February 1940, p.12.
13. AA, CRS A6119[168], W.R. Hodgson, Secretary, Department of External Affairs to Director, Commonwealth Investigation Branch, 27 February 1940.
1940 the New South Wales railway authorities had to contend with widespread industrial discontent. There was nothing premeditated about this development, but on the other hand the ARU did nothing to discourage it. The ideological background could not be ignored. The war, the militants agreed, posed a grave threat to working-class conditions; determined trade union action was needed to meet the challenge. A preparedness on the part of railwaymen to enter into industrial disputes was more important than ever. Full support from their union could be expected.14

The spark required to turn ideology into action was provided by the Broken Hill fettlers, who had not forgotten their success in spearheading the campaign for bank-to-bank conditions two years earlier. Beginning in mid-1939 the Broken Hill line was the scene of a prolonged industrial dispute. On 13 July, after an earlier and more extensive set of demands had been rejected, local fettlers decided to begin strike action in support of a claim for an increased climatic allowance. Four weeks later, on 11 August, they voted to go back to work after the Conciliation and Arbitration Court agreed to consider the climatic allowance issue in relation to the whole state. The court's eventual decision on the matter, although announced on 22 December, hardly amounted to a Christmas present. An increase in the climatic allowance was granted to fettlers working in other areas in the far north west but no increase at all was granted to the fettlers

of Broken Hill. To make matters worse, the court decreed that for single men the allowance was to be reduced by 1/- a day (although this reduction was not to be applied to railwaymen already working in the area). An appeal from the men at Broken Hill to the Railways Commissioner to attend to the matter by way of an administrative order got nowhere. Thereupon they decided to resume the dispute. On 15 January, following the Christmas holiday period, fettlers situated between Menindee and Broken Hill went out on strike.15

The events at Broken Hill encouraged railwaymen elsewhere in New South Wales to resort to industrial action, both out of sympathy and in order to pursue particular grievances of their own. On 4 February the shunters at Enfield decided to begin working strictly according to rule.16 During the following two weeks similar action on the part of other railwaymen occurred at Thirroul, Cootamundra and the Darling Harbour goods yard.17

In line with Lloyd Ross's standard approach, the Broken Hill dispute was accompanied by a full-scale ARU publicity campaign. In an effort to highlight the grievances of the strikers the union prepared countless bulletins,

16. SMH, 5 February 1940, p.10.
17. Ibid., 12 February 1940, p.13, 19 February 1940, p.13, 28 February 1940, p.15; Sun, 21 February 1940, p.6.
leaflets, circulars and posters and inundated the Railways Commissioner with letters and telegrams. Petitions, deputations and public meetings were arranged and publicity material was supplied to wireless stations and newspapers. The railway authorities sought to respond in kind. Official statements were inserted in the press and 15,000 copies of the departmental publication, *Railway Digest*, were distributed.\(^\text{18}\)

The railway disputes of 1940 reinforced the ARU's 'Communistic' image. As had been the case with the great strike of 1917, the onset of industrial disruption at a time of war - albeit only in the form of the 'Phoney War' - inevitably meant that allegations of 'disloyalty' quickly surfaced. On 25 January Transport Minister Bruxner declared that the dispute at Broken Hill had been fomented solely by 'a communist element'.\(^\text{19}\) In time, as the strike dragged on, Bruxner was backed up by the Railways Commissioner, who asserted that 95 per cent of railwaymen were 'not only efficient, but loyal'.\(^\text{20}\) As in the past they had been led astray by a handful of 'disruptionists'.\(^\text{21}\)

Bruxner was determined to maintain the pressure. Early in March he treated state parliament to a full-blooded attack on the ARU. He dwelt on the union's 1931 decision

\(^{18}\) Eighteen Months of Activity and Achievement, pp.19-22,25.

\(^{19}\) SMH, 26 January 1940, p.12.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 8 March 1940, p.10.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 19 March 1940, p.9.
to seek affiliation with the Red International of Labor Unions. He likewise came up with the allegation that Lloyd Ross had attended a sacrilegious mock-burial of a non-striker at Menindee. Lloyd Ross was quick to reply to both charges. He pointed out that the 1931 decision had never been acted upon and denied being involved in the incident at Menindee, although the practice of staging mock-burials, he added, had long been accepted as a legitimate form of strike action in the Broken Hill area.23

The altercation between Bruxner and Ross occurred on the eve of the fourteenth biennial meeting of the ARU national council. Originally scheduled to take place in September 1939, the council had been postponed because of the outbreak of the war. The council was finally convened on 11 March by which time federal ARU endorsement of the left-wing anti-war position was taken for granted. In official reports presented to the delegates Tim Moroney and Jim Chapple vigorously defended Russia's invasion of Finland. Their remarks were taken up by Lloyd Ross and Tom Hickey, who together secured the adoption of separate resolutions incorporating the standard left-wing view regarding Britain's supposed intention of turning the war against Germany into a war against the Soviet Union. For his part Lloyd Ross

25. NLA MS 3939, Box 1, 1940 Australian Council Minutes, pp.15-16,19.
was determined not to be swayed by the fear of an anti-communist witchhunt. His defiant attitude was evident in a report on state branch activities presented to the council in which he noted that Transport Minister Bruxner seemed willing to base his case against the state branch solely upon mendacious anti-ARU propaganda put out by the NUR. There was no Communist plot afoot, he later insisted. 'Our attitude to the foreign policy of the Soviet has no relation whatever to the assistance we are giving to the men [at Broken Hill] who, by their own decision, went on strike for better conditions'.

In view of the ARU's general class war position Lloyd Ross's disclaimer was unlikely to impress the New South Wales government. Bruxner responded by issuing a further hostile press statement. Industrial disruption during wartime - the coalminers were on strike as well - would not be tolerated, the minister asserted.

In the case of the ARU, the full import of Bruxner's series of warnings was about to be revealed. On 18 March deregistration proceedings against the union were formally instituted by the Railways Commissioner. The Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Court was provided with a statement in which it was alleged that the ARU no longer deserved to be recognised as a legitimate industrial

26. Ibid., p.5.
27. SMH, 14 March 1940, p.10.
28. Ibid., 16 March 1940, p.17.
organisation on account of its having incited 'certain of its members to subvert discipline, order, and good management in the working of the New South Wales Government railways'.

The threat of deregistration further enhanced Lloyd Ross's reputation as an ideological purist. By now he was 'at the top of [his] career as a Left winger'. Action on the political and industrial fronts was occurring simultaneously. Already his ARU national council resolution relating to the danger of a diversionary war against Russia had been forwarded to the state ALP, along with the similar resolution moved by Tom Hickey. Both resolutions were included on the agenda for the forthcoming state ALP conference, which was due to begin its deliberations on Good Friday, 22 March.

Lloyd Ross was duly empowered to attend the state conference as an ARU delegate. The other two railwaymen excluded from the August unity conference, Tom Hickey and Jimmy Littler, were likewise selected. On the night before the proceedings got underway Lloyd Ross received a message from the Communist Party instructing him to stay away from the conference. The party was convinced that he would be excluded a second time and 'did not want a split or an

29. Ibid., 19 March 1940, p.13.
31. ABL, Transport Workers' Union of Australia, NSW Branch, T29/10/18, Agenda, 1940 ALP State Conference, p.7.
32. Railroad, 19 March 1940, p.11.
argument on this simple personal issue'. In the event he chose to ignore this instruction. His action was soon vindicated once the conference got underway. Not only was he not excluded, but he went on to play a key role in the proceedings. Along with another Communist (Bill Gollan) and a suspected Communist (J.R. Hughes) he was elected to the special War and Defence Committee with state parliamentary leader McKell being brought in as an advisor. The four men were expected to draw up an official statement to be presented to the delegates based upon the anti-war resolutions that had been sent in by the affiliated unions (notably the ARU) and ALP branches.

Although restricted to merely advising the committee, McKell from the outset was determined to ensure that no embarrassing consequences flowed from its deliberations. For the most part he was prepared to accept the firm anti-war position favoured by the three left-wing members of the committee. The depth of their feeling on the issue was clearly revealed in the proposed statement as formulated by Hughes:

We declare that the Australian people have nothing to gain from the continuance of the war. On the contrary, the management of the war in the hands of the anti-Labour Menzies Government, in association with the anti-Labour Chamberlain Government, means that the war is being pursued in the interests of big finance and monopolists.

33. TRC 236, 2:1/19.
34. Tribune, 26 March 1940, p.1. For a pre-conference assessment of Hughes's position see NLA MS 2070/1/1, H.E. Boote diary (1940), 15 March 1940.
35. SMH, 25 March 1940, p.8; Bill Gollan, letter to author, 16 August 1987.
However there had to be limits. McKell 'was opposed to the introduction of the Soviet question'. Nothing should be done to arouse the electorate's fear of Communism. To this end McKell prevailed upon the Agenda Committee to delete a passage from the proposed statement which set out the standard left-wing view regarding the imminence of a diversionary war against the Soviet Union. The offending passage read as follows:

The conference makes it clear that, while being opposed to Australian participation in oversea conflicts, it is also opposed to any effort of the anti-Labour Government to change the direction of the present war by an aggressive act against any other country with which we are not at war, including the Soviet Union.

McKell's action triggered off a left-wing revolt. Ever the purist, Lloyd Ross was determined to ensure that the proposed anti-war statement was accepted in its entirety. He immediately protested when Hughes presented the truncated version of the statement to the full conference and proceeded to insist that the statement should instead be presented in its original form. In view of his evident determination to press the issue, his request was acceded to whereupon Hughes called on the delegates to pass a resolution endorsing both versions of the statement. In the course of his remarks Hughes noted that "Hands off Russia" is the policy of the labor movement today, as it has been in the past.

Although eager to take part in the debate, McKell was precluded from doing so on a technicality. The case for removing the offending passage was thus deprived of its leading advocate. The decisive moment in the debate came when the Langite stalwart P.J. Keller called on the two junior members of the War and Defence Committee to express their views on the words in question. Both men readily complied. Bill Gollan spoke first, attacking the bona fides of the British government. It was then Lloyd Ross's turn to speak. He began by complimenting Keller on his having finally discovered the joys of free speech:

... Mr. Keller's motion enabling him to make a special address reminded him of the invitation extended by the spider to the fly. (Laughter.)

Perhaps Mr. Keller hoped that he, Ross, might be drawn into an attack on Mr. McKell on the question of mentioning the Soviet Union.

Or perhaps Mr. Keller hoped that he would spend a lot of time defending the Soviet action in Poland and Finland, which did not need defending.

Amidst a hail of interjections and points of order he pressed on to his conclusion:

Mr. Curtin ... points out that the lives of Australians are very much more valuable to us than the profits of the oil millionaires who want the Baku oil wells.

We agree with that. Do the country people of this Commonwealth want to fight a war on behalf of the oil monopolists? (Shouts of No, no!) There [is] no doubt in my mind that within a very few months we may be asked to stand side by side with the British imperialists, in a war against the only Socialist country in the world.

40. SMH, 28 March 1940, p.9, 29 March 1940, p.10.
We find some people - Bruxner, the Minister for Transport, is one of them - who try to tell us that any struggle for decent conditions, any intelligent policy, is Red propaganda.

We find other people who say that if we don't join the imperialists in attacking the Soviet Union, we won't win an election! (Laughter.)

The fact, of course, is that if we don't make this stand, we won't have any elections to win! (Applause.)

Upon completing his remarks Lloyd Ross received a further round of applause which, as an exultant Tribune reporter observed, 'swept the hall, which was packed to the doors; then swept back again, rising to a crescendo, falling, then rising in equal volume again'. The speech demonstrated that Lloyd Ross was 'perhaps the outstanding orator among Australia's Labor leaders'. Success capped off his efforts. Following his speech Hughes's 'Hands Off Russia' resolution was carried decisively, by 195 votes to 88. This result was far from an unqualified ideological triumph, however. Amidst the excitement generated by Lloyd Ross's dramatic intervention the actual content of the War and Defence Committee's draft statement had been largely ignored with attention being focussed solely on the highly contentious 'Hands Off Russia' paragraph. The final resolution 'became headlines and the theorising at the beginning of the statement was completely forgotten'.

41. Tribune, 26 March 1940, p.3. The comment by Curtin appeared in SMH, 6 February 1940, p.11.
42. Tribune, 26 March 1940, p.3.
43. TRC 236, 2:1/20.
In the wake of the state conference Lloyd Ross set about the task of 'selling' the by now infamous 'Hands Off Russia' resolution. On 27 March he used the occasion of the ARU's 1940 state conference to reiterate his support for the resolution. Once again he scornfully brushed aside talk of possible adverse electoral consequences. 'The only things worth while in our history have been those which we have been charged with putting forward to lose elections'. The great danger was not electoral defeat, but a war with the Soviet Union. The war against Germany was an imperialist-capitalist venture and as such posed a serious challenge to the international socialist movement of which the ARU formed a part. After an extensive debate the delegates proceeded, by 37 votes to 13, to endorse the 'Hands Off Russia' resolution.44

The parliamentary leadership of the ALP failed to share Lloyd Ross's enthusiasm for the contentious resolution. A concerted effort to overturn the decision of the Easter Conference was soon underway. Curtin and McKell led the way in reaffirming Labor's loyalty to the British Empire. On 12 April the federal executive ordered the state party to expunge the resolution from its records. The request was promptly acceded to. Despite having triumphed at the Easter Conference Labor's anti-war wing now stood on the defensive

44. Tribune, 2 April 1940, p.1; DN, 29 March 1940, p.5; Minutes of State Conference of the Australian Railways Union N.S.W. Branch ... March 27, 28 and 29, 1940, Sydney, 1940, pp.20-23.
following Germany's invasion of Denmark and Norway on 9 April. Determined to exploit this situation to the full, the federal executive went on to warn the state branch against entering into any form of collaboration with the Communist Party. 45

The speedy disavowal of the 'Hands Off Russia' resolution, while restoring the state executive's standing in the eyes of the federal party, immediately precipitated a new factional upheaval in New South Wales. With the federal party now appeased, the state executive was at last in a position to move against the pro-Lang wing of the party, which was still determined to reverse the decisions of the August 1939 unity conference. A purge seemed imminent. Well aware that this was the case, Lang decided to get out before the axe fell. On 18 April he announced the formation of a breakaway group which went by the name of the Australian Labor Party (non-Communist). 46 Lang's parliamentary spokesman in Canberra was, as on previous occasions, Jack Beasley. On 2 May members of the House of Representatives were notified of the formation of the new party. Later on in the day Beasley delivered a speech in which he proceeded to detail the extent of Communist influence in the New South Wales branch of the ALP, culminating with an account of the activities of Lloyd Ross and the notorious War and Defence Committee. 47

46. Ibid., pp.38-39.
47. CPD, vol. 163, 2 May 1940, pp.490-500.
However the Easter Conference was already ancient history. Despite being the ultimate begetter of the 'Hands Off Russia' resolution, Lloyd Ross fully acquiesced in the state executive's decision not to make a stand on the issue. He was willing to accept the view that 'the re-establishment of the dictatorship of Mr. Lang was too high a price to be paid for a resolution'. At the same time he was still prepared to insist that 'no retreat can alter the outlook of the rank-and-file'.

Lloyd Ross was unwilling to admit that the main reason why he was prepared to countenance a policy of retreat on the political front was because he was confronted with more immediate problems in his own domain. Yet this undoubtedly was the case. The campaign of industrial disruption that had dragged on since January was about to come to a sorry end. On 12 April the Broken Hill fettlers voted to go back to work in line with a recommendation from the ARU. The various 'regulations strikes' which had been so cheerfully entered into were similarly abandoned, although not all at once. With supplies coming in from Adelaide Broken Hill had scarcely been affected by the strike. Moreover the line was not a profit-making venture so that the railway authorities had an added incentive to dig in. The obvious ineffectiveness of the

48. ST, 21 April 1940, p.15.
49. SMH, 13 April 1940, p.17.
50. Ibid., 25 April 1940, p.8.
51. TRC 236, 1:2/27.
strike, along with the threat of deregistration, served to weaken the union's fighting resolve. The end finally came when the ARU's weekly strike levy netted only half of the sum required to maintain the Broken Hill fettlers.52 It was clear that many ARU members were concerned at the course the union was following. In these circumstances the struggle had to be abandoned. The ARU's troubles were far from over, however. The industrial campaign of 1940 was over, but the deregistration proceedings in the Arbitration Court were still pending.53

Meanwhile the retreat on the broader political front continued as well. On 16 April another ACTU national congress opened in Sydney. The labour movement's position in relation to the war effort came up for debate on the afternoon of 18 April when the executive called upon the delegates to endorse the federal ALP's decision to support Australia's involvement in the war. The militants strongly opposed this recommendation. The need to maintain rigid opposition to the entire programme of the Menzies government was insisted upon by a string of left-wing speakers - Ernie Thornton, Tom Wright, Lloyd Ross, Jock Garden - all of whom lauded Russia as the only world power which could be regarded as truly anti-imperialist and anti-fascist. With the congress being held away from Melbourne the politically moderate Victorian

53. SMH, 10 April 1940, p.15.
delegation was smaller in size when compared with previous congresses but notwithstanding this advantage the militants still failed to carry the day. When a vote was called for, the ALP's stance was duly endorsed, albeit by an extremely narrow margin: by 67 votes to 65.

As the left's position worsened, Lloyd Ross drew comfort from the increasingly embattled position he found himself in. 'Those who hold very determinedly to certain working-class doctrines', he bravely insisted, 'are treated almost as pariahs'. He felt certain that the accommodating ways of Labor's parliamentary wing - and Curtin's 'genial futility' in particular - did the movement no good at all. An alternative course had to be mapped out. In his column in the Sunday Telegraph Lloyd Ross sought as ever to present the views of 'the most active, sincere, and courageous members of the rank-and-file' and in this way hoped to curtail the scope for compromise. Perhaps he was too outspoken in this regard for his services, at the end of May, were quietly dispensed with. He certainly went down fighting. In his final article he referred to the recent appointment of Essington Lewis as Director-General of Munitions, arguing that the move was entirely consistent with the anti-working-class nature of the war.

54. Cf. LC, 25 April 1940, p.5.
55. ABL, S784, Box 1, 1940 ACTU Congress Minutes, pp.17-23; SMH, 20 April 1940, p.18; DN, 20 April 1940, p.5.
58. Ibid., 26 May 1940, p.15.
Lloyd Ross, as a good fundamentalist, continued to display a deep reverence for Labor's heroic past. 1940 was a bumper year from this point of view. During the autumn the state branch of the ALP organised a round of commemorative celebrations to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the party in New South Wales. A concerted effort was made to tie in the jubilee with the party's wartime propaganda activities. On 16 February, in the course of soliciting material for an official jubilee booklet, the Labor stalwart J.B. Sweeney informed Brian Fitzpatrick that the party wanted the publication to have 'as reasonably Left a tone as is possible'. The finished product duly met this requirement. Apart from Fitzpatrick the contributors included Bill McNamara, Jessie Street, Edgar Ross, H.V. Evatt, Henry Boote, E.J. Brady and Lloyd Ross (whose contribution dealt with the connection between Australian literature and Labor politics). Overall, as a Sydney Morning Herald reviewer noted, the contributors tended 'to subordinate interesting historical material to socialistic and anti-conscription propaganda'. Had there been no ideological fervour present, however, the antiquarian zeal of the contributors would likewise have been lacking. Certainly Lloyd Ross displayed this tendency to the full. Throughout the period of the jubilee his historical imagination

59. Brian Fitzpatrick Papers, NLA MS 4965/1/1128.
61. SMH, 27 April 1940, p.10.
flourished alongside his anti-war zeal. Late in February party secretary Evans noted Lloyd Ross's enthusiasm for publicising the anniversary as evidenced by his role in arranging for the preparation of some jubilee leaflets. At about this same time he also was able, in collaboration with Frank Dalby Davison, to put together a theatrical piece in which the course of Australian labour history was chronicled. The play was later performed at the ALP's official jubilee rally.

The militants' invocation of history was incessant. Beginning on 14 April, Transport House was the venue for a series of WEA lectures in which the history and policies of the Labor Party were examined by various sympathetic speakers. Lloyd Ross delivered the final lecture in the series on 12 May. In his address he concentrated upon the pleasing dissimilarities between 1914 and 1939. 'In 1914 Labor was absolutely bewildered, but at the beginning of this war, although they were confused, they quickly responded to the real attitude Labor should adopt'. It was up to the party to expose the futility of the war effort.

There was no let up in Lloyd Ross's constant schedule of political activities. On 15 April he spoke at a

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63. Railroad, 13 February 1940, p.6; DN, 18 March 1940, p.6, 19 March 1940, p.2.
64. AH, 13 April 1940, p.33; Railroad, 9 April 1940, p.2.
65. DN, 13 May 1940, p.3.
major anti-conscription rally - in his remarks he was careful to invoke the spirit of Eureka - while on the following night he defended Russia's foreign policy in a public debate. Shortly thereafter he agreed to take part in a public meeting arranged by the Left Book Club at which the subject for discussion was the parlous condition of democracy in wartime Australia. In further anti-authoritarian gestures, he signed an open letter protesting against recent attempts to censor the magazine Soviets To-day and helped Dr. Eric Dark (the husband of the novelist) to prepare a leaflet which likewise dealt with the issue of civil liberties.

The advent of the annual May Day celebrations in 1940 presented Lloyd Ross with yet another opportunity to proclaim his radicalism. On the afternoon of 5 May he was one of the speakers who addressed the Labor Council's May Day rally. The Domain that afternoon was rain-sodden but Lloyd Ross's enthusiasm was unaffected. Among other things he inveighed against the censorship of trade union mail and left-wing literature. In both cases his remarks were animated by personal experience. The postal authorities had

66. Tribune, 19 April 1940, pp.1,3; SMH, 16 April 1940, p.10; DN, 16 April 1940, p.2.
67. Ibid., 17 April 1940, p.6.
68. CC, 27 April 1940, p.8; Tribune, 26 April 1940, p.1.
69. ABL, N5/689, J.A. Smith (FSU) to J. Chapple, 16 May 1940.
70. NLA MS 4965/1/1174, E.P. Dark to Brian Fitzpatrick, 14 May 1940.
71. Tribune 7 May 1940, p.1; DN, 6 May 1940, p.1; SMH, 6 May 1940, p.11.
begun to intercept ARU mail and already Railroad had been subjected to censorship on a number of occasions.

Left-wing politics remained a thriving concern for the entire Ross family. Stina Ross joined Lloyd in contributing to the round of May Day activities and even their seven-year-old son David got into the act by publishing a poem in the Left Book Club's poetry journal. Edgar Ross was firmly aligned with the anti-war cause, both as a journalist and speaker. Like his brother he was eager to take up the issue of civil liberties and did much to publicise the left's fear of a diversionary war against the Soviet Union. From the outset he was involved in the official anti-conscription campaign organised jointly by the Labor Council and the state branch of the ALP.

On 10 May Germany invaded France and the Low Countries, thereby bringing the Phoney War to an end. The political climate in Australia became increasingly chilly as the situation in Europe worsened. On 15 June the Communist Party was declared to be a proscribed political organisation. Even its dissolution served to strengthen Lloyd Ross's

72. NMH, 30 March 1940, p.9; SMH, 30 March 1940, p.17.
73. NLA MS 3939, Box 22, Lloyd Ross, 'Only the Working Class Can Defend Australia' [1940], pp.53-55.
74. Boote diary, 3 May 1940.
75. Ibid., 30 March 1940; David Ross, 'Shadows', The People's Poetry, Jan-Feb. 1940, p.15.
76. DN, 3 June 1940, p.5.
77. AW, 21 February 1940, p.7; Tribune, 12 April 1940, p.4.
78. AW, 6 March 1940, p.2.
identification with subversive causes. On the night the party was banned the official Communist bookshop in Hay Street, Sydney, was raided by the police. A large amount of material - 'office files, newspapers, newspaper cuttings, and books' - was carted away. Included among the confiscated material were 411 unsold copies of Lloyd Ross's biography of William Lane. On the same night the police raided the premises of the New Theatre League. Once again books and equipment were confiscated, although Lloyd Ross's copy of the official Tolpuddle centenary volume was left behind since it featured an inscription from the eminently respectable Sir Walter Citrine. The police also visited the homes of political suspects including a number of Lloyd Ross's friends, but he himself was spared this indignity. There was 'a sort of agreement that nothing could be done to trade union officials'.

Overall at this time it was hard for the ARU not to conclude that it was caught up in the general campaign being waged against left-wing organisations. Formally at least, the continuing deregistration case posed a serious threat to the union's future activities. The judge hearing the case, Sir George Beeby, made no attempt to hide the politicised nature of the proceedings. On 26 April Sir George stated that the only reason why he was not prepared to order

79. AA, Attorney-General's Department, CRS A467, Special Files, 1905-51, No.42, Bundle 90, Items 1 and 3 and Bundle 93, Item 52.
81. TRC 236, 2:1/30.
immediate deregistration was because he was convinced that in the course of the Broken Hill dispute most railwaymen had been led astray by a number of abusive and mendacious articles appearing in Railroad. In reply the union's counsel admitted that, in the wake of the dispute, the ARU had come to realise that its traditional policy of simultaneously denigrating and utilising the arbitration system was no longer viable.82 A fortnight later, when the matter again came before him, Sir George suggested that ARU members and officials who favoured arbitration should do their utmost 'to restrain extremist leaders fomenting direct action from political motives'. Sir George decided to withhold his final judgement until 16 July in order to provide the rank-and-file with an opportunity to state conclusively whether they preferred arbitration or direct action. ARU officials, should direct action be forsworn, were expected to come up with satisfactory assurances to the effect that they fully intended to obey the decision. Overall Sir George's hostile attitude to Lloyd Ross and his left-wing comrades remained unaltered. 'If I were dealing only with the New South Wales branch of the organisation,' he stated, 'I would not hesitate to deregister the union under its present leadership. It would be far better to allow those rail men who believe in arbitration to form a new union and apply for re-registration'.83

82. SMH, 27 April 1940, p.17.
83. Ibid., 10 May 1940, p.11.
Following Sir George Beeby's statement, Lloyd Ross - who was well aware that most railwaymen were not prepared to renounce arbitration – set out to provide the necessary assurances. Mass meetings of railwaymen and trips by ARU organisers, taking in most sub-branches, were arranged. Stan Wyatt visited railwaymen between Bourke and Bathurst while Lloyd Ross and Jack Ferguson covered the sub-branches between South Brisbane and Albury. The entire month of June was set aside for the purpose of gauging the state of opinion in the ARU regarding the respective merits of direct action and arbitration. In the event all the sub-branches, with the sole exception of Coff's Harbour, rejected the idea of by-passing the arbitration system, choosing instead to endorse the following resolution: 'That the State council affirms its policy as one of arbitration, instructs executive officers to give effect to that policy, and instructs the union organ to carry out the policy so outlined'. The union's surrender was complete and further humiliation was unnecessary. On 16 July, after having been informed of the ARU's position, Sir George Beeby agreed to terminate the deregistration proceedings.

The New South Wales branch's decision to abandon its formal commitment to class war doctrines was an important

84. At the 1942 Australian Council of the ARU he stated that 'when the judge intimated that he was prepared to adjourn the matter while we consulted the Branches, we knew that we were saved.' (NLA MS 3939, Box 1, Minutes, p.7).

85. SMH, 17 July 1940, p.6.
moment in the ideological history of the ARU. Despite being thoroughly immersed in the arbitration system, the railway militants had long been energised by the myth of direct action. Their efforts in the industrial relations field had been directed to preparing ARU members for the great day when they would at last be willing to rely solely on their own strength when pursuing their industrial demands rather than having to seek recourse to the cumbersome processes of conciliation and arbitration. Resolute struggle and open confrontation with the capitalist system and the state apparatus was the great Sorelian myth that drove them on. In the aftermath of the disastrous strikes of 1940 that myth had had to be forsworn.

Following the end of the deregistration proceedings the ARU needed a period of respite in order to regroup its forces after which, hopefully, it could begin turning its pledge to obey the arbitration system to its advantage. Real if modest progress could be expected in this regard. Already Sir George Beeby had promised to investigate allegations of needless delay in the hearing of arbitration cases involving railwaymen.86

In point of fact, however, the threat of deregistration turned out to be the prelude to an even greater period of tribulation for the ARU. A far more explosive ideological situation had now arisen. Along with

86. Ibid.
the myth of direct action, the union's alignment with the anti-war cause was a vital expression of its abiding radicalism. Both policies, which rested upon a common foundation of socialist doctrine, were destined to founder in the increasingly uncongenial climate of wartime Australia.

Starting in June Lloyd Ross's entire political outlook underwent a dramatic shift. In the course of investigating the extent of grassroots opposition to the arbitration system he found himself unable to restrict his attention to the immediate question at hand; he was, in addition, forced to face up to the question of whether, in opposing the war, the railway militants were likewise out of step with grassroots opinion in the ARU. For a period of four weeks it was his privilege to travel widely throughout rural New South Wales in areas where militants were hard to find. Cut off from the hothouse atmosphere of the Trades Hall and Transport House he gradually began to unwind. He experienced a growing sense of detachment from the ideological categories so freely bandied about by opponents of the war. In the course of his travels he discovered that railwaymen were more interested in the 'Hands Off Russia' resolution than in the respective merits of direct action and arbitration. He was at one with them in this regard. The international situation was clearly the major issue of the day. However he was no longer able to come up with any easy left-wing answers. The fall of France could not lightly be brushed aside.

Eventually Lloyd Ross decided to undertake a closer examination of the ideological situation in England, where even before the fall of the Chamberlain government the leading Left Book Club intellectuals had favoured the war effort notwithstanding the anti-war stance adopted by the Communist Party of Great Britain, whose position gradually hardened into one of revolutionary defeatism. From the outset the Left Book Club publicist Victor Gollancz was 'infuriated' by the party's decision not to support the British war effort.88 The doctrine of revolutionary defeatism (which strangely enough was not preached by the German Communists) merely served to encourage further Nazi aggression. The Communist Party's stance was pro-German rather than anti-war.89 Similarly the Labour Party ideologue Harold Laski was prepared to support the lesser evil of British imperialism since a Hitlerite victory, he felt certain, would spell the end of independent working-class politics. Socialists, he considered, had no option 'other than [to] work for the defeat of Hitler'. If allowed to go unchecked, Nazi aggression would bring the era of class struggle to an end whereas under 'contracting' British imperialism socialism's future was assured.90

90. Harold Laski, 'Is This an Imperialist War?', Labour's Aims in War and Peace, London, 1940, pp.22-33.
The third and final member of the Left Book Club's patriotic junta was John Strachey. Initially a firm pro-Soviet apologist, Strachey reversed his position in the spring of 1940, denouncing revolutionary defeatism in the name of left-wing patriotism. In a public attack on the Communist Party he lamented the pro-German stance adopted by Britain's Leninists:

So long as that remains the case I, and, it seems, almost everybody else in the country, can have nothing to do with them, however much we, like all sane people, 'do not want the war,' and however much we may agree with them as to the general character of the war.

The pro-war message emanating from the Left Book Club was heard in distant Australia. Prompted by Britain's determination to fight on after the fall of France Lloyd Ross gradually swung round to the Laski-Strachey-Gollancz view of the war. The world, he considered, was indeed witnessing 'a genuine democratic war in opposition to Fascism'.

It is possible to document the exact moment when Lloyd Ross rejected the creed of revolutionary defeatism. The change of heart occurred whilst he was in the midst of his tour through rural New South Wales. On the evening of 14

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92. 'The Daily Worker and the War', New Statesman and Nation, 27 April 1940, p.559.
June he was at Narrabri, on the banks of the Namoi River, when news of the surrender of Paris came through. This momentous event, he immediately concluded, proved beyond doubt that the Communist Party was completely wrong in opposing the war. It was obvious that Hitler was intent upon world conquest. Old-style imperialists and left-wing democrats no longer had any choice other than to join together in a desperate stand against Nazism. It was, as ever, a case of all or nothing so far as Lloyd Ross was concerned. The emphasis in his thinking, he later recalled, 'changed from fear that the Allies might be diverted to attacking Russia, to fear that the Nazis might conquer Britain and Australia'.

With a view to defining the exact basis of his decision to reject the Communist Party's professed anti-war position Lloyd Ross proceeded to draw up 'a little monograph' (its working title was 'Is the War Imperialist - And What Then?') in which he undertook to examine whether, in purely Leninist terms, it was possible to justify Australia's involvement in the war in Europe. After combing through the standard texts of Marxism-Leninism (notably Lenin's collected works) - and with an eye still on the state of left-wing opinion in England - he was able to prove to

94. Railroad, 23 September 1941, p.2.
95. TRC 236, 2:1/24. Copies of the pamphlet are in NLA MS 3939, Boxes 11, 22 and 23. The copy in Box 11 contains an annotation by Lloyd Ross in which it is stated that the pamphlet was written 'about July-August 1940'.
96. Annotated editions of the Left Book Club publication Left News for May and July 1940 are in NLA MS 3939, Box 45.
his own satisfaction that the Left Book Club's pro-war position was indeed soundly based. He readily agreed that the war could ultimately be traced back to capitalist competition and imperialist rivalry. Nonetheless Leninists still needed to attend to the immediate task at hand, which involved taking a stand against Hitlerite aggression.

As set out in his pamphlet Lloyd Ross's radicalism remained fully intact. The need for Labor and the trade unions to support the war by no means implied, he argued, that it was necessary to fall in behind the overtly collaborationist policies being championed by John Curtin and William McKell. The Menzies government could not be relied upon to pursue a rigorously anti-fascist line so that co-operation was out of the question. Labor had to show that it was not prepared to countenance the introduction of conscription and a greatly reduced standard of living. Curtin's manifold deficiencies as a leader meant that the responsibility for mobilising opposition to the Menzies government had fallen on the labour movement's Leninist militants. Against this background the Communist Party needed to reassess its anti-war position. The doctrine of revolutionary defeatism had outlived its usefulness in the

97. 'Is the War Imperialist', p.1.
98. Ibid., pp.11,18,30.
100. Ibid., p.23.
101. Ibid., pp.24,25.
era of fascist conquest. The realities of the Australian political scene required a pro-war left-wing stance on the part of the labour movement. In a non-revolutionary situation in which a grim determination to fight on rather than war weariness was the popular mood left-wing activists had to drive home the message that the labour movement was the only force in the land that could be trusted to stand up to the fascists and their sympathisers, both at home and abroad. Lloyd Ross was determined to see that the challenge was fully taken up:

We must visualise the difficulty that a war situation may make it necessary to co-ordinate a policy, based on defence under [an] anti-Labor Government[,] struggle for a workers Government and resistance to the invader.

True to its British origins, 'Is the War Imperialist - And What Then?' dealt with the position of the Communist Party rather than of the ARU. However in this instance, as in others, it was hard to separate Lloyd Ross's political and trade union priorities. Certainly in both cases self-interest required him to keep his views to himself. In the repressive political climate of mid-1940 there was every reason for him not to publicly announce that he had just prepared a thirty-page typescript in his capacity as a member of the recently outlawed Communist Party of Australia. His trade union position strengthened the case for circumspection. His deviation from Leninist orthodoxy was hardly likely to be

102. Ibid., pp.8,10.
103. Ibid., p.'00'.
palatable to his left-wing ARU supporters. Accordingly he made no effort to publish his pro-war tract. The only people who got to know of its existence were Stina Ross, Jack Ferguson and Eileen Powell.104

Throughout the winter of 1940 Lloyd Ross continued to publicly question the federal government's anti-fascist credentials and its actual management of the war effort even as he moved, ideologically and in private, from an anti-war to a pro-war position. On 17 July he joined a number of other public figures in severely criticising the government after it was announced that Sir Keith Murdoch's powers as Director-General of Information were to be extended.105 On the following evening at a meeting of the Labor Council he followed other left-wing speakers in denouncing a government proposal whereby trade unionists were again invited to participate in a scheme of industry advisory panels. It was absurd, he insisted, 'to imagine that by sitting side by side with Mr. Essington Lewis, Sir Keith Murdoch and Sir Ernest Fisk, Trade Union officials could deflect them from the course dictated by their interests'.106 On 21 July he attended an anti-conscription rally in Newcastle and afterwards spoke at a public meeting at the Trades Hall.107 His address dealt with the situation in Europe

104. Lloyd Ross, conversation with author, 8 March 1986.
105. SMH, 18 July 1940, p.7.
106. AW, 24 July 1940, p.7; CC, 27 July 1940, p.7. Sir Ernest Fisk of Amalgamated Wireless (A/asia) Ltd. was Director of Economic Co-ordination.
107. NMH, 22 July 1940, p.6; DN, 22 July 1940, p.11.
and was considered by Tom Hickey to be a 'lucid and fine analysis'.

108  His Sydney comrades likewise continued to hold him in high esteem. Early in August he was invited to speak at a demonstration in the Domain organised by the official anti-conscription committee.109

In mid-1940, as ever, the promotion of internationalist ideas was integral to the left's operations as a Labor faction. In this regard its position on both fronts was deteriorating rapidly. On 2 August the federal executive of the party voted to suspend the New South Wales state executive after it received a complaint regarding an alleged attempt by the latter body to force members of federal caucus to vote against a major piece of wartime legislation in the form of the National Security Bill. The state executive's willingness to collaborate with Communists in the anti-conscription campaign was put forward as another reason for deciding to intervene. The suspension was not to come into effect until 16 August, by which time it was expected that, as at the time of the 'Hands Off Russia' resolution, the state executive would be ready to acknowledge the error of its ways.110

A different factional situation now existed, however, as compared with the position in April. With Lang having left

108. Railroad, 3 September 1940, p.6.
109. A leaflet advertising the rally is in A.W. Thompson Papers, ML MSS 727, Box 8.
the party the state executive felt that it could afford to be less circumspect. An organised attempt to circumvent the federal executive's decision was soon underway. The rank-and-file was requested to come to the aid of the deposed executive. As a result of the toing and froing a new dimension was added to the already complex factional situation in the New South Wales party. The Langites who had broken away in April looked on with interest as the defiant state executive, under the command of J.R. Hughes and party secretary Evans, confronted the pro-federal camp (in factional terms, the 'Official ALP'), which was led by Curtin and McKell. The resulting political tension was further compounded by the knowledge that a federal election was now imminent, parliament having almost run its full three-year term.

As a result of the renewed outbreak of Labor factionalism the affiliated unions were again required to go through the divisive process of deciding which Labor group to support. Affiliation meant an infusion of finance, personnel and publicity resources for whichever Labor faction was so favoured. In addition to the various ALP and trade union participants, the question of affiliation was of crucial importance to the outlawed Communist Party. The Hughes-Evans group was heavily imbued with left-wing anti-war sentiment. Through involvement in its activities Communists could still hope to operate on the political stage despite their own

111. Ibid., pp.50-56.
party's illegality. For this reason every effort had to be made to strengthen the Hughes-Evans group's position.

Despite its left-wing aura, the Hughes-Evans group got off to an inauspicious start in the race to secure trade union support. On 9 August the central council of the Miners' Federation announced that, because of a procedural requirement, it was not in a position to endorse either of the two competing Labor factions.112

However all was not lost. In the case of the other great left-wing union, the ARU, nothing appeared to be standing in the way of a favourable decision. The Hughes-Evans group was the direct descendant of the rebel Labor Party of 1938-39 which had always enjoyed the steadfast support of the railwaymen. Lloyd Ross's ideological problems were still a strictly private matter. Outwardly he remained an uncomplicated leftist. Following the dismissal of the state executive he wrote an editorial for Railroad in which he was highly critical of the decision. Federal intervention, he insisted, had arisen because of Curtin's collaborationist tendencies. Curtin and his AWU henchmen were intent on emasculating the Labor Party. 'They attacked N.S.W. because they do not believe in Labor principles.'113

112. SMH, 8 August 1940, p.11, 10 August 1940, p.15; CC, 17 August 1940, p.4.
The battle to win trade union support was now on in earnest. On the afternoon of 8 August, John Curtin addressed a special meeting of trade union executives at the Trades Hall in Sydney. In the course of his speech he warmly defended his action in supporting the national war effort. 'However much we may be opposed to the Government, we are not opposed to the country which the Government governs.' At the conclusion of the meeting a resolution endorsing federal intervention was agreed to. Lloyd Ross's presence in the audience did nothing to disturb the friendly atmosphere. After questions were invited he asked Curtin whether the Labor Party 'would take steps to disallow those regulations which limited freedom of expression. Curtin replied without heat that the Party was prepared to consider the matter.'

A few hours later the political situation formed the subject of another lengthy discussion at the Trades Hall. At 8.00pm the regular weekly meeting of the Labor Council got underway. Rowdy scenes erupted after a motion deploring the suspension of the state executive was introduced. The main speaker in the subsequent debate was J.R. Hughes, who vigorously defended the old executive. A motion to terminate the discussion was carried by 63 votes to 37 whereupon Hughes declared that the original motion had been carried on the

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114. SMH, 9 August 1940, p.9; AW, 14 August 1940, p.7; CC, 17 August 1940, p.4.
115. NLA MS 3939, Box 29, Draft of Lloyd Ross's biography of John Curtin, p.603.
voices. 'Delegates heatedly protested, and the meeting broke up in confusion'.

The turmoil in Labor's ranks served as the matrix out of which a politically transformed Lloyd Ross finally emerged into the world. Having inwardly accepted the war, he was now prepared, albeit reluctantly, to side with Curtin and the federal party rather than follow the anti-war Hughes-Evans group. As the gap between the two sides widened he began to look with renewed fondness upon the sacred principle of 'Labor unity'. He was not prepared to countenance drastic action against federal intervention - despite his having opposed the actual decision - since he was of the view that state branch opposition to the federal party, if allowed to go unchecked, was certain to lead to an extremely damaging Labor split. It was impossible to justify the formation of a breakaway Labor group notwithstanding the manifold deficiencies of the federal party. The first indication that he intended to abide by this principle came on 13 August, in a Railroad editorial. 'We have been critical of Curtin', he stated, 'and could be critical of Lang - but at this moment, when there is a grave danger of the Labor Movement being splintered into more and more fragments, we feel it necessary to stress that we have a common enemy, and we must win a common victory'.

116. SMH, 9 August 1940, p.9.
However the fact remained that for the moment at least the Labor faithful were far more interested in opposing each other than in fighting the UAP enemy. On 17 August some 173 delegates who had been accredited to the previous Easter Conference assembled at the Trades Hall in response to a call from the Hughes-Evans executive. After condemning the suspension of the state executive the meeting proceeded to 'instruct the officers and the executive to carry on as the Australian Labor Party, State of New South Wales'. The new splinter group that had thus been formed then set about the task of electing a new branch president, the titular head of the old state executive (J. Cranwell) having sided with the Official ALP. In the event the ARU's Ted Barker was elected to the position unopposed. An election was also held to fill the places left vacant on the old executive as a result of the withdrawal of the pro-federal faction. In addition the delegates authorised the executive to draw up a list of candidates to contest the forthcoming federal election.118

The delegates who attended the Trades Hall meeting were determined to resist the pretensions of the Official ALP to the utmost. There were few dissenters present. Two FIA men, Harry Denford and Ted Wright, raised a storm of protest when, upon the motion to set up a new party being introduced, they came forward with an amendment whereby the supreme authority of the federal executive was solemnly

118. ABL, E196/6/6, Report of Annual General Conference Reassembled at Trades Hall, Sydney on Saturday, 17th August 1940.
reaffirmed. Lloyd Ross was the only other delegate prepared to come out in favour of adopting a more cautious approach, although in his case he aroused a completely different response. There was 'silent amazement' when he got to his feet and informed the delegates that he was unable to go along with the proposal to nominate a separate list of parliamentary candidates. 'Dr. Lloyd Ross declared that there would be bitter disillusionment amongst the rank-and-file when Labor sent three different Labor voices to contest the election.' The delegates were bewildered at this sudden lack of resolve displayed by a man who was seen as a tireless exponent of left-wing Labor ideology. His comments attracted no support whatsoever and the conference concluded its deliberations without further ado. Thereupon Lloyd Ross left the Trades Hall, well aware that his relationship with the militants was effectively at an end. Things 'were bad and becoming worse'.

As a result of his public rejection of left-wing orthodoxy Lloyd Ross found himself confronted with the prospect of an inevitable Communist backlash in his union. Already this latest bout of Labor factionalism had begun to have an adverse impact on the ARU's internal cohesion. The state president and secretary were clearly at odds. Ted

119. Ibid., p.5; SMH, 19 August 1940, p.11; ST, 18 August 1940, p.6.
120. Sunday Sun and Guardian, 18 August 1940, p.9.
Barker, along with most of the other ARU militants, strongly supported the State Labor Party but it was now a matter of public notoriety that Lloyd Ross was wavering. In addition, the Langites had managed, over the previous few weeks, to set up a network of active Labor branches in the railway workshops as part of their attempt to boost the fortunes of the Australian Labor Party (non-Communist). The political situation was clearly getting out of hand.

A fortnight after the State Labor Party was formed the political position of the ARU came up for consideration at the regular August meeting of the state council. In an effort to maintain a semblance of unity a deal was struck. Lloyd Ross was prepared to see the council condemn the suspension of the state executive. Curtin's willingness to accept the National Security Bill was likewise denounced. The council then went on to proclaim its support for the list of parliamentary candidates put forward by the State Labor Party. At the same time the membership at large was duly reminded of the fact that the three rival Labor factions had publicly called for a full exchange of preferences to take place between all the various Labor candidates in the federal election (polling day had now been set down for 21 September). The main benefit Lloyd Ross got out of the deal was an agreement by the state council to defer the question of

123. SMH, 22 August 1940, p.9.
affiliation until its next meeting, which was some three months away. 125

From the outset the truce in the ARU was a fragile affair since it was readily apparent that, irrespective of what line the union might care to take, the Communist Party hierarchy intended to subject Lloyd Ross to the full force of its displeasure on account of his having flouted party policy. By the beginning of September the process of excommunication was well and truly underway. The split was finally precipitated by yet another of Lloyd Ross's characteristic acts of impetuosity. Sometime towards the end of August he publicly described the three ALP factions as 'Stalin, Trotsky and Lenin Parties'. 126 In a more serious vein he advanced the slogan 'men, materials, and policy' in commenting on the defence needs of Australia. 127 In terms of both factionalism and his pro-war attitude it was clear that he was no longer prepared to follow the broad direction set by the Communist Party. He had strayed from the fold.

Expulsion from the ranks of the party duly followed. On 4 September the Commonwealth intelligence service was breathlessly informed by one of its agents in Sydney that the act of excommunication had, as expected, gone ahead. Lloyd

126. AA, CRS A6119[168], Acting Inspector F.G. Gallegan to Director CIB, 4 September 1940.
127. Freedom's Voice, 4 September 1940, p.2.
Ross was no longer a member of the Communist Party.¹²⁸ This was on the very same day that a stinging critique of the ARU secretary appeared in the fugitive left-wing Sydney publication Freedom's Voice. Lloyd Ross was depicted by Freedom's Voice as just another unreliable 'middle-class "intellectual"' who now belonged to 'the ranks of those whose theory was unable to stand up to practice'. Lloyd Ross, it was clear, had joined 'the camp of the class-collaborators'. He had abandoned the struggle for socialism.¹²⁹

Political interest at this time naturally centred on the unfolding federal election campaign and as a result the news that Lloyd Ross had been expelled from the Communist Party attracted little attention except in the case of the party itself and its watchers in the security service. Apart from these interested observers the act of separation went unnoticed. For the moment at least Lloyd Ross, as the instigator of the affair, had a strong interest in ensuring that silence was maintained. It would be unwise for his newly uncertain factional orientation to become too widely known.

As editor of Railroad Lloyd Ross was in a position to exercise total control over the state branch's publicity and propaganda activities in the pre-election period and, as polling day drew near, he proceeded to capitalise on this

¹²⁸. Galleighan to Director CIB.
situation to the full. Emulating his father in this regard, he sought to impose an armistice on the warring Labor factions with a view to promoting party solidarity and electoral success. In his pre-election editorials he treated the state council's endorsement of the Hughes-Evans group as being of little consequence. The rival factions had agreed, after all, to exchange preferences. As a result he was able

In the event the results of the 1940 election completely confounded accepted political wisdom. Despite its

133. In addition to the original version of this document there is, also in NLA MS 3939, Box 22, another copy which Lloyd Ross intended to use as the basis for a revised and enlarged version.
being split three ways, Labor polled well in New South Wales, gaining 55 per cent of the House of Representatives vote and winning 16 of the 28 seats. Both J.B. Chifley and H.V. Evatt returned to the parliamentary arena. By way of contrast, the UAP-Country Party coalition outpolled the ALP in all the other states, where Labor factionalism was far less of a problem. In Western Australia Curtin almost lost his seat.

The State Labor Party could afford to be philosophical about its poor showing at the polls since, from a factional point of view, the real contest had scarcely begun. With the election now over, Labor's internal

political truce was at an end. There was no longer any need for the factions to maintain a common front in opposition to the UAP. The struggle for legitimacy, for recognition as the only true Labor Party in New South Wales, was resumed with a vengeance. As ever the position of the affiliated unions was of crucial importance. With its position in regard to affiliation still to be determined the ARU inevitably received considerable attention on this account. The on the state council was intent on having a loyal affiliate of the State equally determined to see that they aligned with the Official ALP. 

He readily to the new post-election tack to take on his former friends in litzkrieg tactics were, it seemed, attack was the best form of defence. 

in first and drew out into the open a controversy that was proceeding in whispers, intrigue, personalities and misrepresentation. He boldly set out the case for rejecting affiliation with the State Labor Party in the first Railroad to appear after the election. The outstanding victory obtained by the Official ALP in New South Wales, he editorialised, proved beyond doubt that Labor voters were not prepared to support breakaway left-wing groups, irrespective of the correctness of their policies and treatments.

the justice of their cause. Curtin and McKell, he readily agreed, exerted a strong reactionary influence over the labour movement. This state of affairs, though, could readily be combated provided the left applied itself to the task of developing an alternative Labor approach uninhibited by inflexible attitudes. The militants, Lloyd Ross insisted, could best express their opposition to collaborationist tendencies in the ALP by working for the adoption of left-wing policies appropriate to the wartime situation.136 He had already specified these policies in a pre-election Railroad editorial. They comprised:

1. Nationalization of the war industries.
2. A co-ordinated economic plan for defending Australia, democratically and efficiently.
3. Opposition to conscription.
4. Opposition to lowered standards.
5. The wealthy to pay the full cost of Australian defence.
6. Restoration of working class freedom in Australia.137

In spite of his painful break with the Communist Party Lloyd Ross still regarded himself as a staunch leftist. Whatever Freedom's Voice might say, he was certain in his own mind that he was not just 'another intellectual gone wrong'. He proceeded to elaborate his basic position in a further post-election commentary that appeared in the 1 October issue of Railroad:

137. Ibid., 30 July 1940, p.1.
Because I maintained that the Labor split was not "inevitable," because I said that the best way to influence Labor policy was to stay within the Official Party, because I said the election debacle proved the tactic of forming a third Party was wrong - I have been accused of capitulating on questions of principle.

Lloyd Ross was supremely unmoved by such criticism. The Communist Party, he felt certain, was completely out of step with political reality. The only way militant trade unionists could hope to translate their socialist faith into political deeds was by helping to secure the election of Labor governments. There was simply no point in supporting left-wing splinter parties whose socialist virtue was invariably preserved at the cost of political impotence. The Hughes-Evans group was drawing away Labor activists whose true function was to radicalise mainstream thinking in the ALP. 'The Left is isolating itself from the main body of Labor supporters and Labor voters, as well as weakening the chance to control the Labor machine for working class principles.' A great political opportunity was in danger of being squandered. Wartime repression had produced untold disaffection; the resulting politicisation of the working class pointed to a complete change in the character and personnel of the ALP. Curtin's scope for manoeuvre was diminishing all the time. The militants needed to permeate the Official ALP so as to keep up the pressure. This, for Lloyd Ross, was the only true Leninist approach.138

138. Ibid., 1 October 1940, pp.4-5.
Lloyd Ross's adoption of a strong anti-State Labor Party position undoubtedly caught the ARU militants by surprise. From the middle of October until well into November their shocked reaction was amply documented in the pages of Railroad. Each week during this period the ARU newspaper carried elaborate letters to the editor and spirited political commentaries in which the case for or against affiliating with the State Labor Party was canvassed at great length. Lloyd Ross's left-wing critics were led by the Eveleigh sub-branch activist Stan Jones, for whom the choice was straightforward. 'Members of the Union are confronted with accepting [Curtin's] bankrupt leadership, ending ultimately in Fascism, or, alternatively, of supporting a policy which will lift the burden of war from the people.'

A.E. Matthews of Goulburn argued in a similar vein. 'The 100,000 votes cast for N.S.W. Labor was in practice a class conscious vote. A vote for Socialism. 100,000 votes cast for Socialism in the present period is worth 500,000 cast for an Australian "Churchill".'

Understandably enough, Jones and Matthews were unable to see how in all honesty Lloyd Ross could allow his attitude to the State Labor Party to be governed by the fact that it had been easily outpolled by the Official ALP in the recent federal election. In the past had he not invariably been forthright in condemning any Labor man who had dared to bend his principles in order to gain votes? The left-wing

139. Ibid., 15 October 1940, p.8.
140. Ibid.
ARU critics failed to recognise, however, that the entire ideological situation had altered as a result of the war. Lloyd Ross had drifted into the orbit of the Communist Party (in 1935) at a time when it had moved decisively away from a period of sectarianism and was actively seeking broader support in the trade union movement and the community generally. In this more relaxed climate rigid tests of political orthodoxy were less likely to be applied. Lloyd Ross was not required to abandon his longstanding insistence that the prime duty of radical and working-class activists — including Communists — was to work for the redemption of the Australian Labor Party. In 1940 his continuing adherence to this basic principle was bound to lead to a parting of the ways given the Communist Party's retreat into a renewed sectarian phase in line with its anti-war position. The mutually advantageous arrangement arrived at in 1935 was redundant. But with Lloyd Ross having since become an important figure in the trade union movement, the process of separation was bound to be extremely painful.

The ideological salvoes in Railroad were an indication of the depth of feeling aroused by the ARU's internal upheaval. Behind the scenes the toing and froing intensified as it became increasingly apparent that the opposing forces were finely balanced. The question of the ARU's political affiliation dominated the forthcoming agenda of the November state council. Of the 21 members of the council all but a handful were members of the Communist
Party. But nobody knew for certain how many councillors would toe the party line and repudiate their errant secretary. Leninist rectitude ran up against the ARU militants' long-standing regard for Lloyd Ross. The Communist Party did everything it could to counteract his baleful influence. The pressure was unrelenting. Apart from continuing to be criticised on the ideological plane, Lloyd Ross found himself subjected to a series of personal attacks in the course of which aspects of his private life became common knowledge in the world of labour politics. Thus on 12 November Louise Mackay (a woman 'closely associated with the Communist Party') informed Henry Boote that 'Lloyd Ross's decision to throw in his lot with the Official Labor Party was largely due to his wife'. Lloyd and his brother Edgar, she added, were no longer on speaking terms - Edgar was a staunch State Labor Party man - which was a source of much heartache to their mother.

The question of where the ARU belonged in the Labor factional spectrum remained in doubt right up until 28 November when the state council finally met. In the end,

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141. TRC 236, 2:1/25.
142. Socialism and Peace (West Sydney District Committee, CPA), 24 October 1940, 1 November 1940 (unpaginated).
143. Boote diary, 12 November 1940. Edgar Ross later attributed his sister-in-law's supposed lack of left-wing commitment to the fact that she considered herself to be 'connected with the aristocracy'. NLA MS 2070/1/2, H.E. Boote diary (1941-43), 7 April 1941. In Sweden the Adelskold ('noble shield') family belonged to the minor nobility (information supplied by Swedish Embassy, Canberra).
however, Lloyd Ross managed to carry the day. After firstly prevailing on a procedural matter, he went on to request the council to reaffirm the ARU's affiliation with the Official Labor Party. He rejected the concept of the ARU as a 'vanguard', insisting instead that the wishes of the rank-and-file should be paramount. 'The masses of our members — I would say 90 per cent of our members in the country — do not understand the position that is taken up by a few of our comrades.' In the real world of politics, he noted, there was simply no possibility of the State Labor Party ever being able to rival the Official ALP in terms of popular support. It was the height of ideological folly for the Communist Party to condemn Curtin's policies in the name of 'the masses'. By way of reply his opponents at the meeting reiterated that the ARU's task was 'not to bow to what the workers might desire but to help them to understand what they should desire'. After fourteen of the councillors had spoken Lloyd Ross proceeded to wind up the debate:

I agree that Curtin is WEAK, and I agree that the Australian Labor Party is bureaucratic, but I say to you that at one stage you declared that unity was so important that you believed you had to get inside the Labor Party to alter that policy and what you have to do now is to show why something has happened. You have not explained what has happened, why the line that you followed for years when unity was the word uppermost on your lips, when that was the line that you advocated then[,] why a change [is] necessary - and now you say that other people have changed their views!

When a vote was taken, Lloyd Ross's position in relation to the affiliation question was endorsed by the narrowest possible margin, 11 votes to 10. The minority was led by
Mick Martin and Tom Hickey. The split in the ranks of the ARU militants was complete.144

The state council's decision on the affiliation question greatly strengthened Lloyd Ross's hand in the ARU. The post-August 1940 factional struggle, he knew, would continue, but at least he would not fight unaided. By the time the council met he was, in the eyes of the Communist Party, a political renegade. But in the light of the council's decision, he was clearly no longer alone. The ten councillors who had supported him on the affiliation issue were likewise, on that account, classified as political pariahs. Faced with the Communist Party's displeasure the pro-Ross men had no choice but to stick together if they wished to avoid being consigned to political oblivion. In this way they represented the nucleus of a new majority faction on the council. Lloyd Ross immediately sought to capitalise on the situation. Before the state council wound up its proceedings he secured the adoption of a motion overturning the ballot for the incoming state council, which was still being conducted. Irregularities in the conduct of the poll were alleged, but no attempt was made to initiate a proper inquiry into the matter.145 Progress, the State Labor Party's official newspaper, promptly asserted that the ballot had been overturned because early results indicated

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a strong anti-Ross vote. The Communist minority on the state council duly called on the federal ARU to reverse the decision, but the appeal was turned down.

Under the terms of the controversial motion the existing pro-Ross state council was authorised to continue in office until a new election was held which, under the terms of the motion, could not take place until the following autumn. In this way Lloyd Ross gained a valuable breathing space. During this period he was able to initiate the process whereby his mastery of the ARU factional scene was fully confirmed. In so doing, however, he generated untold bitterness, so that in the end what he conquered brought him little joy.

146. Progress, 13 December 1940, p.3.
Following his painful break with the Communist Party Lloyd Ross found himself entrapped in a cruel paradox. In line with his abiding radicalism he still yearned to convert his pro-Labor ideas into political praxis. He wanted to shape events, not just interpret them. However in order to continue to feature on the political stage he henceforth needed to rely on the support of groups and individuals for whom his chief merit lay in the fact that, from 1940 onwards, he could be safely regarded as a staunch anti-communist. In such company his leftism inevitably shed its erstwhile dynamic character. He continued to be a prominent labour figure, but the drive that had taken him to the top was gone.

Lloyd Ross's inexorable drift to the right commenced from the moment he left the Communist Party. On the ideological plane he remained, for the time being, a staunch leftist, but at the political level the harsh reality of his new situation was soon evident. Having fallen out with the Communist Party, Lloyd Ross from now on could not afford to be too selective when it came to requisitioning fresh sources
of political support in the continuing battle to control the ARU. Already in September 1940 it was hard for him not to avoid noticing that a potential body of anti-communist supporters existed in the form of the Langite breakaway group, the Australian Labor Party (non-Communist), which commanded a strong following among railwaymen and Labor supporters generally. Lloyd Ross had long condemned the machinations of Lang's followers but for the moment at least survival was everything. The Langites, unquestionably, could be counted upon to do all they could to frustrate the plans of the Communist Party, even to the extent of helping to prop up the formerly detested - but now greatly chastened - pro-Ross faction in the ARU. There was no point in the two sides opposing each other any more. In the interests of self-preservation they needed to form a joint anti-communist front.

During the summer of 1940-41 a rapprochement of some kind became gradually more conceivable. Within the broader labour movement strenuous efforts already were underway to heal the rift between the Official ALP and the breakaway Langite party. At the end of 1940, following delicate negotiations, the question of reunification was able to be turned over to the rank-and-file. The affiliated unions and local party branches were asked to vote for or against the proposed merger in an internal ALP plebiscite.¹

¹ SMH, 21 December 1940, p.13.
Befitting the ARU's importance, the vote of the railwaymen was seen as providing the key to the entire result of the referendum. In the event Lloyd Ross readily complied with the plans of the Official ALP, with ARU sub-branch representatives voting strongly in favour of amalgamation with the Langites. From then on the issue was no longer in doubt. With the bloc vote of the ARU behind it, the proposed merger went on to obtain overall majority support.

The merger between the Langites and the Official ALP was not formalised until the end of February 1941 but even before the alliance was officially consummated its effects were being felt. At the beginning of the month the annual election of Labor Council officials took place. By combining with the pro-Lang delegates the Official ALP faction was able to secure a favourable result. In the election for president the Communist-backed incumbent J.R. Hughes was defeated by Jim Maloney, whose strictures against Lang during the Labor Daily dispute were conveniently overlooked on this occasion. In a second trial of strength, involving the position of assistant secretary, the left was again defeated, with Abner McAlpine of the Official ALP being elected. Naturally the

2. Ibid., 1 February 1941, p.15.
4. SMH, 8 February 1941, p.15; ABL, Federated Ironworkers' Association of Australia, National Council, E218/10, ALP, NSW Branch, Circular to unions and ALP branches, 18 February 1941.
5. SMH, 31 January 1941, p.7, 7 February 1941, p.7; Progress, 14 February 1941, p.3.
militants were aggrieved. For the Communist Party both results clearly indicated that some malign force was at work, with Lloyd Ross being the prime suspect. 'The Lang-Curtin forces, supported by Lloyd Ross, were a united front', was Tribune's comment on the election.6

The dramatic rearrangement of factional loyalties was undoubtedly to Lloyd Ross's advantage, and within the context of the ARU he was able to capitalise on the new situation to the full. By March 1941 the pro-Ross forces in the state branch had expanded considerably since the harrowing days of September 1940. As a result of the reunification process in the ALP Lloyd Ross, in his capacity as an ARU factionist, could count upon attracting support from right-wing Langites, Official ALP loyalists and old-time socialists such as former president A.J. McAllister - whose own faction had teamed up with the Langites on occasions in the past7 - and - far more importantly - Jack Ferguson, the union's chief organiser.

Having managed to gather a corps of supporters behind him, Lloyd Ross was now able to address the problem of

7. For McAllister's use of the Labor Daily as a vehicle for his views see the issue dated 25 June 1937, p.6. A.J. Wallace was another old-time socialist who used the Labor Daily to attack the ARU leadership (ibid., 20 November 1936, p.6, 18 February 1938, p.7). Following the split in the Communist faction he strongly supported Lloyd Ross (Railroad, 14 January 1941, p.5).
the postponed 1940 state council election. Ultimately he had no way of knowing for certain whether he would have a majority when the new council finally met. Eighteen of the councillors were elected directly by the rank-and-file, who could be influenced but not coerced. However in regard to the three ex-officio members (the state president, vice-president and secretary) the situation was different. These three officers were appointed by the state conference. The state president, Mick Martin, was a staunch Communist as was the vice-president, Jack Myles. By replacing these two men with pro-Ross loyalists two valuable votes would be gained on the council. But everything had to be carefully orchestrated. A state conference was scheduled to take place in August but this was too late for Lloyd Ross given that the first meeting of the incoming state council would occur in May. However, it was within the power of the state council to summon special state conferences and in view of his having a majority on the existing council there was nothing to stop Lloyd Ross from resorting to this mechanism. In the event he acted as a true factionist. Following the February 1941 meeting of the council it was duly announced that a special state conference would take place in April. At the same time the election for the new state council was ordered to be held forthwith.8

With elections for the state council and the special conference being conducted simultaneously, the autumn of 1941

was, inevitably, a hectic time for the ARU. Lloyd Ross, as the incumbent, entered the fray with certain clear advantages. He controlled the political content of Railroad and was able to requisition the services of the staff at Transport House. As the electioneering intensified the Communist faction in the union began to feel increasingly beleaguered. Paid ARU officers, led by Jack Ferguson, indulged in energetic lobbying on behalf of pro-Ross candidates. Membership lists were pored over and sub-branches were stacked.9

In the event Ferguson's diligence was amply rewarded. The special conference, which met for four days beginning on 21 April, was definitely a pro-Ross affair. His faction was in control from the outset. Most of the first day was taken up in considering the position of a number of pro-Ross delegates whose credentials were challenged. In the course of five divisions on the question Lloyd Ross commanded a solid majority. All but two of the 61 delegates present voted the same way five times, with 39 supporting Lloyd Ross and 20 coming out in opposition to him.10 Late in the afternoon the delegates finally got around to the main

9. See the account contained in the leaflet Australian Railways Union Smash Dictatorship Whenever It Shows Itself! Bringing Lloyd Ross and "Jackie" Ferguson from Behind their Smoke Screens!, n.p., [1941] (NLA MS 3939, Box 36). The author of this document, while strongly anti-Ross, was apparently well-versed in the finer points of union electioneering.

10. Minutes of Special State Conference of the Australian Railways Union (N.S.W. Branch) ... April 21, 22, 23 and 24, 1941, Sydney, 1941, pp.7-16.
business of the day, the election of the new president and vice-president. The ballot went strictly according to plan. Mick Martin and Jack Myles were unceremoniously dumped. Martin – the organiser of Lloyd Ross's heroic victory in 1935 – was replaced by the Langite stalwart Bill O'Neill while the new vice-president was Les Austin. For good measure the returning officer, the Communist J. McEncroe, also was replaced by a pro-Ross man. During the remaining three days of the conference the pattern of factional loyalties held sway with equal force. In a series of crucial divisions the delegates emphatically reaffirmed the ARU's pro-war and pro-Official ALP stance.

From Lloyd Ross's standpoint, the political situation was getting better all the time. On 10 May a state election was held in New South Wales. The Official Labor Party, under the leadership of McKell, was swept into office. The UAP was reduced to an impotent rump. The State Labor Party, with 27 candidates (who included Rupert Lockwood) failed to win any seats and obtained only 78,363 votes as compared with the 706,014 votes obtained by the Official Labor Party. Lloyd Ross was naturally exultant. Earlier during the election campaign he had scornfully attacked the policies and political record of the Hughes-Evans group in a number of Railroad editorials and in

11. Ibid., pp.19-23; SMH, 22 April 1941, p.11; Railroad, 22 April 1941, p.1.
12. Ibid., 6 May 1941, p.3.
an election leaflet as well. Following McKell's victory he was ready to crow. The State Labor Party's 'superficial militancy', he noted in a post-election Railroad editorial, was of little consequence so far as the mass of Labor voters was concerned. The point he had insisted upon during the previous year's controversy still applied. Radicals who believed in social reconstruction needed to align themselves with the ALP if they wished to achieve anything positive.

The newly constituted ARU state council met for the first time in the week following the state election. The necessity for purging Martin and Myles was quickly revealed once the inevitable factional manoeuvring got underway. A debate and subsequent vote on the question of whether the ARU should donate the sum of £100 to the Official Labor Party served to demonstrate that the Communists and their State Labor Party allies had nine representatives on the new council. Had the special conference not been arranged, they would have enjoyed a one-vote majority.

Lloyd Ross's victory on this occasion, being so narrow, was all the sweeter. In its wake he was eager to display his gratitude to his faithful supporters. The Langite wing of his faction certainly benefitted in this

16. Ibid., 8 July 1941, p.7.
regard. On the same day that the state council was convened the Labor Council held an election for a new assistant secretary, Abner McAlpine having resigned from the position. The successful candidate was Frank Kelly, Lang's former associate in the *Sunday Express* venture, who was supported by the combined forces of the Official ALP and the Langites. Earlier in the day at the ARU state council the left-wing minority had unsuccessfully tried to overturn a directive from Lloyd Ross whereby the ARU's Labor Council delegates were required to vote against the left's candidate in the election. Following Kelly's successful candidature anti-Ross propagandists sought to extract the maximum political capital from the day's events. ARU delegates, long the champions of radicalism, were now being compelled to vote for Langites in union elections. The Kelly appointment, State Labor Party spokesmen asserted, was 'a disaster for the Council and the Labor Movement'.

The constant sniping left Lloyd Ross unmoved. He again flaunted his new political position early in June, when he turned up at the 1941 ACTU national congress in Melbourne. In marked contrast to the situation at previous congresses, he was on this occasion determined to uphold the recommendations of the ACTU executive. Along with another ex-communist, the Victorian Dinny Lovegrove, he led the way in calling for an affirmative vote after the ACTU executive

17. Ibid.
18. *Progress*, 23 May 1941, p.3.
called on the delegates to reaffirm the trade union movement's pro-war position. Rejecting the anti-war arguments advanced by his former left-wing associates - notably Tom Wright and Ernie Thornton - he proceeded to assert that 'it was the responsibility of the Labour movement to defend the freedom now enjoyed and to oppose interference by any organisation that sought the opportunity for Fascism to come to Australia'. At the end of the debate the official resolution was accepted by 128 votes to 71. This was a major rebuff for the militants.19

The war of words continued well after the momentous debate had concluded. Lloyd Ross followed up his remarks at the ACTU congress with a letter to the Sydney Morning Herald in which he stoutly insisted that, in having become pro-war, he was nonetheless still a leftist at heart:

Although opposition to the war is mainly Communist, in gatherings such as the A.C.T.U. advocates of peace obtain their main support from those who do not want a Nazi victory, but who, still feeling safe from invasion, are influenced by opposition to profiteers, incompetency, corruption, and Fascist tendencies in our midst. Nothing is more likely to produce apathy and hostility to the war from the workers than restraints on freedom of the Press and platform.20

Certainly in his own case Lloyd Ross had every intention of exercising these rights to the full. In commenting on the ACTU congress in Railroad, he chose to eschew the temperate

19. ABL, S784, Box 1, 1941 ACTU Congress Minutes, pp.2-10; SMH, 6 June 1941, p.9; Age, 6 June 1941, p.8; LC, 12 June 1941, pp.1, 4.
20. SMH, 12 June 1941, p.4.
approach considered suitable for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, deciding instead to freely lash out at his Communist critics. He boldly portrayed the ACTU's anti-war minority as an 'odd mixture of pacifists, sectarians, defeatists, star-gazers, and Moscow-worshippers'.

The left-wing press had no intention of letting Lloyd Ross's insults go unanswered. By way of reply *Progress* noted that the 1941 ACTU congress had witnessed 'the emergence of Lloyd Ross as an aspiring military leader'. Henceforth the ARU secretary would be known as Brigadier-General Lloyd Ross. *Tribune* likewise lamented Lloyd Ross's 'profound subversion' to the capitalist class. In a similar spirit *Ironworker*, the official journal of the FIA, observed that, in the course of attacking his former left-wing allies, Lloyd Ross had become 'very hysterical'. The ARU secretary was 'only a shadow of his former self'. It was scarcely possible to believe that he had once been a renowned left-wing orator.

The ACTU congress ended on 6 June. A week later in Sydney Lloyd Ross was present at the first annual ALP state conference to be held since the departure of the Hughes-Evans group and the readmission of the Lang faction. The delegates staged a few lively debates, but otherwise there was

22. *Progress*, 13 June 1941, p.3.
little excitement. Meeting in the aftermath of the formation of the McKell government, the conference was indeed destined to be a rather prosaic affair. The ideological fireworks that had so bedevilled the 1940 state conference belonged to a bygone era. Henceforth stable government rather than ideological purity was Labor's prime objective in New South Wales. There was far less need for the brand of fundamentalist Labor rhetoric that Lloyd Ross had formerly revelled in.

The ARU chieftain's services could not wholly be dispensed with, however. Lloyd Ross's sterling efforts on behalf of the Official ALP already had resulted in his being co-opted on to the state executive. At the conference he had the honour of introducing the resolution which set out the state branch's continuing opposition to conscription. Otherwise the highlight of his weekend at the conference came when he seconded a motion of thanks to McKell. It was indeed becoming difficult to remember that he had once been a remorseless critic of Labor's leaders. Progress was quick to accuse him of fawning upon his new friends. According to a report it published, Ross told McKell that 'the most important thing the Government can do is NOT to give us the things we want, but to retain the support of public opinion until the war is over, when we can get social reconstruction'.

26. See Boote diary, 14 June 1941.
was, it was clear, already well attuned to the new political agenda facing the labour movement.

By mid-1941 the quarrel between Lloyd Ross and the Communist Party, although barely nine months old, had already taken on an immutable quality. The German invasion of Russia on 22 June, and the attendant reversal in the Communist Party's attitude to the war, did nothing to allay their mutual antagonism. In line with its new pro-war stance, the Communist Party suddenly rediscovered the virtues of trade union and Labor Party unity. Nevertheless a strong exception was made in the case of Lloyd Ross. His sins were considered to be unforgiveable. In stark contrast to other Communists who fell from grace in the early war years - notably Jim Rawling and Charlie Nelson of the Miners' Federation29 - Lloyd Ross's close involvement with the labour movement did not terminate upon his ceasing to be a Communist. His expulsion from the party notwithstanding, he was determined to stay on in the ARU and push for the implementation of a strong left-wing Labor programme. His intentions in this regard obviously represented a serious challenge to the position of the Communist Party, which naturally refused to accept that it was possible to separate Communism and left-wing socialism. The party accordingly was intent on dislodging Lloyd Ross from his highly influential position as ARU secretary. A truce was ruled out from the start.

For his part Lloyd Ross was well aware that there was simply no point in trying to appease the Communist Party. He could not afford to lower his guard at any time. Name calling was still the order of the day. In line with this approach, his immediate public response to Russia's entry into the war took the form of a strong attack on the Soviet Union's post-1939 diplomatic record. 'Another appeaser', he told a Sydney Morning Herald reporter, 'has been proved wrong when dealing with Hitler. Stalin should now realise what British Labour has emphasised, namely, that Hitler cannot be bought off, but must be defeated.' The impossibility of striking a lasting deal with Hitler demonstrated 'how futile and stupid the policy of the left elements was at the A.C.T.U. Congress'.

There was no cause so sacred that it was incapable of being exploited in the endless struggle between the pro- and anti-Ross camps in the ARU. This was amply demonstrated during the Ratliff-Thomas affair. Horace Ratliff and Max Thomas were two Communist trade unionists who were interned in accordance with the National Security Regulations late in 1940. After being released, the two men were rounded up again in June 1941. Soon afterwards a public campaign to secure their permanent release was initiated. As part of this campaign some 50,000 trade unionists staged a one-day strike on 28 July. The strike was well supported by the main

30. SMH, 23 June 1941, p.9.
31. Australian Civil Rights Defence League, The Case of Ratliff and Thomas, [Sydney, 1941].
left-wing unions, notably the miners and the ironworkers. However the railwaymen, their erstwhile political allies, refused to take part. Lloyd Ross, while calling for the release of the two men, counselled against strike action. 'It would have been weakening to the power and prestige of the A.R.U. to have called out our members knowing well enough that few felt the issue intensely enough to have obeyed'. Progress proceeded to give its own summary of his attitude: 'The union is not giving a lead'. Eventually the ARU's refusal to support the strike became the subject of a fugitive anti-Ross leaflet.

At the August 1941 meeting of the ARU state council the Communists sought to develop the link between anti-Ross polemics and the Ratliff-Thomas affair. In a gesture of solidarity Bill O'Neill formally recommended that the union donate £5 to the Ratliff-Thomas campaign fund. Thereupon the Communist faction came forward with an amendment which provided for the sum to be raised to £50. This move failed to impress the pro-Ross faction and the amendment was sternly rejected. The Communists were similarly outvoted when they came forward with amendments to other resolutions sponsored by the dominant faction (one of which comprised a declaration of solidarity with the Soviet people). Their

32. SMH, 28 July 1941, p.6, 29 July 1941, p.7; Sun, 28 July 1941, p.3.
33. Railroad, 29 July 1941, p.4.
34. Progress, 1 August 1941, p.4.
35. Wake Up Rail Men, n.p., [1941] (NLA MS 3939, Box 36).
36. Railroad, 14 October 1941, p.5.
only success came when they were able to frustrate an attempt by Lloyd Ross to defray the legal expenses of the highly litigious A.J. McAllister. However this single success scarcely made up for the string of defeats. Frustrated at being outvoted so often the Communists prepared another anti-Ross leaflet in which railwaymen were called upon, in no uncertain manner, to: 'Clean out the rats'. Lloyd Ross was denounced as the 'LITTLE CZAR OF "RAILROAD"'. With only nine definite opponents in a council of 21 members he was able to ride roughshod over the union.

The hostility directed against Lloyd Ross was unremitting. On 14 August the Left Book Club arranged a public meeting in Sydney at which Russia's plight was discussed. Ernie Thornton was invited along, as were Lloyd Ross and another wartime Communist rebel, Guido Baracchi. Desiring not to be contaminated, Thornton did not attend. Despite Lloyd Ross's own pro-Soviet stance, there was no question in the Communist Party's mind of his being allowed to contribute in any way to the new era of left-wing mythologising that had got underway on 22 June.

Faced as he was with the Communist Party's undying hostility, Lloyd Ross had no option but to steadily cultivate

37. Ibid., 21 October 1941, p.7, 28 October 1941, p.6.
39. Railroad, 5 August 1941, p.1; ABL N57/437, advertisement for meeting; NLA MS 1174/28/19, notes used by Baracchi; NLA MS 1174/1/6025-6, G. Baracchi to N. Palmer, 24 August 1941.
the art of self-preservation. His efforts in this regard fell into two categories. He proceeded to consolidate his developing links with the upper echelon of the ALP while at the same time moving to prevent the possibility of a left-wing counter-offensive in the ARU based on grassroots discontent. By the winter of 1941, following Labor's historic victory in the recent New South Wales state election, notable progress on the former front had already occurred. Upon the McKell government being formed the ARU was speedily rewarded for its wise decision to back the Official ALP and disown all other suitors. On 10 June, after the new Minister for Transport, Maurice O'Sullivan, had conferred with a deputation from the ARU, the state cabinet announced that it proposed to institute a policy of compulsory trade union membership in respect of all workers employed by the state government. To be covered by the decision, a union had to be recognised as a bona fide industrial organisation by the ACTU and the Labor Council. The decision was designed to benefit other unions besides the ARU - notably the AWU and the Public Service Association - but its immediate political import was largely assessed in terms of its effect on the railway and tramway service. The government's version of compulsory union membership, if fully carried out, would effectively bring about the elimination of the NUR. The continued existence of the ROEU was likewise threatened.

40. Railroad, 10 June 1941, p.1.
41. SMH, 11 June 1941, p.11.
42. Ibid., 14 June 1941, p.15, 16 June 1941, p.8.
The ARU had every reason to hail the accession of the McKell government. On 20 June, in a further bid to placate the railwaymen, the Minister for Transport announced that the state government intended to grant their longstanding demand for additional leave entitlements. They were to be given an extra week's annual leave and their period of long service leave was to be increased from one month to three months. The enabling legislation duly passed through state parliament in September.

With the UAP opposition agreeing to the government's proposal the only disputation generated by the legislation occurred among the railwaymen themselves. Upon assuming office the McKell government had been officially informed by the ARU that it was expected to act promptly in improving the leave conditions of railwaymen. This statement no doubt influenced the government's decision, but the anti-Ross forces in the union were decidedly unimpressed. After the new leave package was announced they applied themselves to the task of seeking to persuade the rank-and-file that the ARU deserved little of the credit for securing its implementation. They were at pains to stress that in the past the major impetus in the campaign for improvements in this area had invariably been provided by the shop committees. However they were more than willing to acknowledge the ARU's role in helping to secure the decision once it became evident that

43. Ibid., 21 June 1941, p.12.
44. Ibid., 14 May 1941, p.13.
the additional period of long service leave could be taken only in the form of pre-retirement leave. Eventually the whole issue became completely factionalised. When the time came for negotiations to be entered into regarding the detailed application of the new leave provisions, the various trade union and workshop representatives were unable to come up with an agreed position.45

The McKell government's new deal for railwaymen was hardly an unqualified success. As with the new leave provisions, its policy of compulsory union membership - which was directed against the NUR - soon came unstuck. The NUR, it was immediately pointed out once the policy was announced, was registered as an industrial organisation under the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act and as such could not be proscribed by the state government under its policy of compulsory union membership.46 On 24 June the Minister for Transport was forced to acknowledge that he simply did not have the power to ban the NUR. The loyalists were jubilant. In commenting on the minister's latest announcement NUR secretary Fletcher proudly emphasised the valuable service being performed by his union. 'Our members', he stated, 'are pledged to loyalty to the Government at all times, but especially in this time, of national crisis'.47

45. Blinded by Arrogance; Progress, 4 July 1941, p.3, 29 August 1941, p.4.
46. SMH, 14 June 1941, p.15.
47. Ibid., 25 June 1941, p.12.
The renewed offensive against 'scabs' and 'splitters' had yet to run its full course, however. The NUR's position was secure for the time being but in the case of its sectarian counterpart, the ROEU, the situation was far less clear cut. Although registered under the Trade Union Act of New South Wales, the ROEU had not gone on to obtain registration under either the Conciliation and Arbitration Act or that statute's New South Wales counterpart, the Industrial Arbitration Act. As a result it had no official status so far as the arbitration courts were concerned, which meant that it was exposed to the full force of the state governments policy regarding compulsory membership of a bona fide union. The ROEU was naturally intent on rectifying this situation. Late in July it applied for registration under the Industrial Arbitration Act. On 11 September, after having examined all the available material relating to the case (which included anti-ROEU submissions from both the ARU and the NUR), the Industrial Registrar announced that he could not agree to the application. In giving his reasons for the decision he proceeded to state that he was at a loss to discover why the 500 or so members of the ROEU should object to joining any of the existing registered railway unions. The sole purpose of the ROEU - to protect railwaymen from the evils of Communism - was already being adequately served. The NUR prided itself on its right-wing stance while the ARU, whose radicalism had so affronted the founders of the ROEU, had lately undergone a political metamorphosis.

48. 62 NSWIG 709-713. Transcript of evidence and other material relating to the case is in ABL, E80/38.
The ROEU refused to accept defeat. It promptly lodged an appeal against the Industrial Registrar's decision with the New South Wales Industrial Commission. The appeal was dismissed, but, undaunted, the ROEU manfully persisted with its industrial and political activities. At the end of 1942 it renewed its application for registration and when it met with a second refusal it once more took the matter to the full Industrial Commission. Although the original decision was again upheld the ROEU was still able to consolidate its influence. The desultory nature of the proceedings - the second appeal was not disposed of until late in 1943 - was of considerable benefit in this regard, but in any event the ROEU was effectively shielded by the increasingly tight network of wartime manpower restrictions, in accordance with which it was impossible for railwaymen to be stood down or suspended merely because they refused to join a mainstream union.

In the course of time, then, the 1941 injunction regarding compulsory union membership turned out to be something of a damp squib. Both the NUR and the ROEU were able to escape extinction. Nevertheless, for all its shortcomings, the new policy was not completely futile. In the immediate aftermath of the injunction the comparative position of the ARU undoubtedly improved. During 1941 the

49. 64 NSWIG 225.
50. 64 NSWIG 567-569; 1943 NSWAR 731-733.
membership of the state branch increased from 16,136 to 21,245. The corresponding increase in revenue was even more dramatic, with annual contributions rising from £14,077 in 1940 to £23,490 in 1941.52

Few of the conscripted ARU members were likely to have been attuned to the finer points of left-wing unionism. Their wholesale absorption into the union implied a further weakening of the position of Lloyd Ross's factional opponents. Against this background the Communist Party's frantic efforts to unseat the dominant faction in the state branch took on an added poignancy. In the past the Langites in the union had regularly accused the militants of acting as an 'inner group'. But now, following the events of 1940-41, the situation was reversed. The Langites were aligned with Lloyd Ross and the Communists were the 'outs'. Henceforth the practice of attacking oligarchical tendencies in the ARU was a left-wing rather than a right-wing tactic. The appropriate slogans - 'democratic control and militant leadership' - were freely employed by the party faithful. Underground anti-Ross leaflets and circulars continued to be issued on a regular basis in an effort to generate disaffection among the rank-and-file. The leaders of the ARU, it was suggested on one occasion, were as anti-working class as Fletcher and Skelton of the NUR. With its mendacious editorials and slanted stories Railroad bore a

striking resemblance to the Labor Daily during Lang's heyday. In effect Lloyd Ross now found himself at the receiving end of the same kind of impassioned rhetoric that he himself had, until recently, so freely employed against various right-wing trade union and ALP identities:

We will continue to work for the release of working-class enthusiasm, activity, honesty and ability, not the stifling of that enthusiasm, activity, honesty and ability by the methods employed by Ross, Ferguson and their heelers.53

In reality there was little likelihood of the militants being able to topple the pro-Ross faction. As 1941 drew to a close it became ever more obvious that the ARU leadership had access to important and influential people. In backing the Official ALP the union had clearly chosen the winning side. At the end of August, with discontent rampant in the UAP, Menzies resigned as prime minister. Six weeks later his successor, Arthur Fadden, was forced to resign after the House of Representatives passed a vote of no-confidence in his government. On 7 October John Joseph Curtin was sworn in as the fourteenth prime minister of the Commonwealth of Australia. The Labor Party had returned from the political wilderness. The factionalism that had reigned supreme during the previous ten years was in abeyance under the new government. The former Langites Beasley and Ward sat in the same cabinet alongside such notable anti-Langites as Chifley and Evatt. The new government regarded Scullin as an honoured adviser. The trauma of 1931 had been exorcised.

53. The Enemy Within, n.p., [1941] (NLA MS 3939, Box 36).
With the coming of the Pacific War two months later Labor's newfound sense of purpose reached an even higher level of intensity.

Lloyd Ross shared the thrill of exultation that swept through the labour movement following Curtin's accession to power. In the past he had been unable to summon up much enthusiasm for Curtin's performance in opposition. At times he had been downright scathing in his comments. But the harsh words were now forgotten. In the first Railroad to appear after the formation of the new government Lloyd Ross announced that it was time 'some of us apologised to Mr. Curtin'. The overthrow of the Fadden government demonstrated that Curtin's tactics had been right after all. Curtin had bided his time, refusing to act until the proper circumstances arose. The decisive moment had at last come and as a result a new era in Australian politics was underway. 'The greatest opportunity ever presented the Labor Movement has now been reached.' There could be no holding back notwithstanding the grave national crisis confronting Australia. Resolute action on the part of left-wing Labor men was essential in light of the radically transformed political situation. The new government had to be subjected to the full force of 'socialistic ideas'. In obedience to this requirement Lloyd Ross, in this same Railroad editorial, went on to announce that he intended to press for the immediate implementation of a radical Labor programme involving the nationalisation of the munitions industry, the abolition of private banking, a
national housing scheme and the commencement of systematic planning for a new post-war social order.54

In the wake of his painful break with the Communist Party Lloyd Ross still felt certain that his socialist principles were as fixed as ever. 'Should the time come that Labor shows signs of weakening', he observed, 'we will become its hardest critics, just as we are now its strongest friends'.55 He continued to insist that, for all his loyalty to the new government, he was still very much a left-wing fundamentalist. The November meeting of the ARU state council provided him with the perfect venue in which to restate his position. During the course of the proceedings he introduced two resolutions reaffirming total opposition to conscription for overseas service. In line with the Communist Party's new pro-war (and pro-conscription) position, the nine-man left-wing minority promptly responded by introducing amendments designed to tone down the two resolutions. When a vote was taken, the amendments were, as a matter of course, soundly defeated.56 The issue was regarded as being far from settled, however. After the state council adjourned the two sides continued to debate the question, with rival press statements and commentaries being issued. Lloyd Ross put together an anti-conscription and anti-communist Railroad editorial57 while the views of three leading left-wing

55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., 13 January 1942, p.5; SMH, 1 December 1941, p.7.
state councillors (Stan Jones, Ted Walsham and A. Ball) were set out in the columns of the pro-conscription Sydney Morning Herald.58

The vibrant pro-war enthusiasm of his left-wing opponents forced Lloyd Ross, from late 1941 onwards, to take a further close look at the question that lay at the heart of his quarrel with the Communist Party: how could the socialist cause best be advanced under wartime conditions? In a series of Railroad editorials and articles he re-examined the allegation that he had sold out the workers in repudiating the Communist Party. Naturally he rejected the idea that he was a turncoat. He was concerned to show that instead it was the Communists who had abandoned their erstwhile radicalism. It was they, not he, who had buckled under the immense pressure generated by the war. In a short-sighted quest for ever greater levels of wartime production they were prepared to accept excessively long working hours and less stringent health and safety precautions. The continued survival of the Soviet Union apparently required the Australian trade union movement to give up many of the conditions it had fought for in the past. His initial waspish comment of 22 June 1941 notwithstanding, Lloyd Ross strongly supported the USSR — early in 1942 the ARU raised £500 to buy an ambulance for the eastern front59 — but he considered that local Communists had gone too far in succumbing to the wartime mystique of

58. SMH, 2 December 1941, p.4.
'sacrifice'. They already had abandoned anti-conscriptionist agitation and had softened their demand for the social ownership of basic industries. There was every danger that the mistakes of 1916 and 1931 would be repeated. It was the height of folly to modify fundamental labour principles in order to achieve 'national unity'. Such an approach could only lead to an abject capitulation to the remorseless demands of the capitalist class.60

Lloyd Ross was the first to acknowledge that it was most unlikely that the Labor Party could be induced to immediately implement a programme of extended public ownership. The Curtin government was acutely aware that the very idea of nationalisation was anathema to a sizeable proportion of the electorate. He was equally prepared to argue, however, that, despite the political perils of wartime nationalisation, there was simply no excuse for the Communist Party to remain silent on the issue. The trade union movement had to see to it that the electorate obtained a better understanding of the merits of public ownership.61 The ARU, unlike the Communist Party, did not intend to shirk its responsibilities in this regard.

Lloyd Ross's outspoken support for wartime socialist measures failed to impress his former left-wing comrades. In

61. 1942 Australian Council Minutes, pp.28-29.
both the Ironworker and Tribune the ARU's stand on nationalisation was depicted as a cynical exercise in sloganeering with Lloyd Ross's real motive being to cover up the shame he felt at having betrayed the trade union militants.\(^6^2\) Lance Sharkey felt compelled to issue two special anti-Ross leaflets in which the same message was conveyed.\(^6^3\) There was no way that Lloyd Ross could hope to escape the censure of the Communist Party. Even if he happened to be sincere, his willingness to publicly advocate the divisive policy of nationalisation still amounted to a gross act of political foolishness so far as the party faithful were concerned. A full-scale socialist propaganda campaign would only serve to disrupt the war effort at a time when the political agenda, for all good Leninists, was dominated by the need to secure the defeat of German and Japanese fascism.

Although the alliance between Lloyd Ross and the leading trade union leftists had been sundered forever, some residual contacts were still maintained. During 1941 and 1942, in line with its doctrine of impartiality, the WEA brought the warring parties together on a number of occasions in an effort to encourage debate about the great issues facing wartime Australia. In October 1941 Lloyd Ross and

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63. The Lie Direct to "Dr." Ross (copy in ABL, T. Wright Collection, P120/710); The Left[,] "Dr." Lloyd Ross and Nationalisation (copy in Jack Mullett Collection, ABL, P18/1/520).
Eileen Powell joined Ernie Thornton and the State Labor Party spokesman Bill Wood at a WEA weekend school. A few months later, in February and March 1942, Lloyd Ross and Esmonde Higgins took part in a series of weekly WEA broadcasts along with Bill Wood and his left-wing associate Rupert Lockwood.

Lloyd Ross and his left-wing critics took these WEA jousts very seriously. The struggle for ideological supremacy was unremitting. On 19 March, in the course of a recorded WEA address - which later formed the basis of an ARU pamphlet - Lloyd Ross reiterated his views regarding the need for the labour movement to immediately begin working for the creation of a more regulated peacetime economy. The Communist Party, he noted, was in a position to assist in this process, although the effectiveness of its contribution was likely to depend on the extent to which it was prepared to scale down its long-term expectations. Post-war Australia would continue to regard Soviet-style planning with distaste. 'There is a responsibility on the Communist Party', Lloyd Ross argued, 'to avoid so behaving that instead of being satisfied with influencing the people, it pushes its independent organisation to the extent of smashing the Labor Movement'.

64. AH, 15 October 1941, p.ii; Railroad, 23 September 1941, p.7.
67. Ibid., p.16.
The Communist Party had no intention of letting Lloyd Ross get away with these remarks. In due course a response appeared in the Communist Review in the form of an ideological commentary in which Lloyd Ross found himself portrayed as a disciple of the great self-styled 'centrists' of working-class history - Ramsay MacDonald, Snowden, Kautsky, Otto Bauer, the young Trotsky - all of whom, necessarily, had ended up as apostates. There was no middle course between Leninism and capitalism. To suggest otherwise effectively opened the door to collaboration with the class enemy, as the fate of the great 'centrists' indicated: 'because of their pseudo-Socialism, they held back the workers from the genuine revolutionary movement and acted as a screen for the Right, in the end, going over to the enemies of Socialism'. There was no reason to despair, however. The Communist Review felt certain that Lloyd Ross was unlikely to exert a similar destructive influence notwithstanding his position in the trade union movement. His strange faith in the socialist tendencies of the wartime ALP was too blatantly superficial to pose any real menace to the working-class movement.68

Eventually it was brought home to the WEA in no uncertain manner that it was being completely unrealistic in seeking to act as a neutral party in the endless struggle between Lloyd Ross and his critics. During 30 October-1 November 1942 a WEA weekend school was held at which the

68. 'A Pamphlet You Need Not Buy', Communist Review, July 1942, pp.11-12.
subject for discussion was 'The USSR - Its Significance for the West'. The format consisted of a trio of lectures given by WEA speakers with each lecture being followed up by comments from 'a trade union critic'. In the first two lectures W.G.K. Duncan spoke on Soviet diplomacy and Esmonde Higgins dealt with the Russian economy while S. Jordan of 2KY and Len Fox of Progress assessed the lectures from the standpoint of left-wing orthodoxy. The final lecture was given by Lloyd Ross, who spoke on the Soviet political system. He examined the 1936 constitution, the role and status of the Communist Party, the extent of democracy in the Soviet Union and the political significance of wartime Soviet anti-fascism. His remarks were assessed by Tom Wright, who could be counted upon to present a rigidly Stalinist viewpoint on all these matters. The series of exchanges between the various lecturers and their trade union critics reverberated long after the symposium had concluded. The presence of Communist and State Labor Party participants at the summer school did not stop Progress, in the weeks ahead, from seeking to disparage the whole exercise. A series of anti-Ross and anti-WEA comments from the party faithful - notably Len Fox and Edgar Ross - appeared. Among other things Progress accused Lloyd Ross of 'mud-spattering'


70. Cf. Forward, 6 November 1942, p.4.

71. Progress, 20 November 1942, p.3.

72. Ibid., p.4.
the Soviet Union. By giving the two men a chance to air their views the WEA had revealed its true colours. The organisation was controlled by a vicious anti-Soviet clique.

The ideological confrontation between Lloyd Ross and his left-wing critics was, as ever, paralleled by an equally spirited contest at the political level. During 1942 the already highly charged factional situation in the ARU became even more volatile. Communist influence in the union was in a state of decline but Lloyd Ross was determined to convert the retreat into a complete rout. He started from a strong position. When, in January 1942, the results of the election for the incoming state council were announced, it was revealed that none of the nine left-wingers on the old council - all of whom were candidates - had been re-elected. The policies and practices of the dominant pro-Ross faction had been decisively endorsed. Lloyd Ross was ready to exploit this mandate to the full.

Certainly Lloyd Ross could not afford to be complacent. Although now excluded from the main executive positions in the union and no longer represented on the state council, his ARU opponents were still highly active and influential at the sub-branch and sectional levels as well as

73. Ibid., 6 November 1942, p.1.
74. Ibid., p.3.
being deeply involved in the work of the railway shop committees. If left alone for some time they would be able to regroup and wait for an opportunity to hit back. Lloyd Ross naturally was determined to prevent such a challenge eventuating. Throughout 1942 ARU factionalism centred on attempts by the dominant faction to stamp out anti-Ross activities at this grassroots level.

The nature of the impending struggle had been foreshadowed early in the previous year when, after the annual election of sub-branch officers and representatives, the state council had examined a number of complaints regarding alleged shortcomings in the conduct of various sub-branch ballots, notably at Enfield and Newcastle.76 Nothing of consequence resulted at the time but by early 1942, with his majority on the state council having been consolidated, Lloyd Ross was much better placed to act decisively against his opponents. When the new state council assembled for the first time in February he proceeded to secure the adoption of a resolution overturning the latest annual ballot conducted by the Enfield sub-branch. The ballot was declared null and void after it was alleged that the deposed ARU returning officer, J. McEncroe, had been called in to count the votes. A new election, to be conducted by the general returning officer, was ordered.77 The sub-branch thereupon protested to the federal office of

77. Ibid., 27 February 1942, p.21.
the union, contending that the move was incompatible with sub-branch autonomy and would thus favour the formation of 'a ruling clique' (which everyone knew existed anyway). The decision to intervene, it was further alleged, was especially obnoxious given that the state council itself had been elected under highly irregular circumstances, with the distribution of the voting slips being very much a slapdash affair.78

The federal ARU was unable to provide any comfort to the aggrieved Enfield sub-branch. The national office informed the sub-branch that all appeals to the federal council of the ARU had to come through the relevant state council.79 The New South Wales state council did not have to meet again until May. The sub-branch was thus stymied and the new ballot was able to go ahead unhindered. Lloyd Ross had won the opening round in his struggle against the shibboleth of 'sub-branch autonomy'.

The full import of Lloyd Ross's victory was soon revealed. As a result of the Enfield dispute the extent to which state branch decisions were subject to appeal came up for discussion when the ARU's federal council met in April. On being asked to state official ARU policy on the matter federal president Moroney proceeded to point out that the

78. See ABL, N5/649, file entitled 'Ballots, union branches'.
79. Ibid., J. Chapple to Keith M. Ross, secretary, Enfield ARU, 19 March 1942.
federal union was not prepared to exercise jurisdiction over the various state branches by way of its appellate powers. The state branches were expected to run their own affairs with a minimum of outside interference. Federal intervention, while being provided for in the ARU's constitution, was justified only when matters of national concern were involved. In Moroney's opinion, the factional saga in New South Wales, culminating in the series of disputed union ballots, did not fall into this category. Consequently, the entire matter lay outside the jurisdiction of the federal council. 'The New South Wales dispute in regard to the constitution of the [1941] Conference was a purely local and domestic concern'. The principle of state autonomy had to be respected at all costs. Against this background it was hard to see how any decision of the New South Wales state council could be overturned. There was simply no point in Lloyd Ross's factional opponents appealing to any higher authority in the union.

The anti-Ross activists in the union faced a bleak future. The February state council had seen Lloyd Ross mount a full-scale attack on their position. Not content with overturning the Enfield ballot, he had gone on to secure the appointment of a special committee to investigate supposed irregularities in the conduct of sub-branch ballots at Newcastle and Goulburn. In the event the committee, once

80. 1942 Australian Council Minutes, pp.29-30.  
it got down to business, devoted all of its attention to the Newcastle sub-branch. This was hardly surprising. The local ARU secretary was Lloyd Ross's former comrade Tom Hickey, who was one of the main anti-Ross men still active at the sub-branch level. As such he merited special treatment.

During the period March 16-22 Lloyd Ross visited the Newcastle area. For some of the time he was present at an ARU regional conference but otherwise he was fully occupied in his capacity as chairman of the special investigation committee. Assisted by H.A. Harvey and C. Matthews, he proceeded to collect details of alleged anomalies and abuses in the conduct of the previous year's sub-branch ballot. The committee then reported back to the May state council which, after considering the matter, proceeded to declare the election of the Newcastle sub-branch officers to be null and void on account of the 'irregularities and carelessness' that had, allegedly, characterised the ballot. A new election in the form of a postal ballot conducted by the ARU returning officer was immediately set in train. At the same time Hickey was asked to appear before the August state council after it was alleged that he had reflected on the honesty of the ARU hierarchy at a meeting of the Newcastle sub-branch.

82. NMH, 23 March 1942, p.4.
83. State Council Minutes, 21 May 1942, pp.21-25; NMH, 10 July 1942, p.2; Railroad, 14 July 1942, p.1.
84. State Council Minutes, 20-22 May 1942, pp.13, 21, 34.
Voting in the second Newcastle ballot took place in July. Hickey's supporters fought bravely to the end. At the height of the campaign a special meeting of the sub-branch was held. The meeting, understandably enough, was a stormy affair. 'It was stated that cross-firing, interjections and heckling were frequent, and that several angry clashes occurred.' Lloyd Ross defended the decision to intervene and Tom Hickey replied on behalf of the sub-branch. Eventually a motion of confidence in Hickey was moved whereupon, amidst scenes of uproar, the meeting was promptly adjourned.85

The charge of disloyalty pending against Hickey came up for consideration at the ARU state council on 19 August. By 15 votes to 5 the charge was upheld and an appropriate penalty meted out: Hickey was prevented from holding any position in the ARU for a period of three years.86 A week later the result of the Newcastle ballot was declared. It was revealed that in the election for secretary Hickey had been narrowly defeated by Lloyd Ross's nominee, the ALP stalwart C.E. Griffiths. The militants' defeat was not total, however. Hickey was chosen as a delegate to the state conference (although his suspension negated this result) and the sub-branch president, the militant A. Outteridge, was re-elected.87 The two factions in Newcastle were finely balanced. With the next annual sub-branch election due in a

85. NMH, 27 July 1942, p.2; Newcastle Sun, 27 July 1942, p.2; Tribune, 19 August 1942, p.4.
87. NMH, 26 August 1942, p.2.
few weeks' time, the ill-feeling between the two sides could only get worse.

The anti-Hickey campaign was followed up by a similar exercise directed against a second prominent left-wing railwayman in the person of Stan Jones. Besides being active in the Eveleigh sub-branch, Jones was vice-president of the Central Council of Railway Shop Committees. As a result of this dual role he was inevitably marked out for attention. After the Depression Communist influence had spread from the shop committees to permeate the hitherto despised ARU and now, with the union once more in political disfavour, the workshop committees again stood out as a haven for Communist activists in the industry.88 For this reason Jones was bound to figure on Lloyd Ross's hit list. Success in curbing his effectiveness would prove to the Communists that there was no way of escaping the retribution of the ARU.

Jones's fate was sealed following a sudden worsening of relations between the ARU and the workshop committees. The fuse was lit on 5 May when Lloyd Ross published an article in Railroad criticising the Chullora workshop committee. In the course of the article it was alleged that the committee had entered into negotiations with management over the introduction of twelve-hour shifts at Chullora

without first consulting the railway unions. In addition to
the political considerations at stake Lloyd Ross undoubtedly
had a genuine interest in the matter: he had just written a
pamphlet dealing with the inverse relationship between
extended working hours and increased productivity. In
the following week's Railroad the attack was renewed, with
Lloyd Ross again asserting that extended shifts in no way
assisted the war effort.

The situation at Chullora was in fact rather more
complex than Lloyd Ross suggested. There was no mad scramble
to wind back existing working conditions. At a meeting of
the CCRSC held on 2 May Stan Jones called for the issue of
twelve-hour shifts to be considered at a full-scale trade
union conference. The shop committee movement was
confident that it had acted properly. Following Lloyd Ross's
two Railroad articles the CCRSC executive asked Jones to
prepare a statement setting out the details of the
negotiations at Chullora. The intention was to show that
Lloyd Ross was hopelessly misinformed. On 20 May the
executive endorsed Jones's draft statement, which was to be
circulated as a printed leaflet. Along with the other
members of the executive Jones duly agreed to affix his name
to the leaflet. Thereupon 12,000 copies of the document,

89. Lloyd Ross, Hours Holidays Health and the War Effort, Sydney, [1942], pp.36-37.
91. CCRSC Minutes.
92. Ibid., 16 May 1942.
bearing the executive's imprimatur, were distributed among the rank-and-file.93

The publication of the CCRSC's leaflet led to the full authority of the ARU being invoked against Jones. Lloyd Ross regarded his action as that of a malcontent who had conspired with outside elements in an attempt to discredit the union. He was dealt with accordingly. The ARU executive drew up a charge of disloyal conduct against Jones and ordered him to appear before the August state council. He was thus tried along with Tom Hickey and underwent the same fate: he was suspended from holding any office in the union for a period of three years.94 Two other local ARU identities who had assisted in arranging and publicising the negotiations at Chullora - Sid Hewitt and Joe Perry - were also arraigned. Both were given lesser penalties: Hewitt received a one year's suspension and Perry was admonished.95 The case of a fifth ARU man, the left-winger Cliff Davies - who was accused of having failed to uphold branch policy at the April meeting of the federal council - came up for consideration as well, but a motion to impose a year's suspension was defeated on a tied vote.96

93. Ibid., 20 May 1942; Magnet, September 1942, p.3.
95. Ibid., 20 May 1942, pp.8-9, 10-11, 17-19 August 1942, pp.6-8, 14-19, 46. The resolution was carried by 16 votes to 5, with the minority consisting of the same five councillors who had opposed Hickey's suspension.
96. Ibid., 17 August 1942, pp.9-12.
The spate of suspensions led to a renewed outbreak of anti-Ross agitation in the ARU. Leaflets and petitions attacking the state council's treatment of Hickey, Jones, Hewitt and Perry were distributed among railwaymen. The case of Bill Clarke, who had received a year's suspension in the aftermath of the Enfield dispute (he was the sub-branch's returning officer), was also taken up. The first leaflet to be issued was headed 'A.R.U. Members Victimised' and was authorised by S. Wright, who claimed to be acting on behalf of the ARU Members Defence Committee. In a subsequent Railroad commentary Lloyd Ross vigorously insisted that the leaflet was a fake. In response to this allegation the author of the leaflet sought to establish his identity by means of a statutory declaration. The full name and address of the secretary of the ARU Members Defence Committee, it transpired, was Sydney Erle Wright of 22 Parkham Street, Surry Hills. Wright had been a member of the ARU for less than a year - previously he had operated as an activist among the unemployed - but he was a keen admirer of Tom Hickey and in his enthusiasm he was willing to bear the responsibility for organising the campaign of protest against the decisions of the August state council.

97. Ibid., 27 February 1942, p.21, 22 May 1942, pp.35-36.
100. State Council Minutes, special meeting, 26 November 1942, pp.1, 4, 6.
Wright's willingness to reveal his identity had no effect at all on Lloyd Ross, who continued to insist that the campaign being waged on behalf of Hickey and Jones was completely fraudulent. The ARU Members Defence Committee was obviously a bogus organisation set up by outside agitators who were intent on turning the ARU into an adjunct of the Communist Party. The latest batch of hostile leaflets, petitions and resolutions merely served to indicate the extent of the conspiracy being directed against the state branch. Lloyd Ross was determined to withstand the pressure. There were further attacks in Railroad on the ARU Members Defence Committee and in a similar spirit the Ross faction in quick succession distributed a brace of splenetic anti-communist leaflets (Conspiracy Against the A.R.U. and The Theories of S. Wright) in an attempt to discredit its enemies. The Communists - 'well organised, well disciplined, well financed' - were out to subvert the ARU. They had to be stopped:

They still want to control the A.R.U. in the interests of the "Tribune" and "Progress."
Who is to control the A.R.U.? 
Its members or the C.P.? 
Whom does the A.R.U. member desire to control the A.R.U.? - himself or the "Tribune"; the A.R.U. or "Progress"; the A.R.U. or members of shop committees; the A.R.U. or craft unionists?

The endless strife between Lloyd Ross and the Communist and State Labor Party faithful necessarily forced

102. ABL, E80/60/25.
103. Copy in Lloyd Ross Pamphlet Collection.
104. Conspiracy Against the A.R.U. (unpaginated).
the ARU into an increasingly close alliance with the Official ALP. In the upper echelon of the party the overlap in personnel was increasingly noticeable. At the annual ALP state conference in June 1942 Bill O'Neill stood against Abner McAlpine (the incumbent) for the post of state president. He was strongly supported by the Langite section of the party and was defeated only after the returning officer was forced to exercise his vote, the two candidates having polled 133 votes each. The result dramatically underlined the ARU's willingness to become involved in the affairs of the New South Wales ALP. Lloyd Ross continued to serve as the union's representative on the state executive and in addition was largely responsible for the branch's political education activities.

In the period since federal intervention control of the state branch had passed into the hands of 'the McKell-McAlpine junta'. Lloyd Ross was a key member of this latest 'inner group' notwithstanding his colleague O'Neill's defeat. Along with Abner McAlpine and branch vice-president Bill Taylor he was entrusted with the delicate task of ensuring that a cordial relationship was maintained.

105. SMH, 15 June 1942, p.7; ML MSS 727/9/28, 'Lang Ticket 1942'.
106. ABL, Seamen's Union of Australia (Federal Office and Sydney branch), E183/29/12, Election Results, New South Wales ALP Conference, 13 June 1942; ABL, T29/10/14, New South Wales ALP 1942 Executive Report; ABL, E218/11, 'ALP Services' (1942).
By the spring of 1942 Lloyd Ross's former hostility to John Curtin had completely vanished. The ideological gulf that had seemed unbridgeable between 1935 and 1940 was already a distant memory. The abiding influence of their common VSP background was again evident. Curtin's fond memories of his earlier association with Bob Ross meant that the growing political interaction between the two men was bolstered by personal links. In later years Lloyd Ross gave the following account of the process of reconciliation:

The things that we wouldn't have accepted from a Menzies Government we accepted from [the] Curtin Government, partly because it was Labor, partly because he was beginning to exert a very big influence over the labour movement and partly because he had given certain assurances that there wouldn't be unnecessary restrictions of liberty, and anyhow Australia by that time was involved in her own safety because of the Japanese invasion. ... It took some people, including myself, some time to become completely involved with him. He rang up the ARU office once early in his ministry and made a rather severe attack on me, but it ended up with him saying "Oh well, how's your mother?" because our family was very close to Curtin. Oh, I think I was one of the many who became more and more involved in supporting him.

In line with his longstanding insistence on the need for the labour movement to create its own heroes, Lloyd Ross played a key role in contributing to the wartime apotheosis of John Curtin. Early in October 1942, when the first

108. TRC 236, 2:1/32.
109. Ibid.
anniversary of the accession of the federal Labor government came round, he was one of the speakers at an Official ALP rally held in the Domain. On 11 October he outlined the achievements of the Curtin and McKell governments at an ARU rally in Newcastle while on the following evening, along with his ALP associates Abner McAlpine and Bill Taylor, he was responsible for staging a public meeting at the Sydney Town Hall which was addressed by Curtin.

Lloyd Ross's left-wing opponents were equally intent on strengthening the position of the Curtin government, given that they themselves were strongly pro-war. At the Newcastle ARU meeting a resolution pledging the union's 'full support in the fight against Fascism' was moved by Tom Hickey. But notwithstanding this common resolve, the struggle for control of the state branch was unremitting, with the Communist Party being tireless in its efforts to embarrass the ARU hierarchy. At the end of September Tribune reported that Lloyd Ross had been seen 'hanging around Canberra lately'. It was widely rumoured that he hoped to get a seat in federal parliament as a reward for his recent efforts on behalf of the ALP. Fuelled by such reports, anti-Ross feeling was kept fully alive among the party faithful. At Curtin's anniversary rally the Communists in the audience walked out

110. Railroad, 29 September 1942, p.1; Century, 2 October 1942, p.12; ST, 4 October 1942, p.5.
111. Railroad, 6 October 1942, p.1; NMH, 12 October 1942, P.4.
112. SMH, 13 October 1942, p.4; TRC 236, 2:1/32-33.
113. Tribune, 30 September 1942, p.4.
when Lloyd Ross was invited to speak.114 Everything had to be done to discredit the ARU's ruling clique. To this same end Tribune warmly welcomed the election in October of the thirty-year-old Communist activist J.J. Brown as the new state secretary of the ARU in Victoria. The Victorian secretary was elected directly by the rank-and-file, a practice which Tribune was eager to see followed elsewhere. 'How about an honest ballot of N.S.W. railwaymen, Dr. Ross?', it gleefully entreated.115

The election of J.J. Brown formed part of an overall pattern of growing Communist success in wartime union elections, with the defeat of the anti-Ross forces in the New South Wales ARU going completely against the prevailing trend.116 Communist influence in the wartime trade union movement was on the increase long before the ban on the party was finally lifted at the end of 1942. In May 1941 the Communist E.V. Elliott was elected as general secretary of the Seamen's Union117 while in May 1942 a Communist was elected as secretary of the Munition Workers' Federation as a result of which moves to secure an amalgamation with the FIA were soon underway.118 A similar trend emerged in the

114. Forward, 23 October 1942, p.4.
115. Tribune, 14 October 1942, p.3.
118. Annals of ACP, 9 May 1942; Murray and White, Ironworkers, pp.118-120.
Miners' Federation. Following the downfall of Charlie Nelson the union returned to the fold with the election of a new national president, Harold Wells, and a central council 'with substantial communist representation'.

The consolidation of Communist power in the trade unions after 1941 was entirely consistent with, and did much to promote, a 'win the war first' attitude on the part of the labour movement as a whole. The political wing of the movement was certainly fully in tune with the predominant mood. Under Curtin's direction - and with the only notable dissent coming from Eddie Ward and Arthur Calwell - the federal parliamentary Labor Party was prepared to postpone the implementation of ideologically correct but politically divisive socialist policies until well after the defeat of the Axis powers. As a result of this situation Labor's more ardent extra-parliamentary supporters were destined to see their wartime hopes for immediate nationalisation come to grief. Given the exigencies of the political situation, their socialist fervour could all too easily be dismissed as an undesirable aberration.

For Lloyd Ross the growing impact of political reality led to a rude awakening indeed. His heroic attempt,
after 1940, to hammer together a political programme that was at once emphatically left wing yet staunchly non-communist turned out to be a rather forlorn gesture when viewed against the Labor Party's incurable pragmatism. With the Curtin government obviously intent on political survival he found it increasingly difficult to ignore the limitations on his freedom of action. By the end of 1942 he was finally beginning to experience the full impact of the factional and ideological shock waves that had been set in motion following his split with the Communist Party. With his scope for effective action in the broader trade union movement diminishing all the time on account of his having incurred the wrath of the Communist Party hierarchy he now had little choice other than to swallow his socialist pride and look to his friends in the Labor Party for aid and support if he wished to remain a force in the labour movement. Certainly Labor fully intended to make use of his services, but strictly on its own terms, which in effect meant that henceforth he had to soften his insistent demand for 'socialism in our time'. His radicalism had begun to disintegrate.

Once underway, the process of co-option was inexorable. By late 1942 Lloyd Ross's close identification with the official wing of the ALP had come to encompass parliamentary aspirations, although not to the extent that the Communist Party had earlier suggested. He was prepared to consider the possibility of becoming a member of the New South Wales Legislative Council. A move to secure his
inclusion on the ALP ticket was launched after nominations for the forthcoming triennial Legislative Council election were called for at the end of October but in the event he quickly discovered that, on this occasion, there was no prospect of his being given a viable position on the ticket. The election of the first ARU member of the New South Wales upper house still lay in the future.

For Lloyd Ross gratitude for services rendered to the ALP primarily took the form of a series of official wartime government appointments. He no longer treated the state apparatus as an object of suspicion; increasingly it was seen as a highly beneficial force, capable of being used to promote progressive and enlightened policies. From mid-1942 onwards the early post-war reconstruction efforts of the Curtin and McKell governments, rather than the myth of socialist reconstruction, served as the great generator of his public zeal. Along with Eileen Powell Lloyd Ross already was participating in the work of the New South Wales state government's Reconstruction Advisory Committee. Given the favourable political climate, the way was now open for him to become actively involved in similar post-war reconstruction efforts in the federal sphere as well.

124. Jack Ferguson was the state branch's first upper house member, being elected in November 1945.
Late in October 1942 Production Executive (the federal cabinet's chief planning committee) was called on to determine the membership of the Universities Commission, a new body whose establishment had been made necessary following the federal government's decision to institute the payment of allowances to university students. The responsible minister (J.J. Dedman) was in favour of having Professor R.C. Mills of Sydney University as chairman of the commission with former prime minister Scullin and the military historian C.E.W. Bean being suggested as possible part-time members. In the event Mills's appointment went ahead, but the idea of appointing Scullin and Bean fell by the wayside. On 29 October Production Executive decided to appoint Lloyd Ross as one of the part-time members of the commission in preference to Bean. At the same time arrangements were made to substitute F.P. Baker, a Labor member of federal parliament, for the ailing Scullin. Shortly afterwards the government decided to appoint another part-time commissioner in the person of J.R. Darling, the headmaster of Geelong Grammar.\(^\text{126}\) The appointment of Professor Mills and his three colleagues was announced on 20 November.\(^\text{127}\)

Even before his appointment to the Universities Commission was finalised Lloyd Ross already had received a

\(^{126}\) AA, Curtin Ministry, Production Executive, CRS A2870, Agenda, Decisions and Related Correspondence, 1941-45, vol.3, 23 October 1942, 29 October 1942; Production Executive, CRS A2867, Minutes of Meetings, 1941-45, 29 October 1942, 13 November 1942.

\(^{127}\) Argus, 21 November 1942, p.4.
further indication that he was indeed held in high regard in official circles. In the spring of 1942 the Australian Institute of International Affairs was required to nominate a delegation to represent Australia at a conference on wartime and post-war developments in the Pacific region being held by the Institute of Pacific Relations at Mont Tremblant in Canada beginning on 4 December. Given the restrictions placed on wartime travel, the AIIA obviously needed to receive the full backing of the government. This was duly sought, albeit somewhat belatedly. At the beginning of November External Affairs Minister Evatt was officially notified that, in regard to the actual membership of the delegation, the AIIA had agreed to nominate Lloyd Ross, Professor Kenneth Bailey of Melbourne University and the Queensland grazier and AIIA stalwart Richard Boyer. 128 Professor Bailey, it soon transpired, was precluded from joining the delegation because of prior commitments whereupon it was decided that his place should be taken by P.M.C. Hasluck of the External Affairs Department, which served to further underline the semi-official nature of the delegation.

In view of the lack of advanced notice there was no time to be lost in arranging the logistics of the journey. On 16 November Lloyd Ross was officially informed that the trip to Canada had been approved and that the delegation had to be out of Australia by 22 November if it wished to arrive

128. AA, External Affairs Department, CRS A989, Correspondence Files, 1939-45, File 43/650/1, Part 1, I. Clunies Ross to H.V. Evatt, 5 November 1942.
in time for the opening session of the conference. He already had conferred with his immediate ARU colleagues Bill O'Neill and vice-president Les Austin and as a result it had been agreed that he was to be given two months' leave of absence to cover his stay in North America. \(^{129}\) It was his intention at this stage to hold discussions with trade union officials in New York and Washington following the Mont Tremblant conference. \(^{130}\) On 17 November (a Tuesday) ARU members first learnt of their leader's imminent departure by way of an announcement in *Railroad*. \(^{131}\) By the end of the week Lloyd Ross was in Brisbane waiting to be put on a plane for the trip across the Pacific.

The announcement of Lloyd Ross's imminent departure occurred on the same day that John Curtin made his historic declaration regarding his intention to send conscripts to the south-west Pacific area. Curtin's proposal was a serious affront to the labour movement's anti-conscriptionist conscience. Ultimately Curtin got his way but only after a fierce political struggle, involving all sections of the movement, which lasted throughout the summer of 1942-43.

For some Labor people the revived conscription debate was particularly poignant. Maurice Blackburn was a

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\(^{129}\) NSW Head Office, Lloyd Ross to President, Vice-President and State Councillors, 20 November 1942.

\(^{130}\) AA, CRS A989, File 43/650/1, Part 1, Lloyd Ross to H.V. Evatt, 13 November 1942.

\(^{131}\) *Railroad*, 17 November 1942, p.1.
Lloyd Ross also fell into this category. As a strong pro-Curtin man he had little choice other than to support the new policy notwithstanding his anti-conscriptionist heritage. The controversy that erupted on 17 November 1942 marked, in point of fact, the parting of the ways so far as his erstwhile radicalism was concerned. He was forced to place Labor Party solidarity above all other considerations. In the wake of Curtin's pronouncement he proceeded to announce that, no matter what the ultimate decision on the issue might be, Labor Party unity had to be preserved at all costs. In other words, he was willing to modify his own oft-professed anti-conscriptionist stance in the event of Curtin's new position being endorsed at an ALP federal conference.

In his capacity as a student of left-wing politics Lloyd Ross had, in the past, often made a point of noting how the doctrine of party solidarity, when faithfully upheld, invariably proved to be the undoing of Labor's fundamentalists, with the tyranny of numbers prevailing over the dictates of their socialist conscience. Now it was his turn to succumb to the same fate. In 1940 he had supported party unity because he was eager to see the ALP permeated by socialists; by the end of 1942, however, it had become clear that the doctrine of Labor unity was drawing him away from his own radical heritage.

At the end of November the regular quarterly meeting of the ARU state council went ahead in Lloyd Ross's absence. Bill O'Neill was confirmed as acting state secretary and at the same time a resolution reaffirming the state branch's total opposition to conscription was agreed to, with O'Neill's influence being paramount in this regard. The Communist press had no hesitation in attributing the ARU's unyielding position on conscription to the machinations of the 'anti-Communist Ross clique'. But in view of the rapidly changing political situation this was hardly an accurate assessment. It was no longer possible to regard Lloyd Ross as an anti-conscriptionist given his firm belief in the overriding necessity of Labor Party unity. A further complicating factor was that his sudden disappearance had immediately had a destabilising effect on existing factional arrangements. Even as he prepared to leave for overseas it was clear that, in regard to the state council, the solid anti-communist front - or 'the Lloyd Ross clique' - that had held sway earlier on in the year was falling apart. At the November state council a motion to annul the union membership of the still fractious Sid Wright was duly carried, but eight councillors opposed the move. In a further show of dissent seven councillors voted in favour of a censure motion.

134. Ibid., 1 December 1942, p.1.
directed against Bill O'Neill and Les Austin, with the debate revolving around the fact that the two men had failed to confer with other members of the state council before granting Lloyd Ross's request for leave of absence. The contentious resolution reaffirming the ARU's opposition to conscription was carried by 13 votes to 7, with Bill O'Neill's uncompromising stand on the issue being repudiated by Les Austin.

Lloyd Ross could afford to be philosophical notwithstanding the upheaval caused by his sudden departure. Put simply, he was prepared to accept a renewed round of factional rancour in the ARU in order to preserve his overall political effectiveness. By removing himself from the political scene at this time he was able to avoid having to face up to the potentially embarrassing consequences of his decision to maintain his links with Curtin even if it meant disowning his personal left-wing Labor creed. He was about to leave the country just as the great debate on the issue of conscription was beginning to gather momentum. His finesse was impeccable. Lloyd Ross was able to avoid becoming embroiled in the detailed politics of the debate - both in the ALP and the ARU - which certainly would not have been the case had he stayed. At 1.15am on 29 November, together with Richard Boyer, he flew out of Amberley airforce base on a United States bomber. The two men were accompanied by a

party of American servicemen who a few days earlier had been involved in the famous Brisbane street riots of November 1942.139

His recent highly stressful career as a factionist notwithstanding, Lloyd Ross still had much to accomplish in the labour movement, although the future direction of his activities would result in his straying even further away from 'the track to socialism' that he had followed throughout the 1920s and 1930s. With his youthful radicalism having been thoroughly exorcised he was, with the war barely half over, already fully attuned to the pressures of the emerging post-war world of American dominance and militant anti-communism.

139. Sir Richard Boyer Papers, NLA MS 3181, Box 8, Diary of R.J.F. Boyer, 29 November 1942.
EPILOGUE

Lloyd Ross's mid-war overseas trip, although originally intended to last for no more than two months, quickly developed into a full-scale odyssey. After attending the Mont Tremblant conference - where he created a tremendous impression\(^1\) - he went on to confer with leading community and trade union figures in New York and Washington after which he undertook a hectic round of speaking engagements in the mid-western states. It was widely recognised in official circles that he was an outstanding 'win the war' speaker. Every effort was made to fully utilise him in this capacity. Upon arriving in Cleveland he learnt that the Curtin government had decided to second him to the British Ministry of Information. During the spring and summer of 1943 he toured the United Kingdom, delivering a series of addresses on Australia's contribution to the Allied war effort. It was not until September 1943, after some nine months' absence, that he finally returned to Australia.

\(^1\) Paul Hasluck, Diplomatic Witness Australian Foreign Affairs, 1941-1947, Melbourne, 1980, p.69.
During Lloyd Ross's extended absence the factional situation in the ARU underwent a marked change. As a direct result of the conscription debate of 1942-43 the hardcore Langite section of the party withdrew from the Official ALP while for its part the newly legalised Communist Party stepped up its support for the Curtin government. The resulting factional realignment was strongly reflected in the politics of the ARU. In February 1943 the Langite Bill O'Neill was forced to relinquish the position of acting state secretary in favour of Jack Ferguson, who was much more acceptable to the Communist faction. In September O'Neill was deposed as state president, being succeeded by the ALP loyalist Les Austin while the left-winger Ted Walsham became vice-president. At the same time the suspensions that had been imposed on Tom Hickey, Stan Jones, Sid Wright and the other left-wing railwaymen were lifted. For the duration of the war the state branch was effectively controlled by a coalition comprising Official ALP, State Labor Party and CPA elements.

To have reintroduced the extremely divisive Lloyd Ross into the ARU political scene would inevitably have disrupted the newfound factional harmony in the state branch. Consequently a determined effort was made to ensure that he was eased out. For his part Lloyd Ross was more than

willing to go. He was, for the time being, weary of trade union politics and now wished to devote himself full-time to the task of promoting the post-war reconstruction efforts of the federal Labor government. On 27 September 1943, in accordance with a recommendation from Ben Chifley, it was publicly announced that he had been appointed to the position of Director of Public Relations with the federal Department of Post-War Reconstruction. Criticism of the move came from both the UAP (in the person of Senator C.H. Brand) and the labour left but Lloyd Ross's absorption into the apparatus of government was unstoppable. Following the appointment his resignation as secretary of the New South Wales branch of the ARU duly went ahead and in November Jack Ferguson was formally installed as his successor.

From the very outset Lloyd Ross was an avowedly political public servant who had no intention of avoiding controversy. He saw himself as an agent of the labour movement whose task it was to vigorously present the government's policies to the public by means of press statements, magazine articles, speeches and radio

4. 'NSW Branch, ARU', October 1973, p.2; TRC 236, 2:1/34,2/7.
5. SMH, 28 September 1943, p.4; Century, 1 October 1943, p.2; AA, Curtin, Forde and Chifley Ministries, CRS A2700, Cabinet Minutes and Agenda, 1941-49, vol.6, agenda no. 516, Appointment of Assistant Director-General, Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction.
7. Brian Fitzpatrick, 'Are Unionists Being Overlooked?', Smith's Weekly, 16 October 1943, p.11 ('Ex-Comrade Ross is about as popular with the [Communist] win-the-war unions as is Theodore').
broadcasts. At the same time, amidst a flurry of publicity, he decided to undertake the task of writing a semi-official biography of his post-1941 Labor hero John Curtin following the latter's death in July 1945. However for the time being he was able to make little progress given his immersion in day-to-day political and administrative activity. He was a tireless champion of Labor policies throughout the lifetime of the ensuing Chifley government, helping to present the 'yes' case during referendum campaigns in 1946 and 1948 and staunchly defending Chifley’s attempt to nationalise the private banks. Reflecting his political status, he was immediately relieved of his public service position following the election of the Menzies government in December 1949 whereupon he joined the staff of the resolutely anti-communist Melbourne Herald as a labour affairs commentator.

However, while remaining a staunch Labor partisan, Lloyd Ross had, by the mid-1940s, clearly ceased to be a radical labour man. As the Cold War era set in his hostility to the CPA steadily intensified, taking on a strident anti-Soviet tone which it had previously lacked.

9. SMH, 26 September 1946, p.4.
his strong commitment to the Chifley government, he was naturally appalled by the wave of militant strike activity that erupted after 1945, when the coming of peace set off a flood of pent-up working-class demands for improvements in wages and conditions. The Communist Party, having dropped its wartime policy of steadfastly supporting the Labor government, was all in favour of this development whereas Lloyd Ross was by now fully attuned to mainstream ALP thinking with its emphasis on 'gradual and peaceful reforms'.

He championed the official line put forward by the Department of Post-War Reconstruction whereby the great objective to be sought was not the abolition of domestic private capitalism but rather the development of policies designed to make its operations less anarchic and wasteful. Against this background Lloyd Ross moved away from his longstanding commitment to 'socialism in our time', being henceforth content with the lesser god of 'democratic socialism'. Change was to be brought about as a result of consultation and consent rather than through confrontation and coercion. An improved standard of living - involving full employment, low inflation and extended social services - was to be funded by increased national production. Rejecting class warfare and industrial conflict, Lloyd Ross increasingly

15. Ibid., p.219.
stressed the importance of encouraging co-operation between workers and employers. He called for the development of an array of decentralised consultative processes involving workers and management coupled with a thoroughgoing analysis of the causes of industrial unrest with a view to their elimination. In this way the benefits of a socialist way of living would in time be gained under capitalism.16

Throughout the late 1940s Lloyd Ross's abiding influence in the trade union movement was still a force to be reckoned with notwithstanding his formal departure from the world of internal union politics. The New South Wales branch of the ARU was at one with its former leader in distancing itself from the post-war wave of industrial militancy. Under the guidance of Jack Ferguson the anti-party political legacy of old-style industrial unionism lingered on in the form of a deep suspicion of the policies and influence of the Communist Party.17 The state branch supported its left-wing comrades in Queensland at the time of the 1948 railworkers' strike in that state18 but otherwise its influence was exerted firmly


on the side of moderation. Ferguson formally broke off his wartime alliance with the Communist ARU faction at the end of 1945 and thereafter his and the ARU's devotion to anti-communist policies developed apace. From early 1946 onwards the union was a stalwart supporter of the moderate pro-ALP faction which controlled the Labor Council. The state branch's right-wing stance was fully evident during the miners' strike of 1949 when, in the name of anti-communism, it resolutely supported the strikebreaking activities of the Chifley government. The broad left-wing unity of the late 1930s was now a distant memory. The miners' case was presented by Edgar Ross while Lloyd prepared the government's anti-strike publicity. The pro-ALP argument that the latter had unveiled in November 1942 was tirelessly supported on this occasion by Jack Ferguson - 'Whatever we do should be designed to ensure the retention of Labor Governments in power' - with this line of argument being upheld in practice by his immediate state branch colleagues as well, notably Stan Wyatt.

19. Railroad, 23 November 1945, p.6, 7 December 1945, pp.1, 3, 8.
20. The ARU's Les Austin served as Labor Council president during 1946-47 and Stan Wyatt was a vice-president from 1947 to 1950.
23. NLA MS 3939, Box 1, Australian Railways Union, Minutes of the Twenty-First (Special) Meeting of the Australian Council, July 15, 1949, p.1.
His anti-communist fervour notwithstanding Jack Ferguson was unable to accept the growing influence of the ALP Industrial Groups, whose activities increasingly set the tone of anti-communist politics in the labour movement after 1945. He was bound to reject the Communist Party's pretensions given his insistence that no self-respecting trade union could afford to become the loyal agent of a political party. However for this same reason he was unable to countenance the activities of the ALP Industrial Groups notwithstanding their joint anti-communist stance. This divergence of opinion was a source of increasing irritation to right-wing elements in the labour movement in New South Wales. As a result of the defeat of the federal government's 1951 attempt to ban the Communist Party the ALP now found itself obliged to fully validate its claim that the only way Communist influence could be curbed in the unions was through purely internal procedures. The New South Wales ARU, as a right-wing union, was eager to throw its weight behind such a campaign but Ferguson himself was not prepared to soften his attitude to the Industrial Groups.

The stand off in the ARU cleared the way for Lloyd Ross, now suitably refreshed, to return to the hectic world

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of trade union factionalism. Unlike Ferguson he was perfectly willing to make use of the anti-communist zeal of the Industrial Groups, whose effectiveness was dramatically indicated during the summer and autumn of 1951-52 with the election of Laurie Short as national secretary of the FIA. Lloyd Ross's earlier wartime decision to align himself with the Langite faction was of crucial importance in this regard since it had the effect of entirely freeing him of any inhibitions in regard to co-operating with the forces of right-wing Laborism. Henceforth the pattern was set and only the details needed to be filled in. Already at the ideological level a convergence of interests had occurred with Lloyd Ross, in the years since 1945, having become a keen and sympathetic student of Australian Catholic social thought which in his case soon resulted in his coming into contact with B.A. Santamaria. The joint influence of pre-1914 anti-collectivist ideas - as personified by both Belloc and the syndicalists - was still able to make its presence felt.

The state ALP government was prepared to facilitate Lloyd Ross's re-entry into right-wing union politics. In April 1952 Jack Ferguson resigned as New South Wales secretary of the ARU following his appointment as chairman of the New

27. Lloyd Ross, 'This Is the Way to Oust Reds', Herald, 10 March 1952, p.4.
28. See, for example, Lloyd Ross, 'Labour, Catholicism and Democratic Socialism', Twentieth Century, December 1947, pp.74-89.
South Wales Milk Board. Bill O'Neill still commanded a fair amount of right-wing support in the union but the exigencies of anti-communist politics demanded a far more dynamic approach than he could offer, with the power of the Industrial Groups being the key factor. To this end, in August 1952 Lloyd Ross was installed as acting secretary of the state branch. This move infuriated the unforgiving Communist faction in the union and a determined bid to overturn the new arrangement was immediately launched. The resulting factional and legal wrangling dragged on until October 1955, when Lloyd Ross was finally confirmed as secretary of the state branch. His ultimate victory was an eloquent tribute to the political effectiveness of his Grouper allies.

Lloyd Ross's Cold War alliance with political Catholicism did not outlast the great Labor split of the mid-1950s. Following Labor's eventual decision to dismantle the Industrial Groups he was confronted with a situation similar to that which had existed at the time of the earlier, and by now forgotten, Labor split of 1940, although this time the position of the main right- and left-wing factions was curiously reversed. In the early war years, when faced with having to choose between the Official ALP and his erstwhile left-wing associates, Lloyd Ross had opted for the ALP, doing

30. SMH, 19 August 1952, p.3; Railroad, 5 September 1952, p.1.
31. Ibid., p.9.
32. SMH, 6 October 1955, p.7; DT, 6 October 1955, p.35.
so in the name of labour unity. A decade and a half later, with the Cold War in full swing, he was forced to choose between the ALP and the Industrial Groups. Again he opted for party unity, choosing to fight on in the ALP, which meant that he had to accept - albeit with great reluctance - the formal dissolution of the Industrial Groups. For a second time party solidarity prevailed at the cost of ideological zeal.

Henceforth for Lloyd Ross there were to be no more divisive crusades. His left-wing phase was an increasingly distant memory and his post-war flirtation with Catholic activism inevitably went into decline following the trauma of 1955. Lloyd Ross still had a decade and a half of useful service with the ARU ahead of him - he finally retired as state secretary at the end of 1969 - but by the late 1950s the 'end of ideology' so characteristic of the time was well and truly upon him.

Befitting his status as an ex-leftist, Lloyd Ross became a contributor to the right-wing journal Quadrant and thereafter he was increasingly caught up in the internal affairs of the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom, an organisation which in many ways served as a friendly meeting place for ex-radicals (its secretary, Richard

Krygier, was a former fellow-traveller).34 His immediate AACF contacts were the lawyers John Kerr and Hal Wootten, who together had served as his legal counsel during the recent factional upheaval in the ARU.35 Lloyd Ross's association with Kerr ultimately broke down, however. In October 1961, supported by Richard Krygier and James McAuley, he successfully stood for the presidency of the AACF in opposition to Kerr, who was unacceptable to the majority faction on the executive because he was seen as less of a hardline anti-communist.36

The upsurge of factionalism associated with Lloyd Ross's election led to a number of resignations from the AACF, with Kerr and Wootten leading the exodus. The split in the ranks of the organisation precipitated a lively public debate in the course of which the AACF's recent history and future role was canvassed in some detail. However for the most part Lloyd Ross by now had ceased to figure at the centre of political-cum-ideological controversies. Within the ARU his interest was increasingly focussed on a number of highly specific industrial issues (an industry allowance, service increments and an extra week's annual leave) to the exclusion of political intrigue and ideological developments and as a result his former intense interest in the fortunes

35. 79 CAR 85.
of trade union factions and factionalism gradually faded to the point where it was barely discernible. Consensus among all concerned was essential in the age of automation.37 Eventually he proclaimed the death of ideological politics in the trade union movement38 and dropped his last remaining informal contacts with the Groupers, preferring instead to drift back to the middle of the Labor spectrum, finally ending up as a good 'left of centre' man.39 Against this background his election as AACF president was hardly likely to result in a further rightward lurch in the orientation of that organisation and in the event the perceived difference with Kerr was of little practical import.40

From the early 1960s onwards Lloyd Ross's descent into silence proceeded apace. There was no longer any grand vision to expound. After 35 years as a tireless publicist his stream of occasional publications gradually began to dry up. He had nothing new to say. His only remaining notable pro-labour literary project, the long delayed biography of John Curtin, finally saw the light of day in 1977. It met with the usual array of reviews from academic and journalistic worthies with the generally low level of comment and criticism being redeemed by a lively review from the New Left's Humphrey McQueen, who gleefully seized upon the piquancy involved in

37. SMH, 5 November 1960, p.6.
39. Australian, 26 November 1969, p.13; NLA MS 3939, Box 5, Lloyd Ross, 'Twenty-Four Years as a Union Secretary'.
the ex-socialist Lloyd Ross writing about the career of the ex-socialist John Curtin.41

In descending into ideological insignificance Lloyd Ross faithfully mirrored the entire post-1939 experience of the labour movement in New South Wales, which has traditionally been the heartland of Australian labour politics. After it assumed office following the historic election victory of 1941 the ALP rapidly became the natural party of government in New South Wales. It took on an unprecedented adamantine quality. Internal stability and cautious gradualism henceforth were its hallmarks. Factional strife and socialist idealism alike were noticeable by their absence.42 However it is important to note that this blessed state of equanimity, while obviously attuned to the 'realities of politics',43 was not attained by accident. The stability that prevailed throughout the 1940s and 1950s - with the ALP split of 1955 being largely confined to Victoria and, eventually, Queensland - was based on events that occurred during the early war years when the ever fractious Lang was removed as party leader and the left-wing Hughes-Evans group successfully excised. The accompanying ideological and factional turmoil rose to a crescendo only to exhaust itself and give way to a preternatural calm. All passion was spent. Henceforth the realists of the New South

42. Aitken, The Colonel, pp.246-247.
43. Ibid., p.246.
Wales ALP machine - 'the most formidable and successful Labor force in Australia'\textsuperscript{44} - came into their own, relentlessly pursuing the politics of pragmatism up until the present time, as indicated by their role in the formation and consolidation of 'the Hawke ascendancy'. In this way the forgotten passions of a bygone era - albeit through their benumbing absence - still haunt the present.

Ultimately it is in regard to his role in contributing to Labor's grand disenchantment that Lloyd Ross's historical significance is to be found. The intensity of his radicalism in the 1930s resulted in his post-1940 anti-communist reaction being all the more violent, with both the New South Wales ARU and, by extension, the ALP and the trade union movement generally feeling the effects. The spirit of disinterestedness was absent. As a result of unbridled factional zeal on the part of both Lloyd Ross and his post-1935 Communist comrades the ideological fervour that the ARU militants revelled in during their heyday eventually burnt itself out, to be seen no more. Lloyd Ross was attracted to trade union politics because of the state branch's socialist position but in the end political wisdom, in its infinite cunning, brought about the undoing of his ideological zeal. His boundless energy ultimately had the effect of helping to perpetuate the mindlessness that he had railed against during his days as a left-wing critic of the

\textsuperscript{44} Paul Kelly, The Hawke Ascendancy, revised ed., Sydney, 1985, p.110.
Australian labour movement. At the personal level this outcome was highly ironic. In broader terms, however, by immersing himself in the recurrent cycle of militancy and deradicalisation Lloyd Ross was clearly moving in the mainstream of labour history and indeed he contributed more than his fair share to helping the process along. In this sense as an ARU official he undoubtedly played a key role in the ideological evolution of modern Australia.
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