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### Abbreviations

<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>A.L.P.</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
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<td>A.N.R.</td>
<td>Australian National Review</td>
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<td>A.W.</td>
<td>Australian Worker</td>
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<td>A.W.U.</td>
<td>Australian Workers' Union</td>
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<td>I.W.W.</td>
<td>Industrial Workers of the World</td>
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<td>O.B.U.</td>
<td>One Big Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comm. Year Book</td>
<td>Year Book, Commonwealth of Australia</td>
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<td>N.S.W. Parl. Deb.</td>
<td>New South Wales Parliamentary Debates</td>
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<td>N.S.W. Parl. Pap.</td>
<td>New South Wales Parliamentary Papers</td>
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<td>S.M.H.</td>
<td>Sydney Morning Herald</td>
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### A Note on Terms

**Caucus** ... the body of all Australian Labor Party members in a particular legislature — invariably in this thesis, the New South Wales State Parliament.

**'Labor' and 'labor'** ... the word 'Labor', capitalised, refers to the Australian Labor Party; the uncapitalised 'labor' refers to the labor movement in general.
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PART I: 1919-1922.
Introduction

The opening years in this study of revolutionaries and reformists in New South Wales are extremely unsettled years, marked by widespread strikes, the formation of new radical parties, the strengthening of left-wing influence and authority, and the bitter clash of factions within the mass party, the Australian Labor party, labor's established party since 1890. No one man or clique dominates the movement. Relative to their behaviour in previous periods, the rank and file is active rather than passive. Through the years which follow, the left wing retains and even extends the early hold over trade union positions which was so vital to its influence and authority. And although the struggle for political leadership traces out a fluctuating course, this left wing by no means lacks its share of victories.

Yet the rank and file can no longer be described as 'active'; passivity is spreading fast. By 1927, the area over which power is shared in the mass party, for example, has shrunk dramatically. A suburban estate agent of little talent has the levers of power in his hands. As he quickly entrenches himself in dictator-like remoteness from rank and file control, the labor movement finds that the struggle of the twenties is moving towards an unexpected outcome: the personal rule of the 'Big Jella', John Thomas Lang.

How did the situation of the opening years change to that of the latter years?

This study examines the events of 1919-27 which accompanied (and accomplished) this striking change. It gives particularly close attention to the activities and role of a number of labor leaders known
collectively as the 'Trades Hall reds'.

The Australian labor movement is and has always been profoundly reformist, its ideology empiricist in the extreme. But during its most radical and militant period, c. 1916-1921, in New South Wales the labor movement threw up a group of socialists with powerful mass connections—the 'Trades Hall reds' of these pages, who played a vital part in founding and shaping the policy of the early Communist Party. These, unlike most of their comrades overseas—and those at home who were less well-connected in the mass labor organisations—were conservative bureaucrats in industrial matters and opportunist in political affairs. But without and their union ties, it would have taken perhaps five months, instead of the actual five years, for the new Communist Party to stand revealed as yet another revolutionary splinter party, almost ignored in national politics despite great powers of endurance gained through its connection with the Soviet Union.

Profoundly significant for the future development of the Trades Hall reds, was the ebbing of the international tide of political radicalism and industrial militancy which had thrown them up. If Europe, or even some part of it outside Russia, had turned socialist, then the climate of the twenties would have been far more favourable to revolutionaries throughout the world. As it turned out, the influences already firmly planted in Australian soil which nourish reformism became stronger, claiming the Trades Hall reds as their own. Need they have been claimed, and need they have been claimed to the extent that they were? Was it inevitable that this should happen? During the years 1921-26, we see the Trades Hall reds make a series of decisions which led to the steady
erosion of the group's distinctively left standpoint. It seems too facile to say that these were predestined or inevitable decisions, although they were likely and understandable decisions.

In examining the industrial policy of the Trades Hall reds, a method of strike analysis is developed which has not so far been used among labor or strike historians. This method distinguishes the 'extended' from the 'confined' type of strike tactic, each with its various subforms. The concepts began to take some shape during earlier studies on the Australian waterside strike of 1928 and the coal lockout of 1929-30, and emerged more clearly in an investigation of the timber strike of 1929.

Also used throughout the thesis is the concept of the rank and file, on which some comment is needed.

The rank and file of a party or trade union are those not holding the main leadership positions. This distinction may not always be a valid one, as for example at times in certain important industries during the first world war in England, when the rank and file were bonded so closely with de facto leadership as to make separation difficult if not impossible. But in most times in most countries the distinction is an obviously real one. There will however be room for argument as to precisely which people constitute the main leadership at a given time. Through most of our period, for example, the main leadership of the A.I.P. were the state executive, the parliamentarians and those able to exercise influence on party policy and activities by virtue of trade union positions. Once Lang's rule was decisively established, by contrast, the main leadership in fact came from Lang and his 'inner group'.
One cannot sustain the idea of a firm distinction between the industrial and political leaderships, for the reason mentioned above - some union officials exert substantial influence on party policy and activity without being formally part of the political leadership; nor between the industrial and political rank and file, as these also overlapped considerably.

Indeed, the same interweaving of an industrial warp and a political woof is continually apparent in this as in other periods of labor history, and the study that follows inevitably moves back and forth between these two strands. The political strand however is itself clearly divided between the mass party (the Australian Labor Party) and the socialist groups. In this sense, then, three studies are pursued in what follows.
CHAPTER I  RE-ORGANISING THE MOVEMENT: the One Big Union and the Industrial Socialist Labor Party.
In 1919, the masses were aroused on a scale unprecedented in history, in movements that leaped over national frontiers everywhere. In some countries, this took the form of political revolutions; in others, strikes and mass demonstrations stopping far short of revolution. In Australia, one of the world's most prosperous and insular corners, there was an echo of the far-off thunder.

The most heavily populated and industrialised of Australia's six states is New South Wales. Labor's path throughout Australia was and is strongly influenced by labor in New South Wales. There, in 1919, the trade unions were still inclined towards direct action despite a disastrous strike in 1917. Since 1890, when they had played a crucial role in setting it up, the unions had acknowledged the Australian Labor Party as their mass party; but now in 1919, their attitude to it ranged from passivity and discontent to flat hostility.

Yet the A.L.P. in New South Wales had by no means been unresponsive to mounting working class discontent as the war unfolded. It is true that many leading A.L.P. members, including parliamentarians, had resisted union pressure for improvements in working conditions, but outstanding among the exceptions were leaders of the Australian Workers' Union (A.W.U.), for example. The giant A.W.U. was a federal union originally based on outback shearmen and shed-hands, but now an empire embracing many types of workers, largely semi-skilled and unskilled and mainly rural. The A.W.U.'s tough bureaucracy,
members of which were often highly placed within the A.L.P., contained many who were personally less enthusiastic about the allied war effort than about the Irish rebellion, and who opposed conscription for overseas service. Others were alarmed by their rank and file's responsiveness to class-war concepts and their resistance to war-time erosion of living standards, and these leaders helped crystallise and lead such resistance, in order to protect and strengthen their positions.

The A.L.P. expelled many who resisted union pressure for economic improvements when they also fell foul of the unions over conscription. Indeed, to accommodate the rank and file discontent manifest in New South Wales as in so many lands as the war developed, the A.L.P. split.

All this did not prove enough. Though unionists did not adopt a new party as their own, they tended to turn their back on the old, for those who remained in its leadership did too little to meet labor's new mood.

That new mood was one sympathetic to the left\(^n\) political matters and, in industrial affairs, well disposed to what was popularly called 'direct action' - that is, use of the strike weapon in its many forms. The workers of Irish background played their part in shaping this mood, as they saw the hand of imperialism, and not merely of the English, in the crushing of the Easter rebellion. Traditionally associated with the A.L.P., they helped at this time to form a climate within that party favourable to the left.

Labor was well disposed to the slogans of syndicalism, still, though transiently, the most powerful current on the left. Syndicalist
industrial tactics - the general strike, the extended strike, or forms of the partial strike such as the go-slow - were part of labor's everyday vocabulary.

The syndicalist plan for a new world turned about the One Big Union which was to be built from industrial unions, that is, unions which organised all workers in a particular industry who contribute to one product or groups of products, irrespective of their skill. Industrial unions were popular and, to a lesser extent, the One Big Union was also - but as a weapon in the daily 'guerrilla war' against Capital, rather than as components of the society of tomorrow.

If the Australian labor movement was strongly influenced by New South Wales, that of New South Wales was dominated by Sydney. There were other centres of power, it is true, at Newcastle, Wollongong and Broken Hill. Where Sydney had, in general, injected into the labor movement a conservative influence, the outlying centres had injected a more politically radical and industrially militant influence. But in any contest, the strength lay with Sydney, and within Sydney the locus of power was to be found in the industrially conservative New South Wales Labor Council.

These were unusual times, however, and the climate of unrest made itself felt even within that august body. During 1919 a group of leftists (at the time neither syndicalist nor socialist, but a little of each) began to take control of the Labor Council. In 1917, the conservative secretary of the Labor Council, E.J. Kavanagh, had appointed as assistant-secretary leading leftist John Smith Garden, a Scots
migrant, one-time lay preacher, and no-conscription candidate for the A.L.P. Not long after this, Kavanagh resigned the secretaryship to take up a government position, and Garden became the new secretary by two votes, early in 1918.

The union defeat in the 1917 'debacle', as the inaccurately but popularly known 'general' strike was dubbed, had convinced those not already so minded that union reorganisation was needed. To meet this need, Garden and his supporters launched, with official Labor Council support, the One Big Union project. And in 1919 this project was the first of the contests through which left and right in New South Wales met in struggle; the second contest took place over a breakaway party from the A.L.P. led by One Big Unionists boring from within it and known as the Industrial Socialist Labor Party.

**Industrial Unionism - All Things to all Men?**

As framed by the New South Wales left, the One Big Union was taken over almost unchanged from the American Industrial Workers of the World. 1A

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1 According to the Labor Council, the strike involved 100,000 workers, 65,000 of whom were in New South Wales, and lasted about eight weeks. (Report and Balance Sheet Lab. Council, for Half Year ending December 31 1917, p.11).

1A For a version of the 'political' or DeLeonite I.W.W. preamble, see Workers' International Industrial Union, Constitution, Sydney, n.d. but 1917 or 1918. For the 'industrial' or 'Chicagote' I.W.W. preamble, see the pamphlet Direct Action, printed by the Sydney Branch of the I.W.W., n.d., p.15; for an analysis of it, The I.W.W. Its History, Structure and Methods, by Vincent St.John, Ohio, n.d.
The Preamble of the One Big Union said:

Capitalism can only be abolished by the workers uniting in one class-conscious, economic organisation to take and hold the means of production by revolutionary industrial and political action. 2

The idea of the One Big Union had a firm foundation in the prevailing popularity of industrial unionism. 'Industrial Unionism' — there was a slogan under which nearly all sections of the post-war labor movement (officials or rank and file, right wing or left wing) were willing to march. But the destination of that march, and even the precise meaning of the slogan, were understood quite differently by different sections of the movement. And in this variety of interpretation one finds much to explain the paradoxes within the One Big Union itself.

Though industrial unionism was common to both Marxist and syndicalist traditions, it was more widely known as part of the latter. Australian syndicalism was chiefly represented by the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.). In 1911, the Australian I.W.W. split into an 'industrial' or 'Chicago', 'direct action' faction, and a

2 Rules, Workers Industrial Union of Australia, 1918.

This appears to be an orthodox DeLeonite I.W.W. formulation. However, originally the words 'and political' ('revolutionary industrial and political action') were absent. They were inserted during the New South Wales Trade Union Congress of August 1918, at the insistence of a conservative federal A.L.P. parliamentarian, one James Howard Catts (See Molesworth collection, Set 243, Item 1).
'political', or 'DeLeonite', 'Detroit' faction. The DeLeonite stream was represented by the Sydney Socialist Labour Party, led by E.E. Judd, and by the Workers' International Industrial League, established in 1916. All I.W.W. groups supported the idea of a One Big Union. But the direct actionists had the greater mass appeal, both through their slogans and their style of work, so doubtless they did the most to popularise the One Big Union. The I.W.W. groups urged trade unionists to combine in one great 'class' union, the One Big Union, overthrow existing society, and build a new syndicalist society. The One Big Union would be their scaffolding.

Seeping into Australian working class thought after 1905 through I.W.W. propaganda, the One Big Union steadily increased in popularity, as the I.W.W. case appeared to gain strength from the lessons learned in the industrial conflicts at Broken Hill and Newcastle in 1909, Lithgow and Queensland in 1912, and in New South Wales in 1916 and 1917.

Attempts to further the growth of industrial unionism were made well before the general strike of 1917. In 1913 and 1914, right-wing and moderate union leaders sponsored an 'Australian Unions' Federation' which they called a 'One Big Union'. Its 'most important rule' contained these words:

No cessation of work or disturbance of existing conditions (which may involve an industrial dispute) by an affiliated organisation, shall take place unless, and until the matter has been laid before the Council, and the Council has so decided.
V.G. Childe agrees with both a contemporary opinion 'that the scheme was a sort of checkmate on the industrial ardour of men' and the opinion of a leading A.W.U. official, Lambert, that it was a 'cunningly devised scheme by a few wily politicians to hobble, bind and shackle the unions.' The checkmate theme proved a dominant one, echoed by later official proponents of industrial unionism, whether right- or left-wing. In 1916, the A.W.U. itself arranged exploratory discussions on the subject of the One Big Union, but the smaller unions' suspicions of A.W.U. motives proved fatal. In January 1917, the executive of the New South Wales Labor Council received correspondence from Newcastle Labor Council asking for an all-states conference to devise 'a scheme that would make Strikes a thing of the past.' The executive signified its approval of Newcastle's desire to 'abolish strike[s].' In 1917 conferences of marine transport unions succeeded in establishing a so-called industrial union known as the Transport Workers' Federation. In 1917, the Chicagoite I.W.W. leaders were gaol ed and the movement itself virtually wiped out; but the One Big Union movement survived and gained new vigour after that year of

3 Cited V.G. Childe, How Labour Governs, pp.111-113. See also S.M.H. 20 May 1914, Direct Action, 15 June, 1 July 1914.


5 They were charged under the Unlawful Associations Act 1916 and the Crimes Acts 1914-1915 (Geoffrey Sawer, Australian Federal Politics and Law 1901-1929, pp.134-136).
industrial upheaval. Indeed the general strike appears to have stimulated interest in the One Big Union amongst both officials and rank and file unionists — though in somewhat different ways.

From 1917 to 1930, union officials in New South Wales, whether right-or left-wing, often referred to the general strike of 1917 as the '1917 debacle'. Officials appear to have drawn the lesson that, since the general strike was an extreme form of the 'extended front' strike, any sort of extended strike was, in itself, disastrous. The general strike had been initiated by the rank and file. Because almost all officials were against the extended strike after 1917, any such strikes after that year would have had to be initiated by the rank and file, whose mood was such that officials felt them likely to do this. The right wing hoped that 'industrial reorganisation', a term they used interchangeably with industrial unionism, would help keep rank and file militancy in check. But prominent men on the left had views not dissimilar. In 1919, the Labor Council's new left-wing secretary, J.S. Garden, said, in giving the Council's annual report:

Surely in this day we can use a more scientific weapon than the obsolete weapon of the strike... let us... lay aside the strike weapon until the movement is thoroughly organized along scientific lines that will make it an efficient weapon.

The Sydney Trades Hall reds associated with Garden were extremely influential men, both in the left wing and in the overall union

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6 E.H. Lane, Dawn to Dusk, Reminiscences of a Rebel, Brisbane, 1939, pp. 206-207.
movement of New South Wales. Their practice from 1919 to 1927 was to encourage strikes very little, to take the lead only when unavoidable, or when an extended strike might threaten without their intervention. Their almost invariable choice was for what this study defines as the 'confined' strike - strikes 'confined' as to mode of action or area, and usually both. Examples are the Saturday morning strike, the no-overtime strike, the go-slow, the work to regulations strike, limited perhaps to one industry, or section of one industry, and often, as we shall see, to a small group of shops within one industry. Though much influenced by both Chicago and DeLeonite I.W.W., the Trades Hall reds leaned towards the strike tactics of the latter. In place of the Chicagote willingness to use both the short, extended form and varieties of confined and on-the-job forms ('go-slow', overtime ban etc.) the Trades Hall reds invariably leaned towards the confined forms.

In different ways, the 1917 strike inspired both officials and rank and file with the need for 'industrial unionism'. In December 1917, the conservative secretary of Labor Council, E.J. Kavanagh, proposed to Council a scheme for 'industrial reorganisation' which he felt supporters of the One Big Union 'if consistent' would support, as a first step towards their ideal. He prefaced his proposals with an account of the 1917 general strike, explaining that officials, and more particularly the Labor Council executive,

had found it impossible to prevent the strike, and equally impossible to confine its area once it was under way. The strike suggested to Kavanagh the need for a 'complete alteration of our present system of organisation in order that in future such matters shall be controlled by a responsible... body.' To achieve this end, Kavanagh proposed:

That all Unions be grouped on lines of trade affinity. Such groups to be formed into Industrial Federations, which in order to form a complete whole shall be linked up to a State or Central Council. State Councils to be linked up to a Federal body by the formation of an Australian Labor Council...

Industrial Councils to deal with all domestic affairs affecting any trade or calling within its own group...

Australian Labor Council to deal with all Federal matters, including disputes that extend beyond the limits of any one State...

No Union to cease work unless by authority of Industrial Federation...

Industrial Federation to have power to investigate any matter in dispute, and if deemed necessary, to order the taking of a ballot of members of any Union in its group...

The scheme bore a strong similarity to the Australian Unions' Federation of 1914, which Lambert of the A.W.U. had predicted would "hobble, bind and shackle the unions." A sub-committee appointed to investigate Kavanagh's scheme consisted of leading leftists Garden, A.A. McPherson and E.E. Judd. They objected to Kavanagh's

8 See above, p. 15.
Proposal not because its degree of top-committee control would
"hobble, bind and shackle..."', but because it "was on craft lines...".
Council adopted the left scheme for reorganisation on "industrial
lines". But the left's scheme was as likely to "hobble, bind
and shackle..." individual unions as much as the right's.

The Trades Hall reds led the One Big Union movement but,
contrary to Childe's belief (see below), one does not find them
advocating it as a means of more efficiently conducting strikes,
particularly the extended strikes for which industrial unions were
widely believed to be designed. Childe writes:

detailed action by sections of the working-class,
essential... for success in the struggle against the
master class... required, above all, that a paralysing strike
could be called of the whole of the workers in one
specific industry-building, mining, railways, etc. A
union departmentalised on the American plan could carry out
just those tactics. 10

In their propaganda, the O.B.U. leaders said very little about
immediate uses for industrial unionism, whether for strikes or other
purposes. Rather, the stress was laid upon the new social structure
the O.B.U. could bring:

J.S. Garden was secretary by this time and so gave the annual report.
See also the Social Democrat, 26 April 1918.

10 Childe, op.cit. p. 197. In this passage Childe equates 'industrial
unionists' (with whom he associates J.S. Garden) and the I.W.W.,
in respect of their strike tactics.
Industrial Unionism educates the workers so that they may run the plants themselves, so that they may directly control the various industries under the truest form of democracy. 11

Strike figures for the time show that unionists were willing to strike for immediate demands, 12 and this willingness explains why sympathy for industrial unionism was so widespread among the rank and file. Should he wish to strike, the rank and file unionist could bring some sort of pressure to bear on the elected leaders of his own union. However if no strike could begin without the approval of the top committee of a One Big Union, the position was clearly less favourable to the would-be striker. One Big Union spokesmen made it abundantly clear that they did not encourage strikes. Thus the rank and file desire to strike for immediate demands in fact drew no more nourishment from the One Big Union, 1918-1922, than it had from the right-wing schemes of 1914 and 1917. 13

11 One Big Union—Industrial Unionism, a leaflet published by the O.B.U. under its official title the 'Workers' Industrial Union of A.' Signed by the W.I.U. secretary, J.S. Garden, Sydney n.d. but Molesworth dates it August 1919. (Set 243, item 1, Molesworth Collection, Mitchell).

12 See appendix Ch. 3.

13 The words, attitudes and actions of O.B.U. leaders told the unionist where the O.B.U. stood on strikes. But the 1918 constitution would also have told him, had he read it, (Workers' Industrial Union of Australia, Rules, 1918, clause 5 (i)). In 1918, under left-wing leadership, provisions on local autonomy were no different from those of 1922, when right-wing influence was dominant. (Australasian Workers' Union, Constitution and General Rules 1922-23, Sydney, 1922. H.E. Holland coll.)

It might be argued that such provisions were designed to meet the requirements of the arbitration courts. Australian unions must show the courts that they control their membership, and provisions on local autonomy would suggest lack of control. This would certainly have been a consideration in the case of the 1922 Australasian Workers' Union, but not with the 1918 Workers Industrial Union of Australia. The latter was modelled closely on the DeLeonite Workers' International (Industrial) Union, (see below p.22) which had very similar provisions on local autonomy (Constitution, Sydney, n.d. 1917 or 1918) and as much interest in the arbitration court as the O.B.U.
First Steps and First Clashes

In 1918, when excitement over the conscription referenda and the general strike had subsided, the Labor Council announced, at the instance of A.C. Willis, general secretary of the powerful miners' federation, a trade union congress for 5 August 1918, and circulated a copy of the left-wing proposals for industrial reorganization. At the congress, where 141 delegates, including nine
from the A.W.U., represented seventy-nine unions, the left won the
main official positions, while the scheme for industrial reorganisation accepted from several alternatives was that of the left, with its marked I.W.W. influence.

According to the left union officials' proposed constitution, trade unionists would strive for the overthrow of capitalist ownership of the means of production through a One Big Union embracing all workers in six great economic 'departments'—these being concerned with building and construction, manufacture and general production; transport and communication; agriculture; land and fisheries; civil services and public utilities; and mining. Each 'department' was then sub-divided several times until, through the fundamental unit of the 'section', the network encompassed the rank and file.

14 While A.C. Willis was chairman, seven of the twelve members on the 'Constitutional Committee' were leftists (A. Rutherford, J. Kilburn, A. Rae, E.W. Judd, A.C. Willis, J.S. Garden and G. Burns).

15 For two alternative Victorian schemes, see J.T. Sutcliffe, A History of Trade Unionism in Australia, p. 210 and p. 212. For another rejected scheme, sponsored by the N.S.W. Branch of the Printing Industry Employees Union, see Electrical Trades Journal, 30 April, 1919.
After adopting the constitution for the One Big Union proposed by the left wing, the 1918 congress elected an organising committee of twelve, asked trade unions to pay in £5 for each 1,000 of their members, appointed an organising secretary (J.S. Garden) and planned to launch the One Big Union on 14 October, 1918.

There were criticisms in plenty: some, including the right wing, criticised the August constitution because it was felt that skilled unionists ran the risk of being 'swamped' by unskilled.

A tiny DeLeonite I.W.W. group, the Melbourne branch of the Workers' International Industrial Union, condemned the August constitution.

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18 In 1916 Australia's DeLeonite I.W.W. (assisted by the Socialist Labor Party, considered to be the I.W.W.'s 'political sword') changed its name to the Workers' International Industrial Union, in accordance with an American lead. The subsequent story of this tiny faction-ridden body can be gleaned in part from fragmentary minutes in the Mitchell Library. See the Minute Book, National Executive of IWW Clubs. National Executive Committee of Australasia, 1913-1921. A second book contains minutes of general meetings of the 'Sydney Socialist IWW Club', 1916-18. While it was nowhere healthy, the W.I.I.U. made more impression in Melbourne than in Sydney. In Melbourne, in March 1918, this body organised the One Big Union Propaganda League to build support for the One Big Union among Victorian unionists. In October, 1918, the One Big Union Propaganda League began to publish the 'One Big Union Herald'. (For an account of the activities of the Workers' International Industrial Union from 1916 to 1928, see L.G. Churchward, 'The American Influence on the Australian Labour Movement', in Historical Studies of Australia and New Zealand, (vol. 5, no. 19, p. 272).
because the fundamental units or 'sections' were based on existing craft unions and their officials. Expressing this view, a spokesman for a group with very similar views alleged that the 'Trades Hall One Big Union'

resolve[d] itself into a conglomeration of Trades Unions cursed with 'bossdom' of autocratic executives...21

The I.W.W. critics insisted that the One Big Union must be built up from 'shop committees', industrial unions in miniature.

Yet despite criticism, to the casual observer of 1918 the future of the One Big Union surely looked rosy. Union interest in reorganisation was at a peak: in August 1918, the Central Council of the Miners' Federation resolved to endorse the formation of the

20 The Constitution of the Workers' International Industrial Union (Marxian Print, Sydney, n.d. but either 1917 or 1918) forbade a member to be an officer in a 'pure and simple trade union' (Article VI, sec.3). Its local unit was composed of 'all the actual wage-workers in a given locality, welded together in shop branches or as the particular requirements of said industry may render necessary' (Article 1, sec.2(c)).

In a recent study of the One Big Union, Ian Bedford (The One Big Union 1918-1923. The Last Days of Revolutionary Syndicalism in Australia, Final Year Thesis, Department of Government, Sydney University, 1960.) remarks (p.7) a contrast between the American I.W.W., whose strength lay among non-unionised, unskilled workers, many of whom were recent immigrants, and the Australian, sponsored and controlled by the skilled unionists officially controlling the labor movement of New South Wales. It is probable that this contrast is linked with the greater Australian emphasis on centralised control as against local autonomy.

21 Solidarity, the Official Organ of the I.L.P. (Industrial Labour Party) 21 Sept. 1918.
One Big Union and to donate to it 10s. for each 100 members of the Federation.\textsuperscript{22} By November 1918, J.S. Garden, secretary of the One Big Union movement as well as of the Labor Council, announced an impressive list of unions which had passed resolutions \textit{approving} the One Big Union as outlined at the 1918 Conference.\textsuperscript{23} At the Sydney Domain, a 'Monster Demonstration' was held on 8 December 1918 to promote the One Big Union. There were four 'stumps', each with a constellation of leading labor spokesmen, right-wing, moderates and left-wing.\textsuperscript{24}

The participation of right and left-wing union officials in the 1918 union congress and its sympathy for the One Big Union; the acclaim for the One Big Union throughout the labor press and movement; above all, the keen rank and file interest in industrial unionism as an aid to industrial action—all this augured well for the One Big Union. But below the appearance of unity lay strong divisive influences: the ambitions of the great Australian Workers' Union; official concern over rank and file industrial militancy; and fear that the left would use the One Big Union to make a bid for control of the A.L.P.

\textsuperscript{22} Minutes, Central Council Miners' Federation 14-18.8.1918.
\textsuperscript{23} For the list, a long one, see a letter from Garden in the One Big Union Herald, November 26, 1918.
\textsuperscript{24} See printed handbill, Workers' Industrial Union of Australia, One Big Union. Monster Demonstration. (Marxian Print, Sydney; R.S. Ross collection.)
The One Big Union and the Industrial Socialist Labor Party, January-September, 1919.

The One Big Union was one of two arenas in which the battle between labor's left and right wings was fought in late 1918. After January 1919, that battle was also fought in the arena of labor's mass political party, the Australian Labor Party. Here the left met with such a defeat that it would have been extremely hard, given the peculiar intermeshing of union and political affairs in Australia through the A.L.P., to make good its losses.

Exhilarated by its success at the Trade Union Congress of August 1918, the left initiated moves which came close to changing the official objective of the A.L.P. in an extremely radical way. The left made its bid to control the A.L.P. through the Industrial Vigilance Council, an officially constituted and powerful organisation within the A.L.P. Established under the name of the Industrial Section of the A.L.P. in 1916, the Industrial Vigilance Council had originally been a united front of right, moderate and left-wing unionists against the so-called 'politicians'.

For a good, brief account of this body's constitution, function and history, see Childe, _op.cit._, p. 64. For the Rules and Constitution of the Industrial Section of the Political Labor League of N.S.W., see Molesworth, Set 71, Item 6; see ibid. for the First Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the Industrial Section, 1917, and the Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the Industrial Vigilance Council, 1918. For a right-wing account of the body's history till August 1918, see V. Molesworth's 'History of the Industrial Section of the Political Labor League which in 1918 was renamed the Industrial Vigilance Council of the Australian Labor Party (N.S.W. Branch)'. Typescript, ibid.
The left remained fairly quiet until it took the lead in the conscription referenda of 1916-17 and, in 1917, through the instrumentality of the Industrial Vigilance Council, gained two vice-presidencies and several other state executive positions in the A.L.P. itself. In 1918, the left was still influential and, on its initiative, peace proposals were circulated over prominent A.L.P. names during the party's annual conference in 1918. The signatories castigated 'the existing capitalistic system of production for profit', proclaimed that enduring peace could come only from 'an organised system of production for use, under democratic control', and succeeded in alarming the more alert of the right wing. Left-wing influence within the A.L.P. continued to grow, and reached a climax in January 1919 when the Industrial Vigilance Council adopted the One Big Union preamble as its objective.

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26 In 1917, Arthur Rae, an old A.W.U. member and a former Senator, and A.C. Willis were vice-presidents, while J.J. Graves and J. Howie, later prominent Communists, were executive members (Molesworth Set 243, Item I). In 1918, Willis was once more a vice-president, with Rae acting general secretary, and Rutherford a member of the executive.


28 After defining the two main classes in industrial society, and stating that lasting peace was impossible while classes exist, the new objective said: 'Between these two classes the struggle must continue until Capitalism is abolished. Capitalism can only be abolished by the workers uniting in one class-conscious economic organisation to take and hold the means of production by revolutionary industrial and political action...' (See also The One Big Union Bulletin, 1919). For the whole new constitution see Industrial Vigilance Council, Australian Labor Party of New South Wales, Rules and Constitution,... Revised and Adopted Jan. 24 1919. Handwritten inside the constitution are the words 'never issued'.
From its inception, the Industrial Vigilance Council had nominated a 'ticket' for the key A.L.P. committees to be elected from the A.L.P.'s annual conference. When the Industrial Vigilance Council adopted the One Big Union preamble as its objective, it was presumed that those on the Council's 'ticket' for annual conference would urge the A.L.P. to renounce its existing objective for that of the One Big Union. Both left and right wing threw themselves into feverish efforts to have their men elected from leagues and unions as conference delegates. The left set up a committee of seventy but, initially inspired by federal A.L.P. parliamentarian James Howard Catts, the right did far better. Parliamentarians were called upon, and state parliamentary leader John Storey, once well-disposed to the One Big Union, now trenchantly denounced the 'few limelighters and notoriety hunters' who attempted to saddle the Australian Labour Party... with methods foreign to our Australian spirit....

By May, the right had made certain of so many delegates that leftist A.L.P. vice-president Willis tried (unsuccessfully) to put off the 1919 annual conference altogether. Deciding to side-step the Industrial Vigilance

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29 Molesworth says that J.H. Catts and J. Bailey (Vice-President of the A.W.U.) took the initiative. ('The Labor Party Crisis of 1919. Being the events leading up to the June 1919 conference of leagues and unions affiliated with the Australian Labour Party, outlining the fight between the constitutional element and the O.B.U.-Soviet section). Typescript, (Molesworth coll, Set 243, Item 1). Catts says he himself led the right wing campaign. (Comm. Parl. Deb., vol.XCIX, p.197, 6 July 1922.)

30 S.M.H., 7 Mar. 1919.

31 In Molesworth's 'The Labor Party Crisis of 1919. Being the events leading up to the June 1919 conference......'
Council and sponsor its own 'ticket' for annual conference, the right 'stacked' a meeting of the Industrial Vigilance Council so that it adjourned until after conference without having chosen the customary 'ticket'. In response, the left formed the 'Reorganised Industrial Section', and under this name drew up its own 'ticket'.

Conference opened after unparalleled backstage preparations, and A.C. Willis, secretary of the miners' federation, proposed that the following be substituted for the existing A.L.P. objective:

That the object of the Party be the establishment of a State of social democracy, in which the entire means of wealth production shall be owned and controlled by the community of workers industrially organised.

That this be the sole issue of future elections...

That in the event of the foregoing series of resolutions being carried by Conference, a campaign of propaganda be commenced with the object of acquainting the general public with the changed economic circumstances engendered by the war....which make a peaceful revolution of the social system urgent...if the working classes are to escape degradation of their standard of living and a condition of servitude culminating probably in a war even more devastating than the one from which we have just emerged.

The left's new objective gained a remarkably big vote, being defeated only by 127 votes to 112. But the highest left-wing vote for an

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32 Roneoed Sheet 'The Industrial Section. Statement of the Position'. Handed out at annual conference on 9 June 1919 (Molesworth, Set 243, Item I); also Molesworth's own account: 'The Labor Party Crisis of 1919...'; and Truth, 22 June 1919.

33 Labor News, 14 June 1919.

34 Truth, 22 June 1919.
executive position was 69, and not one leftist gained a place. The right wing had earlier gained control of the credentials and agenda Committees, and it was suggested that the right-wing 'rigged' the ballot-count for executive positions to exclude the leftists. Towards the end of conference, in protest against an infringement of the rules by the right wing, A.C. Willis led the left-wing delegates from conference to the Trades Hall, where he held a 'special emergency meeting of the Industrial Vigilance Council'. Knowing full well that Willis was in two minds as to whether he should bluff concessions from the existing A.L.P. executive, or set up a new political party, the executive lost no time in blocking the way back to the A.L.P.; it denounced the left move as an I.W.W.-inspired effort to woo unions away from the A.L.P., a move, furthermore, a leading right-winger charged, which violated the principle of

35 At the A.L.P. Annual Conference in 1923 it was alleged that 'sliding ballot boxes' were in use in 1920. (S.M.H., 5 June 1923; see also A.W.U. Convention. 'Ballot Box Enquiry. Debate & Decision, Sydney, 1925, p.10). J.J. Graves, a prominent left-wing participant in the 1919 Conference, told the writer that the right 'pinched' the ballot boxes in 1919. See also Childe, op.cit., p.66.

36 Childe, op.cit., p.67; The Socialist, 26 Sept. 1919; interview with J.J. Graves.

37 Truth, 22 June 1919.

38 Australian Labor Party, Official Manifesto by the New South Wales Central Executive, 23 June, 1919 (Molesworth, Set 243, Item I).
labor solidarity.

If Mr. Garden and Mr. Willis knew the elementary principles of the Australian Labour Party, they would know that it has been founded on solidarity. Does Mr. Garden hope to persuade the Labour Council to 'rat' as a body on the A.L.P.? 39

Whatever their intention at the moment they walked out of conference, the left were thus pushed towards establishing a new party; as Childe says, the left 'allowed themselves to be manoeuvred into forming a new party in 1919'. 40 After several meetings, the left announced that a new party would be launched by a conference of delegates from A.L.P. leagues and affiliated unions on 2 August. Both left and right then vigorously set about approaching those bodies, 41 explaining the whole affair from their different standpoints.

S.A. Rosa, a veteran laborite, outlined the dominant left-wing strategy in an address to the Labor Council; the left, he said, wanted

a militant Labor Party, to regard the Labor Party and the Nationalist Party as reactionary parties, to be fought as the Freetrade and Protection Parties were fought by the Labor Party in 1894. 42

The idea that the new party might hold the balance of power in parliament was taken quite seriously by the right wing. Molesworth,

40 Childe, op.cit., p.208.
41 See, for example, Minutes, General Meeting, Ship Painters' and Dockers' Union, 21 July 1919; Sydney Wharf Labourers' Union, 2 July 1919; 9 July 1919.
42 Daily Telegraph, 27 June 1919; See also S.M.H., 27 June 1919. There is no mention of the address in the Minutes of the Labor Council.
for example, usually a well-informed and shrewd observer, wrote:

Though 'moderate' leaders attempt to discredit the breakaway movement as having no backing I fear that such is not the case and a new industrial party will be formed - of that there is no doubt. They will run candidates and must get a few in. It recalls the private conversation I had with R.D. Meagher M.L.C. before State Conference. He said 'There will be a mix up at next election. There will be Labor, National, Country Party, O.B.U. and independents. returned...'

Molesworth angrily alleged that J.T. Lang made no move to 'rouse...up' the 300 members he controlled in the Auburn Labor League; and this body consequently declared for the breakaways. Could the astute Lang have been so uncertain in 1919 as to sit on the fence - as he often did when uncertain during the 'twenties?

Veteran laborite Arthur Rae identified himself with the breakaways and was removed from editorship of the Labor News, official A.L.P. newspaper. One conservative daily newspaper commented:

45 Activist in the Shearer's Union from 1886, Rae took a prominent part in the 1890 strikes, and was returned from Murrumbidgee as one of the first Labor parliamentarians in 1891 (Common Cause, 8 Dec. 1922). Senator Guthrie, once a prominent leader of the Seamen's Union, described Rae, at the time he joined the breakaways, as 'the best Labour man you ever had' (Comm. Parl Deb., vol. XCI, p. 677, 24 March 1920.)
46 The Molesworth Papers (Set 243, Item 1) carry an account of the paper's Board of Control meeting on 3 July 1919, at which Rae was given two weeks' pay in lieu of notice.
The delegates at yesterday afternoon's meeting at the Trades Hall.
This action is one of the most serious moves taken by Labor for a long time. Mr. Rae has always been recognized as one of Labor's stalwarts, and the fact that he has made a cleavage is evidence of the serious position Labor finds itself in today. 47

On 17 July, the state executive of the A.L.P. expelled Rosa, Willis and Rutherford, and on the eve of the August conference, the executive called together and then formally disbanded the Industrial Vigilance Council.48

The long awaited conference on 2 August, 1919, opened with an attendance of 200 from unions and leagues, though many had been sent along to see how much support the breakaways could muster.49 A new party was formed - 'the Industrial Socialist Labor Party'. Its objective was:

The abolition of Capitalism and the establishment of a system of Society based upon the social ownership, and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by, and in the interests of, the whole community.

In regard to political action, the new party's credo declared that:


48 The 'Third and Last Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the Industrial Vigilance Council (formerly 'Industrial Section') With Official Report of Disbandment'. (Molesworth, Set 71, Item 2). See also the Sun, 2 Aug.1919, for an account of the final meeting, which was not without its exciting moments.

49 For example, the Boilermakers, the Amalgamated Carpenters, the Australasian Society of Engineers, and the Hairdressers, said they had sent delegates along merely to hear the opinions expressed.
Inasmuch as industrial action produces its political reflex, the I.S.L.P. recognizes the use of revolutionary political action...as distinct from the palliative-mongering parliamentarism of non-revolutionary parties, to be essential to the complete overthrow of the capitalist system. 50

A.C. Willis was elected president of the new party, and he claimed that 'the new movement was simply part of a world wide protest against the mismanagement of those who had hitherto controlled the means of production and distribution'. 51 Upon the party's provisional executive were to be found the sponsors of the One Big Union, the leading left-wing union officials of the day; amongst them were J.S. Garden, J. Howie, J.J. Graves, H.L. Denford, A. Rutherford, T. McCristal, R. Webster, H. Dessaix and J. Cullinan. 52 To strengthen the hand of the Industrial Socialist Labor Party, Percy Brookfield, popular Labor state parliamentarian for the Barrier, resigned from the A.L.P. But for all this, an air of foredoomed failure clung to the infant party. Even at the founding conference, several unions and leagues

50 Objective, Constitution and Rules adopted by the Conference of the Industrial Socialist Labor Party, Aug.1919. (R.S. Ross Collection). See also the report on the conference given to a general meeting of the Hotel, Club and Restaurant...Employees' Union by its delegates (Minutes, 2 Sep.1919).

51 By contrast, P. Brookfield, M.L.A., said later that the new party had been formed because 'a large number of working class representatives in Sydney had come to the conclusion that after twenty years' experience of electing Labor members to Parliament, the position of the workers was just as insecure'. Something was needed, he added, which 'would allow the full economic power of the working class to be used to the best advantage...along One Big Union lines'. (The Socialist, 26 Sept.1919.)

52 The Sun, 13 Aug.1919.
had disassociated themselves, while some announced that the matter of affiliation would be left to individual members. Though the Industrial Socialist Labor Party sponsored public meetings throughout Sydney, response was poor. Doubtless sensing the decline of the breakaways' hopes, Albert Willis, a consummate tactician, asked the federal executive of the A.L.P. to intervene in the New South Wales dispute in order to restore the expellees to the A.L.P. However, far from allowing Willis, Rosa and Rutherford to re-enter the A.L.P., the state executive was soon so confident of its strength that it expelled '30 to 40 prominent Labor extremists', including the provisional executive of the new party.

On August 9, the Industrial Socialist Labor Party convened a 'unity' conference of all socialist bodies, but no unity was achieved. During August and September the battle between right wing

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53 Among these were some in which leftists were prominent; the Milk and Ice Carters, the Miscellaneous Workers' Union, and the Ironworkers.


55 Newspaper Cutting, 13 August 1919, in Molesworth, Set 243, Item 1; see also Letter, from the executive of the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Labor Party, 14 Aug. 1919, to 'Secretaries of A.L.P. Branches and Affiliated Unions throughout New South Wales'. The executive said 'that members of the Australian Labor Party who have definitely associated themselves with and joined the recently formed scab Political Party, automatically cease to be members of the A.L.P...' See also the *Sun*, 13 Aug. 1919.

and left wing continued, though considerably abated; but there could be little doubt about the outcome. Despite sustained efforts\(^\text{57}\) and an occasional victory,\(^\text{58}\) and with small need of the great efforts the moderates threw in,\(^\text{59}\) the battle was won — and lost. After the end of September one hears almost nothing further about the Industrial Socialist Labor Party.\(^\text{60}\) Those of its members who stood for the federal elections in December 1919 did so as members of a socialist alliance and polled deplorably. This also happened at the state

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57 On 24 August, supporters of the new party addressed meetings on the South Coast. At one of these, Willis claimed that 'The principal aim of the Labor politicians...was to hold their seats...taken as a whole, there was little, if any, difference between them and the Nationalists' (Evening News, 25 Aug, 1919). A 'Monster Demonstration' was held in the Sydney Town Hall on 17 September (see leaflet, Industrial Print, Sydney, R.S. Ross Collection) and regular Sunday meetings in the Domain were conducted (see leaflet 'Militants! Militants! Your Party has at last come on the Industrial and Political Horizon' signed T.W. McCristal, R.S. Ross Collection).

58 The I.S.L.P. claimed that a new branch was formed at Rockdale, boasting 30 members, and at Wollongong, with 50, that branches were also to be formed at Kogarah, Hurstville and Homebush, and that Warren branch of the A.L.P. had left it in favour of the new party. All except 2 members of the Ashfield branch went over to the I.S.L.P. (A letter from one of the remaining two members to Molesworth, Molesworth Collection, Set 243, Item I).


60 The Barrier 'Industrial Socialist Labor Party', of which one does hear, was a separate organisation.
elections in 1920, though the Socialists stood in the most heavily industrialised areas of Sydney. In January 1920, W.H. Lambert of the Australian Workers' Union alleged that the Industrial Socialist Labor Party had amalgamated with the Socialist Labor Party, while in 1921 Willis referred to this period as if no breakaway party had ever existed.

The architects of the New South Wales One Big Union movement were amongst the union officials most prominently connected with the

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61 See S.M.H., 1 Mar. 1920. Results by electorates, at 24 March (S.M.H. 24 Mar. 1920) are tabulated below.

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<th>Electorate</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Earnest Judd</td>
<td>283</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daisy Loughran</td>
<td>45</td>
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<td>Botany</td>
<td>Mrs Anne Toohey</td>
<td>177</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Henry Leigh Denford</td>
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<td></td>
<td>James Jamieson</td>
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<td>Timothy McCristal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Balmain</td>
<td>J.O. Moroney</td>
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<td>R. Corcoran</td>
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<td>Peter Christensen</td>
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<td>H. Weston</td>
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<td></td>
<td>John Michael McDonald</td>
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<td></td>
<td>David McNeill</td>
<td>140</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William North</td>
<td>51</td>
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</table>

The candidate for Sturt, P. Brookfield, we must count as separate from the rest, because of Broken Hill's special traditions (Brookfield was returned with 4,222 votes).

62 Australian Worker (A.W.), 22 Jan. 1920; Common Cause, 8 Dec. 1922.

63 Australian Labor Party, Official Report of Proceedings of the Ninth Commonwealth Conference, Brisbane, Oct. 1921, p. 13. Willis said 'No, it was the Socialist Party that was proposed at that time, but...the attempt was to unite all Socialist groups in Sydney. We failed, and, consequently, no party has been formed.' But earlier he said 'We ran two candidates under peculiar circumstances, and one opposed Mr. Catts, because they regarded him as one of their most dangerous enemies...The party alluded to was to be a propaganda party, and not a political party.' (my emphasis) (Catts, expelled in 1922, was in general bad standing in the A.L.P. by late 1921).
Industrial Socialist Labor Party. Childe believes that this connection, earning the leftists the title of 'rats', gave the One Big Union its final 'quietus' and there is a good deal of contemporary evidence to bear out Childe's verdict. The One Big Union and the Industrial Socialist Labor Party were overlapping areas in which the right and left engaged in battle, and, in setting up what rapidly proved to be a splinter party, the left offered the right a deadly weapon. No one could have known it in 1919, but it turned out that the trade unionists, militant though they were in industrial matters, kept looking to the established party of labour for political leadership; the new party on the left was simply by-passed by the unionists, despite its manifold union and A.L.P. connections.

During these initially hopeful months that were ultimately to bring the left defeat in the political arena, their performance in the trade union arena was, if anything, even less impressive.

64 Here is Childe's opinion in full: 'The One Big Union] finally received its quietus when its leaders were expelled from the Labour Party in N.S.W. and allowed themselves to be manoeuvred into forming a new party in 1919. By that step they earned for themselves the title of 'rats'; for the majority of unionists, to whom the Labour platform had become a sort of religion, saw no distinction between men like Garden or Willis who left that body to go further Left and those who, like Hughes and Holman, went over to the Right.' (How Labour Governs, p.208).

65 Industrial unionism and the One Big Union were popular in the Sydney Wharf Labourers' Union (which indeed balloted to join the O.B.U. in 1920). But the idea of labor 'solidarity' was so strong that McCristal, in persuading the union to send delegates to the founding conference of the Industrial Socialist Labor Party, argued that such delegates should be sent 'for the purpose of solidifying the Labor Party... Right-wing officials fiercely opposed association with 'a scab party' (Minutes, General Meeting, 9 July, 1919). A resolution passed in the same month in the Amalgamated Rail & Tramway Services' Association reveals similar resentment (Exec. Minutes, 5 July 1919).
The One Big Union, January–August 1919.

The first All-Australian Trade Union Congress devoted specifically to the One Big Union was held on 11 January 1919. Though the absence of the Australian Workers' Union came in for widespread comment, attendance was otherwise fair; the Congress elected an O.B.U. Provisional Council, declared the existing Sydney left-controlled newspaper, O.B.U., to be the movement's official newspaper, and adopted the preamble of the August 1918 Conference.

While there were signs of growth in these early months, at the same time one could see evidence that all was not well. Several bodies now openly propounded as alternatives to the One Big Union (the Transport Workers' Federation, the Building Trades' Federation, the Iron Trades' Federation and the Returned Soldiers' and War Workers'.

In February, it was reported that the Geelong branch of the Australian Labor Party, along with the Geelong Trades and Labor Council, had declared for the One Big Union, appointing a 'strong' committee to carry on 'educational' work on its behalf. Ballarat Trades and Labor Council declared for the One Big Union, while the Leongatha, Malvern, Hampton, Port Melbourne and Surrey Hills branches of the Australian Labor Party also declared their support (O.B.U. 21 Feb. 1919, Melbourne). In March, the Victorian branch of the Australian Timber Workers' Union conducted a ballot by which its members adopted the principles of the One Big Union by 'a 98 per cent majority'. (O.B.U. 20 March 1919). Claude Thompson of the Amalgamated Railway and Tramway Services Association wrote glowingly of the reception given the One Big Union at the union's 29th Annual Conference (O.B.U. 1 March, 1919), claiming that most branch officials were 'just as enthusiastic as the rank and file'. W.R. Corcoran, organiser for the One Big Union and agent for the newspaper O.B.U. was reported as addressing a good many lunch hour meetings. O. Schreiber edited the O.B.U. while Garden, Burns and Swiney of the Trades and Labor Council toured New South Wales with the message of the One Big Union as did E.E. Judd (ibid, 1 April 1919).
Industrial Union of Australia) received increasing attention in trade union circles. Of the seventy nine unions represented at the 1918 Conference, only twenty eight had paid over money to the One Big Union by mid-February 1919, and this amounted to only £250, of which £60 had come from Willis's miners, and £50 from the left-controlled Western branch of the Australian Workers' Union. Though attendance at the New South Wales conferences in March was still fair, several One Big Union officials had resigned, while opposition now began to be heard in unions well-disposed to the O.B.U. (such as the Wharf Labourers, and, in a less well-disposed but still favourable union, the Printing Industry Employees' Union). In Victoria, the picture was little better.

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69 Round Table, vol.9,1918-19,p.808.
70 Minutes, General Meeting of the Sydney Wharf Labourers' Union, 21 May, 25 June 1919.
72 The Easter Conference of the Victorian branch of the A.L.P. rejected a motion by O.B.U. zealot B. Mulvogue to replace the A.L.P.'s existing objective by that of the O.B.U. Perhaps this was to be expected; but there came unexpected blows when Mulvogue caught influenza and later suffered a nervous breakdown, and when Frank Hyett, secretary of the Victorian Railways' Union and another O.B.U. stalwart, died. Attendance fell away sharply at the Victorian One Big Union Conference in May.
With the A.W.U. and the right wing gone, and moderate support beginning to drop away, the minority leftists' demand for 'Shop Branches' as the O.B.U. unit made headway. In January 1919, the official O.B.U. constitution was amended so that the 'section' embraced 'wage workers in any locality in an industry.' Minority leftist pressure for shop branches intensified, and the Sydney Trades Hall reds modified their initial opposition. Their expressions of approval for the minority view, at first qualified, became more definite after all hope of retaining moderate elements had

73 The most vocal minority leftists, members of the Melbourne-based Workers' International Industrial Union, had criticised the O.B.U. constitution of August 1918. They claimed that the 'sections' were really refurbished craft unions. See above p. and also the pamphlet Revolutionary Industrial Unionism. Tactics and Plan of The Workers' International Industrial Union. Published by the Literature and Education Bureau of the Workers' International Industrial Union. Melbourne. Victoria. Sept.1918.

74 'Preamble, Classification and Rules of the Workers' Industrial Union of Australia, Adopted at the All-Australian Trades Union Conference'. Melbourne, Jan.1919.

75 The One Big Union Herald, Mar.1919.

76 See Report of the N.S.W. executive of the One Big Union to the N.S.W. Congress, 28 and 29 March 1919; and the One Big Union Herald, 30 April 1919, where the minority left claimed the official One Big Union in Victoria had agreed that, after a certain date on which a ballot was to be held on the O.B.U., the O.B.U. would no longer officially 'recognise' any trade union. The O.B.U. would go 'to the Job...and organise the workers...on the BASIS of SHOP or JOB branches'. A similar statement from J.S. Garden drew a public official disavowal from the executive of the One Big Union. Workshop committees, said the executive, were intended only to spread propaganda on behalf of the One Big Union, and were not meant to be part of that body.

77 By August 1920, the rules of the One Big Union were amended to give 'sections' uniting all 'wage workers in an industry' greater scope in controlling their own affairs (Minutes, General Meeting of the Hotel, Club, Restaurant and Caterers' Employees' Union, 3 Aug.1920).
vanished. But neither the official left nor the minority left envisaged the shop branch or shop committee as being used in connection with strikes. In February 1919 the official left declared:

DIRECT SHOP ACTION is an impossible proposition at present, primarily because unity is conspicuous by its absence...

In urging 'NO STARVATION STRIKES', the official left observed:

It may be that shop organisation will not come prominently into action when the One Big Union is firmly established, and that Mass-Movement will be found more expedient.

The argument was that strikes might well be avoided altogether as employers would be so impressed by the formal strength of the One Big Union that they would offer no resistance to union demands. These arguments were directed against still-strong approval of the tactics of the gaoled and dispersed Chicago-ite I.W.W. members, and against rank and file sympathy for 'direct action', rather than against the DeLeonite W.I.I.U. in Australia. The latter made their disapproval of strikes and their preference for varieties of 'passive strike' (for example, the 'go-slow-on-the-job'), very clear from the start. The W.I.I.U., they claimed, 'at all times seeks to avoid the necessity of a strike'.

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78 O.B.U., 1 Feb.1919.

80 Revolutionary Industrial Unionism, p.19. See also Preamble and Constitution of the W.I.I.U., 1917, Newton, N.S.W. Article 2, Section eleven, 'Strike and Lockout'. 
By the middle of 1919, O. Schreiber, an influential union secretary, had resigned editorship of the O.B.U. newspaper, and unions who had previously endorsed the One Big Union now formally refused to pay their dues. Thus by September, Round Table could write of the 'virtual failure' of the One Big Union movement. The tide of battle had turned disastrously against the left in the political arena, and this sharply affected the course of the industrial aspect of that battle. Yet even without this disaster, other directly industrial influences were at work to destroy the One Big Union. The craft officials feared for their jobs, and the A.W.U. had its own plans to become the One Big Union. And no one prominent in the O.B.U. attempted to give the One Big Union a meaning for the rank and file unionist in terms of his immediate struggles.

The One Big Union September, 1919–May, 1924

After 1919, there was little further rank and file interest in the One Big Union movement, save amongst the shearers and shed hands. In 1921 the One Big Union appears to have experienced a renaissance, but it was extremely short-lived and the rebirth stirred little interest outside the ranks of officials.

Nevertheless the movement did show some sign of life during its 'dark ages' in late 1919 and 1920. A group of old-established militants achieved considerable success for the One Big Union in the A.W.U., while anti-official resentment flared up at the A.W.U. annual conference of 1920, and came to a head because officials were believed to have accepted unfavourable award conditions for the year 1920-21. Directed by non-official, non-Communist militants, a strike for higher wages broke out, and at its finish, the One Big Union made some headway amongst shearers and shed hands. In August 1920, a ballot held in the New South Wales branch of the Federated Ironworkers' Association resulted in a majority in favour of the One Big Union, and in the same month, the Central Council of the Waterside Workers' Federation adopted the O.B.U. constitution, while a

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82 A.W., 8 Apr.; E. Lane, op. cit., p.239.

84 For example, shearers and shed-hands at Merri-Merrigal station, near Hillston, N.S.W., sent out a circular containing a resolution of no confidence in officials on the grounds of poor conditions. These and other shearers planned a conference of shed representatives for 29 December, 1920, in Sydney. They invited as chairman left-winger J. Cullinan, former leader of the militant Western branch of the A.W.U. (This branch had been recently dissolved on the casting vote of the chairman of the Sydney branch, parliamentarian Arthur Blakely.) On the Merri-Merrigal, and other sheds, the Evening News commented: 'The A.W.U. is said to be exceedingly anxious over the situation.' (21 Sept.1920).

85 O.B.U., Aug. 1920. The union's federal president ruled that the ballot result was invalid (ibid.).
ballot in the Sydney branch approved the One Big Union. In October 1920, the New South Wales miners decided to adopt the O.B.U. constitution and they became the only organisation to take its name, being called to this day the Mining Department of the Workers' Industrial Union of Australia.

Early in 1921 the A.W.U. sponsored a conference of delegates from the waterside workers, miners, seamen and railwaymen, and this seems to have marked a reversal in the A.W.U.'s attitude, from distaste for the O.B.U., to sympathy. Consequently Garden sounded a most conciliatory note in commenting on the A.W.U. leaders:

...the only proposition put before the A.W.U. was that it should take its place at the head of the rural workers and pastoral departments of the O.B.U. He considered that this could be arranged quite simply without the A.W.U. losing any of its identity, or any loss of status by the officials. [my emphasis, M.R.]

To a further conference on 1 March came delegates from the coal miners, the Meat Industry Employees Union, the Australian Workers'  

86 Minutes, General Meeting, 31 March 1920.  
87 Minutes, central committee of the miners' federation, 22 Oct. 1919.  
88 Daily Telegraph, 2 Feb. 1921.
Union and the Australian Railways' Union; the seamen presented apologies as their officials were busy elsewhere. The March conference agreed that a new ballot was to be taken December 31 1921, and the agenda committee to arrange the ballot comprised A.C. Willis, of the miners' federation, W. Smith of the Railways' Union, and A. Blakely of the Australian Workers' Union. The March conference also approved a constitution headed by the old 'revolutionary' preamble, but instead of its former title ('The Workers' Industrial Union of Australia') the one big union was now to be called 'The Australasian Workers' Union'.

And, as if to show that the 'revolutionary' preamble need bother no one, a nationalist 'White Australia' clause was added, excluding 'Chinese, Japanese, Kanakas, or coloured aliens'.

As we will see in the following chapter, a Communist Party formed in December 1920 quickly split into two separate organisations, the 'Sussex Street C.P.' and the 'Liverpool Street C.P.'. The Trades Hall reds inhabited the Sussex Street C.P. as a de facto autonomous group. A writer in the official organ, the Australian Communist, quickly condemned the March O.B.U. constitution, particularly for clauses which the paper claimed would 'do away with rank and file control and place the whole movement in the hands of a few executive officers to run

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89 The seamen were attending meetings of the 'Manning Committee.' (See below, p.132, 143).

as they like'. Earlier, Garden and the other Trades Hall reds in leading positions in the O.B.U. had formally endorsed the 'shop branch' and the idea of rank and file control. However, now they paid no attention to criticism from either the Sussex Street C.P. or its rival, and fully supported the March constitution. They played a prominent part in the All-Australian Trades Union Conference of June 1921; and they supported the One Big Union constitution put up at that conference. That constitution was the one drawn up in March 1921; its provisions on rank and file initiative as to strikes were substantially those the Trade Hall left had sponsored in August, 1918.

Three separate questions now need to be explained. Firstly, why did the Australian Workers' Union change its attitude to the One Big Union project? If the Waterside Workers' Federation, the Australian Railways' Union, the Meat Industry Employees' Union and the Seamen's Union (in all of which there was widespread rank and file militancy) were to be drawn into negotiations with the arch-conservative officials of the A.W.U., the way would have to be shown by a powerful man of outstanding militant reputation; the man almost uniquely fitted to constitute a 'bridge' between the A.W.U. and the rest was A.C. Willis, the miners' secretary. Our second question, then, is this: why did

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91 *The Australian Communist*, 3 June 1921.

A.C. Willis join forces with the A.W.U.? The third question: By 1921, the Trades Hall reds were ostensibly converts to the 'shop-committee' view of the One Big Union. Why did they support the 1921 O.B.U. constitutions which were based on craft-sections, and which also contained 'White-Australia' provisions abhorrent to the reds' internationalism?

As the year 1921 opened, the Australian Workers' Union found itself plagued more sorely then ever by its own militants, who drew nourishment from the One Big Union. 93 Hence - to put the matter in federal Labor parliamentarian James Catts's colourful, if vulgar words:

For two years the A.W.U. has bitterly fought the I.W.W.-O.B.U. Then the guerilla, white ant methods 'of the O.B.U.' worried the A.W.U., and the latter decided to grease its throat well and swallow the O.B.U. 94

Yet this does not give the whole explanation, for neither 'greasing' nor 'swallowing' began until the A.W.U. had satisfied itself that the omens were propitious; for one thing, the A.W.U. could not digest the 'shop-committee' approach (emanating, it believed, from 'disruptive revolutionary elements') 95 nor could it stomach internationalism.

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93 For rank and file discontent with A.W.U. leaders, see E. Lane, op. cit., pp.208,239,241-2; P.S. Cleary, president of the Catholic Federation, ascribed the union's interest in the O.B.U. to the increase of non-shearers within it. (The One Big Union. Will it Emancipate the Worker?) Membership declined owing to discontent. See Comm. Parl Deb., vol.XCIX, p.199, 6 July 1922; International Communist, 12 Feb.1921.

94 The Vanguard, I, No.1, 26 Sept.,1921. R.S. Ross Coll.

95 See the pamphlet Solidarity or Sectionalism. A Plea for Unity, by P.H. Hickey, Australian Workers' Union, Queensland Branch, Brisbane, 1918.
But in fact, before sitting down to its meal with the devil, the
A.W.U. had assured itself of a very long spoon.

Well before 1921, A.C. Willis, powerful secretary of the
miners' union, had decided that there was no future for the Industrial
Socialist Labor Party, the 'breakaway'. Now Willis wanted above all
to get back into the Australian Labor Party and, if possible, retain
the privileges associated with continuity of membership, though he
had broken this continuity. For this, Willis had to have the good­
will of the A.W.U. He knew of the A.W.U.'s empire-building designs
upon his and other unions, but thought he could handle this. For
their part, the hierarchs of the A.W.U. knew Willis to be no friend of
'local autonomy'. The new constitution adopted by the miners, in
declaring themselves the 'Mining Department of the Workers' Industrial
Union of Australia', was marked by increased central control over
districts and lodges in respect of finance and strikes; if the A.W.U.
officials had not in any case already known Willis's approach to local
autonomy, this would have set their minds at rest. Thus the A.W.U.
made its first overtures to Willis, a man who appeared safe for their
purposes while enjoying a valuable reputation as a militant.

By 1920, the Trades Hall reds were beginning to lose interest
in the One Big Union, turning their attention to the task of forming
a Communist party. Closely studying Comintern discussions with the
syndicalists, they noted that, for Bolsheviks, industrial unions were

96 Rules and Constitution of the Workers' Industrial Union of
Australia (Mining Department), Sydney, 1921. (Ferguson Coll.)
adjuncts to a struggle for proletarian power which was to be waged essentially on the political level. So the Trades Hall reds in New South Wales came to reject the One Big Union as syndicalist and impossible to achieve, and to re-examine the idea of industrial unions. They also seriously reconsidered their position in relation to the A.L.P. A good many of the Trades Hall reds had been in the A.L.P. before the breakaway in 1919, while fellow union officials and union associates were often connected with the A.L.P. The Trades Hall reds could therefore see clearly the advantages of good relations with or membership of the A.L.P. Their view drew considerable opposition from fellow Communists, but the Trades Hall reds formed a tightly-knit and extremely influential group within the early Communist parties, and they pressed quietly ahead with their own policy regardless of opposition.

As early as November 1920, steps were announced in preparation for the holding of a special All-Australian Trades Union conference to draw up a new policy for the A.L.P., and this seemed promising to the Trades Hall reds. Among the Communists of both parties, many received news of the conference with indifference or hostility, but the Trades Hall reds hoped to use it to urge the case for industrial unionism, to push the mass party to the left, to set under way a

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97 For example, J.S. Garden, J. Howie (Labor Council president), H. Denford, A. McPherson, A. Rutherford, R. Webster, H. DessaiX, J.J. Graves.

98 The Socialist, 26 Nov. 1920.
campaign for Communist affiliation with the A.L.P. ('a united front of all working class parties'), and to win, at least for the less prominent of those expelled following the 1919 breakaway, the right of re-entry to the A.L.P.

So great was A.W.U. influence in the A.L.P., that the Sydney Trades Hall reds could hope to achieve none of their goals in relation to the A.L.P. if the A.W.U. set its face against them. Thus the Trades Hall reds made no criticism of the March constitution of the One Big Union, nor of the A.W.U., at the All-Australian Trades Union Conference in late June 1921. Indeed, J.S. Garden said to A. Blakely, leading A.W.U. spokesman:

I realise there is very little difference between us. In the last two years we have been "at one another" instead of getting down to business...

By December 1921, the Trades Hall reds had introduced to the Labor Council a scheme for industrial unionism which was close in spirit to Kavanagh's much-scorned proposal of 1917. But, unlike Kavanagh's proposals, the Communists' blueprint now openly proclaimed that success depended above all on the goodwill of existing officials. The need to secure the 'cooperation of the Trade

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99 For Comintern views on Communists and the British Labor Party, 1919-1921, see below at pp.95-98.
100 Official Report of the All-Australian Trades Union Conference, June 20th to 25th, 1921, p.8.
101 See p.18 of this chapter.
Union Secretaries, organisers, etc.' was, they claimed, the 'cardinal point' in their scheme; in presenting the plan to particular groups of unions, the Labor Council executive also stressed its role in preventing the initiation and spread of strikes. During the Labor Council debate on their blueprint, the Communists were charged by syndicalist and other critics on their left with abandoning the rank and file. In reply, Garden allegedly 'proclaimed his unbounded contempt for the "intelligence of the masses", and remarked that if we were to

See Executive Minutes, Labor Council, 13 Dec. 1921. This reversion of the Trades Hall reds to a position close to that of the conservative Kavanagh in 1917 deserves careful documentation, because it runs so much against what one might expect: 'Your Executive is aware that the main discussion will centre round the three years contract for the retention of the services of the existing Trade Union officials, and emphasis is laid upon the necessity of securing the willing and able assistance of those who know every detail of existing organisation... There is little doubt that Industrial Unionism would have materialised had the movement been assured of the active cooperation of the Trade Union Secretaries, organisers, etc. It is the realisation that this cooperation is pre-requisite for the re-organisation of the Trade Union Movement which brings the proposals of your Executive from the realm of theory down to the concrete facts of the existing situation. This is the cardinal point of our proposals.' The members of the sub-committee who drew up these proposals in the first place were three outstanding reds: J.S. Garden, J.J. Graves, and J. Kilburn (Exec. Minutes, Lab. Council, 29 Nov. 1921). Both Graves and Kilburn were deeply influenced by Garden. While Kilburn was not a member of the Communist party, he proclaimed himself a member of the 'Communist group' at the All-Australian Trades Union Conference (Official Report, p. 21).

Executive Council Minutes, Baking Trades Employees' Federation of Australasia, Sydney branch, 8 Mar. 1921.
wait for Industrial Unionism until the rank and file bring it into being, we should wait till the Second Coming, or words to that effect'. In fact, from early 1921, the leading Trades Hall reds had had very little to say about the rank and file's role in building industrial unionism. Instead, they displayed considerable sympathy for the viewpoint of non-Communist fellow union officials, and an insensitivity, remarkable for Communists in those early days, towards the outlook and the needs of the rank and file.

The One Big Union movement itself was abandoned to the non-Communist officials, each trying to preserve or extend the influence of his own organisation. And so the door was opened to those wretched squabbles which were to mark the formal collapse of the whole project.

Throughout 1921 and 1922, officials met and conferred over the establishment of the One Big Union, now styled 'The Australasian Workers' Union'. At first, there were great hopes. In 1921, a plebiscite commanded by that year's A.W.U. convention approved the One Big Union by 18,000 votes to 4,000, and the organisational structure of the new body began to take shape. The first serious sign of trouble came in mid-1922 when the A.W.U., about to issue tickets for the One Big Union (the Australasian Workers' Union), announced it had been


105 For an account of some conferences, see Common Cause, 17 Feb.1922; 28 Apr.1922.

106 For example, Common Cause, 3 Mar.1922.
legally advised that such a ticket issue would mean 'the union would go out of existence, leaving the whole of the assets in the hands of the trustees with no power of transference...'. Thus there was a delay while each amalgamating union tabulated its assets in preparation for their transfer to the One Big Union. But shortly after this came the difficulty over registration in the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, which finally precipitated the collapse of such desultory official negotiations as now limped on. A Provisional Council Meeting on 29 September 1922 instructed the O.B.U.'s general secretary (Senator Barnes, of the Australian Workers' Union) to make application for registration in the Commonwealth Court. The Registrar had no objection, but suspicion and rumours were rife amongst the unions, a further application before the Court on 4 September 1923 was inconclusive, and by this time inter-union recrimination was particularly fierce. When, on 6 May 1924, a further Court application was rejected because of opposition from a large group of unions, efforts virtually collapsed.

In setting down explanations for the failure of the One Big Union, V.G. Childe, E.J. Brady, and E.H. Lane divide the blame between

107 Ibid., 2 June 1922.
109 Common Cause, 23 Feb., 1923.
110 Ibid., 25 May 1923.
111 For the list, see O.B.U. Why It Failed! p.12.
the drive to power of the A.W.U. hierarchs, craft officials' fear
of losing their jobs, and the machinations of conservatively-inclined
politicians. Louise Overacker endorses this explanation. One
can hardly deny the importance of such reasons, but more can be given.

The One Big Union as such could never have succeeded, because
it was a syndicalist utopia; whether one agrees with Elie Halevy that
syndicalism was

a doctrine which really open a new era in the history
of socialism and which lacked only a prophet of the stature
of Karl Marx to be appreciated as it deserved.

or with Schumpeter:

unlike Marxism or Fabianism, syndicalism cannot be espoused
by anyone afflicted by any trace of economic or socio-
logical training. There is no rationale for it. one can admit that, as one of the mainstreams of labor thought, syndical-
ism was doomed, suffering its death blow, no doubt, in the triumph of the
Bolshevik view in 1917. But if the One Big Union were an utopia, the
idea of industrial unionism was not.

The left-wing officials had chosen to work for the cause
of the One Big Union from within existing unions; unlike, for example,

112 Childe, op.cit.,pp.65-66; Brady, 'The 1921 Decision' in 'The Red
Objective' n.d., E.J. Brady Papers, 206/14, A.N.L.; Lane, op.cit.,
253. By contrast, H.E. Boote put the blame on the rank and
file (O.B.U. Why It Failed). The explanation is provided by
the apathy, indifference and ignorance of the mass of the workers. '

113 The Australian Party System, p.129.

114 'L'Ere des Tyrannies; etudes sur le socialisme et la guerre'
Movement, Massachusetts, 1954, p.35; J.A. Schumpeter,
Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy, p.339.
the early American Communists, they had not alienated the goodwill of
the union rank and file by asking that it build up industrial unions
on the ruins of existing unions. Partly for this reason, the left-wing
officials retained the respect of the rank and file, and kept their
own official positions in those unions. Thus, if the left had wished
to take at least some first steps in building industrial unions as
effective weapons in the trade union struggles of New South Wales, there
were useful materials to hand: first, there was a widespread rank and
file militancy over wages and hours; second, there were shop-committees
in existence and, more important, a climate of opinion favourable
to the spread of further shop-committees. But despite their short lived
period of lip-service to the idea of building the One Big Union through

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115 In the Sydney metal trades, the Stove Moulders Union and the Sheet
Metal Working Industrial Union participated in shop committees.
(N.S.W. Ind. Arb. Rep., vol. 18, 1919, p. 40-42; Minutes of the executive
committee of the Sheet Metal Working Industrial Union, N.S.W. branch,
11 Sept. 1919). There was a shop committee at the Randwick Railway
Workshops, Sydney. (Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into
the Proposed Reduction of the Standard Working Week from 48 to
were shop (or, as they were called, 'job') committees among marine
transport unions: such a 'job' committee, on a given ship, cut
across the barriers imposed by the existence of many marine trans­
port unions (Marine Cooks' Union, Marine Stewards' Union, Seamen's
Union) and provided a large-as-life example of an industrial union.
'League' control had long plagued the leaders of the Miners'
Federation. There were shop-committees in the meat industry in
several states. For an account, no doubt idealised, of an effective
shop-committee, see Job Control published by the Literature Bureau
of the Workers' International Industrial Union, Aust. Administra­tion,
South Melbourne 1919. Here, the composition, method of election
and activities of the 'board of control' at the Adelaide Metro­
politan Abattoirs is discussed. There were shop-committees, usually
comprising five men, in at least 16 furniture trade establishments
in New South Wales (see Minutes, Board of Management of the
Furniture Trades Society of New South Wales, April, 1919, to April,
1920). There were also shop-committees at some Victorian timber
works (One Big Union Herald, 28 May 1919).
shop-committees, the Sydney Trades Hall reds gave little if any thought to the possible use of shop-committees in everyday trade union affairs. Yet because a shop-committee unites all workers in a given shop irrespective of skill, it is an industrial union in miniature — and the Trades Hall reds were pledged to the cause of industrial unionism.

The unions might have made at least a partial use of shop-committees in the wages and forty four hours campaigns of 1919 and 1920; indeed, one particular union announced that it would use and further develop a fairly widespread shop-committee network in its own industry as the basis for its campaign on hours. The Sydney Trades Hall reds held sufficiently strong official positions and there was strong enough feeling among the rank and file, to have stimulated industry-wide campaigns, extensively implicating the rank and file by means of existing shop-committees and, more important, by means of new ones thrown up in the course of the campaign. Had such campaigns turned out even tolerably well, they would have given the rank and file a vivid illustration of the immediate advantages of industrial unionism. As it was, the Trades Hall reds largely directed their efforts to build industrial unions towards fellow officials — and ten years later the cause of industrial unionism had advanced little, if at all.

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116 See above p. 40.
117 Minutes, Board of Management, N.S.W. branch of the Furniture Trades' Society, 1 Oct. 1919.
118 For details of these positions, see the Appendix to chapter 2.
During these years the Sydney Trades Hall reds were enthusiastic advocates of the idea of confining strikes to the narrowest possible area. Had the reds called upon the rank and file to use existing shop-committees and throw up new ones in the hours and wages campaigns of those years, the result might very easily have been to stimulate the rank and file to go beyond the 'confined' industrial strategy sponsored by the reds and (given the militant mood of the rank and file) to indulge in 'extended' strikes. However, the Sydney Trades Hall reds believed that extended strikes would be disastrous, and hence they had little reason to encourage the growth of shop-committees.

In forming their picture of the One Big Union, the rank and file would be inclined to look for evidence not so much in a written constitution as in the words, attitudes and deeds of the O.B.U. spokesmen. The Trades Hall reds left no one in doubt of their attitude to strikes. As unions then stood, the right to strike was in the hands of union leaders directly responsible to and dependent for their jobs upon the rank and file. In the centralised O.B.U. scheme, a further and possibly decisive step was interposed between the wishes of the rank and file and the authority sanctioning their expression. Thus the O.B.U. hampered strikes in this way — and this was seen as vital and valid by right and left wing officials alike.
While the Trades Hall reds had no choice but to abandon the One Big Union, they might have done far more about developing industrial unionism, had they oriented their work towards the rank and file rather than towards their fellow officials. But for the reds to do this, they would have had to be industrial militants as well as political radicals.

Why Were the Trades Hall Reds Bureaucratic?

After the conscription campaigns of 1917 were over, the general strike defeated and the Chicagote I.W.W. leaders gaoled, there was a lull on the industrial front until 1919. During 1918, as has been said, a new grouping of the left's leadership took place in Sydney, around J.S. Garden and other unionists. Many gained places of real influence in their unions during or as a result of the ferment of 1917, but all save Thomas Walsh of the Seamen's Union adopted the confined strike tactic wherever they could. Why? They believed and styled themselves reds and, in 1920, Communists, and it was an obiter dicta of the international communist movement to use extended strikes, if anything, in preference to confined strikes, and to draw the masses into current communist campaigns by linking these with goals actually of moment to the rank and file. The Sydney Trades Hall reds were 'deviationists', then, in industrial matters. In the terminology of the labor movement, they acted in a bureaucratic and in a conservative way in industrial affairs.

One can argue that most, if not all, the influences at work arose in one way or another from the Trades Hall reds' 'environment'. For the purposes of analysis, such influences are regarded as 'determined' influences, as opposed to 'accidental' influences.

The reds were union officials, rather than rank and file members,
so that their jobs predisposed them to the quiet life of the office. Dominant amongst them was the attitude not only of the official, but of the craft union official, ensconced as they were in the world-apart of the Sydney Trades Hall. The Sydney Trades Hall dominated the Sydney union movement and, as the centre of craft union influence, it had on the whole been an influence towards preventing and confining strikes. When the reds took over control of the Sydney Labor Council, they took over its industrial traditions which were shaped in no small degree by years of fighting industrial battles through the arbitration courts. Other influences arising from the Australian environment may be set down: Australia's unfamiliarity with war, traditions of prosperity, the arbitration system, the special place unions had in the alternative party of government. Yet between 1916 and 1919 there were other 'determined' influences arising from the environment which offset or counterposed those making for red conservatism.

When joined with class-struggle ideology, the high standard of living can be such a counterposing influence, helping, as it did, to create and deepen industrial militancy which in itself constituted a further influence. This was intensified by the effects of the Irish rebellion and the red October, and also by the winning of the anti-conscription struggles.

Given the interplay of environmental or 'determined' influences, some of which made for conservatism and others of which militated against it, one needs also to consider an 'accidental' influence - the removal from the labor scene of the Chicagoite I.W.W. during crucial years.

Chicago I.W.W. were the men with the mass touch and the most effective mass ties, despite the fact that they stood outside organised labor. These were the toughest ideologues of the left, themselves often of semi-skilled and
unskilled origins. Their influence was remarkable, both directly on the rank and file and on the officials of the organized labor movement. The climate of the time was such that their words struck home. In 1917 the outstanding I.W.W. men were gaoled, the gaoling itself being a tribute to I.W.W. effectiveness in the situation of 1916-17. This disappearance left the way clear for the Trades Hall reds. Had they risen to power with the Chicagoite I.W.W. cadres still free, the Trades Hall reds would have continued to respond to I.W.W. influence as they had done for several years, for the climate of the day, the left as a whole was extremely sensitive to the views of the extreme left. With their removal, the spectrum of the left was displaced to the right.

The ideology of the Trades Hall reds was powerfully influenced by the interplay of personalities within the group itself, and this interplay now took place with a minimum of interference from the Chicagoites. At this level of investigation, it would seem crude to conceive of this interplay as merely the outcome of environmental influences; or to posit that this leadership circle could not have settled upon a more orthodox left-wing line, with a considerable alteration in the course of events in the labor movement as a result.

The argument finally hinges no doubt, upon one's views on the role and potentialities of leaders, and this is closely related to one's view of the creative role and potential of the individual in history. In this work one can do no more than spell out counterposed views and indicate one's own. To strike a note of greater certainty would run beyond the evidence.
CHAPTER II FOUNDOING THE COMMUNIST PARTY, 1919-1922.
Socialists and Syndicalists

Despite the stunted youth and early death of the Industrial Socialist Labor Party, during 1920 the Trades Hall reds helped to set up a new party. This was not so foolish as it might seem. It is not surprising that, in mid-1919, the left entertained the most robust hopes for their breakaway party; after all, one knows that the left harbours life's most incurable optimists. But astute and sober realists of the right took the most painstaking precautions to ensure that the breakaway party collapsed; clearly, the possibility of success did not exist simply in the imagination of the leftists.

The times were such as to encourage the boldest schemes. And indeed, despite the precedent set by the Industrial Socialist Labor Party, the new Communist Party did not wither and die. It did, however, remain the minority party that it was at birth. The working class upsurge in Australia was primarily one of industrial militancy; its political aspects were not such as to nourish mass Communist parties similar to those which sprang up in France, Germany and Italy. The Australian Communist Party resembled, rather, its British counterpart; as in Britain, while unionists displayed passivity, impatience, even disgust, with their established traditional party, they were not prepared to transfer their political allegiance to the left.

During 1919 and 1920, the main socialist and syndicalist groups which took part in the negotiations to set up a new left-wing party were: the Australian Socialist Party, the Victorian Socialist Party and the Social Democratic League of New South Wales;
the Socialist Labor Party, the Melbourne branch of the Workers' International Industrial Union, and apparently isolated Sydney members of the outlawed I.W.W.

In their early days, the forerunners of the groups who threw themselves into setting up the Communist Party all found they disagreed in some way with the A.L.P.'s empirically formulated, nationally oriented program, designed to appeal to, and reflecting, the heterogeneity of the A.L.P.'s social basis. Of these groups, we may first note the Australian Socialist League, from which many important figures in the socialist and labor circles of 1919 received their first socialist ideas. Founded in 1887, the League played a significant part in establishing the Labor Party. During the 1890s, it filtered diverse socialist concepts into the labor movement at large, mainly through the Labor Party. But the League grew uneasy over the Labor Party's electoral neglect of specifically working class interests, and parted company with the Labor Party in 1898, later standing candidates as the Socialist Labor Party against the Labor Party. The Socialist Labor Party advocated socialism, to be achieved through the "industrial and political organisation of the workers - mental and manual...", as well as through the spreading of socialist ideas. By returning socialist candidates to federal and state

1 Childe's phrase (op.cit., p.73).
parliaments and to municipal councils, the party would achieve socialism by parliamentary means. But such candidates were to forswear all 'palliatives'. After parting company with the Labor Party, the Socialist Labor Party's strength dwindled, and it came to have an uncanny resemblance to the American Socialist Labor Party which, in Brissenden's words, 'seemed to be suspended after a fashion in an atmosphere charged with a kind of pedantic essence of the Marxian dialectic'.

The Victorian Socialist Party, arising from Tom Mann's 'Social Questions' Committee', soon grew into the strongest socialist group in Australia, having in all some 2,000 members. Until 1907 the Victorian Socialist Party had worked largely through the A.L.P., but in that year the Victorian Socialist Party participated in a 'unity conference' of Australian socialists which established the Socialist Federation of Australia and rejected the A.L.P. as a means to its objectives. The Socialist Federation announced that the main

4 Paul F. Brissenden, The I.W.W. A Study of American Syndicalism, p.240. E.E. Judd was apparently not without some resemblance to Daniel DeLeon: 'The Socialist Labor party is doctrinaire, unyielding, Jesuitical as was its leader' (loc.cit.).

5 Tom Mann's Memoirs, p.197; Gollon (op.cit.,p.210), citing International Socialist Review. 13 April 1907, gives c.2000 as the figure.

6 The Socialist Labor Party withdrew from the new Federation after the component groups refused to amalgamate with it (Overacker, op.cit., p.172).
vehicle for socialists was to be the movement for industrial unionism, advocated earlier in a 'rather academic' way by the I.W.W. clubs and the Socialist Labor Party. In 1912, the Socialist Federation, though remaining federal in structure, changed its name to the Australasian Socialist Party, affiliating under this name to the Second International. Soon after the change of name, however, it lost the Victorian Socialist Party, which left its ranks to follow again the earlier tactic of working through the A.L.P.

These, then, were the early socialists; of comparable importance were the syndicalists. The early Industrial Workers of the World clubs in Australia received the support of all the socialist groups. The crucial American experience - the split between the 'industrial' (or 'Chicago') faction and the 'political' ('DeLeonite' or 'Detroit') faction - was not reenacted here until 1911, and the new 'Chicago' party lay virtually dormant until several outstanding foreigners arrived. In 1912, J.B. King, originally from Canada returned to stay in Sydney after a b#ery visit to the motherland. Tom Glynn, from South Africa and Ireland and the United States, arrived at much the same time, having taken part in major strikes in South Africa. Later came Tom Barker. The experience and style of work of these men, in conjunction with events between 1914 and 1916, were able to transform the impact of the I.W.W., and at least

7 Childe, op.cit., p.115.
one generation of labor cadres was unforgettably influenced by them. Among those so influenced were men who were to play an important part in the early years of the Communist Party - J.S. Garden, H.L. Denford, Hector Ross, Norman Jeffery; left-wing Labor Party members such as Donald Grant and Bettsy Matthias, and future right-wingers such as Gavin Sutherland. The I.W.W. leaders soon drew about them a group of second-line leaders trained in their ways of work, and there were few who did not concede to them first place for their methods of approaching the rank and file, particularly the semi-skilled and unskilled. Though an early secretary of the Communist Party, W.P. Earsman, might tell the Comintern congress of 1921 that I.W.W. 'intensified propaganda' among Communists had 'little results', this was far from true. While the I.W.W. had little success in a bid made for organisational strength within the early Communist Party, its influence on the thought of the early Communists was nevertheless considerable. Wholesale arrests of 'Chicago' leaders brought to the top a second line of cadres, such as Norman Rancie, Douglas Sinclair, E.A. Giffney, Norman Jeffery, Harry Meatheringham, but these were not able to sustain the organisation's appeal. For the more respectable DeLeonite or Detroit I.W.W., their failure provided a much needed opportunity.

Following the American example, this body renamed itself

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8 Third Congress of the Communist International. Report of Meetings held at Moscow June 22nd–July 12th 1921. (Reprinted from "Moscow", the special organ of the Congress.) Published by the Communist Party of Great Britain. p.131.
the Workers' International Industrial Union (W.I.I.U.). Always extremely weak, the Sydney branch was further weakened by conflict within it between supporters of the Socialist Labor Party, the Australian Socialist Party, and cadres whose first loyalty was to the W.I.I.U. itself. The Melbourne branch, though also tiny, was more active, and produced the newspaper, the One Big Union Herald.

Though weakened past all recovery by wholesale wartime arrests, I.W.W. elements took some part in the One Big Union campaign. At first, the I.W.W. had high hopes for the One Big Union; William Beatty, one of the arrested I.W.W. men of 1916, wrote after his release to J.B. Scott of the Workers' International Industrial Union:

The O.B.U. is about the most hopeful thing here, and is doing good work among city navvies and labourers.

The I.W.W., said Beatty, could not build up its organisation before the anticipated revolution came. But it could try to force the O.B.U. to do so and hold I.W.W. aims and forms in front of them to lead them on. We met the Melbourne DeLeonites of the Workers' International Industrial Union in the One Big Union movement between 1918 and 1920, insisting that the 'shop-committee' must be the unit of the One Big Union.

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11 Beatty to J.B. Scott, 14 October 1920 (Barnes coll.).
Formally expelled from the One Big Union in 1920, the Workers' International Industrial Union denounced as a sham the One Big Union planned at the Trades Union Conference of June 1921. While some members (Maurice Feinberg for one) moved to the A.L.P., others, such as J.B. Scott and Bernard Meyers, passed to the frail Victorian Communist Party.  

The main socialist figures of 1919, then, may be classified as either syndicalist or Marxist, though at the time, few were clear on the distinction between the two traditions, and many, among the Sydney left-wing unionists especially, should more accurately be termed quasi-syndicalist or perhaps syndicalist-socialist.  

The Marxists in turn can be sub-divided according to their approach to the mass party, the A.L.P. The Australian Socialist Party believed that the A.L.P. was useless to workers in the present, and would, in the future, prove to be the final obstacle to the overthrow of capitalism. Yet so great was labor's discontent in the war and immediate post-war years that the Australian Socialist Party did expand its influence at that time, despite its scorn for both the A.L.P. and the trade unions.  

Endorsing the Marxian concept of 'class struggle' and the Marxian definition of the 'state', by 1919 the Australian

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12 Meyers to Barnes, 10 March, 1945 (Barnes coll.).
13 Chronological Notes on the History of the Australian Communist Party. (Barnes coll. n.d. but probably late 1942); History of the A.C.P. Part 4 (Typescript, Barnes coll.).
Socialist Party had a clear perspective. Partly through the example of Russia, partly because the class struggle would depress living standards, the workers would turn to the A.S.P. Unity was desirable, certainly, but it was not to be bought at the price of doctrinal purity; thus the Australian Socialist Party had long and regularly failed to reach agreement with other socialist groups. They believed that the workers, induced by suffering to see the futility of other parties, would turn to the Australian Socialist Party if only it retained its doctrinal integrity, and the Australian Socialist Party would then lead the workers in establishing the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

A long-standing quarrel among socialists the world over had developed over the tactic of 'permeation'. Socialists might permeate or infiltrate established trade unions, established political parties, or both. Many of the Trades Hall reds, for example, had permeated both unions and the A.L.P. before 1919, and while they gave up permeation of the A.L.P. after mid-1919, they resumed it as Communists in 1921, though the Australian Communist Party withheld its formal blessing until the end of 1922. By 1924, however, Communists were asking who had permeated whom – to what extent had the permeators been permeated by the ideology of the A.L.P., and what had the communists achieved for communism in permeating? As old hands at permeation, the Victorian Socialist Party could furnish evidence that socialists permeators might make some mark.

The V.S.P. role in the conscription struggles for example,
was an important one and was made possible through the widespread nature of V.S.P. influence. When war threatened in 1914, the V.S.P. canvassed all Victorian unions on the advisability of a 'general strike against war', in line with the policy of the Second International at the time, and as a result of their agitation, the Melbourne Trades Hall Council declared its support of the Hardie-Vaillant resolution, emphasizing in their support 'the oneness of the interests of the workers of all countries', and pledging itself to work for an end to 'huge profit making by the armament ring...'. The V.S.P. went on to play an important part in the successful opposition to conscription for overseas service. Amongst the earliest members of the V.S.P. were men who helped popularize industrial unionism and the One Big Union, and who did much to win acceptance of the Socialisation Objective by the All-Australian Trades Union and the Federal A.L.P. conferences of 1921.

Amongst its earliest members the Victorian Socialist Party numbered Tom Mann, famous socialist agitator and organiser, Frank Hyett, secretary of the Victorian Railways' Union, E.F. Russell of the Victorian branch of the Agricultural Implement Makers' Union, and as a result of their agitation, the Melbourne Trades Hall Council declared its support of the Hardie-Vaillant resolution, emphasizing in their support 'the oneness of the interests of the workers of all countries', and pledging itself to work for an end to 'huge profit making by the armament ring...'. The V.S.P. went on to play an important part in the successful opposition to conscription for overseas service. Amongst the earliest members of the V.S.P. were men who helped popularize industrial unionism and the One Big Union, and who did much to win acceptance of the Socialisation Objective by the All-Australian Trades Union and the Federal A.L.P. conferences of 1921.

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14 See the leaflet in the R.S. Ross collection, 'War against War' 6 March, 1914.
15 R.S. Ross coll.
Union, and R.S. Ross from 1909 to 1920, intermittently secretary of the Victorian Socialist Party and editor of its paper, the Socialist. Former Victorian Socialist Party members, with whom cordial relations were maintained, included Maurice Blackburn, editor of the official Australian Labor Party newspaper, Labor Call, and E.J. Holloway, secretary of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council and Federal President (1921) of the Australian Labor Party; Thomas Tunnecliffe, member of the Bootmakers' Union, who became Premier of Victoria, as did another V.S.P. member, John Cain; while a keen supporter, John Curtin, became Prime Minister of Australia. Active Victorian Socialist Party members often stood as endorsed Australian Labor Party candidates at elections. The poets Bernard O'Dowd and Marie Pitt were also V.S.P. members.

17 R.S. Ross was particularly important. To him, the One Big Union held out the hope of a uniquely Australian, peaceful, socialist revolution, (see Revolution in Russia and Australia, Melb.1920; The Socialist, 10 Sept.1920; What Next? Building the Industrial State (Australian Labor's Next Step).Melb.1921, E.J. Riley Coll. A.N.L.). Ross argued for this with spirit. Ross had considerable direct influence in securing the adoption of the socialisation objective at the All-Australian Trades Union Conference in June, 1921, while another prominent member of the V.S.P., E.F. Russell, its one-time president (Minutes, special general meeting V.S.P., 12 Feb. 1908), moved the motion for adoption of this objective (Official Report, p.5-6).

18 Tom Mann, Tom Mann's Memoirs, p.201.
Through its leading spokesman, R.S. Ross, the V.S.P. dealt ably with its opponents' most serious charge - that of support for the A.L.P. The V.S.P. supported the A.L.P., Ross said, 'as the existing party of the organized Labor movement', and as the 'creation of the proletariat... to date the only organized political reflex of... Trade Unionism...'. And later: 'As for me, I question the wisdom of discarding the Labor Party until we have its revolutionary successor ready... It isn't by any means improbable that in the future we'll feel tremendously fortunate in having even It.' 19

But if the V.S.P. could claim important achievements, given the number of its members in high places, what can one conclude about its success as a permeator during the years of this study? For a start, there is no doubt that the socialists themselves would say that many of their men in high places were among the 'permeated' rather than the 'permeators'. And as part of the Second International, and then of the 'Two and A Half' International, the V.S.P. was no match for the triumphant representatives of the Russian October. By 1920, the V.S.P.'s brother party in New South Wales, the Social Democratic League, had been destroyed after take-over by the Workers' International Industrial Union, which in turn soon disappeared from the political scene. By 1923, the V.S.P.'s long-established newspaper, the Socialist, was coming out only fitfully, and the party's activities had fallen off greatly. 20

V.S.P. members were often more cultured than their opponents on the left, and undoubtedly more tolerant and open-minded. However, the V.S.P. was not able to convert these qualities into political advantages. Indeed, they were to prove distinct political disadvantages in some cases. Workers' control, much respected by the V.S.P., ceased to be fashionable on the left, as it passed out of vogue in Russia, while the course of the Russian and the international revolution was to convert critical sympathy for Russia, such as the V.S.P. displayed, into a guarantee of minority status on the left. Such status was made the more likely, in any case, by the V.S.P. refusal to affiliate with the new Third International.

21 See Maurice Blackburn, in a pamphlet claimed later to be the earliest on the subject in Australia (Typescript on the death of Maurice Blackburn, Barnes collection). The pamphlet was called Bolshevism. What the Russian Workers are Doing, by Maurice Blackburn, Vice-President A.L.P. (Victorian Division), Melbourne, 1918, Ferguson coll. Also R.S. Ross, Revolution in Russia and Australia, Melb. 1920.

22 e.g. The Socialist 24 Sept. 1920, 9 Dec. 1921.
Socialist Unity Negotiations and the Trades Hall reds.

After 1917, under the spell of the Bolsheviks' conquest of power, stimulated by the flow of Bolshevik pamphlets reaching Australia, and aware of the new Communist International's general policy of accepting only one affiliate from each country, Australian socialists and syndicalists renewed their efforts towards unification.

The first important Sydney-based attempt can be dated at 9 August 1919. On this day, the Social Democratic League, the Socialist Labor Party, the Australian Socialist Party and the A.L.P. 'breakaways' of the Industrial Socialist Labor Party, met in conference and agreed to name a new, united party 'The Revolutionary Socialist Party of Australia'. But the gathering was small and the voting close (11 votes to 8) and the A.L.P. 'breakaways' refused to be bound by this title, insisting upon being known as 'The Industrial Socialist Labor Party'.

Some of these pamphlets, bearing names that were almost all to disappear from the Communist world in the next decade and a half, were: The Russian Revolution. Socialism in Science and Action by Karl Radek (Andrade's, Melbourne, 1919), What is Russia? by Peter Simonoff (Sydney, Worker Print, 1919); The New Communist Manifesto of the 'Third Internationale' (Bolshevist and Left-Wing Socialists), Dec. 1919, (Victorian Socialist Party, Melbourne); The Communist Programme of World Revolution, N. Bukharin (Melbourne Proletarian Publishing Association, 1920); A Paradise in this World, Leo Trotsky (International Publishing Association, Melbourne, 1920); The State and Revolution, N. Lenin. Australian Socialist Party (Marxian Printing Works, Sydney. First Australian Edition, April 1920).

The International Socialist, 16 August 1919.
'The Industrial Socialist Labor Party'. On 6 September a further 'unity' conference involving these groups failed, disagreements again arising over the name of the new body. By mid-1920, the Industrial Socialist Labor Party had disintegrated except in Broken Hill; the earlier elan and mass appeal of the One Big Union had faded, and in any case, as we have seen, the red union officials had turned away from the syndicalist One Big Union. For these reasons, the Trades Hall reds were ready for more serious attempts to form a new open party of revolution.

The weight of participating trade unionists succeeded in giving the infant Communist Party in New South Wales an unusual degree of influence both in trade union and Labor Party affairs. As we have shown, the Trades Hall reds associated with Garden before, during and after his rise to secretaryship of the Labor Council in 1918, were among the most powerfully connected leftists in Australia. Their daily personal contact in the course of Trades Hall business, their location in the Trades Hall, and their constant contact with union officials of all political shades, reinforced their power immeasurably. Not the least important source of that power, however, was the earlier A.L.P. membership of many of their number, and the reds' growing influence among unionists still in the A.L.P. (An appendix to

26 According to the History of the A.C.P. Part 4 (Barnes coll.), the failure of the O.B.U. 'removed a barrier in the way of a new... party.'
this chapter lists the names and positions of those most well-known.)
The Trades Hall reds probably made up a numerical majority of the Sussex Street Communist Party. Figures are not available, but in any case this was a situation, scarcely unfamiliar to the historian, where numbers were not the all-important consideration. The cohesion of the Trades Hall reds would have outweighed any numerical disadvantage and they derived an additional advantage from the fact that their opponents, whether in Sussex Street or Liverpool Street had few mass connections.

Trade union cells embracing the left spectrum of the day existed long before the Communist Party was set up in October, 1920, having formed the basis for Garden's increasing influence within the Labor Council. (Union cell members were by no means clear upon, or perhaps greatly interested in, distinctions between the general political positions of syndicalists and Marxists - after all, the international authorities of the Bolsheviks and the syndicalists took up substantially the same position on the need for cells within unions). In its Annual Report for 1919, the conservative N.S.W. executive of the Electrical Trades Union claimed there were '50-odd' 'white-anting' groups in industry. 27 The anonymous Chronological History of the Australian Communist Party, c.1942, writes of 'independent' groups functioning 'secretly' in the trade unions, and 'term[ing] themselves Communists.' These groups were to be found chiefly in Sydney where

they had been organised by J.S. Garden. Garden, however, has told the
writer that such groups were in existence during and before 1919 and
had been organised by 'Tom Walsh and others'. Confirmation of the
existence of such groups from a hostile source may be found in a
leaflet by George Waite, assistant secretary of the United Labourers'
Society; entitled 'Waite's Warning to Workers', the leaflet claimed
that

In every Union the destroyers are active. J. Kilburn, a prominent left-wing socialist in 1919, claimed that
there were at least 100 'Marxian students' in the building trades. In 1921, a prominent I.W.W. leader, Tom Glynn, temporarily inhabiting
the Sussex Street Communist Party, claimed, in that body's official
organ:

In practically every Trade Union in Australia, today, there
are a nuclei, essentially Communist in outlook, where they
are not actually declared Communists, whose work is growing
in importance from day to day... After October, 1920, the Communist Party — and when it divided
into two, the Communist Parties — included in official programs the
need to establish communist groups in 'every mill, factory, work-shop
and field.' The Sussex Street party fulfilled this ambitious aim
more successfully than its Liverpool Street rival, though neither came
anywhere near fulfilling it at all adequately. Sussex Street

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29 Molesworth coll. set 71, item 7.
31 The Australian Communist, 8 Apr. 1921.
32 The Socialist, 12 Nov. 1920.
continued to meet the requirements of practical exigencies, as well as Comintern orthodoxy, in not asking union cell members either for formal membership or whole hearted ideological endorsement and organisationally, the Sussex Street Communist Party seems to have benefitted from union cell activity.\textsuperscript{33}

All save a handful\textsuperscript{34} of the Trades Hall reds gained their positions during labor's war and post-war wave of militancy. The old A.L.P. stalwart and leftist, ex-Senator Arthur Rae, and A.C. Willis, talented secretary of the powerful miners' federation, were vice-presidents of the N.S.W. branch of the A.L.P. in 1917, and acting general secretary and vice-president respectively in 1918. While not a Communist, Rae, an early member of the A.W.U., appears to have worked with Communists in trade union affairs when he wanted. A.C. Willis was technically a Communist in that he had formally applied for membership\textsuperscript{35} and there is no reason to suppose he was rejected. But Willis acted as a lone-hand leftist of increasingly moderate hue, and was a strong moderating influence on the Trades Hall reds.

Both Willis and Rae were widely believed to be part of the Trades Hall reds' complex, and certainly both of them paved the way for the rise of the Trades Hall reds. The prominent Trades Hall reds J.J. Graves (Stovemakers) and J. Howie (Coopers) were both A.L.P.

\textsuperscript{33} See below, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{34} E.g. J.J. Graves (Stovemakers), T. McCristal (Wharf Laborers), Arthur Rae, Albert Willis, and intermittently a union official from at least 1911, T. Walsh.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{International Communist}, 15 Jan.1921; \textit{One Big Union Herald} Mar.1921.
executive members in 1917 with Rae and Willis, while the red H.L. Denford was an alternative member of the A.L.P. executive in 1917 and, with another prominent Trades Hall red, A. Rutherford, a full executive member in 1918.

While assistant secretary of the N.S.W. branch of the Clerks Union, J.S. Garden, the key Trades Hall red, had been appointed assistant secretary to Labor Council by its conservative secretary, E.J. Kavanagh. In 1918, Kavanagh was appointed to a government position and Garden became the new secretary by two votes. So strong had red influence become by March 1922, that Labor Council decided to affiliate with the Communist-dominated Red International of Labor Unions.

J.S. Garden was a Scots migrant, son of a Nonconformist family, and a former lay preacher in fruit-growing areas in Victoria and New South Wales. He had 'volunteered for active service, but was refused permission by the Defence Department, they stating his services were required at home'. Long an A.L.P. member, in 1917,
Garden stood for the state seat of Parramatta as the 'Selected Labor and No-Conscriptionist Candidate'. As the centre of the Trades Hall red network, not greatly encumbered by theoretical conviction despite transient membership in so doctrinaire a body as the Socialist Labor Party, Garden undoubtedly played an important part. However Guido Baracchi, another foundation member still alive, has told the writer that W.P. Earsman was the power behind Garden at the start.

W.P. Earsman, prominent in the Victorian Socialist Party as early as 1912, was a member of the Melbourne and later the Sydney District of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. He seems to have had no important official position in the organisation, if the comprehensive Commonwealth Council Monthly Reports can be taken as a guide. Foundation Melbourne Communist Guido Baracchi told the writer that Earsman had a great influence upon Garden, while another early Communist, Hector Ross, has mentioned Earsman as one of the outstanding ideologues and teachers of new members. This gives a good idea of

41 See note 40 above.
42 In 1922, a shrewd comrade of Garden's wrote in charitable understatement '... he is always open to the reception of the latest lessons of the times. There will come a time when it will be necessary for Jock to crystallise his views into a definite set purpose...' (The Communist, 4 Aug.1922).
43 Interview, 11 July, 1962.
45 Interview, 11 July 1962.
46 Interview, Oct. 1964.
the left-wing ideological level of the time, for while Earsman was certainly a more able socialist theoretician than Garden, he was far from impressive.47

Another prominent unionist founder of the Communist Party was H.L. ('Snowy') Denford, Originally a South Australian, in 1911 Denford, one of the Sydney I.W.W.'s first members,48 was also a member of the Socialist Labor Party and the Social-Democratic League, and at one time was general secretary of the Australian Socialist Party.49 Denford succeeded Earsman as secretary of the Communist Party in Sydney, leaving along with Garden in 1926, and later joining the A.L.P. Denford was successively a member of the Coal Lumpers' Union, vice-president of the Tramways' Union and a member of the Federated Iron-workers' Association (1920).50 In January 1922, Denford first attended

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47 See, for example, Earsman's 'Report to the C.E. of C.P. (Confidential)', Typescript, late 1921, in Hancock coll. MSS. 772,8-12, ML. This was Earsman's account of the Third Congress of the Comintern. Also his contributions to the Congress, according to the official English report, Third Congress of the Communist International. Report of Meetings Held at Moscow June 22nd-July 12th 1921, p.131.

48 Denford faded into relative obscurity in the I.W.W. when, in 1912 and 1913, T. Barker, J.B.King, C. Reeves and T.Glynn arrived in Sydney from New Zealand, from Canada and England via New Zealand and from South Africa. Their persuasion being that of the Chicago 'bummery', these men had been hardened in bitter trade union struggles and drew an instant response from rank and file unionists in Australia, particularly the semi-skilled and unskilled. (Interviews, Mrs. B. Matthias and Mr. N. Jeffery.)

49 Workers' Weekly, 8 May 1925.

50 From Minutes of Evidence taken at Sydney for the Commonwealth Royal Commission on the Basic Wage, 1920,p.852.
as delegate to the Labor Council and, in the same year, he became part of that body's executive. By 1924 (if not earlier - union records at this time are fragmentary), Denford became a delegate to annual conference of the Federated Ironworkers' Association, and is recorded as being Balmain branch secretary and by 1925, the Association's vice-president.

J.B. ('Jack') Howie, Coopers' Union delegate to the Labor Council from 1914 onwards, and another early Communist, became Labor Council president in 1919. Baracchi has described him as a 'stick in the mud', while E.M. Higgins said that Howie was 'not an opinion maker'. Other early Trades Hall reds were C. Hook, organiser of a red union group in the Municipal Workers' Union, R. Corcoran, a Socialist Labor Party delegate to the abortive 'unity' conference on 9 August, 1919, and a prominent member of the Boiler-makers' Union, A. McPherson (Letter Carriers' Union); H. Deassix (Amalgamated Carpenters' and Joiners' Society); G. Burns (Hotel, Club, Restaurant and Caterers' Employees' Union); J. Burns (Federated Ironworkers' Association member

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51 Minutes, Gen. Meeting, 5 Jan. 1922.
52 Records, Federated Ironworkers' Association, National Headquarters, Sydney; Workers' Weekly, 8 May 1925.
54 Interview, 4 Sept. 1960.
55 Interview with Garden, Aug. 1961.
56 See above, p.73.
who died of influenza in 1919); R. Webster (Municipal Workers' Union); W. Gibb (Federated Clothing Trades' Union); J. Kilburn (Operative Bricklayers' Union); F. Roels (Federated Engine-drivers' and Firemen's Association); A. Rutherford (Saddlers' Union); J.J. Graves (Stovemakers' Union); Pat Drew (Sheet Metal Workers' Industrial Union); H.E. Quaiffe, building trade unionist; and A. Thomas, whose union the writer cannot discover, but who was probably a unionist, since he was appointed an organiser for the One Big Union in 1920.

In December 1919, the Annual Conference of the Australian Socialist Party in Sydney declared for the newly formed Comintern and adopted a manifesto entitled 'Australia and the World Revolution - A Statement of Communist Principles.' But in 1920 an initiative appears to have come from an opposition body, later known as the Sussex Street C.P., with which, as has been noted, the Trades Hall reds were associated. Earsman, speaking to the Third Comintern Congress on behalf of the Sussex Street C.P., made the following claim:

In 1920 a small group of revolutionaries decided to establish the Communist Party of Australia, which they did as a secret organisation. We set to work among the trade unions and formed a number of groups, whose main object was the spreading of Communist principles and the white-anting of these unions... Then we sent out a manifesto and programme in keeping with the principles of the Third Communist International, and a call to form a legal Communist Party. 57

Earsman gives the impression that the ideology of the early red cells was far less diverse than it actually was, and he exaggerates the initiative of the Sussex Street men in starting them, for the groups

57 The Communist, 23 Sept. 1921.
were thrown up at a time when syndicalist currents were probably stronger than Bolshevik in the Australian labor movement. His claims were hotly contested in Moscow by Rees, attending on behalf of the Liverpool Street (ex-Australian Socialist Party) Communist Party. For all this, Earsman may well be right about the manifesto, as the Australian Socialist Party itself published a manifesto discovered in September 1920, which it alleged was not written by the A.S.P., but by a body calling itself the 'C.E. of the Australian Communist Party'.

The earnestness of their rivals possibly spurred the A.S.P. to try to recapture the initiative. On 22 September 1920, the A.S.P. wrote to all it thought interested:

In an endeavour to bring the unified action of all who stand for the emancipation of the working class by revolutionary action, we have decided to arrange a conference, to be held on Saturday, October 30th, 1920, in the A.S.P. Hall, Liverpool St., City.

Enclosed was a statement by the A.S.P., 'put forward... as a basis for the discussion.' The proposed objective was a Communist society, the first step towards it being the establishment of the 'Proletarian Dictatorship'. The Third International's principles were endorsed, and 'exclusively Communist' local branches and shop committees were desired. Support was given to the idea of industrial unions, though as 'subsidiary to the general political Communist movement', while parliamentary activity was approved, though not as 'a cardinal principle,

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58 Third Congress of the Communist International, Report of Meetings held at Moscow... p.144 (Comrade Reece [sic])
59 Int. Socialist. 2 October, 1920.
but merely a tactic to be employed as circumstances warrant'.  

Some sixty people were invited to the conference and, from a list in the Hancock collection, it would seem that the International Socialist (organ of the A.S.P.) is correct in asserting that the majority were invited 'upon the advice of J.S. Garden'. Twenty six attended; six were credentialled from the A.S.P. while H.L. Denford had moved from the defunct Industrial Socialist Labor Party to the Newtown branch of the Socialist Labor Party, from which he came as a delegate. The remaining nineteen came as individuals, and included I.W.W. sympathisers, members of reconstructed I.W.W. groups and members of the red trade union fractions - many of which, of course, might well have overlapped with the former categories.

Garden was unanimously elected conference chairman. The conference formed itself into the Communist Party, elected W.P. Earsman provisional secretary against the A.S.P. nominee, Reardon.

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60 Hancock coll. MSS 772, 8-12, ML.
61 Hancock coll. MSS 8-12, ML. Typewritten sheet with extensive pencilled additions, n.d.; International Socialist, 1 Jan.1921.
62 Original Minute Book of the Communist Party of Australia, Hancock Coll.
63 The Socialist Labor Party formally rejected the invitation, seeing '... no working class necessity or justification for the formation of another Party' (Int. Socialist, 6 Nov.1920).
The remaining eleven members of the provisional executive were A.S. Reardon (general secretary of the A.S.P.), A.T. Brodney (honorary secretary of the Sydney branch of the A.S.P.) and R. Everitt (A.S.P.); C.W. Baker, Thomas and Adele Walsh (Seamen' Union federal secretary and his wife, one of the English Pankhursts), Christine Jollie Smith and Tom Glynn, whose prime loyalty might well have been to I.W.W. principles throughout his brief first stay in the Communist Party. C. Hook, A. Thomas, J.S. Garden were also elected and these, along with Earsman, were most responsive to the prevailing views at the Trades Hall.

The programme adopted at the October conference laid stress on encouraging the spread of the Communist political philosophy and strategy; study classes were to be held under Communist auspices or those of other labor organisations; public meetings were to be sponsored, and 'revolutionary literature' distributed. As to industrial activity, the programme stipulated that the new party was to form groups of its members in 'every mill, factory, workshop and field, so that it [was] always in a position to direct and control through its members every industrial dispute... of the workers, keeping always in mind the same end - social revolution - and trying to utilise every spontaneous action of the workers for that one end.'

64 The Socialist, 12 Nov. 1920.
The A.S.P. could trace its history, and its newspaper, the International Socialist, back for many years. Leading members of the A.S.P. were often more sophisticated as theoretical socialists than were the Trades Hall reds, who were strong where the A.S.P. was weak, that is, on mass contact through unions and the A.L.P. In all, thus, the A.S.P. felt little love for the comparative latecomers and interlopers, whom they suspected of being unduly influenced by immediate considerations arising from union and A.L.P. affairs, but things went smoothly enough with the new Communist Party for some weeks, with A.S.P. branches re-naming themselves Communist branches, and public meetings to spread the new doctrines. However, on 11 December a further conference with eighteen delegates, chaired by J.S. Garden, hinted at impending trouble on the vital question of party control. The conference rejected an A.S.P. proposal to take nominations for regular officers and the executive from branches, with the actual election from a ballot of the whole membership in January, 1921. Instead, the conference carried an Earsman/Denford amendment by twelve votes to five which retained the existing provisional executive until a conference in Easter 1921, should itself elect a regular executive and officers. The Trades Hall reds carried the day on the matter because the I.W.W. men had thrown in their lot with them for the time being.

On 14 December, the A.S.P. withdrew its men, Brodney, Reardon and Everitt, from the Communist Party's provisional executive, and announced that it would sever all relations with the conference attempting to work out conditions for Communist unity. The A.S.P. alleged that negotiations had revealed 'a definite scheme... on the
part of a dominant section of the Conference, who represent no one but themselves, to subvert attempts at unity 'for their own personal ends.' As evidence they offered the Earsman/Denford amendment of 11 December, passed by 'twelve individuals, who truly stated their position in the Communist movement when they urged that a Conference of the Party be held over until Easter, because they were "unknown to the Revolutionary Movement."' The Trades Hall reds were strongly represented on the rump provisional executive which considered this letter of withdrawal, Denford, Garden, Hook, Webster, and Thomas all being present.

The A.S.P. now renamed International Socialist the International Communist, and called itself the Communist Party of Australia. We have called it the Liverpool Street party, after the fashion of the time and in order to distinguish it from its rival, also the 'Communist Party of Australia.' To us, this is the 'Sussex Street' party.

Sussex Street began publishing the Australian Communist on 24 December 1920, and in the paper one can discern the several main tendencies within the party. The Trades Hall reds' influence is directly manifest in J.S. Garden's 'Industrial Notes' and, in a probably more important way, in the almost complete absence of criticism of the A.W.U. faction in the New South Wales branch of the A.L.P. The more orthodox Marxists on the C.P. central executive were led by Carl Baker, an ex-American, formerly from Melbourne, 

65 Letter from the 'Communist Party of Australia' 14 Dec. 1920, to W.P. Earsman (Hancock coll.) Emphasis in original.
and W.P. Earsman. Such men were well aware of the justice in some of Liverpool Street's charges that 'opportunism' and 'job communism' could be found in their ranks. However, as another executive member, Norman Jeffery, recently suggested to the writer (interview), those most guilty of these things, the Trades Hall reds, were the men with the mass connections, and one could not lightly overlook this fact.

A unity conference on 25 March failed, and Liverpool Street rebuffed Sussex Street proposals for further unity efforts in April, May and June of 1921. Both parties sent representatives to the third congress of the Comintern in Moscow, June–July 1921. Soon after the third congress, the Executive of the Comintern wrote to the Australian parties suspending all '...representation at Moscow... until unity is achieved.' By the end of 1921, little progress towards unity – at least on the formal level – had been made.

The Sussex Street party seems to have had a steady, if modest, stream of applications for membership, despite the split and the

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66 So, incidentally, did the Socialist Labor Party, who thought very ill indeed of Sussex Street. See, for example, a letter from E.E. Judd, secretary, to the general secretary of the C.P. of A. 16 March 1921. 'The policy of the "C.P. of A." constitutes an excellent cover under which Capitalist subsidised spies and agents provocateurs can get at sincere members of the working class.' (Hancock coll.).

67 Copy of Letter, 20 August, 1921, Hancock coll.; the Communist, 2 Sept. 1921.

68 Letters between A.S. Reardon (Liverpool Street) and C.W. Baker (Sussex Street), 1921, and Minutes of the annual conference of the Sussex Street party, 27 Dec. 1921. (Hancock coll.).
lack of Comintern recognition. Interstate branches were established and consolidated and, within Sydney, amongst other branches there appeared the Trades Hall branch,

... a good branch...formed with the object of concentrating their work in the Trade Unions. They had no less than 19 unions represented and there were 29 delegates on the Labor Council.  

As to overall membership figures for Sussex Street, the nearest apparently accurate estimate is that of 750 for the whole of Australia in 1922, given by Garden as a Sussex Street delegate to the fourth Comintern congress. The best approximation one can make for Sydney is that a majority of Communists lived in the city. Sussex Street's comparative solidity is also attested by the fact that, though its bank balance was usually slender, it not only published a weekly newspaper, many leaflets and pamphlets, paid the rent for the Communist Hall, but also employed a full-time official in the person of the newspaper editor, paying him £5 a week.

While at first the I.W.W. elements worked with the Trades Hall reds against the former A.S.P. men, it was not long before the old antagonism between syndicalist and socialist began to show up. From 1919 to 1921 the Comintern, deeply influenced by the syndicalists,

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69 Minutes, central executive Meetings, 30 Dec.1920, 4,10,17,24 Jan; 5,2 Feb; 4,12 March 1921.
70 Minutes, C.P. annual congress, 27 Dec.1921. (Hancock coll.)
71 Savings Bank Book; Minutes, central executive of C.P. (Hancock coll.)
70a See below, p. 236.
made quite as strong a bid for the syndicalists as for the left socialists. Comintern and syndicalist views approached nowhere more closely than on the need to organize at the workshop level, and on the need to build industrial unions. Aside from the triumph of October, 1917, this was what most attracted the N.S.W. I.W.W. elements to the new communists, whose early program, as has been said, stressed the need to form groups in 'every mill, factory, workshop and field.' Many syndicalists, however, quickly discovered something notably unmilitant about the leading unionist Communists; additionally, they were not always able to reconcile Marxist views on political activity with their essentially anarchist approach. At first, however, things looked promising.

In September 1920, the Australian left read a pamphlet reproducing the message to the I.W.W. by the Comintern's second congress, with a foreword by leading Australian figure Tom Glynn. A Melbourne Communist journal, the Proletarian Review, expressed the hope that the I.W.W. would join in setting up a united Communist Party. Syndicalists and former syndicalists of more than one variety responded. Tom Glynn, outstanding former leader of the

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72 See above, p. 76.
Chicagoite I.W.W. in Australia, was out of gaol by the end of 1920, and became the (successful) anti-A.S.P. nominee for editorship of the Communist newspaper at the conference of 11 December 1920. In February 1921, a Darlinghurst branch of the Sussex Street party was formed from the I.W.W. branch of that suburb. However, some at least of the I.W.W. men planned either to 'raid' the C.P. or capture it, whether before or as a result of disagreements which appeared as early as March 1921, one does not know. On 2 August 1921, Earsman, at the congress of the Red International Labor Unions in Moscow, wrote to his Sydney comrades to say that the American I.W.W. had endorsed the 'principle of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat', along with syndicalists in France, Italy and Sweden.

I hope that those comrades who joined the C.P. of A. with the object of capturing it to make it an I.W.W. turn out, will mark this... and drop their talk about capturing anything and particularly to people who are opposed to you and who carry their spicy news long distances from Sydney to Moscow. 75

The I.W.W. were obviously uneasy in the Communist Party and on 9 November 1921, J.B. King and Thomas Glynn led the syndicalists out of the Party and established the Industrial Union Propaganda League, publishing a short-lived paper, Direct Action. Both Communists and the Industrial Union Propaganda League set forth their disagreements, the Communists initially in the most measured tones. The I.W.W., less

75 Earsman to the Central Exec. C.P. of A., 2 Aug.1921 (Hancock coll.)
restrained, charged the Communists with being 'right-wing':

'Relations with Moscow' are now becoming so fashionable ... that there is a danger that there may be Unions in Australia, who, in order to boast that they are 'linked up with Moscow', will secure a 'paper affiliation' while in reality pursuing tactics and methods that would disgrace even the Yellow International of Amsterdam. 76

Relations between the Industrial Union Propaganda League and the Communists temporarily improved when a conference on 18 February 1922 arrived at a 'working agreement' based on mutual acceptance of the program of the Red International of Labor Unions. This conference included members of the Workers' International Industrial Union and members of the 'revolutionary Trade Union factions'. 77 Though the Liverpool Street Party refused to attend, the conference declared the establishment of the 'United Communist Party of Australia'. And despite the fact that its admission went against the Bolshevik principles of party structure, the Industrial Union Propaganda League was admitted as an autonomous group, for it had refused to dissolve itself. The later expulsion of these I.W.W. elements came not because of this infringement of organisational procedure, but as a result of a clash over fundamental political doctrine, when members of the Industrial Union Propaganda League opposed a Communist Party decision that Communist members on the Labor Council should endorse trade union participation in politics and call

76 Direct Action, Jan. 1922.
77 Chronological Notes on the History of the Communist Party (Les Barnes coll.).
for the Labor Party's return to office. After this, relations between the Sussex Street Communists and Industrial Union Propaganda League deteriorated rapidly. In September 1922, the Communists dubbed an I.W.W. pamphlet 'More I.W.W. Moonshine', and added that the I.W.W. was 'moving not to the left but to the right'.

The Communist reported a speech by J.B. King, leader of the League, wherein he allegedly stated that the Red Army would 'shoot down... strikers', and that the Communist Party was the 'worst enemy' of the working class.

At times in 1922, then, the chances for Communist unity appeared slim. Relations between the Liverpool and Sussex Streets C.P.s had deteriorated further when, in February 1922, A.S. Reardon, leader of the Liverpool Street C.P. and delegate to the Labor Council from the Blacksmiths' Union, opposed the Labor Council reds' proposal that Council should affiliate to the Red International of Labor Unions. The Communists persuaded the Council to expel Reardon in March 1922, by thirty eight votes to thirty six, when Reardon charged

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78 Minutes, Gen. Meeting, Labor Council, 9,16, Mar.1922; Direct Action, Apr.1922.
79 The Communist, 29 Sept. 1922.
80 The Communist, 1 Sept.1922.
that the Labor Council executive had used money collected for Russian Famine Relief to pay Labor Council expenses. The Comintern cabled and wrote to both Communist parties in April 1922, enquiring as to the 'progress of unification...', but relations with the I.W.W. did not improve, while the Liverpool Street party rejected yet another Sussex Street invitation to discuss unity. However, by the end of June 1922, a revolt within the Liverpool Street party against Reardon and Everitt, led by T. Payne and Lionel Leece, brought an influx into Sussex Street, which soon dropped the word 'united' from its title and was henceforth simply the 'Communist Party'.

A 'unity conference' began sitting on 15 July and continued for some time, and in August 1922, Earsman, then in Berlin, notified the Communist Party that its affiliation as the Australian section of the Communist International had been accepted.

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83 Copy of letter, 10 Apr. 1922, which informed both parties that a cable had been sent on 10 April, from the Comintern executive. The letter was signed 'Rakosi' (Hancock coll.).

84 Liverpool St. C.P. to H.L. Denford, Secretary United C.P. of A. 17 June 1922 (Hancock coll.).

85 The Communist 30 June, 1922.

According to the unsigned history of the C.P. written c. 1942 in the Barnes collection (Chronological Notes...), R. Everitt, editor of the International Communist, asked for his overdue wages in reprisal for a demand from the 'rank and file' that he resign editorship. To secure his wages he, along with Reardon, one of the other main figures in the party, sold the party printing press, 'the only revolutionary printing plant in Australia.'
and the holding of annual conference in December 1922, the party claimed that 102 members had joined. This annual conference elected H.L. Denford as secretary–treasurer and editor, J. Howie and H. Ross as trustees, N. Jeffery and L. Leece as auditors, and as central executive members, J. S. Garden, C.W. Baker, N. Jeffery and L. Leece amongst others. A balance was preserved between Sussex Street and Liverpool Street, with the Trades Hall reds in a strategically fine position.

At its first conference, the united party formally proclaimed the policy of 'party affiliation to and membership in the Labor Party' a policy which the most influential members had openly promoted as early as June 1921, at the All-Australian Trades Union Conference, and had steadily pursued since then. The formal turn is of minor interest to this study, as its outcome was merely a heightening of the Communist influence already brought to bear on the unions and the A.L.P. by the Trade Hall reds with their de facto operation of a united front line for more than eighteen months. The earlier 'de facto' operation, moreover, had been carried out in a climate more favourable to communist influence than that of 1923 and 1924.

86 The Communist, 5 Jan. 1923.
The Trades Hall Reds and the United Front: Permeation 1920-1922.

So far we have focussed on the organizational history of the Communists. Now to their policy, or rather that change in policy which contributed so much to Communist Party political influence in New South Wales between 1921 and 1925. We refer to the Communists' idea of a united front with the Labor Party, loosely described above as 'permeation'.

The British Labor Party, with (in Lenin's words) its 'quite unique character', its 'very structure... so unlike that of the political parties common to the Continent', bore a strong resemblance to the Australian Labor Party. Both were trade union rather than social-democratic parties, for one thing. Australian leftists paid close attention to British discussions on the relation between British socialists and the Labor Party, and the Comintern's interventions on the matter as early as 1919 is unlikely to have passed unnoticed. In 1919, Sylvia Pankhurst initiated a correspondence with Lenin, chiefly over whether Communists should participate in parliamentary elections. On 28 August 1919 Lenin wrote in reply:

I am personally convinced that to renounce participation in the parliamentary elections is a mistake on the part of the revolutionary workers of Britain...88

87 Left Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder written 27 April 1920 and first published as a book in June 1920, taken from On Britain, by V.I. Lenin, p.472; see also p.541.

88 On Britain, p. 424.
This immediately raised as a corollary the idea that Communists should seek relations with the British Labor Party, the issue constituting a central point in socialist unity negotiations.\textsuperscript{89} The British Socialist Party, an affiliate of the Labor Party and a participant in Communist unity discussions, republished part of the Pankhurst-Lenin correspondence in its organ, \textit{the Call}, on 22 April 1920. In April 1920, Lenin finished \textit{Left Wing Communism. An Infantile Disorder}, in which he discussed the 'second point of disagreement among the British Communists - the question of affiliating or not affiliating to the Labour Party'.\textsuperscript{90} While Lenin did not give his own views on the matter here, in July he was among those who persuaded the second congress of the Third International to conclude:

\begin{quote}
At the same time, the Second Congress of the Third International should express itself in favour of groups and organizations in Britain that are communist, or sympathize with communism, affiliating to the Labour Party...
For, so long as this Party permits its affiliated organizations... to carry on...activity in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviet government, so long as that Party preserves its character of an association of all trade-union organisations of the working class, the Communists must... agree to certain compromises in order to have the opportunity of influencing the broadest masses of the workers...\textsuperscript{91}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\begin{footnotes}
\item[89] James W. Hulse, \textit{The Forming of the Communist International}, pp.115-121.
\item[90] On Britain, p.472. An English edition of the pamphlet was published in June. \textit{(Ibid., p.599)}.
\item[91] \textit{Ibid.}, p.499.
\end{footnotes}
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These Theses were published in Australia in 1920. Even after the Comintern second congress, there was no lack of disagreement on the issue. Reporting to the third congress on the work of the Comintern executive since the second congress, Zinoviev said:

We had first to straighten out the "Left" trend cropping up in Germany, Italy, England and America. Take, for example, the question of our attitude to the Labour Party. Some of the English comrades were absolutely opposed to the idea of working within this party owing to its opportunism. We, however, insisted on the necessity of "boring from within" on the ground that in a country like England it was imperative that we utilize the opportunities offered by very large labour organizations to penetrate its ranks...93

British delegates returning from the second congress brought with them Left Wing Communism, published in Britain almost immediately. Soon, despite strong initial opposition some of which persisted, British Marxists accepted readily a policy which would see them enter the Labour Party in order to discredit its "reformist" leadership...95 The ensuing British Communist campaign for affiliation was not without some influence on British labor at large, and as late as June 1921, the acting President of the Miners' Federation was prepared to argue for Communist affiliation to the Labor Party at the Labor

93 Third Congress of the Communist International. Report of Meetings held at Moscow... p.44.
95 Ibid., p.134.
Party annual conference.96

The Australian left was able to follow the Comintern view on Communists and the British Labor Party through the Victorian Socialist Party's newspaper the Socialist and the Sydney-based International Socialist. On 3 September 1920, Lenin's wireless message to Sylvia Pankhurst had appeared in the Socialist

In particular, I am personally in favour of participation in Parliament, and in favour of adhesion to the Labor Party under the condition of reserving entire freedom and independent Communist action...

On 24 September 1920, reporting further Comintern discussion on the matter, R.S. Ross commented:

Anyhow, the Communists are slowly but surely accepting the Australian attitude. Read Bukharin and Lenin on "boring from within", and note Third International's allegiance to Parliamentary action and the decision of the British Communist Party to affiliate with the Labor Party.

In October 1920, the Melbourne Communist journal, the Proletarian, reported a statement by the executive of the Russian C.P. to the second congress of the Comintern which laid down "the position that we should get inside the Parliamentary Labor Parties..."', and in November 1920, the Socialist carried further news on the matter. In Sydney, the theses of the second congress of the third international were published about this time.97 In October the International Socialist, organ of the Australian Socialist Party (now on the point of helping found the Communist Party), discussed the theses and their

96 Ibid. p.181.
97 See above, p. 97.
passages on the 'Communist Parties and the Question of Parliamentarism.' Readers knew that in Australia as much as in British terms, this involved the matter of Labor Party-Communist relations, and therefore implied consideration of 'permeation' - or to give it its more recent name, the 'united front'.

Australian Communists were thus not slow to grasp at least some of the issues at stake in the debate with the Comintern, crystallised as they were in Lenin's *Left Wing Communism* which became a prescribed text for Communists. In April 1921, Garden invoked *Left Wing Communism* to defend the Trades Hall reds against Liverpool Street C.P. attacks over the new One Big Union Constitution, which had grown out of the A.W.U.'s renewed interest in the question in February, 1921.  

At the June All-Australian Trades Union Conference, it was clear that the Trades Hall reds had moved further towards the A.L.P. executive in New South Wales, controlled as it was then by the hierarchs of the Central Branch of the mighty A.W.U. At this gathering, which was closely followed in labor circles, the Trades Hall reds pressed for discussions with the Australasian Labor Party Executives to achieve unity politically of all working-class parties on the basis of affiliation.

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99 For Garden's sympathetic attitude to the A.W.U.'s renewed interest, see *Daily Telegraph*, 2 Feb.1921, quoted above, p.4. For *International Communist*'s reactions, see that paper's issue for 12 Feb.1921. For Garden's use of *Left Wing Communism*, to defend the Trades Hall reds' position, see *International Communist*, 30 April 1921.
Thus A. McPherson, former A.L.P. Executive member and now a prominent Trades Hall red.) Garden himself stressed that the men on the left wing—had, and still, supported the Labor Party every time, not the capitalists.

The Trades Hall reds supported the A.W.U.-approved One Big Union Constitution adopted at the conference, ignoring leftist critics, even within Sussex Street itself, for supporting a constitution which excluded 'Chinese, Japanese, Kanakas, or coloured aliens,' and which neglected provisions for rank and file control. Without making it clear exactly how, Garden said that his view of the O.B.U. had changed, and let it be thought that he had a good deal in common with the A.W.U. controllers of the N.S.W. Labor Party executive:

No one can make a revolution. It is something which is born by things developed under the capitalistic system. It will come. It is coming. Everyone knows that. When the system of its own weight starts to collapse, then it is for a movement like this to take directing authority in Parliament and everywhere else, so that the whole machinery will act at the one time.

Arthur Blakely (A.W.U. leader) commented:

That is purely evolution.

Garden replied:

I realise there is very little difference between us. In the last two years we have been "at one another" instead of getting down to business and seeing where we are. 100

Yet the Trades Hall reds had pressed the matter of A.L.P. affiliation more strongly than their own, Sussex Street Communist Party comrades could be happy with. In the copy of The Communist

which reported the All-Australian Trades Union Conference, Garden wrote:

- to fear a compromise with the Left Wing of the Labor Party is really laughable. On the contrary, it is incumbent upon Communists to seek the necessary complete fusion with this wing, and on the other, would in no way tie the hands of the Communists in their ideo-political struggle against the opportunist Right Wing of the Labor Party. [sic]

Editorially, however, the paper (no doubt through editor Carl Baker, formerly from Melbourne) discussed the Labor Party and the Communists of Great Britain:

Today in England the Communist Party of Great Britain is prepared to back the Labor Party for the sole purpose to further the inevitable development of conditions in England. [sic] 101

This might happen here, thought the editorial, but a clear note of doubt was sounded. But where Sussex Street had doubts, Liverpool Street castigatied the Trades Hall reds in no uncertain way, scorning Garden's attempts to defend them by 'clumsily plagiariz [ing] from Lenin's "left wing Communism". ' 102 Garden retorted by again using Lenin:

The Bolsheviks had to deal with those whom Lenin states had "infantile sickness" like our friends the A.S.P. 103

In June and July 1921 the Comintern held its third congress, and its central theme, that about which the stormiest arguments raged,

101 The Communist, 8 July 1921.
102 The Int. Communist, 16 July 1921.
103 The Communist, 22 July 1921.
was that the Communists could no longer expect the masses to seize power spontaneously. The first great spontaneous mass upheaval, with its attendant boundless confidence, had given way to a spent wariness.\textsuperscript{104} The Communists still believed the proletarian revolution would spread. But the masses would need leadership in order to make a second assault, and they would accept the Communists as leaders only if proofs of Communist worthiness were given. Consequently, it was argued, the Communists had to prove that worth by demonstrating their capacities in the everyday affairs of the trusted working class organisations - the unions and, especially where Communists had not been able to lead a big scale breakaway, the labor and social democratic parties. Only in this way could 'small communist sects' be transformed into 'mass communist parties'.\textsuperscript{105}

From August, 1921, the proceedings of the Comintern's

\textsuperscript{104} See for example Trotsky, 'Theses of the Third World Congress on the International Situation and the Tasks of the Comintern', in The First Five Years of the Communist International, vol. I, p. 260: 'It is absolutely incontestable that on a world scale the open revolutionary struggle of the proletariat for power is at present passing through... a slowing down in tempo... it was impossible to expect that the revolutionary offensive after the war, insofar as it failed to result in an immediate victory, should go on developing uninterruptedly along an upward curve...'


third congress were faithfully reported in the Sydney Communist press, and by October, the congress theses began to appear in booklet form. Whatever the reason, no word was said for some time on the obvious political application of the third congress line, discussion on the united front being curiously limited to the industrial united front stipulated early in the year by the Red International of Labor Unions.

One reason for the uncertain attitudes to the united front within the Sussex Street party was the fact that Liverpool Street opposed it unequivocally, and the Comintern had insisted that Sussex Street and Liverpool Street unite before it would accept any Australian affiliate. Another reason was that within the Sussex Street party there was genuine opposition to the united front with the A.L.P., and doubt even among those who were impressed by the validity of work within the Labor Party. Others were dismayed by the opportunist way the Garden circle applied their de facto united front. Garden might talk about the need to work with the left wing of the A.L.P., but those whom he took care not to offend were the leaders of the N.S.W. Executive, who were also leading men in the A.W.U. - and hardly 'left wing.' Nevertheless the Trades Hall reds were influential enough - with or without calling upon Lenin and, now upon the third congress decisions - to prevent any criticism within the Sussex Street Communist

106 E.g. The Communist, 26 Aug., 2,9,16,23 Sept.1921.

107 Theses on Tactics Adopted by the Third Congress of the Communist International, Moscow, 1921. Published by the Communist Party of Australia, Sydney, 1921. (Available in October - see The Communist, 7 Oct. 1921.)

107a Mr. Alastair Davidson (A.N.U., Canberra) brought this stipulation to my notice.
press of the Executive majority of the N.S.W. A.L.P. — the Bailey A.W.U. group.

In March 1922, state elections were due in New South Wales. The Trades Hall reds had, as early as the last quarter of 1921, cast in their lot in the faction fight with the A.W.U. faction which controlled the state executive of the A.L.P. (the so-called Bailey-McGirr faction.) Under the Trades Hall reds' influence, the Labor Council issued an election manifesto calling for the return of the Labor Party. Although the A.L.P. was described as, inter alia, opportunist, there was no mention of the existence of factions, and the only persons castigated by name were well-known members of the Dooley faction (the so-called 'politicians' or 'parliamentarians').

As the state battle between Baileyites and Dooleyites warmed up, with the elections drawing closer, the Sussex Street Communist newspaper gave more attention to the question of Labor Party-Communist Party affiliation. On 24 March 1922, Sussex Street's paper reported a Comintern executive meeting of 18 December 1921 emphasising the need for affiliation with labor parties. Sussex Street wrote:

108 While the daily press was filled with the faction war within the A.L.P., between Baileyite executive and Dooleyite caucus, the Communist condemned 'parliamentarians' and upheld industrialists', condemned the A.L.P. in general terms and, whenever specific about names, named only Dooleyites. See the Communist, 2, 9 Sept., 9 Dec. 1921.

...the Communist International approves the Demand for a United Working Class Front. The Communist Party of every country will enter into negotiations with every other working class organisation (right, centre, or left) to establish a common fighting programme. The Communist International is prepared to enter into negotiations with the Second International, the Two and A Half International...

This policy has just been decided upon, yet our party has been working on these lines for months past, and, to a degree, we have succeeded. But the fact that the Communist International has now adopted a broad policy of unity in face of the impending collapse of the old order in Europe justifies the attitude towards unity which has been taken by this party in the past.

We have organised a "United Working Class Front" here in Australia, only to be called "opportunists" by other "Communists." 110

Liverpool Street minced no words on this matter:

To many, 'Left Communism' came as a God-send, as it afforded them a naive excuse for, and allowed them to develop to the fullest, their opportunist inclination. 111

"Getting down to the masses", too often degenerates - right here in Sydney-into a tragic farce," charged the Liverpool Street party. The Communist Party in Australia should not do as Sussex Street seemed on the verge of doing, that is, press for affiliation with the A.L.P. Rather,

...if...as here in Australia, the movement is stagnating, the duty of the revolutionary workers is...the development of the understanding and efficiency of the Communist Party.112

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110 Ibid., 24 Mar. 1922.
111 The Int. Communist, 25 Mar. 1922.
112 Ibid., 1 Apr. 1922.
By the end of March, Labor had lost the state elections and Comintern refusal of any affiliation before Communists were united came to the fore again. With this came keener awareness, no doubt, of the need to accommodate the intransigent men of Liverpool Street. Thus, in June, the Communist stressed A.L.P. deficiencies and found the idea of affiliation 'foolish'.

But this made very little difference to the Trades Hall reds. They continued to interest themselves greatly in A.L.P. internal affairs, and took the part of the Bailey faction with undiminished enthusiasm. Garden's industrial notes in the Communist reported the shearing strike of 1922 for example, in a tone that displayed sympathy for the A.W.U. leaders at times, and certainly never attacked them; nor did the general reports in the Sussex Street press.

After July 1922, unity negotiations between the two Communist Parties had got well under way, as we noted, and so there was no longer such a strong need to appease the former A.S.P. men on the united front question. Sussex Street men who continued to have their doubts on the matter felt no inclination to clash with the Comintern on it, and once Communist unity was assured, the united Communist Party moved immediately to implement the Comintern line. The annual conference at the end of 1922

113 The Communist, 16 June 1922; see also, 9 June 1922.
114 However, when Garden had sailed for a congress in Moscow in September, the Communist attacked the A.W.U. leaders over a pastoral strike in no uncertain way: 'If ever the workers were deserted by their leaders in an industrial fight it is on this occasion.' (The Communist, 22 Sept. 1922.)
discussed this question at great length and ... recognised that as the policy of the Communist International was for party affiliation to and membership in the Labor party, the conference was bound to accept same and work for its realisation. 115

The passage sounds a clear note of reluctance, and one of some significance as it turned out. It is hard to see any appreciable difference in the effectiveness of the united front policy now that the Communist Party was formally carrying it out as a party, where before a key group had implemented it without formal national approval. Those who had had real doubts about the line possibly carried the line out without enthusiasm, despite its orthodoxy. There is no notable increase of Communist work in the unions as a result of the new line's formal acceptance, for the chief union reds had been implementing the line - in their own way - for some time. One does see Communists at work in the local A.L.P. branches - Lionel Leece, former Liverpool Street member, is a good example. These people were not only less effective in A.L.P. affairs, but also more vulnerable to expulsion from the A.L.P. Finally, the C.P. members in A.L.P. branches had no organisation to cater for the quite peculiar problems arising for Communists in the A.L.P., and thus were less effective for this reason, too, than the Trades Hall reds, who had an organisation effective for their Labor Party as well as their union work.

Many of those who entered this study as socialists and syndicalists have now become communists. Many of them were later to leave, while some never formally joined. Jack Kilburn, for example,

115 The Communist, 5 Jan. 1923.
felt the time was not ripe for setting up a new revolutionary party, though he joined the A.L.P. in 1922 at the request of Garden and Howie, his comrades if not members of the same party. Others, particularly those once closely associated with the Chicago I.W.W. leaders, found the new Communists notably unmilitant and lacking in the mass touch. Mrs. Bettsy Matthias, close collaborator with the Chicagoites from 1915 to 1917 told the writer that she did not join the new party because its leaders did not 'go forward' as 'militants in the proper manner', or as 'propagandists in the proper manner', and did not adequately 'teach Communism or its ideals.'

The early Communists owed their remarkable impact on the labor movement to the political radicalism and industrial militancy of the union rank and file, to the fact that so many founding Communists were union officials, and to the fact that, for several years, the early Communists oriented most of their activity towards the A.L.P., labor's mass party in this country. We introduced the leftists chiefly as initiators of the Industrial Socialist Labor Party, as directors of the One Big Union, and as founders of the Communist Party. In short we have considered them so far in their political rather than their industrial roles. Now we will look at them as trade unionists.

116 Interview, 4 Mar. 1963.
CHAPTER II. APPENDIX I

The Union Strength of the Left 1919-1926

In April, 1917, J. S. Garden was appointed Labor Council assistant-secretary by E.J. Kavanagh, conservative secretary of Labor Council. (Ex. Min. Lab. Council 10 April 1917). Among those nominating for executive positions in July, 1917, were J.J. Graves, (Stovemakers) W.J. Gibb, (Clothing) J.S. Garden, (Clerks) and E.E. Judd, (then Municipal Workers' Union). (Ex. Min. 19 July 1917). In 1918, the left gained a major control of the New South Wales Trades and Labor Council, and entrenched itself rapidly in the years which followed.

By December 1918, as members of the Labor Council Executive, along with J.S. Garden, secretary of the Council, were A. McPherson (Letter Carriers' Union), as Vice-President, H. Dessaix (Amalgamated Carpenters and Joiners' Society), J. Howie (Coopers' Union), E. Judd (Miscellaneous Workers' Union) and G. Burns (Hotel, Club and Restaurant Employees' Union). In 1919, while Howie became president of the Council, the left was strengthened by the accession to the Executive of R. Webster (Municipal Employees' Union), W.J. Gibb (Federated Clothing Trades Union), J. Kilburn (Operative Bricklayers' Union), and F. Roels (Federated Engine-drivers & Firemen's Association). In 1920, J.J. Graves (Stovemakers' Union) and A. Rutherford (Saddlers' Union) joined the

117 Several unions broke their affiliation with the Council as a consequence; for an account of the new leadership by one (the Electrical Trades Union, which disaffiliated shortly after June 1918) see the Electrical Trades Journal, 29 July 1919.
executive of the Trades and Labor Council; in 1921, J. Beasley (Electrical Trades Union), R.A. King (Saddlers' Union) and P. Shirley (Amalgamated Printing Trades' Union) also joined the Executive. In 1922, Beasley became Acting President of the Council, while H. Denford (Federated Ironworkers' Association) and J. Johnson (Seamen's Union) appeared upon the Executive. In 1924, C. Hook (Municipal Workers' Union) and A.E. Bennet (Coachmakers' Union) were members of the Executive, while M.P. Ryan (Storemen & Packers' Union) appeared in 1926. In all this time, J.S. Garden was Labor Council secretary, and the centre of the red trade union network.

During the same period, many unions began to send left-wing delegates to Council who never became executive members, but who formed an important part of the left's bloc. Among these were O. Schrieber (Furniture Trades Society) (briefly a leftist in 1918 and early 1919), J. Swebleses (Wharf Labourers' Union), J. Burns (Federated Ironworkers' Association), G. Sinclair, R. Corcoran and T. Falkingham (Boilermakers' Society), H.J. Potter and W. Aldwell (Hotel, Club and Restaurant Employees' Union), R.J. Heffron, S. Dallman and W. Elliott (Marine Stewards' Union). (For all details Labor Council personnel, see the Report and Balance Sheet of the Labor Council of New South Wales, 1911-1927.)

What was the strength of the left within the state's largest unions?

By the middle of the nineteen twenties, the largest union in New South Wales was the Australian Workers' Union, with 34,639 members; next came the New South Wales branch of the Australian
Railways' Union, with 17,140 members; the Federated Ironworkers' Association, with 15,601; the Northern Collieries Employees' Association, with 13,500; the Municipal and Shire Council Employees, 10,015; the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, 7,598; the Amalgamated Timber Workers' Union, 7,500; the Hotels, Clubs and Restaurant Employees of New South Wales, 7,136. (From the Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies and Trade Unions, for the Twelve Months ending 30 June, 1927, N.S.W. Parl. Papers, vol. 1, 1928, p. 624)

While the left held few official positions in these unions, its influence was by no means negligible. In the A.W.U., there were capable non-official left-wing leaders, such as G. Berry, G. Bellamy, A. Rae and J. Cullinan. (Cullinan was the leading figure of the powerful Western Branch of the A.W.U. To crush the threat he represented, the right-wing majority leadership of the A.W.U. dissolved the entire branch in 1920. (International Socialist, 11 Sep. 1920. Voting was 50 for, 50 against, with A. Blakely's chairman's vote deciding the issue.) A. Rae had once held a high official position in the A.W.U. In view of widespread rank and file discontent in the A.W.U. (see above p. 47) the left can thus be considered fairly strong in this union, at least until 1923.

The Communists had little official influence in the miners' union. Two outstanding leaders of the Northern Collieries Association, J.M. Baddeley and T. ('Bondy') Hoare, were left-wing, the latter far more so than the Communist officials of the Trades and Labor Council. Baddeley was almost wholly under the personal influence of the miners' general secretary in New South Wales, A.C. Willis.
Though alleged to have joined the Communist Party in 1921, even late in that same year the Communists could not count him as one of their faction, and by early 1923 Willis and the Communists were open enemies. But while the Communists could not claim miners' leaders as members of their faction, they could expect and often received a sympathetic hearing from the rank and file of the union, and at times did not hesitate to appeal to it over the heads of mining officials.

Of the remaining largest unions, the Foundation Communist H. Denford had some influence in the Federated Ironworkers' Association by 1921, and was a member of the executive of the Sydney branch by 1924, if not earlier (the union's records are fragmentary for our period) while the leaders of the Hotel, Club, Restaurant Employees were members of the Social-Democratic League, and by no means unsympathetic to the Communists.

In all, then, the Communists and their supporters were probably better entrenched in trade union official positions than their comrades in European countries. At any rate, the Communists were certainly well enough entrenched to influence strongly, if not to determine, the industrial strategy adopted by the trade union movement in New South Wales in the wages and hours campaigns of 1919-20 and 1922.
CHAPTER III  'NO MORE 1917 DEBACLES!' - the Trade

Union Story, 1919-1923.
In 1919, there were many who felt that the world-wide mass unrest, of which the Bolshevik revolution was a part, was vigorously manifest in Australia. Indeed Senator Newland asserted:

We in Australia have been... more sorely oppressed by that [world-wide] spirit of unrest than any other part of the civilised world. 1

In the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, W.E. Robson alleged that

the great body [of the workers] have refused to recognise the arbitration laws of this country. 2

while the liberal Round Table spoke of

a great intensification of class-consciousness and the development of an internationalism hitherto almost unknown amongst the rank and file of Australian Labour. 3

George Beeby, Nationalist Party Minister for Labor and Industry in New South Wales, wrote:

The strike is rapidly becoming political instead of industrial. Syndicalism is eating its way into the very vitals of trade unionism. 4

Certainly the figures show that Australian labor was in an unusual state of industrial unrest. In 1919 over four million working days were lost in industrial disputes throughout the Commonwealth - a remarkably high figure for Australia. 5 Yet 1917 was the year of the

3 Round Table,vol.9, 1918–1919, p.614; compare with Ernest Scott's later reference to 'the atmosphere of suspicion which permeated industrial life' (The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, vol. XI, Australia During the War, p.683.).
4 The Sunday Times, 11 May 1919.
5 Appendix to this chapter, Table 3.
general strike which, though it brought defeat, obviously did not crush industrial self confidence; in New South Wales, indeed, the average dispute of 1919 was more prolonged than that of 1917. In short, one finds the working class of 1919 caught up in a wave of militancy, for whose origins we must go back a few years.

In the early war years, labor's discontent had taken shape around issues such as the 'wage freeze', or the refusal of Labor parliamentarians to execute Labor policy (in particular, on hours, prices, and the abolition of the Legislative Council). Trade union officials, especially those from unskilled and semi-skilled unions such as the rail and tramways, miners and the A.W.U., played the leading part in crystallising this early labor discontent, and their activities were directed largely through the established trade union party, the Australian Labor Party (though the I.W.W. and, to a lesser extent, the 'international socialists' of various brands played no small part even in the early war years). In 1914 and 1915, political interest and activity were still more or less restricted to labor's leading cadre; by 1915, the rank and file itself was in ferment.

Through the conscription referenda and the strike wave beginning in 1916, the work of the scattered socialist and I.W.W. groups began to bear fruit. Fragments of the ideology of 'class struggle' gripped thousands, helping to make them more interested in political affairs than they were normally, and intensifying their industrial militancy. But the union officials who, in the first war years, had

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6 Appendix to this chapter, Table 5.
supplied the yeast for this ferment of 1916, now revealed increasing uneasiness over the impetuous 'direct action' of the ranks; even the left-wing miners' officials (A.C. Willis, for example), did their best to restrain brushfire militancy, while the politically moderate officials of the A.W.U. and the rail and tram union frankly opposed the new and heady current.

Noting the contrast between headstrong rank and file militancy and official industrial timidity, one might expect a tendency for the rank and file to throw up new officials more in accordance with their mood. Indeed, the leftists who were late to establish the Communist Party gained control of the New South Wales Labor Council in 1918. Knowing that the early European and American Communists were industrial militants, one might suppose that the New South Wales Communists supplied a new and militant leadership to the unions.

But this supposition is wrong. The established leaders of the unskilled and semi-skilled unions were not industrial militants; years of participating in an arbitration and parliamentary network had blunted the edge of any industrial militancy they had possessed, and had shaped their inclinations, habits and abilities in the direction of 'legal' rather than 'direct' action. Wherever the pressure of the

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7 They did this as early as 1914, incidentally. The strike against the afternoon shift of that year furnished a good example. (See S.M.H., 4, 5, 6 June, 1914, and Direct Action, 15 June 1914.

8 For the attitude to militancy of Claude Thompson, secretary of the Amalgamated Rail and Tramways Association, see Direct Action, 1 July 1914, quoting from Thompson's speech in the Cooperator, official journal of this union.
rank and file made direct action unavoidable, these officials chose what was called the 'scientific' method of confining the strike area to "its narrowest possible limits." What of the new, left-wing leaders, the Trades Hall reds? Many of them were craft union officials, and explicitly endorsed the 'scientific' idea of confining strikes. Though they had extensive links with the rank and file militants in the unions, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled, they made little use of these links to encourage industrial militancy and to help unseat entrenched non-militant officials. The Trades Hall reds were not themselves industrial militants.

If the climate of the times had been unsympathetic to industrial militancy, it would be less remarkable to find the leading industrial Communists were non-militants. The first step then is to establish that there was in fact widespread industrial militancy in the early years of left-wing control of the Labor Council.

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9 Quoted in Direct Action, 1 July 1914, reporting Claude Thompson. Compare with a similar statement by J. Tudehope, secretary of the New South Wales branch of the Marine Cooks' Union, quoted below at p. 149.
Industrial Militancy 1919-1920

In 1920, of the 884,104 breadwinners in New South Wales, 277,519 were trade unionists, organised in some 214 separate unions; in one of the 258,863 unionists, 234,898 were males and 23,965 females. Of the twelve main industrial groups identified for official purposes, using statistics furnished in 1925, we give here those who figure frequently in this study: the 'building group' comprised 15 unions, had some 29,000 members, and constituted 11.8% of the total number of unionists in New South Wales; the engineering and metal working group comprised 14 unions, some 22,000 members, and constituted 9.1% of the total; the mining and smelting group covered 13 unions, some 18,000 members, and constituted 7.3% of the total; the pastoral group, 6 unions, some 27,000 members, 10.8% of the total; the shipping and sea transport group covered 11 unions with some 5,800 members, and constituted 2.3% of the total. A substantial increase in the number of unionists in New South Wales and in the Commonwealth as a whole occurred during the war and immediate post-war years, and overseas observers such as the American labor historian Carter Goodrich claimed that

10 Commonwealth Year Book, No. 14, 1924, p.899.
11 N.S.W. Year Book, 1928-29, p.772.
12 See Table 1 in the Appendix to this chapter.
14 In New South Wales, the number of unionists rose from 150,527 in 1911 to 231,550 in 1916, and 258,863 in 1921. (N.S.W. Year Book, 1928-9, p.772).
Australian labor was unusual in its degree of unionisation, singling out as especially noteworthy the extent of unionism among sheep shearers, and the mere fact that unionism had spread at all amongst domestic workers, musicians, journalists, civil servants and teachers.15

Australian unionists were caught up in that world-wide wave of political radicalism and industrial militancy swelling out of the first world-war, though they were not, it is true, as deeply affected as their counterparts in countries more directly involved in the war. Stimulated by the Russian revolution, the Irish Easter rebellion and the anti-conscription struggles, political and social ideas of a left-wing nature spread through the Australian labor movement. For the purposes of analysis, we distinguish industrial militancy and political radicalism as two separate entities but, in the labor movement of the time, the distinction was blurred so that both formed a whole, a climate of dissatisfaction and of self-confidence. Political and social ideas of a left-wing nature nurtured, and were in their turn nourished by, a sentiment of industrial militancy; but contributing more directly to this militancy were price rises which far outstripped wage increases16

15 'The Labour Movement in New Countries; Australia, New Zealand, the United States,' chap.2,p.3. See also H. Heaton, Modern Economic History with Special Reference to Australia, p.246.

16 In 1907, wage earners received 56.2% of the national dividend. Between 1907 and 1929, the lowest point was reached during the war, when wage earners received 48.4% of the national dividend (30 C.A.R. 18). The New South Wales Year Book for 1921 referred to the 'tendency of wages to lag behind advancing prices in the early years of the war' (p.660), while in 1924, the economist D.B. Copland declared (The Economic Journal, vol. 34,p.46) that 'real wages were lower during the whole period 1914–19 than they were in 1913, supporting his view with the table set out below.

(continued next page)
(despite increased productivity),\textsuperscript{17} 'dilution' of labor to meet the needs of war, and the relatively low level of unemployment.\textsuperscript{18}

A cycle of strikes, beginning in 1916, rose to a first peak in 1917. In that year an extended strike, initiated by the rank and file and executed with minimum help from officials, met with severe defeat.\textsuperscript{18b} Perhaps nothing gives more convincing proof of the combativity of the rank and file than the rapid rise of strikes to a new peak in 1919,\textsuperscript{19} for officials were not much more enthusiastic about leading strikes then than they had been in 1917.

16 (continued)

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Table Showing Movements in Wages, Cost of Living, etc.}\label{tab:movements}
\begin{tabular}{lccc}
\hline
 & 1913-1920 & August 1920 to December 1921 & January 1922 to June 1923 \\
\hline
Wholesale prices & + 128\% & - 38 & + 16 \\
Retail prices & + 92 & - 25 & + 12 \\
Rent & + 19 & + 6 & + 7 \\
Cost of Living & + 62 & - 18 & + 11 \\
Wages of Adult Male Workers & + 51 & + 11 & - 2\% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}


\textsuperscript{17} Copland, \textit{op.cit}, p.47 '...in years of rapidly rising prices wages lagged behind when the productivity of industry might have justified higher rates...'

\textsuperscript{18} See Table 2, in the Appendix to this chapter.

Heavy unemployment offers employers a ready means of strike-breaking, & thus one often finds strike peaks correlated with a low level of unemployment.

\textsuperscript{18b} V.G. Childe, \textit{op.cit.}, p.184 'The net result, in N.S.W. at any rate, was that unionism was virtually crippled in almost every industry'.

\textsuperscript{19} See Appendix to this chapter, Tables 3 and 5.
Unionists were indeed in unusually aroused and combative frame of mind. The Sydney Coal Lumpers Union stopped work in 1919, and then never again until 1961. The lofty marine engineers stopped work in this period,21 as did their retiring poor relations, the marine cooks and butchers.22 The period saw strikes by civil servants and school teachers (in Western Australia),23 musicians,24 chorus girls,25 and even (in Victoria) by policemen. The industrial defeat of 1917 was an abysmal one; the Wharf Labourers and Coal Lumpers Unions were shattered, the once strong Amalgamated Road and Tramway Services Association was for some time unable to scrape together a quorum.26 Yet by 1919, the still-battered Wharf Labourers had joined two of their bitter rivals - the Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Wharf Labourers'
Union and the Permanent and Casual Waterside Workers' Union — in a
purely political strike: a refusal to load the vessel 'Sonora', to
prevent the deportation of one Paul Freeman, prominent left winger of
the day. Seamen, though defeated in 1917, held an interstate strike
in 1919 and evoked considerable sympathy when they asked others to
join them.

On the whole, the unions struck work to improve existing
conditions and not to defend them; in short, they were taking the
initiative, and this in itself is evidence of labor's combative spirit.
Striking in 1920 for a forty-four hour week to replace the old forty
eight hour week, unionists also demanded the right to work their forty
four hours in five days — a goal not to be won until after 1945.
The years embraced by this study also saw the peak of the movement for
'industrial unionism', and the popularity of this demand indicates a
climate of optimism and self-confidence in the labor movement. When
morale is low, the worker has barely enough energy to fight piece-meal
rearguard actions in defence of bread and butter conditions; given a
high morale, he may be prepared to do great things. In much of our
period he was not merely aggressive in pursuit of bread and butter
demands; he was also enthused about building anew the union movement
and rudely forced his notions upon the peaceful traditional mass
political party of labor; in June 1921, the trade unionists forced the
Australian Labor Party to adopt a socialisation objective. The
years of this study saw, for the first time, May Day celebrated through—

27 S.M.H., 3 and 4, June 1919.
out Australia. May Day had been celebrated internationally since 1886 by the labor movement, but was supplanted in Australia until 1921 that now modest reformist slogan 'The Eight Hour Day'. It is no accident, given the climate of the time, that the New South Wales Labor Council fell under left-wing leadership in 1918 for the first time in its history. As a consequence the Labor Council began to show keen interest in labor affairs overseas, whereas under conservative leaders its outlook had been insular.

A sure sign of an aroused and self-confident mood amongst the masses may be found in the existence of 'grass-roots' level organisation; traditionally this may be a 'works' committee, a 'shop' committee, or a combined unions committee. It is true that Australian industry had nothing to compare with the shop-steward and works-committee movement that swept Britain's rail, building and engineering unions between 1914 and 1920. Yet Australian industry did possess a good many shop-committees, scattered widely if thinly: job committees in the Seamen's Union; amongst watersiders in some ports, union-controlled roster systems which constituted a degree of 'job-control'; 'works' committees in the meat industry; shop-committees in the furniture-making industry and in at least some parts of the metal trades industry.

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29 See note 115 chapter I.
And the existence of shop stewards was even more widespread.\(^{30}\)

Finally, to underpin the claim for a climate of unusual militancy, there are some figures available of attendance at union meetings. According to a union research officer, attendance figures in the Electrical Trades Union in 1919 and 1920 were far higher than today, after allowance is made for the increase in membership.\(^{31}\)

\(^{30}\) There were shop stewards associated with the following unions: the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (later the Amalgamated Engineering Union); see *Monthly Report*, Commonwealth Council, Jan., March, Apr., Oct., 1919; the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners (*Carpenters Monthly Journal*, Dec. 1921, May 1922, Nov. 1922); Electrical Trades' Union (*Exec. Min. 17 Sep. 1918, 30 Aug. 1920*); Federated Boilmakers' Society (*Minutes, General Meeting, 27 Jan. 1920*).  

\(^{31}\) See the minutes of general meetings of the Electrical Trades Union, N.S.W. branch, June 1919 - July 1920. Attendances ranged from 58 to 150, in comparison with a range between June and December 1918, of from 22 to 67. In 1918, the membership of the New South Wales branch was 2049 (Exec. Annual Report for 1918, in *Electrical Trades Journal* 26 July 1918) and in 1919, 2088. Attendances in the year 1919-1920 compare favourably with attendances today, though the branch is very much larger today. Normally decorous meetings during 1918 were often replaced in the years 1919 to 1921 by excited ones; said a staid commentator in the *Electrical Trades Journal*, 27 Mar. 1920: 'Events move rapidly in industrial circles these times. New South Wales branch has been running a 100% overload since the beginning of the year. During the months of February and March, committee or general meetings were the daily and nightly order'. 
Even at meetings of the union perhaps most damaged by the 1917 defeat, the Wharf Labourers' Union, attendances were high during 1919 and 1920; in a membership of 2,099, the New South Wales branch of the Ship Painters' and Dockers' Union enjoyed attendances of up to 150 members at monthly meetings, which a present-day organiser of that body has described as an unusually high attendance. Attendance at quarterly meetings of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners was also substantial. The Printing Industry Employees' Union, with relatively peaceful domestic politics, and with its most vocal sections skilled and highly paid, had its half-yearly and special general meetings attended by from eighty to 800 members, while its regular Board of Management meetings were attended by up to sixty. By contrast, when the wave of militancy receded, one hears anxious complaints that attendances at union meetings were falling away.

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32 The membership was given in the Financial Secretary's report for 1919 as 1900 (though in 1920 the branch paid affiliation fees to the A.L.P. for 3,000 members); 1,196 participated in a voluntary ballot on the O.B.U. (Minutes, Special Gen. Meeting 31 March 1920). Attendances at general meetings during 1920 and 1921 ranged from 130 to 330, though it must be remembered that these were daytime stop-work meetings. The branch paid affiliation fees to the Waterside Workers' Federation for 3,400 members.


34 Printing Trades Journal, 1918-1920. The latter attendance, and others similar, occurred when there was the possibly of a strike.

35 Minutes, Gen. Meeting Labor Council, 3 July 1924.
One of the polar concepts of this study is that of the rank and file, defined as members of unions and labor political organisations who hold none of the main official positions. Applying this to the industrial side of labor, one thinks of a trade union rank and file as partially separate from its leadership; possessing, and at times manifesting very clearly, interests and an outlook which conflicted with those of its leaders - alongside those which were held in common.

Historians writing about the eighty two day general strike of 1917 have employed the concept of a rank and file as distinct from that of leaders. The affair was initiated by the rank and file in the face of official attitudes ranging from passivity to outright disapproval. Officials entered the strike when it was irrevocably under way, and could not be stopped or influenced unless by those who put themselves at its head. Two weeks after the strike had begun, the organ of the Chicagoite I.W.W. in New South Wales could say:

There is no publicity, and the great bulk of strikers know very little about what is going on. So far there has been no official mass meeting of all unions on strike and no responsible official has appeared on the platform to explain to the strikers what business is being transacted, and how the prospects are looking. No strike bulletins have been issued, and no leaflets or papers explaining the cause of the strike...

Yet rank and file determination was apparently stubborn and morale

35A See above, pp.6-7.
36 See, for example, Childe, op.cit., pp.188-189; I.A. Turner, op.cit., pp.253-257.
37 Direct Action, 18 Aug. 1917.
buoyant. According to a recent historian of the general strike, '... remarkably, the unsystematic organisation and the poor publicity had little effect on the morale of the strikers... As it was at the begin­
ing of the railway strike, so it was at the end: the men, still more
determined than their leaders, "declared that they had been sold, and ...
angrily denounced the action of their Executive"'. Thus the
strike of 1917 was such that any analysis of it which merely used the
term 'labor movement', and took no cognisance of the fact that two
entities comprised that whole, would be plainly inadequate. Yet
the division noted in 1917 between rank and file and leaders did not
spring up overnight; it certainly existed throughout the war years, and
indeed Robert Michels argued as long ago as 1906 that there exists a
general tendency for the interests of leaders and the rank and file to
clash. Though no one appears to have seriously undermined this aspect
of Michels's argument, all we will claim in this study is that such a
clash was manifested in New South Wales between 1916 and 1930. Such
evidence as has been seen of trade union affairs, particularly of

38 Turner, op.cit., p. 259; p.263, citing Worker, 13 Sept. 1917.
39 Robert Michels, Political Parties, 1959. Republished from an English
translation first made in 1915.
40 For evidence of this clash from 1928 to 1930, see the writer's 'The
Strike of Waterside Workers in Australian Ports, 1928, and the
Lockout of Coal Miners on the Northern Coalfield of New South Wales,
1929-30', M.A. thesis; and 'The Timber Strike of 1929', Historical
strikes in New South Wales in this period, suggests that, just as the 1917 division between leaders and rank and file did not appear overnight, neither did it disappear overnight.

The argument to be developed on labor's industrial strategy must, from the nature of the problem, be offered tentatively; but even at this point it does not seem safe to adopt analytical concepts which deal with the labor movement only as a whole, and not, additionally, as divided into these two, not necessarily harmonious, parts. An approach dealing with the labor movement only as a whole excludes the possibility of studying any disparity between the leadership and the rank and file. Where the rank and file are largely inarticulate, officials leave generous documentation behind, so that if precision were the main consideration for the historian — instead of being merely a vitally important consideration — one should give up the effort of estimating the rank and file view, and use the approximation that the officials spoke for labor as a whole.

However this approximation is too misleading.

In the industrial conflicts of 1920-1922, both old-established officials and new leftist officials favoured confinement or no direct action at all. Within the Communist Party, there was clear opposition both on an official and a rank and file level to the confinement line advocated by Garden and the Trades Hall reds. But opposition was not pushed to the point where it became effective, for the Trades Hall reds had the mass links and the Communist central executive recognized this fact. However confinement achieved few of labor's stated aims in the
industrial campaigns of 1920-22, and the rank and file would have adopted extension had they been asked.
The Unions in the 'boom' period 1919-1920: Marine Transport and the Forty-Four Hour Strikes.

Of the trade union efforts to improve conditions during the years of relatively low unemployment in 1919 and 1920, we select the campaign for the forty-four hour week, and three of several marine transport disputes: the seamen's strike, from May to August, 1919; the marine engineers' strike from 13 December 1919 to 28 February 1920, and the strike by marine stewards and pantrymen, from 15 December 1920 to 25 January 1921.

As the last of these marine disputes was well under way, in giving his annual report for the year 1920, Labor Council secretary J.S. Garden asked:

Would it not have been better for the Seamen, Marine Engineers and Stewards to have decided to take action at the same time. It would have been more effective... 41

The reader will probably feel no great surprise in reading Garden's words. Some may decide that they were only common-sense. Others will doubt the 'effectiveness', but will recall that Garden was after all a Communist. The international tendency of the early Communists, in contrast with that of the 1950's and early 1960's, in western countries at any rate, did not lean towards 'irritation' tactics of rolling strikes, overtime bans, regulation strikes, or towards half day stoppages. Nor did the early Communists usually conceive a strike action on a factory-by-factory basis, with a sizable part of the

unionists left at work to finance the strikers. A variation of the latter form was commonly used in New South Wales during the 1920's, and the form itself Knowles, the strike historian, has called the 'bumper' strike. The 'bumper' strike was first used by craft unions in the early nineteenth century, and in the twentieth century "... rediscovered by the Syndicalists." The early Communists, after all, were more inclined to 'short big strikes... rather than small protracted ones...'; in the terms used throughout this study, more inclined to the 'extended' rather than the 'confined' strike.

If, after noting that Garden advised 'action at the same time',

43 Turner, op.cit., p.241. Turner is not referring to Communists here; he is discussing strike forms which developed in Europe during and after the 1890's.
44 Compare these with the terms used by E.T. Hiller (The Strike, A Study in Collective Action, pp. 136-137). In discussing ways in which a strike may be initiated, Hiller distinguished two main types: the strike 'en masse' and the strike 'in detail'. The strike 'en masse' Hiller described as 'the more usual form of initiation', and of the strike 'in detail' (for which term we use 'the confined' strike) Hiller wrote: '...in the simplest form [it was] used by a few English craft unions during the middle of the nineteenth century.' Fred S. Hall (Sympathetic Strikes and Sympathetic Lockouts, p.10, and passim) used the term 'general strike' for what we call the 'extended' strike, while for the general strike in the traditional sense, Hall used the term 'universal strike'. For discussion and definition of the 'general strike', often used as a substitute for the 'extended' strike, see Wilfred H. Crook, Communism and the General Strike, and 'The Revolutionary Logic of the General Strike', in the American Political Science Review, 1934, vol. 28. pp.655-663.
45 Above, p. 130.
the reader supposed that the Trades Hall reds, too, were proponents of the extended strike, this would be a natural and logical thing to suppose. But the reader would be wrong. Whenever Garden and his fellow red union officials were themselves directly responsible for a strike, and even when it appeared that they could seriously influence it, Garden and his colleagues did not propose or countenance 'action at the same time'.

By 1919, marine transport unions in New South Wales shared pressing common grievances, outstanding amongst which were desires for wage increases, for decreases in hours, for an increase in the numbers of the crew working on a given ship (the 'manning' dispute), and for the removal of non-unionists placed on the waterfront following the defeat of 1917. Marine transport unionists possessed in the Transport Workers' Federation a centralised organisation capable of directing common action suggested by common grievances, and made feasible by rank and file militancy. Yet no common action was taken; unions went out one at a time. Though thousands were thrown idle, willy-nilly, by each of these, no officials save the seamen's ever invited those they knew

46 Under the impact of the rising tide of industrial militancy, in July 1917 marine transport unions came together with the avowed purpose of setting up an Industrial Union. Known as the Transport Workers' Federation, the resulting organisation embraced the following unions: the Marine Stewards with 2,000 members; the Federated Seamen's Union, 12,000 members; Marine Cooks 1,000 members; Merchant Service Guild of Australasia, 2,000 members; Newcastle Coal Trimmers' Federal Union, 400 members; Federated Ship Painters' and Dockers' Union, 3,000 members; Federated Carters and Drivers Union, 7,000 members; Waterside Workers' Federation, 15,000 members (see a pencilled estimate on the Minutes of the Conference to Establish the Transport Workers Industrial Union, 6 July 1917).
would be thrown idle to participate voluntarily on behalf of their own grievances, as well as in 'solidarity' with the initiating group.

For years, seamen had attempted to improve their conditions through arbitration. Then they had been drawn into the anti-conscription campaign and, against the wish of their officials, had joined the 1917 extended strike and suffered heavy defeat. Such was the morale of the rank and file, however, that in February, 1919, Australian seamen joined New Zealanders in a wage strike, sparked off by the influenza danger. Officials of the Sydney branch, along with federal officials, withdrew Australian seamen save for the Queenslanders. Then, however, an internal militant revolt consolidated the formerly insecure position of Thomas Walsh in the Sydney branch itself and later, when the strike became Australia-wide once more, in the federal leadership (as the 'general' secretary.) By 20 May, 1919, the strike, having faltered after February, had once more become Australia-wide. Round Table described the strike as 'above all a repudiation of arbitration in favour of direct action' (though, added that journal, the strike was conducted over demands which were 'nothing very extravagant'). In addition to wage increases, seamen now also stressed


48 For a fuller account of this complicated story (for which I am indebted to Mr. R. Coates, currently carrying on research on the Seamen's Union), see the Appendix to this chapter, item 6.

49 In New South Wales, some 7,700 workers were drawn in, 2,190 in Victoria, 2,770 in Queensland, 1,705 in South Australia, 985 in Western Australia, and 655 in Tasmania (Labour Report, No. 15, 1924, p. 110.)

(Footnote 50 next page.)
accommodation on board ship. The seamen wanted an advance of thirty five shillings per month for able seamen, with similar increases for ordinary seamen, firemen and other grades; a maximum six-hour day in port and the carrying into effect of the 1913 Commonwealth Navigation Act with regard to accommodation on board ship. The seamen also required additional provisions for light, bedding, attendance and cleaning, and the application of the menu of the Commonwealth Shipping Line to all ships. They desired increased payments for overtime, for working the cargo, and for trimming coal, with an insurance guarantee of £500 to be paid to next of kin of seamen dying at sea, and wages during sickness. Other unions had made no secret of their grievances, and the seamen's officials asked others to join in extending the strike. This was seriously considered by at least three conferences which included water-side workers, (who in Melbourne had a dispute of their own in progress over non-unionists on the waterfront,) carters and drivers, ship painters and dockers and the two engineers' unions, and later, coal miners, engine-drivers and firemen. Indeed, for some time, the daily press had anticipated extension. Before 10 July, one conference

50 Round Table, vol. 10, 1919-1920, p.166. The seamen later repeatedly charged certain other unions with trying to send them back to arbitration, a charge indignantly denied. (Transcript of Proceedings of Interstate Trade Union Conference, 21-26 July 1919).

51 See the leaflet, Seamen's Strike... a brief history of the negotiations between the Melbourne Industrial Disputes Committee and the Seamen's Federal Council, on the one side, and the Federal Government on the other. This refers to a conference on 6 June 1919; while the Sydney Morning Herald records another conference on 10 July (S.M.H.,11 July 1919); see also Argus, 28 July, 1919.
had actually recommended interstate extension to coal miners, engine-
drivers and firemen, and non-marine transport workers, around demands
including removal of non-unionists from the waterfront, abolition of
the 'bureaux' through which non-unionists on the waterfront were alloc­
ated jobs, and settlement of the current Barrier miners' strike in the
miners' favour. And on 10 July, the Melbourne Trades Hall Council
voted for steps to bring extension about, in accordance with this
recommendation. Emissaries then were dispatched interstate to plead
for extension, and an interstate union conference arranged for 21 July.
At this gathering, alleged to be uniquely broad in representation,
extension was clearly very popular. But on the eve of the conference,
Thomas Walsh, seamen's general secretary and probably the leading advocate
for extension, was imprisoned; and two days later opinion began to move
away from extension when A.C. Willis and J.M. Baddeley, from the New
South Wales miners, arrived and threw their weight against it. Baddeley and Willis advised an approach to Federal Cabinet, but union
distrust of Cabinet's word was deep. Indeed, up to this point, Cabinet
(in charge of the strike because shipping still fell under the Common-

52 S.M.H., 21 May, 11 July; Argus, 11 July 1919.
53 Transcript of Proceedings of Interstate Trade Union Conference,
21-26 July 1919.
54 Extension seems to have been feared by the daily press. See, for
example, Argus, 22, 25 July 1919.
55 On 13 July, Willis had said in Sydney that the best course was to
keep as many men at work as possible, these to supply strikers with
finance (S.M.H., 14 July 1919).
wealth's war-time powers) had been flatly unprepared to make concessions 'as the attitude of the union constitute[d] a challenge to the authority and laws of this Parliament.'

Cabinet at first rebuffed the approach instigated by Willis and Baddeley, and during the 'uproar' which greeted the refusal, 'direct actionists' cried out:

This is the finish. No more parleying.
Out with the coalminers!

Later, a further deputation received assurances that demands would be met if the men resumed, and those on the deputation felt that the Government would honour its assurances. Other unions had their own demands, and to ensure that these were satisfied, and that the Government kept its promises on the seamen, the conference 'resolved to keep itself intact, and be prepared to take any action that might be possible to see that the seamen get justice in the event of the Government failing to keep its promises'.

However the conference did agree to recommend that seamen accept the Government's terms, and the seamen's officials, including the gaol ed Walsh, urged the same course.

And it is probable, though one cannot be certain, that such a resumption


57 Argus, 25 July 1919.

58 From the leaflet Seamen's Strike... a brief history of the negotiations between the Melbourne Industrial Disputes Committee and the Seamen's Federal Council, on the one side, and the Federal Government on the other.
would have gained the seamen what they sought, so near were the others to 'coming out', and so aggressive were the seamen themselves. But the seamen themselves did not feel inclined to chance matters - in particular, they wanted Walsh released, for without him they felt at a disadvantage; and they rejected the conference recommendation. Deeply resentful that other unionists refused to help them, they would not allow the Melbourne Trades Hall Disputes Committee to handle their strike any longer. This, the Sydney Morning Herald charged, left the conduct in the hands of certain 'extreme socialists', prominent amongst whom were Victorian Socialist Party members R.S. Ross and Donald Cameron. In Sydney, marine stewards, against the wishes of their officials, actually did go to the help of the seamen, whose continued strike achieved the desired increase in the basic rate of wages, and substantial improvements in their formerly wretched ship-board eating and sleeping arrangements. Walsh was released, while seamen also gained an increase in overtime rates, and improved leave

60 S.M.H., 2 Aug. 1919.

61 Minutes of Special Meeting, Sydney branch Marine Stewards' Union, 1 Aug. 1919.

62 On 17 Sept. 1919, T.J. Smith, M.L.A., said accommodation on coal boats, for example, was such that he would not rut 'a dog which had bitten [him]' on board (N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol. 76, p. 881); see also J. Storey, in ibid., vol. 75, p. 646, 10 Sept. 1919; F. Malcolm, in 1919 a member of the Federated Seamen's Union, described conditions as 'very poor' in an interview with the writer (August 1961).
of absence rights.

Alone amongst the marine disputes of the time, the seamen's strike was substantially successful in achieving union demands, while concessions were also gained for the Melbourne Wharf Labourers who struck at the same time, notably abolition of the so-called 'scab' labor bureau.\textsuperscript{63} Of all the marine strikes, the seamen's came closest to being an extended strike, some wharf laborers and stewards actually joining of their own volition, while union sympathy was such that for some time wider extension was expected daily. Indeed, Round Table assessed union sympathy at the time as so intense that a demand by the Commonwealth government for volunteers 'would have precipitated immediately a general strike throughout Australia'.\textsuperscript{65}

The seamen, with their marked preference for extension, were semi-skilled unionists. Tom Walsh, an old 'international socialist', became Federal Secretary as a direct result of a militant upsurge within the seamen's union. (See this chapter's appendix, item 6). He was then, and continued to be for several years, the only prominent leftist advocating the tactic of extension.\textsuperscript{64}

Given the somewhat finely balanced state of extensionist and anti-extensionist forces, had the Sydney Trades Hall reds controlling

\textsuperscript{63} From the leaflet Seamen's Strike... a brief history of the negotiations between the Melbourne Industrial Disputes Committee and the Seamen's Federal Council, on the one side, and the Federal Government on the other.

\textsuperscript{64} Walsh and his wife, Adele Pankhurst Walsh, were members of the provisional executive of the Communist Party elected from the foundation conference of 30 October, 1920. (See above, p.85) Walsh's name soon disappears from central executive records, however, and he appears to have had little association with the Trades Hall reds.

\textsuperscript{65} Round Table, vol.10, 1919-20, 169.
the Labor Council so wanted, they could have thrown no small weight onto the scales on behalf of the extensionist forces. But on the Labor Council itself, no word was uttered on this, the central question of the strike, though finance and sympathy were bestowed. Though he was a man given to flamboyant public utterance, Garden's press statements on the strike were most guarded, while at the time of the strike, W.P. Earsman, like Garden also a foundation Communist, condemned the seamen's strike as being 'for something for which the rest of the workers would have to pay'. Giving his secretary's Report at the end of 1919 to the Labor Council, Garden dismissed the seamen's strike in two lines because, being directed from Melbourne, it did not come 'within the purview of the Council', though distance did not prevent him from lengthy comment on events in America, Germany or France. However, in the same report Garden did say something which obviously bears on the seamen's strike.

Surely in this day we can use a more scientific weapon than the obsolete weapon of the strike...let us... lay aside the strike weapon until the movement is thoroughly organised along scientific lines that will make it an efficient weapon. 70

67 See, for example, a statement on the need to proclaim the Navigation Act, in S.M.H., 9 July 1919.  
68 Int. Socialist, 26 July 1919.  
But on the burning question of the day ('to extend or not to extend'), Garden said nothing until there was no hope of extension — until the last of the marine disputes, the steward's strike, was well under way. And then, after noting that responsibility for direction of the marine disputes had been in the hands of his political enemies in the Transport Workers' Federation, Garden asked that question to which attention has already been drawn:

Would it not have been better for the Seamen, Marine Engineers and Stewards to have decided to take action at the same time. It would have been more effective... 71

Not long after the seamen returned, thousands were once more thrown idle by what was surely an aristocrat among the unions: the Australasian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers. A small, exclusive, wealthy union normally averse to striking, 72 it is an undoubted testimony to the militant climate of the time that the marine engineers struck at all. Dissatisfied with an award handed down in December, 1918, 73

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72 Attendance at the monthly meetings of the Sydney District branch in 1919, varied from 7 to 87 out of a total of 212 members. (Minutes, Sydney District meetings, A.N.U. Archives). For an example of exclusiveness, see the attitude towards seamen expressed by Telfer, the engineers Sydney District secretary, Sydney Sun, 15 Sep. 1921. Small as it was, the New South Wales branch of the engineers' institute was listed amongst the state's four wealthiest unions in the mid-twenties. (Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies and Trade Unions, for the Twelve Months ended 30 June 1927, in N.S.W. Parl. Papers, vol.1, 1928, p.624.) On the institute's attitude to strikes, see Ann. Rep. Lab. Council, 31 Dec. 1920, p.9.

73 In 1912, the Commonwealth Arbitration Court had fixed wages for the lowest grade of marine engineers at £12 a month, and £34 for the highest. These rates had been increased by 15% in 1917, and raised again in December 1918 to £15 and £42 respectively, under an award whose currency was fixed at 13 years. Justifying their dissatisf— (continued next page)
some 350 marine engineers on state and interstate ships stopped work on 13 December, 1919. Though the Commonwealth government incurred heavy losses as a result of the strike, it was unable to employ non-unionists, largely because of the skill needed, but partly because there was widespread sympathy in the labor movement for the engineers. When the Commonwealth issued a proclamation under the War Precautions Act forbidding help of any kind to the engineers, this sentiment deepened. 74 But the engineers asked no one to join the dispute, and no one offered. Hence the War Precautions Act might have prompted additional sympathy towards the engineers, but it also prompted the engineers to return to work, accepting a settlement which elicited "exceptionally lively" 75 opposition from at least some of the rank and file, which was at first rejected out of hand by the Sydney branch, and which was declared unsatisfactory by the officials. 76

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73 (continued)
faction, engineers claimed they had put up with unsatisfactory conditions during the war, referred to increases in Britain, U.S.A. and New Zealand, and finally pointed out that the recent increases won by seamen had narrowed their margin above the seamen.


75 S.M.H., 27 Feb. 1920.

76 A.W., 5 Feb. 1920; Minutes, Sydney District, 30 Mar. 1920. Where the old rates had ranged from £15.10s. to £42, the new ranged from £18 to £50, per month.
In Australia, the marine stewards' union has traditionally been a notably unmilitant union. During 1919 and 1920, however, the conservative N.S.W. officials A. Moate, W. Ebsworth and H. Pennington found the rank and file extremely restive. And on 15 December 1920, marine stewards throughout Australia struck when interstate shipping companies refused to reduce by one and a half hours the fifteen hours 'spread' over which the stewards, during seven days of each week, worked their eight-hour day. The officials immediately put the dispute into the hands of the conservatively-controlled Transport Workers' Federation, which would call out other transport workers if non-unionists were employed. Non-unionists were employed in Victoria but no effort was made to extend the dispute, and at the Transport Workers' Federation's recommendation, on 25 January 1921, work was resumed 'unconditionally.'

The Commonwealth Steamship Owners' Association interpreted the stewards' capitulation as a sign of weakness, furnishing an opportunity to move against the growing militancy amongst the marine transport rank and file which received particular stimulus from the militancy and industrial successes of the seamen. Encouraged by their victory in 1919 under the new militant federal leadership, seamen had taken the lead in prompting the growth of shipboard 'job-committees

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77 Minutes, Gen. Meetings Sydney branch, 1919-21.
79 The Socialist, 14 Jan. 1921.
80 Labour Report, No.12, 1921; S.M.H., 25 Jan. 1921.
Despite their 'industrial unionist' and syndicalist overtones, to most seamen job committees were essentially an effective 'grass-roots' organisation for improving everyday working conditions, especially suited to what today we would call 'wild-cat' direct action. Thus the Commonwealth Steamship Owners' Association asked stewards' and seamen's officials to disavow 'job-control' or they would be locked out. Officials immediately complied.

The owners, however, had taken stock of the situation. They knew that the officials were unwilling to strike, as there was no secret about this; they believed that no pledges by officials could put an end to 'job-control' while the rank and file retained the buoyant spirits recent victories had given them (the owners had usually conceded seamen's demands over 'manning' during 1920); they also believed that the seamen would continue to act as a centre of disaffection for the rank and file of other marine unions. Even the normally quiescent marine stewards were still intransigent, despite their defeat. But

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81 To set up a 'job-committee' on a given ship, the seamen, firemen, cooks, bakers, butchers, stewards, pantrymen and sometimes, the officers, would each elect a representative, who would then meet as a 'job committee'. This committee then received, from each union represented, full power to negotiate with shipowners and to take action so long as it did not lower existing standards. In thus exercising 'job control', the 'job committees' would pick a favourable moment when a ship was loaded, passengers aboard, and would then bring forward their demands. They were not averse to doing this on the high seas, and stopping work if unsatisfied.

82 A.W., 3 Feb. 1921.

most union officials clearly did not want to fight, and, noting also
the jump in unemployment — from 6.9% in the final quarter of 1920, to
13.7% in the first quarter of 1921, the owners decided the time had
come for them to take the offensive. It had been left to the unions
for too long. Consequently the ship-owners locked out the seamen and
stewards, the issue at stake being the union's right to take 'direct'
'job-control' action on the so-called 'manning' problem. The lock­
out ended on 26 February 1921, following intervention by the Common­
wealth Arbitration Court and the subsequent establishment of a Manning
Committee. The owners did not achieve their aim of subduing rank and
file militancy.

Common grievances among marine transport unionists, the
militant inclinations of the rank and file, and the existence of
a formally powerful central organisation — all these suggest common
industrial action. Yet as we have seen, though the marine unions
certainly struck, they struck in accordance with no overall plan, their
actions being piecemeal and haphazard, while there is every reason to
believe that (seamen's officials excluded) marine union officials pre­

84 See Appendix to this chapter, Table 4.

85 The shipowners' seizure of initiative brought anti-official opposi­
tion to a head within the marine stewards' union, and in February
1921 a new militant 'direct actionist' executive replaced the old.
The new body was led by one Elliott. The conservative federal
executive deposed the new executive, replacing it by men of whom
it approved. (Minutes, Gen. Meetings, Sydney branch, 21 Feb. to
6 Aug. 1921; also Marine Stewards' Journal, 21 May, 15 Oct.1921.)
In the process, a rank and file Melbourne steward alleged that
Elliott 'had done more in two months for the members than anyone
else had done in ten years. Mr. Elliott was a militant and revol­
utionary man...!' (Marine Stewards' Journal, 21 May 1921).
ferred not to strike at all. But if, under the direction of the
Transport Workers' Federation, marine strikes were haphazard, by con-
trast the Trade Union movement's official forty four hours' campaign
was carefully planned by the Labor Council, which set up special and
elaborate machinery. The red union officials, whether Communist or
on the point of helping to form the Communist Party, had every chance
to influence the actions of the marine unionists, though they did
not control the commanding heights in marine unions. As far as the
forty four hours' campaign was concerned, they did command these
heights.

In 1918 and 1919 as union after union demonstrated growing
interest in the demand for the forty four hour week, the New South

See for example, the tug-of-war inside the then conservatively con-
trolled Marine Stewards' Union, over affiliation to the One Big
Union. This was identified with industrial militancy by the stewards'
rank and file (Minutes, Special Meeting, Marine Stewards, 1 Aug.

During 1918, joint union meetings were held over the forty four hour
demand in various sections of industry. In the shipbuilding industry,
for example, the Amalgamated Carpenters' and Joiners' Society ap-
proached the executive of the Electrical Trades Union to discuss joint
effort as early as 1918, but were rebuffed on the grounds that the
electricians still adhered to the war-time Commonwealth Ship-Building
Agreement which laid down a forty hour week (executive minutes,
Electrical Trades Union, 13 Aug. 1918). The electricians' conservative
executive encountered sharp rank and file resentment over this, how-
ever, and rejected plans made by a later shipbuilding industry con-
ference only on the grounds that they came from a section of industry,
whereas the demand required 'universal participation' (Electrical
Trades Journal, 20 Dec. 1918; exec. minutes, 16 Dec. 1918.) Shortly
after this, however, the executive said that it 'uncompromisingly'
opposed any sort of strike. (Electrical Trades Journal, 28 May 1919).
This, indeed, expressed the executive's consistent attitude.
Wales Labor Council sponsored widely representative union conferences. Two tactics were adopted: the first, a go-slow-on the job, the second, a Saturday morning stay-home — to be implemented by groups of unions one after another. Using the latter method, the conservative Printing Industry Employees' Union had partially achieved the forty four hours by October 1919, though union records do not reveal that direct action was used at all. The printers had withdrawn from the Labor Council when the left gained control, and would not publicly associate themselves with direct action. The first application of the Labor Council's strategy was thus the Saturday stay-home in the building trades, encouraged greatly by the actions of prominent leftist J. Kilburn, and well under way by early 1920, though called off from time to time. Also used in the building trades was the 'go-slow on the job'.

88 For example, on 10 April 1920 (for its decision, see Ann. Rep. Labor Council, 1920, p.12).

89 Printing Trades Journal, 21 October 1919; the method was described to the writer by Mr. Fox (Interview, Dec. 1961), at present an employee of the union, in 1919 an apprentice. The union records consulted were Half-Yearly Reports, 1918-1923, Minutes of the monthly meetings of the Board of Management, Minutes of Special General Meetings, and the Printing Trades' Journal, 1918-1923. In particular, see Printing Trades' Journal, 21 Oct. 1919.


The strike strategy outlined by the Labor Council was one of confinement, and in all cases examined from 1919 to 1929 in New South Wales, whenever the Labor Council was primarily responsible for conduct of a strike, it adopted some form of confinement. Strictly speaking, of course, even the classic so-called 'general' strikes have in fact been limited or confined in some way, as it seems safe to say that all workers never cease work in any one strike-action. But some strikes are more confined than others. Even on the most casual inspection there is a clear difference between, say, the maritime and shearing strikes of 1890–1891, the coal strike of 1909, the threatened seamen's extended strike of 1911, or the Brisbane General Strike of 1912 – and the New South Wales Labor Council's Saturday morning strikes for the forty four hour week in 1920 and 1922. Thus disputes characterised by relatively little confinement, are defined as 'extended' strikes, this term clearly applying to the first four of the disputes listed; while those marked by a large degree of confinement, we label 'confined'.

strikes. Such, for example, were the forty four hour strikes of 1920 and 1922.

An industrial struggle may be confined according to area, or according to method of action, or both. In studying confinement in area, we may note, for example, that a particular strike is confined to one craft within an industry, to one or to several factories, or even to one set of workers within a factory. Confinement used in the second sense (that is, according to the method of action employed) is exemplified by confined or partial withdrawal of labor; it may be an overtime ban, a reduced 'darg', 'ca-canny' ('work to regulations' or 'go-slow-on-the-job'); refusal to carry out shift work, or, to take a case from the years 1919 to 1922, a stay-home on Saturday morning.

European right-wing officials resembled the right-wing officials of Sydney in that they preferred no direct action to direct action, and confined direct action to extended direct action. But the left-wing European union officials, particularly the syndicalists and Communists, were far more sympathetic to extension than their counterparts in Sydney. 93 Knowles, for example, cites an instance from 1922 and another from 1935 to show that English Communists favoured extension (in this case, throughout the transport industry); but in neither year

93 One notes that there were no extended strikes in Sydney from 1918 to 1928, but several in England (see V.L.Allen, Trade Unions and the Government, pp.171-177; an extended rail strike); R.Miliband, Parliamentary Socialism. A Study in the Politics of Labour, pp.75-6.
94 Knowles, op.cit., p.13.
did the Sydney Communists favour extension. 95

One of the conclusions drawn by New South Wales right-wing union officials from the failure of the 'general strike' of 1917 was expressed in the words of J. Tudehope, secretary of the Marine Cooks Union:

> Advocates of the policy of the general strike for the purpose of bringing the employers to their bearings will no doubt admit, after this experience, that it is a failure... it was plainly demonstrated that the smaller the area you confine your dispute to the greater the prospects of victory. 96

It is hard to see where the Trades Hall reds would have disagreed with these words.

By 1919, formal enunciation of the main approaches to the question of strike tactics derived from the old Marxist (often dubbed 'international socialist') line, and from the more recently enunciated syndicalist views. The so-called international socialists favoured extended action (though not exclusively). According to circumstance, syndicalist tactics included extended and confined strikes and 'go-slow-

95 On Communist preference for confinement in 1935, see a discussion of the seamen's strike of that year by Jack Kavanagh, former Communist leader in New South Wales, in a letter dated 27 Jan. 1936, to E.M. Higgins (Kavanagh collection); an interview between Kavanagh and the writer, 10 May 1960, supplied additional evidence.

96 Fifth Annual Report of the Marine Cooks' Union, 1917; compare this with the statement made in 1914 by Claude Thompson, secretary of the Amalgamated Rail and Tramway's Association (see above, page 17; the 'scientific' method was to confine the strike area to 'its narrowest possible limits').
on-the-job', and the Marxists also learned from them. The N.S.W. representatives of the Chicagoite I.W.W. gave greater stress to extension in the early war years than in the later, for example, after 1917. The Workers' International Industrial Union, N.S.W. representatives of the DeLeonite I.W.W. tendency, preferred go-slow-on-the-job to any form of action 'off the job'.

Relatively few rank and file unionists were capable of, or interested in formal discussion of strike theory, but they nevertheless had views about tactics. On the whole, the extended tradition had been developed by unskilled and semi-skilled unionists (often country unionists rather than city), while the city-based craft unions had preferred confinement. At this time of unusual militancy and radicalism, however, the rank and file of skilled and unskilled unions alike leaned towards extension.

The leftists of 1919 were heirs to these traditions, and while all major methods were discussed and given occasional approval,

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97 See, for example, V.G. Childe, op.cit., p.171. There is no doubt that Childe echoes the verdict of the I.W.W., as well as that of many of labor's spokesmen, on the 1916 Coal Strike, when he praises it as 'the most efficiently organised, daringly defiant, and completely successful coal strike... the stoppage was complete, every coal miner in Australia downing tools simultaneously; the whole thing had been carefully worked out in advance...' (pp.174-175). See also Turner, op.cit., pp.241-242.

98 However, they urged that the general strike of that year - begun without their organised intervention or endorsement - needed further, rapid, and systematically organised extension, if the unions were to get optimum results.
qualified or outright, in the Communist press, the Trades Hall reds very strongly endorsed the confined strike and the go-slow. These were 'scientific'; the forms of extended strike were 'starvation strikes' and 'unscientific.' Thus it is not clear what fault the Sydney Trades Hall reds could have found with Tudehope's remark about the 1917 strike (above, p.149). During the 1920's, when he repeatedly referred to what he called 'the 1917 debacle', like Tudehope in 1917, Garden was referring not to 1917's lack of leadership and planning, but seemingly, to its essential strategy. In 1922, Garden specifically condemned the 'old idea that all the members had to come out', and praised the 'splendid' tactics where the 'whole Union concentrated on the first shop'. Perhaps the greatest virtue the Trades Hall reds claimed for their 'scientific' tactics was the fact that those at work could finance their striking comrades; a claim in which they conflicted with their early British counterparts who, in advocating extension of a transport strike in 1922, commented on this particular virtue in the following words:

99 Another often-repeated sentence of union officials in the 1920's (Garden included) was the warning to would-be strikers or strikers: 'Do not let the boss stampede you into another 1917'. It is possible that this was the latter-day form of what V.G. Childe describes as labor's 'amazing myth' (op.cit., p.188) about the 1917 strike. According to this 'myth', the general strike had been 'deliberately engineered by the Government, in conjunction with the Employers' Federation, with a view to dealing a knock-out blow to unionism.'

100 The Communist, 11 Aug. 1922.
'the road transport workers could only pay a levy to help the railways [i.e. the railwaymen who were on strike], by drawing wages that are the result of work that is helping to defeat the railwaymen.' 101

While the New South Wales Labor Council was sponsoring extremely confined strikes on the wages and hours issues in 1920, two strikes based on what Garden condemned as the 'old idea' of extension were in progress over the same issues – not in Sydney, but in the Victorian metropolis and in the outback of New South Wales.

In Queensland, printers had a forty five and a half hour week; in Western Australia, printers had a forty four hour week; in the U.S.A. and Canada, a forty four hour week had been arranged; in some parts of some Sydney printing establishments, a forty two and a half hour week was in vogue and, as we have said, in others a forty four hour week. But many (chiefly the unskilled) grades of printers in many Sydney establishments still had the forty eight hour week, and so did all grades of Victorian printers. On 28 February 1920, skilled and unskilled members of the Victorian Typographical Society went on strike for increased pay and a forty four hour week. The union was soon offered increased wages, but all save the lithographers held out for forty four hours as well. By March 1920, Master Printers in thirty two shops had conceded forty four hours 102 and a week later, this had grown to forty shops. 103 But, believing that the dispute had implications for all

102 Minutes, Melbourne Trades Hall Council Meeting, 19 Mar. 1920.
103 Minutes, General Meeting Printing Industry Employees' Union, 27 Mar. 1920. These were 'small' shops.
Victorian industry, the Victorian Chamber of Manufacturers took over the conduct of affairs from the Master Printers' Association, and employers then refused to further concede the forty four hour week, while the unionists, including some 700 unskilled females, refused to go back without it. The Victorian example - added to the successes of inter-state and overseas printers - proved contagious, particularly in view of the quick partial success (on wages), and the high morale which rejected the idea of return. Consequently, those Sydney printers who still did not have the forty four hour week now began to press for it more urgently. In March, a special general meeting attended by '6-700' passed a motion for 'immediate action' 'owing to the persistent agitation amongst employees in the Printing Industry generally'.

The Victorians too were by this time urging the Sydney printers to strike, arguing - as the Victorian Master Printers did later - that while master printers could get work done on a forty eight hour week basis in Sydney, they would not give the forty four hour week to the Victorians. If printers in New South Wales did not strike in solidarity, said the Victorians:

> Victoria must go down, and the movement in N.S.W. would follow.

106 Minutes, Special General Meeting, Printing Industry Employees' Union, 17 Mar. 1920.
But the Sydney branch leaders did not hold with direct action:

As a policy direct action is cut out...
Into the limbo of the dead past we have relegated this weapon... 109

Attempts to form a federation with the Victorian Typographical society participating had broken down in October 1919, because of that body's adherence to 'direct action'.\textsuperscript{110} Thus though several hectic, packed printers' meetings discussed the matter in Sydney,\textsuperscript{111} Sydney finally refused to help the Victorians and after twelve weeks the Victorians gave in, accepting the proffered wage increase but with no improvement in hours.

In July 1920, the Australian Workers' Union throughout Australia had, by negotiation, secured a forty four hour week—save, that is, for 30,000 men working for the 6,000 members of the New South Wales Graziers' Association. The 30,000 struck work—as with the printers, in accordance with the 'old idea' of extension. If one can judge from the open hostility displayed at annual A.W.U. conferences in 1920 and 1921 (where most delegates were officials), or from the behaviour of A.W.U. officials during the 1922 wages strikes,\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{109} The following words need to be added since in fact some Sydney printers did win forty four hours in 1919 by direct action, though as we recall, no word of it appeared in union minutes or the journal: 'If we have [their emphasis] to strike we'll make a good job of it and pay while the men are out; but we are not plumping for strikes'. The writer found no other instance where this union's leaders did discover a suitable occasion for a strike. (Printing Trades Journal, 18 March 1919.)

\textsuperscript{110} Printing Trades Journal, 21 Oct. 1919.

\textsuperscript{111} Minutes, Special Gen. Meeting, 8 April, 11 April 1920.

\textsuperscript{112} For the story of this, see the following section of this chapter.
the A.W.U. leaders were by no means happy about this strike. An unofficial 'rank and file' 'disputes committee' was quickly set up, led by long-established figures in the A.W.U. such as Arthur Rae, George Bellamy and George Berry (these were all men active in the 'unofficial' strikes conducted by the 'solidarity section' as early as 1915). To judge by the bitter denunciations in the Australian Worker, the 'disputes committee' of 1920 was both popular and effective. In accordance with the 'old idea' (this was no Saturday morning affair) the 30,000 stayed on strike until mid-September, when the New South Wales Graziers' Association conceded them the forty four hour week 'in practically all cases'.

113 Childe, op.cit., 164/165. Childe puts these strikes down to the I.W.W., able to go over the heads of the A.W.U's leaders because of rank and file discontent about the small (negotiated) wage increases in the face of rapidly rising prices. The I.W.W. undoubtedly did play an important part; but so did others, self-styled 'international socialists' (Interview, Mrs Bettsy Matthias, 4 Mar. 1963).

114 See, for example, A.W., 29 July 1920.

The Forty Four Hour Week in Sydney, 1920.

In Sydney itself, the forty four hour week was pursued through forms of confined strikes and go-slow.

The building trades Saturday morning strike was called off after the middle of 1920 and other unions, conservative and militant alike, seriously discussed direct action. But although rank and file feeling was strong, and although the Labor Council called other conferences and established elaborate machinery, action was left to the builders in accordance with the tactics prescribed by the Labor Council. When the builders' participation was almost finished, a second and last industrial group, the iron trades group, entered the fray. At the suggestion of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, the combined Allied Iron Trades Executive arranged a stop-work on Saturday,

In addition to establishing a Forty Four Hour Week Committee, at a conference in May of eighty unions the Labor Council divided all unions into groups for the purpose of the forty four hours' campaign (Monthly Report of the Commonwealth Council, of the A.S.E. May 1920).

By July, a coordinating committee for the forty four hour week had been set up from these groups. On it sat: J. Kilburn (Organiser for the Bricklayers' Union); W.P. Earsman, Amalgamated Society of Engineers and foundation member of the Communist Party; J.S. Garden, Secretary of Trades and Labor Council and foundation member of the Communist Party; G.C. Bodkin, Railway Industry Branch of the A.W.U.; and O. Schreiber, Furniture Trades Society.


Minutes, Quarterly Meeting Boilermakers' Society, 21 Sept. 1920.
4 September 1920. From four iron trades unions, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, the Stove and Piano Frame Moulders, the Boilermakers' Society, and the Federated Ironworkers' Association, some seven hundred unionists attended, and announced a further stop-work meeting for the following Saturday morning. Supported by the Commonwealth government, iron trades employers then threatened to close down a number of iron trades establishments unless iron unionists signed individual pledges to work forty eight hours until the working week was altered by constitutional methods. Tempers rose, and according to the account of the conservative Electricians:

... a trifle thrown into the scale by either party might easily have precipitated a repetition of 1917.

However before the stop work proposed for 11 September took place, the recently-elected State Labor government arranged a conference through the state Department of Labour. From the conference came the announcement that the Labor-appointed President of the state Board of Trade (former Nationalist Party Minister for Labor, G.S. Beeby) would appoint a Special Tribunal to deal with the forty four hours question. The employers were extremely dubious about the tribunal, and perhaps the unions were at first, for the Saturday morning strikes continued on 11 and 15 September. However, when the Labor government announced that a Royal Commission would precede the Tribunal, all direct action soon stopped. Unofficially, the government had done more than promise

118 (on previous page).
120 Minutes, Boilermakers' Society, 21 Sept. 1920.
the unions a Royal Commission. According to the boilermakers, the government had said it would guarantee they would place before Parliament one of the planks of their platform, viz. the Reduction of Hour Bill, within five weeks. [sic]

While the iron trades' strike was still in progress, the stovemakers' union secretary claimed that

... prominent members of the Government had given assurances that legislation for the forty four hr. week would be treated as emergency legislation and be brought before the house as early as possible. [sic] 122

In November 1920, commenting upon the shortage of labor and prevalence of overtime in the iron trades, 123 and noting that 'for the time being organised skilled labour is in a strong position', 124 the Royal Commission Report recommended a forty four hour week for the iron and building trades. But the Report excluded sections of the building workers and rejected the union demand that the shorter hours be uniformly worked.

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122 Report of the New South Wales Secretary of the Boilermakers' Society, for the six months ending 30 June 1920, presented 21 September 1920; minutes, Quarterly Meeting, Stove and Piano Frame Moulders, 15 Sept. 1920.


124 Ibid., p. 1240.
in five days, leaving Saturday free. In at least some cases a reduction in hours was accompanied by a reduction in wages. And while building unionists received an immediate forty four hour week, iron trades unionists were not to enjoy theirs for six months. G. Cann, Minister for Labour and Industry, then introduced the Eight Hours (Amendment) Bill in December, which when passed, set up a Special Court to enquire into working hours and to provide for a forty four hour week if it were felt desirable. Over the next eighteen months, this Court applied the forty four hour week to nearly all important industries under the jurisdiction of the State arbitration tribunals.

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125 N.S.W. Official Year Book, 1920, pp. 538-9. In the Royal Commission Report (p. 1253) Beeby argued that the five-day aspect of the forty four hour demand was stressed by militants who actually regarded it as part of the demand for a forty hour week. 'I doubt', he said, 'if there is any real desire on the part of the majority for the abolition of Saturday work'. While it may be true, however, that the militants (in particular, the bricklayers, led by J. Kilburn) did take a leading role in asking for a five-day week, too many other unions (including conservative unions) pressed the demand for Beeby's conclusion to be acceptable. See, for example, the Ballot on the forty four hour week submitted to members by the executive of the Electrical Trades Union (Minutes of executive meeting, March, 1920); the Minutes of a Special General Meeting of the Printing Industry Employees' Union, which called for a five-day week (25 Apr. 1920); the Minutes of the State Management Committee of the Amalgamated Carpenters' and Joiners' Society, 2 June 1920; the Minutes of the Board of Management of the Furniture Trades Society, 16 May 1921.

126 N.S.W. Ind. Arb. Rep., vol. 20, 1921, pp. 211-220. Appeal by Trolley, Draymen and Carters' Union from an Award by Rolin, J.

127 Report of Royal Commission, p. 1259; N.S.W. Ind. Arb. Rep., vol. 20, 1921, p. 77f. In addition, certain large firms were permitted to retain a 48-hour week (ibid., p. 812).


129 N.S.W. Official Year Book, 1925-26, p. 708.
On 22 June 1921, cabinet agreed to introduce a forty-four hour week in all
government departments 'except where the cost would be increased or
the efficiency lessened'. But there was considerable union discontent:
months later, for example, the Australian Railways' Union claimed that
employees felt 'intense dissatisfaction' because only some of their
number had received the forty-four hour week. 130

The matter of Saturday work was left to individual employers
and unionists to arrange, and the battle over this issue kept up
throughout 1921. It was still unsettled when in March 1922, the
Dooley Labor administration fell, and the Nationalist Party was returned
to office. Promptly and efficiently the new government enacted a
Forty-Four Hour Week Act, relevant proclamations followed and where
the unions proved stubborn, employers eventually backed up the govern­
ment by lockouts. Trade union reaction was aptly expressed by the
Carpenters' and Joiners' Society, political moderates:

If the Labor Government had treated its supporters in
the same way as the Nationalist Government treated theirs,
the result would have been, by Act of Parliament, that the
standard working hours per week would be 44, and the onus
of proving that they should be longer or shorter for any
reason whatever would be on the party making such a claim. 131

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130 Railways' Union Gazette, 20 Oct. 1921.

131 Carpenters' Monthly Journal, Nov. 1922.
Thus the 'planned campaign' for the forty four hour week emerged as a series of heavily confined piecemeal actions, not much less haphazard in appearance than the marine transport strikes - which at least laid no claim to being a planned campaign. Minimum mobilisation of the rank and file meant minimum pressure upon the economy, and an unimpressive industrial performance reaped unimpressive concessions from the Labor Party administration. The procedure by which the forty four hour week was introduced could not have been much slower, and in many cases, barely had unions begun to enjoy the forty four hour week when Nationalist legislation withdrew it, while the five-day objective was in any case left entirely to the industrial power of individual unions.
The Union in the 'depression' period 1921-1922

Unemployment in New South Wales rose suddenly during the first months of 1921: from 6.9% in the last quarter of 1920, unemployment jumped to 13.7% in the first quarter of 1921, and fell no lower than 11% throughout 1922.¹³² The rank and file showed no immediate sign of declining morale, however. The Sydney marine stewards elected a new 'direct actionist' executive in February 1921 when, had their will to fight been crushed by the recent increase in unemployment, the best way to guarantee industrial peace was to keep their old leaders. Table 5 of this chapter's appendix sets out strike figures in New South Wales for the years 1917 to 1923. During 1921, since there were few lockouts, and since the number of disputes rose from 349 in 1920 to 535 in 1921, one can scarcely postulate that union morale collapsed, the postulate appearing even less likely when one sees, in the same table, that the ratio of those involved directly to those involved indirectly also increased as between 1920 and 1921. The examination of several major strikes which follows shortly also suggests that a militant mood persisted for a time despite unemployment; in short, it seems that, for the years we are examining, a 'time lag' occurred between the onset of unemployment and the collapse of union morale. Thus choice of confinement by the Trades Hall reds and other officials in the hours and wages disputes of 1922, was not forced upon them by rank and file timidity, whatever other considerations entered the choice.

¹³² Table 4, Appendix to this chapter.
As early as 1921, leading labor spokesmen warned of an approaching employer offensive. The chairman of the All-Australian Trades Union Conference of June 1921 later noted that at the time 'it was predicted that we were on the eve of an organised attack from the leaders of the capitalist class...\(^{133}\) Delegate Birrell, a militant Labor Party man from South Australia, claimed that the non-Labor Premier of his state had come out for 'a bold policy for the reduction of wages'. R.S. Ross, socialist, and Labor Party member from Victoria, said: 'Anyone knowing anything about economics knew that a bad time was coming'. Labor needed 'more machinery' to 'meet the depression that is going to occur'.\(^{134}\) (This was a reference to the Commonwealth Council of Action, which Conference was then discussing). In early 1922 the A.L.P. in New South Wales accepted a claim by Forgan Smith and the A.L.P. central executive in Queensland that they had uncovered a concerted employer plan to attack working class conditions,\(^{135}\) both A.W.U. and anti-A.W.U. factions in the Labor Party reporting and accepting the allegations in their newspapers.\(^{136}\) Union leaders stressed that the

\(^{133}\) *Common Cause*, 21 July 1922.


\(^{135}\) See the pamphlet *The Gloves Off. Employers' Ultimatum to Queensland Workers*. Issued by the authority of the Queensland Central Executive of the A.L.P. (Molesworth Coll., Set 71, Item 8). *Daily Mail*, 16 Feb. 1922 (cutting Molesworth Coll.) For comment by one of the Communist parties, which accepted the allegation, see *International Communist*, 4 Mar. 1922.

\(^{136}\) *Daily Mail*, 18 Feb. 1922; *A.W.*, 1 Mar. 1922.
general attack might fall on one group of workers at one moment, but
that others could scarcely hope to escape. Thus an official statement
from the Miners' Federation said:

We must support the present struggle in every way,
and if necessary throw our resources on the side of the
workers concerned. Victory to them means strength
to us when our turn comes, or even complete immunity
from attack. 137

The Communists on the New South Wales Labor Council believed that
the Australian 'employer offensive' was part of a world-wide 'offensive'.
Thus Webster:

The object of the Capitalist Class all over the World
is to reduce wages and lengthen the Working-Week...138

And this might well see the end of capitalism: 'The capitalist
system is tottering...', wrote J.S. Garden, in the Communist.139

On their part, employers made no secret of their belief that
reduced wages and increased hours were essential.140 In many parts of
Australia, union conferences decided to respond to a 'general offensive'
with counter-blows along a wide, or 'extended' front, counter-blows
designed to have a maximum impact upon the economy - but in a minimum

137 S.M.H., 4 Nov. 1922.
139 The Communist, 3 Feb. 1922.
140 Round Table, vol. 12, p.694, 700; Common Cause, 17 Mar. 1922.
time. It was felt that, with unemployment heavy, even more than in days of low unemployment, time was very much on the employers' side.

In Melbourne, support for extension had been particularly strong during the seamen's strike in 1919; later, during the timber strike of 1929, extensionist sentiment (at the official, as well as the rank and file, level) was also strong. Thus in Melbourne, in 1921, the Trades Hall Council summoned a union conference which drew up and published plans for an extended strike - 'not...a 1917 fiasco, but a concerted policy of action', to meet the employer offensive. Union conferences in Perth and New Zealand also announced they would adopt an extended strategy. Away from Sydney in New South Wales, the strikes of 1922 seem to have tended towards 'extension'; for example, a strike amongst A.W.U. members in the same year, led once more by an unofficial disputes committee, was an 'extended' strike.

In Sydney itself, by contrast, the tactics officially adopted by the trade union movement were those put forward by the Communists


144 S.M.H., 1 Feb. 1923.
controlling the Labor Council, a combination of 'go-slow-on-the-job' with extremely confined strikes. The most commonly used device was a Saturday stay-home which they then confined to certain shops in the iron trades. In this situation, Knowles's comment on the 'bumper' strike is relevant:

For such a strike tactic to succeed, however... at least there must be no possibility of getting the work done elsewhere or elsehow. Otherwise the 'correct' tactic for strikes is presumably to extend rather than to restrict them. 145

With unemployment rising and demand falling, there were ample possibilities for getting work done 'elsewhere' and 'elsehow'.

The employer 'offensive' was manifest in 1921 in the mining industry, and by March 1922 miners anticipated wage reductions of approximately one-third, with increases in hours. 146 Their response was through 'irritation' tactics. For example, on the south field in New South Wales the 'darg' was implemented through a one-day-a-week strike, and on the north field through a go-slow on the job. 147 This drew extremely heavy extensionist opposition, but during 1922 the Trades Hall reds gave it no support. Miners' secretary Willis was the architect of miners' 'irritation' tactics and the Trades Hall reds had great expectations of him as a liaison with the A.L.P.; in any case,

146 Int. Communist, 20 Aug., 10 Sept. 1921; Minutes, Central Council of the Australasian Coal and Shale Employees Fedn., 21-23 Mar. 1922.
147 S.M.H., 28, 25 Sept. 1922.
the Trades Hall reds were conducting the metropolitan hours and wages campaign along the same lines. In the metal trades, the employer 'offensive' was under way early in 1922. The courts announced reductions culminating in a and an hour's increase to forty eight hours. A tug-of-war ensued inside the A.E.U. One response considered was withdrawal from arbitration, the other acceptance An Australia-wide conference of the A.E.U. decided to 'put the 44 hour week into operation'. Some branches did this by Saturday strikes, others by extended. But by November, resistance was virtually at an end.

In the latter half of 1920, in 1921, and until the time of the award by Mr. Justice Powers for the Australian pastoral industry in May 1922, shearers and shed hands had worked a forty four hour week. As Powers said, this was brought about 'by force of circumstances and by the fact that the shearing was practically threatened to be held up... Powers increased hours to forty eight, fixed the basic wage for shed hands at £3.12.0 per week, and the shearing rate at thirty-five shillings a hundred. The Australian Worker, official

148 A.W., 2,15 Feb.; S.M.H., 1 Dec. 1922, shows that the Newcastle Steel Works were closed down in April 1922.
organ of the Australian Workers' Union, protested that the award brought severe reductions and constituted a return to the industrial status of Members were incensed and struck work in June 1922, their strike tactic being one traditional for the union, that of extension. However, the men suffered a severe setback when their leaders ceased to lead after prosecutions were launched against them for alleged breaches of the Award. To comply with court directions, the A.W.U. officials suspended rule 113 of the union, which contravened the new Powers Award, and circulated new rules conforming with the Award. The strike went on, led by militants not in official positions.

While the owners claimed that shed after shed was resuming on terms of the Powers Award, they also admitted that the shearers as a whole had not resumed; late in August, for example, the executive of the New South Wales Graziers' Association said that it felt 'the fight is likely to be a protracted one'. The existence of a large number of sheds working under terms of the old award and of a large number of strikers, no doubt helped to prompt the owners to this conclusion; a further influence, however, was the election of a left-wing strike committee by a large meeting of A.W.U. members during August, prominent upon which were old-time non-Communist militants, George Bellamy and

152 A.W., 14 May 1922.
153 S.M.H., 7 July, 15 Aug. 1922.
154 S.M.H., 7, 12 July 1922.
155 S.M.H., 29 July, 2,3 Aug. 1922; 24 Aug. 1922.
156 For the names of some, see the Communist, 18 Aug.1922.
Arthur Rae, associated with a militant organisation existing within the A.W.U., the Bush Workers' Propaganda Group.

Before the end of August, references to the shearers' strike in J.S. Garden's 'Industrial Notes', in the Communist had tended to display some sympathy towards the A.W.U. officials. At the same time, the Communist's general comment on the strike adopted a tone of approval towards strikers. But after the end of August, J.S. Garden, the centre of the network of daily associations linking the Trades Hall reds with moderate and right wing union officials, sailed for Moscow. True, before Garden's departure, the Communist had sympathetically reported the formation of the new strike committee. But it was not until after Garden's departure that the Communist made its first explicit attack upon the A.W.U. officials. The rank and file, alleged the Communist, had been

Abandoned by their leaders and organisers who are still drawing their pay, sneaking about the country away from the places where they should be (the sheds that had started).

And further:

If ever the workers were deserted by their leaders in an industrial fight it is on this occasion. Look in the official paper 'The Worker' and all you see is a few lines of police court evidence. 158

157 The Communist, 4 Aug. 1922; see also ibid., 18 Aug. 1922.
158 The Communist, 22 Sept. 1922.
The strikers apparently did relatively well from August until October, when George Bellamy of the militant strike committee claimed:

...we are just beginning to get the upper hand of the pastoralists, after one of the hardest fights of our lives...160

That the strike committee was at least partly successful is suggested by official A.W.U. attacks upon it.161 A meeting called by the new strike committee appealed to the Labor Council for funds, and the Council in turn appealed to its affiliates. Investigating the strike committee on behalf of the Sydney Wharf Labourers' Union, in response to the appeal, W.H. Seale, not a left winger, reported that the committee comprised 'those who had gained the 44 hour week for the A.W.U. and were doing all they could to win the strike for the men...'162

However late in October, Bellamy was imprisoned for nine months for handing out dodgers to shearsers working under the new award,163 the organ of the strike committee was silenced by an injunction, and in November, Arthur Rae, the other leading figure, was fined £100 on a charge of encouraging strikers.164 Deprived of their unofficial leader-

161 A.W., 11, 18 Oct. 1922.
162 Minutes, Special Meeting, Sydney Wharf Labourers' Union, 30 Aug. 1922. By contrast, the State Committee of Management of the Amalgamated Carpenters' and Joiners' Society sought advice from leading A.W.U. official John Bailey, who told the carpenters to ignore the appeal. (Minutes, State Committee of Management, Amalgamated Carpenters' and Joiners' Society, 24 and 31 Aug. 1922.)
164 The Communist, 10 Nov. 1922.
ship, the strikers collapsed.

In this case the Sussex Street Communist press supported an extended strike but the support was tardy and in no way matched support given the metropolitan confined campaign where the Trades Hall reds led it. The strike would have collapsed had the A.W.U. leaders had their way; but the rank and file were prepared to hold out, provided some generalship was offered.

A further indication of rank and file morale comes from an analysis of the officially-conducted campaign to defend existing hours and wages standards. Union resistance continued until January of 1923, despite the fact that more than six months of the Labor Council's 'campaign' had won hardly a single union victory. Only high initial morale can explain such persistence in the absence of success.

The Labor Council was slow to initiate a union campaign against the increase in hours and reduction in wages which were long fore-shadowed and in many cases actually enforced. Union spokesmen had warned since 1921 of an employer offensive. In May 1922 the Board of Trade in New South Wales reduced the state basic wage; current awards were thereupon quickly varied — and yet a Labor Council sub-committee set up in May to combat the reductions seems to have formulated no

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165 See, for example, the June variations of the Breadcarters' Award, in N.S.W. Ind. Arb. Rep., vol. 21, 1922, p.73ff.
The Trades Hall reds hoped that the Commonwealth Council of Action, a body first elected at the All-Australian Trades Union Conference of June 1921, and elected anew from a similar conference in June 1922, would assume overall control of the unions' campaign. But though Chairman E.J. Holloway claimed that since 1921 'there had been a considerable onslaught on the workers' standard of living' and the workers had been 'slowly, but surely, retreating ever since', no plan for coordinated industrial action came from the 1922 conference. Indeed, the newly-elected Commonwealth Council of Action did not meet until 27 September 1922. However, Conference also authorised the setting up of 'State Emergency Councils of Action', and this gave the Trades Hall reds their chance.

In July, the Trades Hall reds moved. Labor Council executive called a conference of officials from some sixty unions, including the miners and the A.W.U. While confined 'irritation' strikes were suggested for gas employees, all other unions were merely asked to 'go slow' and reduce output. On 20 July, the Labor Council accepted

166 On it sat: J.S.Garden, G.Sinclair (Boilmakers), E.R.Voigt (Secretary of the Trades Hall Secretaries' Association), O.Schreiber and J.Upton (Furniture Trades), E.C.Magrath (Printers), F.Landon (Pastrycooks) (A.W., 17 May 1922.).

167 Common Cause, 21 July 1922.


169 On the 'State Emergency Council of Action' were to sit Commonwealth Council of Action members in each state, the Disputes Committees of each Labor Council, along with the representative of any unions involved or likely to be involved in a dispute (Common Cause, 21 July 1922).

170 S.M.H., 19 July 1922.
its executive's recommendation of 'go-slow',\textsuperscript{171} J.S. Garden emphasizing soon after that 'go-slow' was hot a strike,\textsuperscript{172} while as Labor Council secretary he signed a Council manifesto which put the matter sharply:

The most effective battle ground for the worker is inside the factory, on the job. \textsuperscript{173}

But the 'go-slow' does not appear to have caught on — instead, unionists began to come out on strike. On the initiative of a workshop committee, stovemakers at Ward's factory in Surry Hills struck work.\textsuperscript{174}

This prompted Garden to say:

The tactics of the Union in their fight were splendid, the old idea that all the members had to come out was put to one side on this occasion, and the whole Union concentrated on the first shop... \textsuperscript{175}

But other moulders quickly followed Ward's example,\textsuperscript{176} and the apparent spread\textsuperscript{177} of the strike was no doubt important in securing an agreement to maintain existing pay rates from some employers.\textsuperscript{178}

\begin{verbatim}
\begin{footnotes}
\item[172] A.W., 26 July 1922.
\item[173] The Communist, 28 July 1922.
\item[174] The Communist, 4 Aug. 1922.
\item[175] The Communist, 11 Aug. 1922.
\item[176] S.M.H., 7 Aug. 1922.
\item[177] Miliband's remark on the reaction of the British government (the employer in this case) to the possibility of the spread of the Rail Strike in 1919 is relevant here: 'No sooner however was the Government faced with the real possibility that the strike would [his emphasis] spread than it agreed to a settlement which gave the railwaymen much, though not all, that they had asked'(op.cit., p.76).
\item[178] A.W., 16 Aug. 1922.
\end{footnotes}
\end{verbatim}
Yet such victories were not only rare; they were short-lived. On 12 August the Hadfield's moulders returned, accepting wage reductions which taken in conjunction with those received in earlier months, now came to seventeen shillings a week, and by November, the Ward's stovemakers had also accepted their employers' terms.

In mid-August, waterfront boilmakers, faced with wage cuts, adopted the Labor Council's strategy by introducing a 'go-slow', and refusing overtime. At roughly the same time, member unions of the Iron Trades Group moved towards 'combined action', when the Amalgamated Society of Engineers invited the Boilermakers' executive to attend a meeting of moulders, blacksmiths, sheet metal workers, ironworkers and stovemakers. In August, a conference of the iron trades group of Labor Council carried recommendations for their executives which substantially embodied Labor Council policy. Considerable emphasis was laid upon the need to keep any strike activity under the closest control of the Council of Action; where individual employers attempted to introduce longer hours, for example, individual factories might hold stopwork meetings - but only at such times and places as were

179 S.M.H., 15 Aug. 1922.
180 The Communist, 18 Aug. 1922.
181 The A.E.U., the Federated Moulders' Union, Australasian Engineers, the Boilermakers, the Enginedrivers, the Electrical Trades' Union, the Ironworkers' Assistants (Sydney branch and Balmain branch), the Blacksmiths and the Patternmakers.
182 Minutes, Gen. Meeting, Boilermakers' Society, 8 Aug. 1922.
183 A.W., 23 Aug. 1922; S.M.H., 19 Aug. 1922.
determined by a committee of the iron trades group, which was to be appointed subject to the approval of the Council of Action. Such emphasis would scarcely have been given had officials not feared that rank and file initiatives would otherwise have spilled beyond the official 'irritation' approach into extended strikes.

Yet another general trade union conference on 23 August added little to the range of tactics so far outlined, with the 'go-slow' once more receiving central emphasis. This conference also elected a State Emergency Council of Action on which sat some of the leading Trades Hall reds and their allies, among them H. Denford and J.J. Graves. Once again, great emphasis was placed upon the need to keep control of the union campaign in the Emergency Council's hands.

From the time the left's tactics of go-slow and confined strikes were put forward in July, there had been right-wing criticism, though at first few officials came out in open opposition. In some unions, officials and at least a substantial section of the rank and file were divided, the former against, the latter sympathetic towards, the left's tactics. In the Australasian Society of Engineers,
a section of the members in Sydney was reported as favouring the
Labor Council's policy, while the Engineers' executive flatly refused
to hold stopwork meetings, though warning that 'Great unrest exists
amongst the engineers'. As the passing weeks brought little or no
success for the left's policy, opposition voices, at first muffled,
began to be raised more loudly. The executive of the New South Wales
branch of the Australian Labor Party 'repudiated' the left's policy,
which it regarded as extremist. A meeting of the Trades Unions'
Secretaries' Association in the first week of September decided that
union resistance should be limited to appeals through the courts.
Thus opposition to all direct action appears to have been nourished by
the failure of the particular sort of direct action sponsored by the
left. This was surely the time for a morale-raising turn in tactics.
Unions were still determined to refuse lengthened hours; for example, the
executive of the Labor Council iron trades group called for a Saturday
stop-home and go-slow if the forty eight hours were introduced. But
so much had been said for so many months, and so little done or won!

Suddenly, the unions were faced with the choice: accept forty
eight hours without struggle, or struggle for concessions. In mid-
October the state Arbitration Court announced that a forty eight hour
week would be introduced for the iron trades on 10 November.

185 S.M.H., 22 Aug. 1922.
186 S.M.H., 26 Aug. 1922.
187 A.W., 20 Sept. 1922; Minutes, Specially Summoned Meeting of the
Boilermakers' Society, 26 Sept. 1922.
Labor Council president Howie warned that as soon as employers tried to implement the court decisions 'a certain policy which had been decided upon would be put into operation'. Prominent state union officials - Willis of the miners, Johnson of the Seamen, Howie, Sinclair of the boilermakers, Macleay of the ironworkers - addressed a combined mass meeting of iron trades unionists, urging all to refuse to work the additional four hours but to take care to work forty-four hours:

This will throw the onus on the employer of declaring a lockout.

The firm of Hoskins Limited then introduced the forty-eight hour week at its factories in Ultimo and Rhodes. Three hundred absented themselves on Saturday morning, Labor Council officials advising strikers to resume work on Monday. Thus the labor movement's entire hours' campaign in Sydney was being waged by metal trades unionists at Hoskins, who absented themselves from work on Saturday mornings and returned on Mondays, and by waterfront boilermakers who took the same action with the help of their unskilled assistants.

188 S.M.H., 17 Oct. 1922.
Broadly representative union conferences at this time reveal a sort of paralysis of will. A day-long conference between delegates from the iron trades group and members of the State Emergency Council of Action rose with no decision as to action, other than to hold 'propaganda' meetings and to 'educate' workers concerning the beneficial possibilities of the Council of Action. A meeting of three hundred and twenty shop delegates could decide nothing more than that Labor Leagues should be asked to seek help from the A.L.P. state executive and from state Labor parliamentarians in retaining the forty four hour week.¹⁹¹

Up to November 1922, a facade of trade union solidarity was preserved. There was formal unity, if very little unity of action; a State Council of Action existed and the executive of the iron trades' group had announced a policy consistent with the State Council of Action's policy. Quite suddenly, this facade was shattered.

On 3 November came the announcement that the Australasian Society of Engineers, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and the Electrical Trades Union now refused the Council of Action the right to involve them in strike activity. Then came a decision by the unionists at Hoskins to work forty eight hours.¹⁹² Later, the militant Boilermakers' Society withdrew from the Council of Action.¹⁹³ According to

¹⁹¹ A.W., 1 Nov. 1922.
¹⁹² S.M.H., 3,4 Nov. 1922.
¹⁹³ Explaining their action, the Boilermakers' said: 'We withdrew because of our disgust at the repudiation by certain unions of their undertaking and their betrayal of the Council of Action and the other unions'. (Common Cause, 10 Nov. 1922.)
the Sydney Morning Herald, the Australasian Society of Engineers withdrew from the Council of Action for fear it would lose its arbitration court registration as a penalty for following the Council's policy; it allegedly believed that, if it were de-registered, it would be 'swallowed up' by its rival, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. Common Cause, organ of the miners' union, gave a slightly different version of the affair; the Amalgamated Engineers' Union 'which had somewhat hesitatingly submitted to the council, made its continued allegiance contingent upon a written undertaking, from the Australasian Society, which it was impossible to secure'. In explaining events to a mass meeting of Newcastle district iron trades unionists, President Howie of the Labor Council was reported to say: 'The primary breakaway resulted from the refusal of the Australasian Society of Engineers to give a written agreement that it would stand by the decisions of the council.'

The Sydney Morning Herald greeted the breakdown of formal unity with obvious relief:

... it can now be taken for granted that there will be no general strike in the engineering industry.

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194 S.M.H., 4 Nov. 1922.
195 Common Cause, 10 Nov. 1922.
196 S.M.H., 6 Nov. 1922.
197 S.M.H., 8 Nov. 1922.
And in Lithgow and Newcastle the dispute soon petered out, though in Sydney a rear-guard action persisted till early in 1923.

Sydney waterfront boilermakers, sheetmetal workers and iron-workers kept up a Saturday strike until early January, while the Coopers' Union was still on strike in early February. But by December 1923, the normal working week in the state was forty eight hours, while the average wage was eighty two shillings a week for men and forty one shillings and sixpence for women. And there was obvious truth in the retrospective observation of the conservative Printers' Board of Management:

Only the minimum of dislocation in the industries of the State was seen to follow [the employers'] serious attacks...201

During the years studied in the preceding pages, the advent of high unemployment in 1921 and 1922 did not bring an immediate fall in morale. There was a time lag in the workers' response to the changed situation. Such a time lag occurs, of course, whenever one phase gives way to another, but the lag in 1921 and 1922 was a long and important one,


200 N.S.W. Statistical Register, 1922-23, p.604.

201 Report of the Board of Management of the Printing Industry Employees' Union, for the Half Year Ended 5 Jan. 1923.
because morale was unusually buoyant in the immediate post-war years. High morale spilled over from the years of low unemployment to the years of high unemployment.

To see this fact illustrated, we need only consider two sets of figures: those for unemployment, and those for strike activity. Unemployment in the first quarter of 1921 was double that of the first quarter of 1920, while the figure for the whole year 1921 is similarly greater than that for the year 1920. But the number of workers directly involved in disputes in 1921 was 60% greater than that for 1920. These figures simply confirm the evidence, brought together in this chapter, of the rank and file's will to fight in this time of high unemployment - even in Sydney itself, where the go-slow and the confinement tactic neither stimulated the broad actions, nor won the evident successes which feed rank and file confidence. The rearguard actions which persisted when the main campaign had failed are less remarkable if one postulates a still combative rank and file. Though few officials might have expected to achieve union aims by rearguard action, they might have felt it unwise to dissuade members from attempting it.

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202 Appendix to this chapter, p.185.
203 Comm. Year Book, no.15, 1922. Based on a table on p.890: 'Industrial Disputes in each State and Territory'.
204 A parallel lies in the extreme care officials had to use to persuade the rank and file to return to work during the strikes of 1928-30 in New South Wales (see writer's M.A. thesis, Chs. 2, 6, 7).
Within the Sussex Street Communist Party there had been a conflict over strike tactics between the Trades Hall reds and extensionists. According to Norman Jeffery the Communist Party central executive decided in favour of extension. However the Trades Hall reds controlled the Labor Council. The Sussex Street Central Executive elected at the Sussex Street annual conference on 27 December 1921 contained anti-extensionists Denford, Garden, Howie, Voigt, and possibly Earsman, facing the most formidable extensionist in Carl Baker. Jeffery claims now that he and Ross leafletted factories on the C.P. extension line. It is also possible, however, that their leaflets in reality did not conflict with the published Sussex Street line on the question, which was a distinct attempt at a compromise with Garden's view.

Comrades and fellow workers, the Communist Party calls you to take up the Go Slow policy NOW... the Communist Party states that its policy does not cease with the adoption of the Go Slow policy, the Communist Party stands for... the complete withdrawal of all labor from industry should the necessity arise. The Communist Party stands for the partial strike, for a general strike, for mass demonstrations, and in fact for any organised attempt to prevent the capitalist class... from carrying on their wage reduction robbery.

... neither the Communist Party nor the Labor Council adopted the Go Slow policy as a final and only policy for the workers. The Go Slow policy was adopted as an immediate policy, to be followed by whatever policy was necessary in order to make victory certain. 206

205 Interview

206 The Communist, 15 Sept. 1922 (wrongly dated 8 Sept. 1922).
If this was meant not as a public compromise position but as a serious project, it is important to note that there is no evidence of a Communist union official mentioning that 'go-slow' and, later, the confined (Saturday) strike were to be seen as possible preludes to future extension. In January 1923, when the campaign was over and the unions defeated, C.P. central executive member Hector Ross sharply criticised the entire conception of the union campaign. Heading his criticism 'The Futility of a Shortened Front', Ross claimed that certain leaders had been 'obsessed with the idea of confining the struggle to a few shops...', with the idea that the other shops, exempted, would finance the strikers during a long struggle by which employers would be wearied into submission. 'Those responsible for this theory', continued Ross, 'were actuated by the tactics of certain small industrial unions, who have undoubtedly achieved much success by "irritation methods"'. However, he concluded: 'The tactic of the shortened front, should only be considered under exceptional circumstances, but at the present time such a course is absolutely suicidal.'

207 The Communist, 12 Jan. 1923.
APPENDIX - CHAPTER III

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF TRADE UNIONISTS IN NEW SOUTH WALES
ACCORDING TO TWELVE MAIN GROUPS, 1924

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Group</th>
<th>Number of Unions in Group</th>
<th>Number of Members</th>
<th>Membership of Group as a Percentage of Total No. of Unionists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Group</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29,605</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13,322</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and Metal Working</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22,800</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food, Drink and Narcotics</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26,389</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Transport (Exclusive of Railway and Tramway)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4,403</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining and Smelting</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18,257</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27,180</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing, Bookbinding etc.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5,618</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways and Tramways</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29,276</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipping and Sea Transport</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5,883</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14,149</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>54,033</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>177</strong></td>
<td><strong>250,915</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### A. TABLE SHOWING PERCENTAGE UNEMPLOYMENT AMONGST TRADE UNIONS
**FURNISHING RETURNS, COMMONWEALTH, 1891-1928**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage Unemployment</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage Unemployment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1891 (end of year)</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>1916 (average for year)</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913 (average for year)</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Labour Report, No. 19, 1928, p. 129.

**Note 1:** The figures in both these tables are exclusive of strikes and lockouts.

### B. TABLE SHOWING PERCENTAGE UNEMPLOYMENT AMONGST TRADE UNIONS
**FURNISHING RETURNS, NEW SOUTH WALES, 1912-1928**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage Unemployment</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage Unemployment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Commonwealth Year Book, No. 6 (1913) to No. 22 (1929).
TABLE 3
INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES IN AUSTRALIA, ALL GROUPS, 1913-1922

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Disputes (All Industrial Groups)</th>
<th>No. of Workers Involved, Indirectly and Directly</th>
<th>No. of Workers Directly Involved</th>
<th>No. of Working Days Lost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>50,283</td>
<td>33,493</td>
<td>623,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>71,049</td>
<td>43,073</td>
<td>1,090,395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>81,292</td>
<td>57,005</td>
<td>583,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>170,683</td>
<td>128,546</td>
<td>1,678,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>173,970</td>
<td>154,061</td>
<td>4,599,658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>56,439</td>
<td>42,553</td>
<td>580,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>157,591</td>
<td>100,300</td>
<td>6,308,226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>155,566</td>
<td>102,519</td>
<td>1,872,065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>165,101</td>
<td>102,198</td>
<td>956,617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>116,332</td>
<td>100,263</td>
<td>858,685</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Labour Report, No.7 (1916) - No.13 (1922)

Note: There was an international peak of strike activity 1919-20. (Labour Report, No.12, p.182, 'Industrial Disputes in Various Countries').

TABLE 4
TABLE SHOWING PERCENTAGE UNEMPLOYMENT AMONGST TRADE UNIONS FURNISHING RETURNS, BY QUARTERS: 1919-1928, NEW SOUTH WALES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1st quarter</th>
<th>2nd quarter</th>
<th>3rd quarter</th>
<th>4th quarter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Labour Reports, 1919-1928, no.10 to no.19.
TABLE 5
INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES IN NEW SOUTH WALES: 1917-1923

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Disputes</th>
<th>No. of Workpeople Involved</th>
<th>Ratio of Workers Involved Directly to those Involved Indirectly</th>
<th>Average No. Days Lost Per Head men</th>
<th>No. of men per dispute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>118,515</td>
<td>8:1</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>24,417</td>
<td>3:1</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>64,956</td>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>68,033</td>
<td>3:1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>108,573</td>
<td>4:1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>88,257</td>
<td>6:1</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>54,809</td>
<td>10:1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on tables in Comm. Year Book no. 15, 1922, p. 890 and no. 17, 1924, p. 561.

ITEM 6 - Thomas Walsh and the Federated Seamen's Union

Walsh had been a member of the Sydney branch Executive in 1912, and then discouraged Sydney seamen from joining Queenslanders on a projected 'extended' strike. Shortly after this, Walsh disappeared from the Executive, at much the same time being acquitted of charges of financial misdealings. After this, the Sydney Morning Herald (1 December 1922) referred to the New South Wales branch as 'fairly peaceful', referring, probably to the officials, for the rank and file had participated in the anti-conscription campaigns and in the 1917 strike.

Indeed, the rank and file were deeply affected by labor's general wartime and post-war militancy, and rank and file 'job-committees' spread throughout the ships. In 1918, when the then 'General' (federal) secretary was appointed to the New South Wales Board of Trade, and the
then secretary in New South Wales, one Edwards, became Acting General Secretary, Walsh was elected branch secretary. In early 1919, Walsh became General Secretary in a closely-contested ballot (voting 1294 to 1213) and was left in an insecure position. In the bitter inner-branch conflict over the February strike, Walsh put himself at the head of the discontented militants, and in May 1919 had the satisfaction of being elected General Secretary in a new ballot, this time with no precarious lead. On 20 and 21 May 1919, the Victorian and New South Wales branches again joined Queensland in the strike, and in June, five members of the Executive of the New South Wales branch resigned allegedly because 'they didn't believe in direct action' (S.M.H., 12 June 1919).
CHAPTER IV  THE REFORMIST PARTY MINUS THE REVOLUTIONARIES:

Chapter 4.

The years 1919 to 1921 were years of unsurpassed mass industrial militancy in Australia. Yet industrially militant though they were, unionists still looked to the A.L.P. as their mass party. It was at this time, however, that the left had chosen to withdraw from the A.L.P., a time when they could have expected their influence to have been very great within that party. At no time since the 1890's had the masses been more susceptible to the left's ideas.

We have seen in chapter 2 that, while their Sussex Street Communist Party did not concur until December 1922, it was some time before June 1921 that the Trades Hall reds began to operate their de facto united front line towards the A.L.P. Its effects were manifest within the A.L.P. from about September 1921. One sees a remarkable renewal of A.L.P. factional and parliamentary interest in trade union demands, while a major, if not the major, issue of the state elections in March 1922 concerned the basic wage, with the red menace a close contestant. The leader of one of the two right-wing A.L.P. factions, cabinet member 'Greg' McGirr, was alleged to have fallen under communist influence.

By early 1921, affiliated unionists were already discontented with A.L.P. performance on their demands, and rising unemployment sharpened their discontent. But the unionists clearly lacked political-faction 'know-how' and toughness in promoting their viewpoint. The Trades Hall reds sought an appreciable increase of these qualities to the affiliated unions. And thus trade union demands moved to the
centre of A.L.P. factional life, when for a long time they had been
treated as a sort of football between the two factions.

Red interest in the A.L.P. was still only in the early
stage of its renewal, by late 1921 and early 1922. Thus, despite the
industrial militancy of the unions and the special place unions have
in the A.L.P. structure, for most of the time of their maximum
potential responsiveness to leftist views the unions lacked effective
leadership in the specialised ways of war of the A.L.P. faction fight.
Therefore trade union demands played a less effective part in the
A.L.P. during the time of the Storey and Dooley administrations
which sat at the time of militancy and radicalism, than they did at
the time of Lang's first administration, 1925-1926, when the unions
were notably less aggressive and self-confident industrially. For
by early 1926, if we add the periods of de facto operation of the
united front line to the years after December 1922, when the line was
formally operated by the whole Communist Party, the A.L.P. had been
directly subject to red influences for some four and a half years.

In New South Wales from April 1920 to March 1922, both
main factions ruling the A.L.P. were right-wing factions. These are
years notorious in the labor movement for the audacious malpractices
of the warring factions. They are years also marked by absorption
of A.L.P. spokesmen of that state in the narrowest personal goals.
In Victoria, the Victorian Socialist Party had long been infiltrating
the A.L.P., with its own brand of 'united front' policy. And by
contrast with New South Wales, in Victoria and at the federal level
of the A.L.P., one finds a greater concern with long-term aims and principles than at any time before or since; while outside Australia, labor fiercely debated questions of principles, aims and tactics, stimulated by revolution, by mass strikes and the fall of syndicalism in the path of triumphant marxism.
In March 1920, the Storey Labor administration was elected to office in New South Wales. The year 1920 and much of 1921 was a time of exceptional trade union militancy, but the Storey Labor administration was remarkably unresponsive to trade union demands. Its slender majority cannot be considered a completely satisfactory explanation for this unresponsiveness; McGowen, with a majority of only two, did more for the unions than Holman, whose majority was ten, and with a similar majority of two, Lang defied the wrath of Labor's business and farmer supporters to put through a whole series of long-sought industrialist measures. Other circumstances of the time make even more remarkable the Storey administration's unresponsiveness to trade union demands. Among the trade unions who for many months so impotently challenged the parliamentarians in 1920 and 1921, were many who participated in forming the 'Industrial Section' which had bodily dealt with unresponsive parliamentarians only a few years earlier; and while Labor parliamentarians seemed unresponsive to demands of affiliated unions (if we measure responsiveness in terms of legislative performance rather than in words), they were extremely sensitive to the views of a newly-formed country group, the Progressive Party.

An essential condition for the setting up of the 'Industrial

Section' in 1916 had been Holman's refusal to legislate upon trade union demands. Outstanding among these were the demand for wage readjustment to rising prices, an Eight Hours Act, a Workmen's Compensation Act, amendment of the Arbitration Act to give absolute preference to unionists, equal pay to women for equal work, fair rents, and improved shearers' accommodation. In order to gain these things, unions also pressed for fulfilment of Labor's policy abolishing the Legislative Council. Partly because he neglected their demands, the affiliated unions expelled Holman from the A.L.P., changed Party rules to favour trade union representation at the all-powerful annual conference, and excluded parliamentarians from the executive elected by that body. During 1916 and 1917, conscription struggles intensified a growing working-class unrest, and by early 1919, left-wing union officials had won control of the Industrial Section (now called the Industrial Vigilance Council) of the A.L.P. and were believed to have a good chance of winning control of the A.L.P. itself at the coming annual conference. When the left's attempt failed, the left abandoned the A.L.P. to the right wing, set up the Industrial Socialist Labor Party and were expelled from the A.L.P. This is how it came about that, as the Storey and Dooley Labor administrations acted out

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4 See above, Ch. I
their brief and inglorious parts on the parliamentary stage, control of the party machine in New South Wales was divided between two right-wing factions.

Penetrating unions and parliament alike, these factions may be equally well examined from the vantage point of either the executive or caucus. The larger of the two main parliamentary factions was led by John Storey, state Premier after March 1920, but on the executive of the state branch of the Labor Party, Storey's followers were a minority, and in the trade unions, Storey's followers were few and scattered. The majority faction on the Party executive was controlled by the Central Branch of the Australian Workers' Union, notably by J. Bailey and W.H. Lambert. J. Bailey, ruthless, poker-faced and

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5 A document published by the 'Reorganised Industrial Section' (Molesworth, Set 71, Item 6) claimed that although the A.W.U. had a mere thirty one delegates in an annual A.L.P. conference composed of 239 delegates, about one half the members of the central executive of the A.L.P. were members or employees of the Central Branch of the A.W.U. Important committees elected by the executive consisted mainly of members of this body too. On the organising-finance committee (a nominee committee alleged to be of greater importance than the central executive itself), the Central Branch of the A.W.U. had 2/3 of the members, while it had 4/5 of the members of the disputes committee.
allegedly semi-literate,\(^6\) dominated the executive faction,\(^7\) his main spokesmen in caucus being Voltaire Molesworth, R.J. Stuart-Robertson, and in cabinet, J.J.G. McGirr. The Bailey faction was to meet mounting charges of corrupt practices.\(^8\)

We take the opportunity here to look more closely at McGirr, whom the non-Labor dailies were to dub leader of the red forces within the A.L.P. and who did in fact make himself spokesman for the affiliated union viewpoint in cabinet. In a sense, McGirr practised Langism ahead of Lang, at a time when Lang himself sat rather quietly in cabinet as Treasurer—no doubt learning a great deal from what McGirr did.

In 1920 McGirr was taking part in his third Labor caucus. Like Lang who was a Catholic and an estate agent, McGirr might seem

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6 I. Young, 'Conflict Within the New South Wales Labor Party, 1919-1932' M.A. thesis, University of Sydney, 1960, p. 396; J.H. Catt's reference to 'an uneducated and uncouth dictatorship', in the leaflet 'To the Delegates, Members, Branches and Affiliated Unions, Reply to Inspired Attack in Sydney Daily Telegraph', March 1921 (K.S. Ross Coll.). See also Truth, 22 June 1919. Such allegations are also borne out by the following fragment in the Molesworth Collection (Set 71, Item 4), labelled in handwriting: 'J.Bailey's writing': 'As against Cummings's statement I can produce five reliable persons including the Ex Mayor of Junee who were in my Company at the time Cummings stated I Inspected the Boxes in Sydney,'

7 Bailey was extremely able at settling disagreements with his fists (Interview with Jack Moss, an ex-shearer who knew Bailey) and allegedly inspired fear throughout much of the labor movement (see Young, op.cit., p.396) Bailey was vice-president of the Labor Party executive before his return to the Legislative Assembly from Monaro, and he remained chairman of the A.L.P. organising committee and vice-president of the Central Branch of the A.W.U.

an oddly inappropriate spokesman for the affiliated union view: 'Labor's wealthiest minister', he once owned chemist shops in four towns, and described himself as a 'farmer on a large scale and ... a representative of farmers for the last ten years...' with 'more acres under wheat than the whole of the members of this so-called farmers' party..." [That is, the Progressive Party]. Freeman's Journal (The Leading Catholic Journal of Australia), was initially well-disposed to McGirr, but after he became de facto spokesman in cabinet for the affiliated union viewpoint, this paper described him as 'of the fiery cross order', a man who wanted 'everything at once, with the result that the unattached voters get cold feet about a possible revolution.'

Working in general harmony with the Baileyites, and partly overlapping it in personnel, was a Roman Catholic group established in 1919 when the Catholic Church took alarm at the leftist tide within the labor movement. Outstanding in this group were P.J. Cleary, of the Catholic Federation, and Patrick Minahan and Peter Loughlin, both state Labor parliamentarians. To combat the left-wing effort to give the A.L.P. a socialist objective, the Catholic group found common ground with both Bailey and Storey factions in the defence of the 1918 state Labor objective. But the Catholics resented Storey's refusal to grant a state subsidy to church schools, and for this among other reasons, found themselves, on most issues, in the Bailey camp,

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9 Freeman's Journal, 12 Jan.1922; Fighting Line (issued by the National Association of N.S.W., and later called the Australian National Review), 22 Apr.1920; N.S.W. Parl. Deb. vol. 79, p.495,486, 26 Aug.1920.

10 Freeman's Journal, 19 Jan.1922.
at least until the sharp identification of the Bailey faction with union demands, when the picture becomes less clear. Cutting across these faction lines to some extent came the conservative, small but formidable, personal empire of James Howard Catts, M.H.R. for Cook, an empire scattered amongst trade unions, leages, caucus and cabinet. Despite John Storey's personal friendship with Catts, Catts's empire remained uneasily allied with the Baileyites until shortly before annual conference in 1921.

So much for the main factions.

In March 1920, the Storey Labor government took office in a generally unsettled climate, marked by electoral dissatisfaction with the established parties. Assuming its most marked forms amongst the working class, this mood of uneasiness infected many others, having its sources in war time experiences, in a rapid price rise coupled with a lag in wages and salaries, and also, no doubt, in an Australian echo of the Russian October. While the apathy of both labor and non-labor voters contributed to the unusually low poll in March 1920, (only fifty five per cent of those eligible turned out on election day) the non-labor turnout was noticeably lower than at either the preceding or following elections. Non-labor apathy owed

11 Through a long association with all aspects of the party machine, Catts had a personal following in the unions. See James Howard Catts, by Dorothy Catts, passim.

a good deal to the split in Nationalist party ranks and to the gross scandals attributed to the Holman administration. In the countryside agrarian dissatisfaction took on radical, anti big-business overtones along with its more marked anti-city attributes. Yet the community-wide unease expressed itself nowhere more clearly and violently than amongst workers, with a strike wave reaching a peak between 1918 and 1921. How, then, can one explain the tendency to indifference of the working-class in New South Wales to the established party of labor and to the political process itself? The answer lies in the contrast between the working-class mood and the Labor Party's image as shaped, largely, by its parliamentarians. The workers stubbornly persisted in believing that the Labor Party was their party throughout this time of militancy. But the men who modelled the public image


Labor men of various viewpoints commented on this indifference: for example H.E. Boote, editor of the Australian Worker, 22 Dec. 1921: 'The workers of Australia... display a staggering indifference to...the ballot box.' In a roneoed document, Peter Loughlin, leading Catholic Labor parliamentarian, offered a radical political program for workers to offset the popularity of the socialisation objective and to restore 'the workers' waning interest in the political battle' (Molesworth coll. Set 71, item 7. n.d. but almost certainly late 1921). See also D.W. Rawson, 'The Organisation of the Australian Labor Party 1916-1941', Ph.D. Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1954. pp.43-44.
of the Labor Party were not elected merely by working-class votes, and as election time drew close in 1920, the Labor Party in New South Wales found that image being groomed into impeccable moderateness, its vocabulary pruned of militant dropped h's and revolutionary adjectives. The Professor Higgins of this transformation may have been parliamentary leader John Storey, but there were few Party figures who did not lend a hand. In the weeks before March, 1920, Labor Party spokesmen pledged it to be all things to all men; to be both an efficient alternative administration of a capitalist economy and the tribune of the under-privileged. As for the workers, they found themselves in a sorry, but perhaps not uncommon, plight; they would vote for no other party but the Labor Party, because they believed it was their party, and if the men who controlled the Labor Party gave it such a genteel and toothless air, why, then, they would not vote at all, since voting was not compulsory.15

15 The system of Proportional Representation was used for the first time in March 1920. While the 'unnecessary complications' (to quote R.S. Parker in S.R. Davis (ed) The Government of the Australian States, p.66) help to account for the high rate of informal voting in that year (nearly 10 per cent), proportional representation can offer no convincing explanation for the low turnout of voters. (fifty five per cent of the 1,182,409 eligibles turned out.) The overriding concern of A.L.P. election workers even today is to keep electors in working-class areas in mind of the fact that there is an election on a given day; if they vote, on the whole they vote Labor. The notion that, in 1920, electors were fully aware of approaching elections, had considered the mechanics of voting and had decided to absent themselves from the booths because of the complexity of these mechanics implies an unlikely level of knowledgeable about the electoral process, at least in Labor strongholds; it was here, however, that the percentage turnout was lowest.

Continued on next page.
The parliamentarians fought, with marked success, to keep the party image impeccably moderate, well within the 'lib-lab' tradition. At a time when unionists were industrially militant and socially radical, this does much to explain union indifference to the A.L.P. John Storey, the Labor leader, emphatically disassociated his party from the 'Direct Actionists', and in doing so came near to disavowing strikes altogether. He pledged the A.L.P. to take up the 'great decentralisation and developmental policy' of the Labor government between 1910 and 1916, to extend public transport, provide water, sewerage and power facilities in the countryside, guarantee 'living areas of land' to all 'bona fide' settlers; establish a Rural Bank and a compulsory wheat pool, and offer a guaranteed minimum price for wheat. Labor would nationalise monopolies, coastal shipping and banking, and restore the positions of trade unionists demoted and otherwise suffering as a result of the 1917 strike settlement. Labor alleged that in 1919, Premier Holman had tried to 'minimize [the] effect.'

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The view that Proportional Representation caused poor turnout thus has little force when applied to 1920 as voters would not have stayed away because of a system they had never yet experienced. But it is conceivable that, in 1922, voters might have recalled their earlier experience and not turned out on that occasion as a result. One should not ascribe too much weight to the mechanics of voting, nevertheless, for voters, both Labor and non-Labor, in fact turned out in much greater numbers in 1922 than in 1920; the Chief Electoral Officer described the 1922 poll as a 'particularly heavy' poll (S.M.H., 27 Mar. 1922).

Round Table's phrase. (vol.10, 1918–19, p.682.) The Board of Trade's decision had been 'received...with consternation in some quarters' (ibid.).
of the Board of Trade's decision to increase the basic wage to £3.17s, and, in denouncing this attempt, Storey promised an increased minimum basic wage with periodic adjustment to (a then rising) cost of living, with strict price control\(^\text{17}\) and gaoling of profiteers. To the lower income groups as a whole, Labor offered 'Motherhood Endowment' for families with more than two children where incomes were below £6.15s.\(^\text{18}\)

During the elections of March 1920, the system of proportional voting was used for the first time in the history of New South Wales. Some 313 candidates nominated, including sixty from the Nationalist Party, fifty from the Progressive Party, eighty nine from the Labor Party and sixteen Socialists. Of the 1,182,409 citizens eligible to vote, only some fifty five per cent turned out on election day. Labor received 285,792 of these votes, non-Labor (Nationalists and Progressives) 299,997, while some ten per cent of votes cast were informal. In all there were forty five Labor members, but as the

\(^{17}\) On the role of prices in bringing the downfall of the Nationalists, Round Table commented:

'This last is possibly the strongest of the varied sentiments agitating the public mind and it gathers additional force because the Nationalists, possibly unjustly, are accused of over-tenderness to the moneyed interests.' (Loc.cit., p.672)

\(^{18}\) Holman's bill to offset the declaration of a basic wage of £3.17s. provides the immediate background for this much-repeated promise by the Labor Party. Holman had proposed that a man and wife alone should constitute the unit for the basic wage, while children were provided for from a fund derived from employers and, if necessary, from Consolidated Revenue. For fuller details of Labor's proposals on endowment, see S.M.H., 18 Feb.1920 and Labor News, 6 Mar. 1920.
Nationalists and independent Nationalists numbered thirty, and the Progressive Party fifteen, the non-Labor muster was also forty five. Daniel Levy, Nationalist member from the five-member Labor electorate of Sydney, agreed to the Labor Party's request to act as speaker, and so gave Labor its tenuous majority of one. To stabilise their precarious advantage Labor parliamentarians set about winning the goodwill of the Progressive Party, and it is to this interesting newcomer, upon whom Labor parliamentarians pinned such hopes, we must now briefly turn.

In 1919, long-repeated efforts to form a country political party were crowned with success, and the Progressive Party was born. Support in 1917 by the Farmers' and Settlers' Association for the new Holman Nationalist administration had given way to hostility during 1918, as the Farmers' and Settlers' Association charged Holman with neglecting country interests and the Nationalist Association with excluding it from policy making. Towards the end of 1919, the Graziers' Association joined the Farmers' and Settlers' Association in its anti-Nationalist stance, while within parliament, a group of dissident Nationalists crystallised. By March 1920 the three groups had come together and stood candidates as the Progressive Party. At the moment of formation, the Farmers' and Settlers' Association had greater influence than the Graziers' Association in Party councils despite the fact that the Graziers provided most of the Party's finance, and possibly because of this greater influence, even though the Progressives were

19 B.D. Graham, op.cit., p.256.
among the 'anti-Labor forces,'²⁰ of New South Wales, their parliamentarians flatly refused the overtures of Fuller, the Nationalist Leader, to form a coalition cabinet. They agreed, though reluctantly and with many reservations, to support Labor. As A.K. Trethowan, president of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association put it:

The country apparently is prepared to give Labour a trial, and we have to recognise the voice of the majority. We can keep Labour in order. If they start any socialistic legislation, they will either have to drop that or drop their bundle. ²¹

Labor men from left to right wing deplored the government's delicate position, but drew different conclusions from it. The left took the view that Storey must press ahead immediately with promised reforms, deliberately courting an early election if these were frustrated by the Speaker or obstructed by the Legislative Council.²² But the parliamentarians, some of whom now for the first time, enjoyed the sweet smell of success, concluded that they must hasten quietly and slowly,²³ and as if to underline the point parliament met for eleven

²⁰ Ibid., p.282.
²¹ S.M.H., 23 Mar. 1920; see also B.D. Graham, op. cit. p.310/311.
²² See, for example, the Victorian Socialist Party's paper, the Socialist, passim, 1920; A.W. 25 Mar. 1920. A writer in the Australian Worker begged Labor not to form an alliance with the Progressives. '...if you mix Laborism with Capitalism or Half-Way-Betweenism you inevitably get a mongrelised policy....'
²³ The Fighting Line claimed that he had a 'Go-Slow Policy' (22 Apr. 1920), while Storey himself is alleged to have said he had only 'half a mandate'. (Lang, op. cit., p.127).
and a half hours in April and then not at all until late September, achieving very few of its electoral pledges when it did sit. Although the Government's slender majority helps one understand this strange and instantaneous paralysis, the success of the Menzies administration from December 1961 to late 1962 (to give a recent example) suggests that paralysis is not the best way to set a disadvantage to rights. However, the paralysis is the more understandable if one looks at the savage eruption of the Labor faction struggle which immediately broke out.

Despite careful planning by the Bailey faction, by one vote, Caucus failed to elect John Bailey to Cabinet and Bailey took immediate reprisals. Believing Mutch and Dooley to be the ringleaders within the Storey faction, by skilful use of the daily press, Bailey forced Storey to appoint a Royal Commission over allegations that Mutch and Dooley had taken bribes to stop an enquiry into the wheat industry.

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24 The Fighting Line, 22 Apr. 1920, gives biographical detail on some of the successful aspirants. T.D. Mutch was a journalist with the Australian Worker, organ of the A.W.U., ex-president of the Australian Journalists' Association, three years a member of the Legislative Assembly, and formerly keen anti-conscriptionist. Peter Loughlin, a parliamentarian in 1917, was a forty year old school teacher. W. McKell, a twenty eight year old ex-boilermaker, was studying law. Sproule, forty years old had the degrees of B.A. and Ll.B. Many prominent in the cabinet were Catholic; e.g., McTiernan, Loughlin, McGirr, Dooley, Lang and Lazzarini, George Scan and T.D. Mutch (Freeman's Journal, 15 Apr. 1920).

25 The Royal Commission concluded that Mutch and Dooley had no knowledge of corrupt payments. (Report of Royal Commission of Inquiry (Mr Justice Pring) into the Administration of the State Wheat Office. N.S.W. Parl.Pap. vol.1, 1920, pp.219-249).
This was one of several affairs which absorbed no small part of the parliamentarians' energies but contributed nothing to union or lower-income groups' needs. The Bailey faction knew that if it made no show of taking up long-standing union demands, the affiliated unions would be unhealthily susceptible to the overtures of the Communists in control of the New South Wales Labor Council. If skilfully handled however, the unions could be drawn into the faction struggle on Bailey's side, yet manipulated so that their demands did not threaten the parliamentary alliance with the Progressives without which neither Bailey nor Storey faction could achieve its goals. The alliance would be seriously threatened, after all, only if the administration actually embodied certain of the most controversial union demands in legislation; however, while affiliated unions remained pliant and quiescent, the Baileyites had no need to press for this step.

**Storey and the Demands of Affiliated Unions.**

The hard core of unionist demands presented to the Storey and Dooley administrations resembled in many ways those presented so boldly to Holman by the Industrial Section in 1916. There were, however, two main differences. Settlement of the 1917 strike was marked by the imposition of unfavourable conditions upon unionists who had participated, some finding it impossible to get their old jobs back. Unions concerned with marine and land transport were most severely affected, and so the Labor government found itself hard

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Footnote 26 next page.
pressed by unions such as the Waterside Workers' Federation, the Coal Lumpers, and the Australian Railways' Union, asking for the restoration of pre-1917 conditions. Affiliated unions also demanded the modification of the Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Preference Act because they alleged it was used to the disadvantage of the 1917 strikers. Many unions had been de-registered from the state Arbitration Court because of their part in the 1917 strike, and in 1920, most

26 Members of the Amalgamated Rail and Tramway Services Association alleged that the aftermath of the 1917 strike had included 'union smashing', 'the issue of free passes to union breakers, victimization, and the retaining of affiliated—physically and mentally—loyalists...'. [sic] (A.R.T.S.A. Minutes, 29th Annual General Meeting, 17 Feb. 1919.)

On the waterfront members of the Waterside Workers' Federation were issued with discs ranging from the number 5000 upwards. Wharf laborers outside this union had discs ranging one to 5000, and calls for labor at the two main hiring bureaux were on a rotary system, starting daily with the number one. (See The Hungry Mile by T. Nelson, pp. 67-68). Thus, the call often did not reach the W.W.F.

The Coal Lumpers demanded Labor return their 'Model Lodging House', confiscated by Holman to house strike-breakers. On 7 September 1920, P. Minahan asked Treasurer Lang on behalf of the Coal Lumpers whether the Model Lodging House had not been 'leased to certain big shipping companies' (N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol. 79, p. 671.

The Railway and Tramway unionists called for restoration of seniority rights to their 1917 strikers (see Nationalist Election Leaflet, March 1922 'To the Railway and Tramway Employees of New South Wales' in 'N.S.W. Election Leaflets, 1922' [Mitchell]).

27 Some unions were registered before this, under the Trade Unions Re-registration Act, 1918. See Report of the Department of Labour and Industry during the year 1918, in N.S.W. Parl. Pap., vol. 1, 1919, p. 466.
were still not re-registered. Hence they asked Labor to help. Unions also pressed Labor to repeal the severe penalties against striking introduced into the state Industrial Arbitration Act in 1918, and to give unionists unqualified preference in employment.

Because of the recent steep rise in prices, union demands for government help in increasing the basic wage were more imperative than those made in 1916; also very urgent were their demands for legislation establishing a forty four hour week. Other measures unions wanted, but gave less emphasis, were demands for extension of the Workers' Compensation Act of 1916, and an Equal Pay Act. Union spokesmen also urged measures favouring lower-income groups in general, such as fair rents legislation and motherhood endowment.

The Bailey faction set to work to organise affiliated unions to draw up a list of demands so that the faction could use these against Storey, and using its control of the central executive of the Labor Party, summoned a conference of sixty eight affiliated unions on 30 April, and another in May. In July, 1920, the A.L.P. executive presented the unions' demands to Storey. But the Storey faction could hardly have failed to realise that the unions were well under Bailey's control and thus were harmless until Bailey moved or until they got themselves an alternative or additional voice within the A.L.P.

Thus though parliament was summoned on 23 September 1920, it rose in December with only one of the important industrialist demands

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within sight of fulfilment - and very distant sight, so it turned out. This was the demand for the forty-four hour week.

During February 1920 there had been direct action in the building industry around the demand for the forty-four hour week, and though by September these Saturday stay-homes in the building trade were faltering, various iron trades unionists now followed their example. Some employers retaliated by lockouts. The unionists were in an aggressive, self-confident mood and it was felt that widespread rank and file strikes might break out. Then the Storey administration announced that the newly-appointed President of the Board of Trade (G.S. Beeby, Minister of Labour and Industry in the last anti-Labor administration) would conduct a Royal Commission into hours, and additionally, the administration promised unions legislation on the forty-four hour week. This put an immediate end to all direct action. Following the recommendation of the Royal Commission came 'emergency legislation' establishing a Special Court before which unions could apply for a forty-four hour week. The unions had wanted legislation enacting a uniform forty-four hour week, spread out over five days. But as a result of the government's procedure, the question of a five-day week was left to individual employers and

29 See above, chapter 3, p. 157.
30 See above, chapter 3, pp. 157-8.
employees, and relatively few unionists came to enjoy it. Provoking more ill feeling in union circles, however, was the fact that as a result of the government's method the forty-four hour week itself was brought in over some eighteen months, by which time a Nationalist Coalition was returned to power. Moving fast, this government reintroduced a forty-eight hour week. (the Eight Hours Amendment Act, no. 8 of 1922). Unions were not slow to bewail the contrast between the Labor and Nationalist approaches to hours.  

Because of the marked discrepancy between prices and wages, while unionists were keenly interested in the hours problem, they might well have felt wages an even more pressing matter. Affiliated unions declared that Labor did little to help in this regard, and there seems some justification for their attitude. In October 1919 with a Nationalist government in office, the N.S.W. Board of Trade increased the basic wage by seventeen shillings, bringing it to £3.17.0 a week. In October 1920 with the Labor government in office and Labor-appointee Beeby as President of the Board of Trade, unionists gained undoubted benefit from regulations 'for the first time applying the living wage generally to all male adults.' But in announcing the living wage itself during that month, Judge Beeby stated that prices had risen by about eighteen per cent., while the purchasing power of money had

31 Carpenters' Monthly Journal, Nov. 1922.
declined by at least fifteen per cent. since October of the previous year. The basic wage increase was one of 11.4%, bringing the amount to £4. 5. 0. In deciding on this amount, said Beeby, the Board of Trade had given 'some consideration... to the fact that families by rearrangement of their expenditure can economise without lowering their standard of living.' 1 Official interstate union policy had followed the Piddington Royal Commission which found that a 'reasonable wage' for New South Wales was £5.17. 1. 35

Performance on other 'hard-core' demands was equally unsatisfying to the trade unions. Despite an amending Act (no. 19 of 1920), the Industrial Arbitration Act still contained a penalty of £1,000 against unions whose executive officers called upon members to 'refuse to offer for, or accept employment'. Provisions concerning preference to unionists remained thoroughly unsatisfactory from the unionist viewpoint as preference was forbidden where a union had taken part in, or aided or abetted, an illegal strike, and in some awards preference was granted only where it did not prejudice employment of non-unionists already at work. In all cases was subject to the provisions of the Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Employment Act of 1919,

34 N.S.W. Year Book, 1920, p. 549. For the Declaration of the Living Wage, see N.S.W. Industrial Gazette, 31 Dec. 1920, p.1148.
36 N.S.W. Year Book, 1920, p.540. Trade union dissatisfaction on preference began in 1912 when the Legislative Council removed from the Arbitration Act clauses granting effective preference to unionists, and excluded clerks and rural workers. (V.G. Childe, op.cit., p.58.)
and many unions objected to this. 37

The Storey administration was certainly not inactive over these matters, yet the unions were most dissatisfied with its achievements. Following the report of a Select Committee on the Trade Unions' Re-Registration Bill, 38 the government restored to the arbitration system several unions excluded after the 1917 strikes and not re-instated under the general amnesty granted in 1918. 39 However, re-registration was still a burning question at the Labor Party annual conference in 1921, at the state elections of 1922, and the state elections of 1925. 40 The Labor Party had promised to restore the pre-1917 position to unions 41 but it was not restored in the railways, for example, until Lang took office in 1925. Waterside workers became irate as the Storey administration, from whom they had hoped much, grew increasingly evasive over the removal of non-unionists from the waterfront; 42 again, this removal was not actually effected

37 See, for example, the Railways Union Gazette, 28 July 1921.
39 For the list of those restored, see Summary of the Principal Legislative and Administrative Acts of the New South Wales Labour Government, p. 5 (Sydney Government Printer, March 1921.).
40 For some of the implications of de-registration for the trade unions (though especially for locomotive enginemen), see the evidence given by W. Ainsworth before the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Trade Union Re-Registration Bill, N.S.W. Parl. Pap., vol. II, 1920, pp. 1285-1291; and L.F. Crisp's Ben Chifley, pp. 24-28.
41 See, for example, a roneoed letter, above John Storey's name, dated 2 March, 1920, in the Minute Book of the Amalgamated Railway and Tramway Services' Association, 1918-1919. 'Railway and Tramway Men. Beware of the Nationalists'; Storey here specifically promised to restore 'service rights'.
42 Minutes, Gen. Meeting, Sydney branch of the Wharf Laborers' Union, 23 June 1920; 11 Aug. 1920; 13 July 1921.
until Lang took office in 1925. Criticising the Fair Rents Amend-
ment Act of 1920, Gardiner, Independent Labor member for Newcastle,
claimed that the Fair Rents Court was 'acting against the interests
of the tenants', and it is true that in the work of the Metropolitan
Fair Rents Court between 1917 and 1929 only the years 1919, 1920 and
1921 show rent increases and not decreases.\(^{43}\) The Profiteering
Prevention Act, 'robbed of its best features' by the Legislative
Council, elicited little response either in praise or in anger, passing
almost unnoticed.\(^{44}\) In surveying workers' compensation, Lang ignores
the Workmen's Compensation Acts of 1920,\(^{45}\) partly no doubt because
Storey's Acts excluded casual hands, outworkers and others embraced
by Lang's legislation in 1925, and partly no doubt, because as Baddeley,
Minister for Labour and Industry in 1925, claimed, it was only in 1925

\(^{43}\) The Act was no. 46 of 1920. For Gardiner's criticism, see N.S.W.
Parl. Deb., vol.83,pp. 357-358. For the work of the Fair Rents
Court, see a Table giving a review of the decisions of the
Metropolitan Fair Rents Court in each year since its inception in

\(^{44}\) The Act was no. 41 of 1920.

\(^{45}\) Lang op.cit. p.230. The state law on Workmen's Compensation was
contained in Acts of 1916 and 1920. An Amendment (No.45 of 1920)
and two new Acts were passed in 1920: the Workmen's Compensation
(Silicosis) Act of 1920, and the Workmen's Compensation (Broken
Hill) Act, 1920. The wage limit had been £312; Storey raised to
£525, and increased the rate of weekly payment in case of incapacity
from 50 per cent to 66\(^{2}/3\) per cent of the average weekly earnings.
Unionists objected strongly to the Broken Hill Act where one
clause stipulated that to qualify under the Act, an employee had
to offer himself for employment within three months of its being
passed. The Broken Hill mining strike was then in progress.
that steps were taken to make the Silicosis Act effective. Items of interest to the unions which the Storey government introduced but failed to have passed included an equal pay for equal work bill (the Female Employees' Wages Bill) and a Motherhood Endowment Bill. Failure to deal with election promises to reduce unemployment also drew criticisms.

The year was a time of considerable industrial militancy and of relatively low unemployment; but despite this, long-standing demands of affiliated unions can scarcely be said to have weighed heavily with A.L.P. leaders, whether one looks to the faction fights or to parliament. True, the Baileyite executive held union conferences; but we saw how seriously the Storey administration took the demands arising from them - about as seriously, possibly, as the Baileyites did. In short, while the faction struggle was solely between two right-wing groups the demands of the trade unions made little headway. Towards the end of 1921, however, despite heavy unemployment, a trade union demand became the central issue in the A.L.P. The demand was that the basic wage must not be reduced, and it soon became the central issue in state politics as a whole. A major reason for this was the renewal of left-wing interest in the A.L.P. in New South Wales.

46 N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol.103, p.2362, 18 Nov.1925. This was the Workmen's Compensation (Silicosis) Act of 1920, which followed the Report of Technical Commission of Enquiry appointed by Storey to investigate the Prevalence of Miner's Phtisis and Pneumoconiosis at the Metaliferous Mines at Broken Hill (N.S.W. Parl.Pap., vol.II, 1921, pp.1289-1364).

47 Both bills were stopped by the prorogation of parliament.

Trade Union Demands move to the Centre of the Stage: the

A.L.P. 1921 - March 1922

The Trades Hall reds had peculiarly close links with the A.L.P., even in 1919 and 1920 when they were relatively indifferent to it. A network of daily trade union associations bound them to fellow union officials who were A.L.P. members at the Trades Hall itself (and no doubt at its adjacent hotels, important centres of social contact to this day). Many if not most of the Trades Hall reds had been A.L.P. members, some well-placed, before July 1919 when they helped form the 'breakaway' from the A.L.P., namely, the Industrial Socialist Labor Party. Against local Communist Party official policy, though in keeping with what by late 1920 had become the executive committee of the Comintern's view on work with Labor parties, before June 1921 these Trades Hall reds, had begun what might be called a de facto united front line of permeating the A.L.P. The Trades Hall reds enabled unionists to press their demands more vigorously and more effectively upon the two right-wing factions in control of the New South Wales branch of the A.L.P. It is likely that they also played some part in the moves to form a new union faction within the A.L.P., moves which made the Bailey faction especially sensitive to trade union demands. As 1921 wore on, such demands were undoubtedly treated far more seriously by the administration and by the factions than they had been in earlier months; but it would be

49 See above, chapter 1, pp. 25-29.
50 See above, chapter 2, pp. 95-99.
foolish to put this down solely to left-wing pressures. Other influences were at work to put unionists in a frame of mind such that left-wing arguments fell on responsive ears.

By the time of the annual A.L.P. conference of Easter 1921, a world-wide economic depression had overtaken Australia and, while strike activity here continued to be widespread, the affiliated unions also began to expect more of political action, directing a searching gaze towards the Labor administration's performance over their demands. At annual conference union spokesmen attacked both the executive and the Storey administration; charging both with failure to see that promises to the unions were honoured, and showing for the first time a tendency to independence. W.J. Mills, B. Mullins and W.H. Seale, three officials of the Sydney Wharf Laborers' Union, were, along with Wheeler (member of the Ships Painters' and Dockers' Union and inspirer of the anti-One Big Union Transport Workers' Federation) and J.Power, of the A.W.U., vocal in attacking both factions. Mills, Mullins and Seale ran for executive positions on a ticket\(^5^1\) of their own—'to fight this Go-Slow Government'. They issued a leaflet at conference entitled:

\[ \text{The Third Party In the Conference.} \\
\text{Representing the Workers, as against Corrupt Tactics}^5^2 \]

Claiming that Broken Hill Labor delegates were now to be found in the

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\(^{5^1}\) 'Tickets at the 1921 Annual Conference of the New South Wales branch of the Labor Party' (R.S. Ross Collection).

\(^{5^2}\) Molesworth, Set 243, Item 3. (The word 'Party' here means 'faction'.)
Industrial Socialist Labor Party, and noting that the miners and seamen were absent from conference, they warned that next year so might the Sydney Wharf Laborers be absent: 'You know the cause of the 1919 break, and the formation of the Industrial Labor Party'.

And the leaflet also said:

To say that one is pained with [sic] disgust and sickness at the exhibition of lack of interest in the welfare of the workers, as shown at this 'Conference', is to put it in a most mild form. 53

But conference elections reaffirmed the Bailey hold and McGirr soon became deputy leader of the parliamentary Party. After a 'record' recess of nine months, parliament met on August 30 1921, for the third and as it turned out, the final time. John Storey died in October, and James Dooley replaced him, McGirr receiving the additional portfolio of Labour and Industry.

53 Molesworth, Set 243, Item 3.

54 A contributing cause of this victory is suggested in a leaflet published in 1922 (n.d. Mitchell Library) by an 'elected A.W.U. organiser' A.B. Berry. The leaflet, entitled Bailey, Lambert & Co. Ltd, Secrets Exposed, gave A.W.U. Central Branch Membership at 2 February 1921 (citing 'A.W.U. official records') as 14,000 members. On 24 March 1921, for the purposes of the A.L.P. annual conference, it was stated as 22,600. But on 31 May 1921 (at the close of the A.W.U. financial year) it was given as 15,660. The increase had given the A.W.U. Central Branch executive, who appointed the delegates, twenty three delegates to the conference instead of sixteen or seventeen.

Annual conference had stressed the need to abolish the Legislative Council by 'swamping' it with Labor appointees pledged to abolition, and one of the government's first acts was to appoint sixteen new members to the Council. The Bailey faction announced that its nominees had been unfairly treated, and increased its attacks on the Dooley faction.

In keeping with their truculent attitude at annual A.L.P. conference in 1921, the unions also continued to display their discontent. For example in August, the Sydney branch of the Wharf Labourers' Union threatened to disaffiliate from the A.L.P., and later re-affiliated to the Labor Council; in September, the Australian Railways' Union ruthlessly attacked the administration for inactivity on trade union demands, while in the same month Labor parliamentarians received a deputation claiming to represent 90,000 unionists, which protested about unemployment, and included several prominent officials associated with the 'breakaways' of 1919.

57 Ibid, 16 November 1921.
58 Railways' Union Gazette, 25 Aug. 1921. In September, 1921, the Gazette published a cartoon headed 'The Biggest Program on Earth'. A 'spruiker' ('The Storey-Teller') says 'Here You are Gentlemen, the biggest program on earth'; railway and tramway employees reply: 'The program is all right, Mister: but when does the show start'.
59 Amongst these were J.J. Graves (Stovemakers), M. Gibb (Clothing Trades), G. Burn (Hotel, Club and Restaurant Employees), T. Walsh (Seamen), A. Rutherford (Saddlers), J. Kilburn (Bricklayers).
whose presence may reasonably be linked with the efforts of the Trades Hall reds to gain influence in the Labor Party.

The Labor Administration Falls

By late September 1921, the Trades Hall reds had begun their strange and tenuous alliance with the Bailey faction - whom we had better rename the Bailey-McGirr faction in view of McGirr's new prominence in it. This association led the Bailey-dominated A.L.P. executive to adopt the Brisbane socialisation objective (previously anathema to them) before annual conference of 1923, and only broke up when Garden, Denford, J. Beasley and R. Heffron moved over to the Lang camp which emerged from that conference.

By late September 1921, a threatened reduction in the basic wage had become the burning political topic of the day, and the Bailey-McGirr faction put themselves at the head of the affiliated unions' opposition to reduction. At the same time, the Bailey-McGirr faction identified itself with a last effort to pass the Motherhood Endowment Bill. Together, the basic wage and endowment demands became the de facto 'fighting platform' in the A.L.P. faction contest and, soon after, the main issues of the day in state politics. Anti-Labor spokesmen alleged that the Dooley faction had fallen completely under McGirr's control and predicted that the unions' demands would be achieved if anti-Labor parliamentarians did not unite to bring down the Dooley administration.

"Mother" McGirr... has shouldered his chief, Premier Dooley, off the stage altogether... [and] has taken complete control of the administration..."
Dooley is pledged to carry out the late Premier's policy of moderation. McGirr, for his own purposes, is an extremist, and will place himself in the hands of the ... Communists, in order that he may achieve his ambition to wear the Premiersal crown. 60

The Catholic Freeman's Journal, once well-disposed towards McGirr, now came to have substantially the same view. McGirr, it claimed, had said in so many words that if he had the power there would be beer and skittles for the industrialists, no matter if the capitalists had to live on carrots. 61

Though the McGirr faction grew more and more outspoken as the weeks passed, the Dooley administration's performance in relation to Labor's key promises, trade union or otherwise, was poor.

Parliament met on August 30 1921, with the tiny McGirr faction in Caucus composed of M.A. Davidson, R.J. Stuart-Robertson, and McGirr himself. A message from the Governor recommending provision for a Government Insurance Bill was received 29 September, but the Bill was not brought in; a message concerning a Fair Rents Bill, received 19 October, met the same fate. W.F. Dunn (Captain Dunn) introduced a Wheat Marketing Bill on 25 October; by 9 November, it had passed the Third Reading stage, and was sent to the Legislative Council, but on 28 December, 1921, parliament was prorogued, and the Bill had not been returned from the Legislative Council. 62 A Large Holdings Subdivision Bill introduced by Peter Loughlin, had similarly not been returned.

61 Freeman's Journal, 19 Jan. 1922. 'Industrialists' was commonly used as a substitute for 'unionists'.
62 N.S.W. Leg. Ass. Votes and Proceedings, 3rd session, 1921, p. 203, 'Register of Public Bills Originated in the Assembly During the Session of 1921'.
from the Council at prorogation.

For some time, the Progressive Party had been growing increasingly ill-disposed towards the Labor parliamentarians. But it was the heavy emphasis now being given in the more and more openly conducted A.L.P. faction-contest, to motherhood endowment and above all, to the idea of maintaining the existing basic wage, that led to the final rupture between Labor, on the one hand, and Speaker Daniel Levy and the Progressives, on the other.

The Motherhood Endowment Bill aroused a storm among the Nationalists, though inside parliament Nationalist parliamentarians were fairly circumspect in their opposition. Hill, for example, confined himself to describing the Bill as 'a piece of bluff, with the object of buying the votes of ignorant people outside'. Outside parliament, disapproval was expressed more clearly. The Australian National Review for example, expressed itself very sharply: 'Mother McGirr* had designed what was essentially 'propaganda which buys the votes of enfranchised beggars'. And:

63 Motherhood Endowment was only a part of an enlightened program for women promised in Labor election speeches of 1920 (for example, in John Storey's 'keynote' speech, S.H., 18 Feb. 1920, and in J.H. Catts's summary of Labor promises, Labor News, 6 Mar. 1920). Also included were 'Scientific instruction for girls of suitable age'; maternity hospitals throughout the state, with outdoor departments; pre-natal and after-care facilities; support and protection for unmarried mothers; adequate living allowances for widows and deserted wives with young children.

64 N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol. 85, p.2459, 6 Dec. 1921.
As the 'Review' has repeatedly pointed out, nationalisation of children is coming in this State. When men and women are so lost to their own sense of parenthood that they accept payment from the State for producing children, the time is ripe for making State wards of the unfortunate offspring.

McGirr repeatedly claimed that cabinet opposed the Motherhood Endowment bill. This seems more than likely, while it is almost certain that cabinet resisted McGirr's Industrial Arbitration Amendment ('basic wage') bill. This was the Bill which led to the final rupture between Labor on the one hand, and Speaker Levy and the Progressives on the other.

The Board of Trade reduced the basic wage from £4. 5. 0 to £4. 2. 0 in its declaration of October 1921. Immediately following the declaration, a trade union deputation interviewed McGirr, the new Minister for Labour and Industry: one of the participants, the Australian Railways' Union, later said:

Acting upon our representations Mr. McGirr took steps to endeavour to stay the hand of the Board of Trade.

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65 A.N.R., 24 September 1921. There was also a poem entitled 'Motherhood Endowment':

O women, In your hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy and hard to please!
If you should get Endowment now,
For what next would you raise a row.

66 A.W., 14 June 1922. Some support may be found for this in Freeman's Journal, 25 Aug. 1921.


68 Railways Union Gazette, 17 Nov. 1921; see also A.N.R., 24 Nov. 1921.
McGirr then refused to gazette the new wage. He wrote to the President of the Board of Trade, in his capacity as Minister for Labour and Industry, asking the Board to reconsider the reduction, and to exempt from their consideration the months of July and August, on the grounds that these two months had not ever been introduced into living wage calculations before, but that they alone of the months used for calculation, had been months of falling prices. The Board refused McGirr's request, and McGirr then refused to gazette the reduced wage, though this did not prevent manufacturers (for example, textile manufacturers) successfully applying to the State Arbitration Court for the reduction as early as October.

Two proposals had then been made in caucus; one that the Board of Trade be asked to review its findings, the other that the government pass legislation maintaining the basic wage at £4.5.0. Cabinet appears to have been strongly in favour of the former course, despite an implied denial of this by an 'investigation' committee set up by A.L.P. annual conference in 1922. When the Board of Trade rejected requests for

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69 Correspondence between the Minister for Labour and the President of the Board of Trade Respecting the Reduction in the Basic Wage, in N.S.W. Parl. Pap. vol. II, 1921, p. 765, 28 Oct. 1921.

70 In 1919 & 1920, the living wage had been computed on data compiled until 30 June (ibid p. 766).


McGirr made strong claims on the matter at the A.L.P. annual conference in 1922. Notwithstanding caucus instructions, said McGirr,

...Mr. Dooley said that no such bill would be introduced... When the Basic Wage Bill was placed before Parliament he was confident that efforts would be made to prevent it becoming law. The first reading got through all right, but at the second reading stage Mr. Lang was put up on the Budget speech to block the bill. Mr. Dooley had told prominent men in the city that the £4. 5. 0 Basic Wage Bill would never see the light of day. And it never did. If the Ministry was sincere about the matter, it could have rushed the bill through the House at one sitting, just as it did with the Wheat Marketing Bill, and had it tested in the Upper House. That would have shown the workers that they were genuine. 74

Labor Council took sides with McGirr. In October 1921, its executive recorded approval for McGirr's 'action on the 44 hour question', and in the Council's annual report, frowned upon his opponents:

Mr. McGirr showed from the moment he took control of the Department of Labour...that he was going to assist, if possible, to protect the workers. But his will to do so was promptly sabotaged by the Cabinet. 75

McGirr was parliamentary leader of the A.W.U. faction, so understandably, the editor of the A.W.U.'s official newspaper concurred with

74 A.W. 14 June 1922.
"MOTHER" McGIRR SOOLS A MAD DOG ON THE FARMER.

NEW FARMER: "If that cat gets me, I'm finished!"
Greg McGirr has been singled out for the venomous attacks of the capitalist class because of his militant advocacy of the wage-workers' cause and has incurred the secret enmity of TREACHEROUS ELEMENTS in Labor's own ranks.\[76\]

A.L.P. annual conference of 1922 set up a conference investigation committee to examine McGirr's charges but, despite its findings, it seems clear that McGirr's account of the position was substantially true. However one can see cabinet's point of view. The basic wage bill would have meant the end of Labor's arrangement with the Progressive Party, as Progressives and Nationalists alike felt the greatest misgivings on the basic wage bill. Prices had fallen and a regulation introduced by Storey's cabinet in October 1920 extended the basic wage to country as well as city areas. In the words of the Australian National Review:

A basic wage is bad enough in all conscience at any time in connection with city industries, but in the country it is an impossible idea.

And Progressive parliamentary leader W.E. Wearne put the matter equally clearly:

To apply a basic wage of £4.5s. a week to rural industries would mean closing up all the farms, for no man can pay £4.5s. a week, and successfully work a farm when competing in the open market... If any honorable member went into a wheat-growing or stock-raising district and advocated this bill, that would be the end of his career as a country member, and rightly so. \[77\]

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Thus certain leading Progressives took the Bill as a sign that the time was ripe to formally shatter any shreds still remaining on the alliance with Labor and openly declare for the Nationalists,\(^78\) and the subsequent passage of the Industrial Arbitration Amendment Bill by forty two votes to thirty nine precipitated a crisis within the Progressive Party when a number of Progressives joined Nationalist leader George Fuller in approaching Speaker Levy. Levy resigned the Speakership on 8 December, claiming that Labor had introduced the sort of 'contentious legislation'\(^79\) which he was pledged to oppose. Simon Hickey, from the Labor Party, became Speaker\(^80\) and the government was then defeated, first on a censure motion, forty five votes to forty four, then on an adjournment.\(^81\) At this Dooley resigned, refusing to ask the Governor for a dissolution of parliament, and after a week's hard bargaining with the Progressives, Fuller announced the formation of a coalition Nationalist-Progressive Party cabinet. But seven of the fifteen parliamentary Progressives were opposed to coalition, while many country and city branches of the Progressive Party also opposed coalition.\(^82\) Thus after seven hours\(^83\) in office, the coalition

\(^{78}\) B.D. Graham, *op.cit.*, p.324.
\(^{79}\) *A.W.*, 15 Dec. 1921.
\(^{80}\) *N.S.W. Parl. Deb.*, vol. 85, p.2598, 13 Dec. 1921.
\(^{81}\) *N.S.W. Parl. Deb.*, vol. 85, p.2602, 14 Dec. 1921.
\(^{83}\) *A.N.R.*, 24 Dec. 1921.
cabinet fell when Daniel Levy once more agreed to a Labor request to act as Speaker. Dooley was then commissioned to form a government. He deprived McGirr of his Labour and Industry portfolio, and announced early elections, promising to introduce only essential items of legislation in the meantime - though there were no strings attached to the commission.

When the downfall of Dooley first occurred on 13 December 1921, H.E. Boote, editor of the *Australian Worker*, suggested it had been 'precipitated' because both motherhood endowment and basic wage bills were in the hands of the Legislative Council. The Nationalist and Progressive leaders Fuller and Wearne hoped, Boote thought, to rescue the Legislative Council from the 'odium' of obstructing these. In 1922, unemployment was rising and employers were trying to vary working conditions to their advantage. Too prolonged obstruction, especially in the teeth of an energetic and well-publicised Labor protest, could therefore have cast an uncomfortable searchlight upon the Legislative Council, a body which Labor had long been pledged to abolish. (Queensland had abolished it not long before.) At annual conference in 1922, McGirr claimed that he had asked cabinet to prolong the life of the government long enough to bring the motherhood and basic wage issues to a head, alleging that Labor could have put 100 Labor supporters into the Legislative Council, who could then have forced the Governor to agree or have got another governor in his place.

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84 A.W., 15 Dec. 1921.
All statements to the contrary were so much dope, only fit for children. 85 said McGirr. But Dooley refused to remain in office:

... I will not try another session of Parliament by getting a squib from the other side to come over and act for us. What is the use of our staying in office unless we can carry out the platform and policy of Labor. 86

McGirr had asked Labor to stay in office just long enough to pass the endowment and endowment legislation. The odds against its success were known and it was clearly understood that in terms of immediate action McGirr's plea meant that the government should initiate the legislation, in the circumstances, amid an inevitable blaze of controversy and publicity. Already, according to the Australian National Review,

'Dooleyism versus McGirrism' challenged the attention of the newspaper reader morning, noon, and night. 87

and a fight over the motherhood and basic wage bills would have intensified interest. A Labor attempt, whether successful or not, would have raised the morale of the affiliated unions and of all Labor's 'solid' supporters. Commenting in December 1921, the conservatively-inclined Printing Industry Employees' Union, for example, felt that the odds were against Labor in the coming election, but added that certain measures such as the basic wage legislation were urgent, and 'a delay-and-do-nothing policy will spell disaster.' 88

85 A.W., 14 June 1922.
Dooley made a vigorous effort impossible. Had the Labor Party been defeated in the Assembly over the basic wage or motherhood endowment legislation, or had it forced a crisis with the Legislative Council over such measures, this would not merely have lifted morale throughout the entire labor movement; whether successful or not, the effort would also have enabled the parliamentarians to face the electors in a much sounder position. As it was, the Labor Party's election promises rang hollow, being almost exact repetitions of those made two years earlier.

As March 1922 brought election day closer, the trade unions had lost most of the earlier elan and self-confidence in industrial affairs which had characterised them when Storey took office. The government was immobilised, and the Labor Party found itself engulfed in a new wave of in-fighting as factions jockeyed over pre-selection ballots. By contrast, on the non-Labor side conflict seemed to have disappeared, and the Progressive-Nationalist candidates presented themselves as 'The Coalition', the key note of their appeal being opposition to the 'Red Challenge to the Establishment and Empire'. Yet of the nine seats that swung to the Coalition, only two were in Labor strongholds, and the Labor total vote increased, though the Coalition reaped most of the benefit of the vastly increased turn-out of voters at this

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89 For examples, see A.W. 12 Jan., 22 Feb. 1922; Daily Mail, 17 Feb. 1922.
90 S.M.H. 23 Mar. 1922; N.S.W. Election Leaflets, 1922, Mitchell.
'particularly heavy',\(^{91}\) poll.

From the moment it took office in March 1920, the Labor Party had two alternatives: to push ahead with 'contentious' legislation, and face an early election in defence of this legislation, or to hang on grimly, while achieving very little, and thus help to bring demoralisation to the entire labor movement. By March 1922, the faction fighting was blatant and incessant, while rumours of shady dealing were rampant.\(^{92}\) All these things provided the soil for religious sectarianism to flare up within the labor movement.\(^{93}\) While the Nationalist voters would have turned out more strongly no matter how soon the election, an early election in a mood of high working class morale might have further increased the Labor turn-out. This must remain speculative, but it seems safe to say that the course adopted by the parliamentarians could not have been much worse so far as labor morale was concerned.

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\(^{91}\) The Chief Electoral Officer (S.M.H., 27 Mar. 1922).

\(^{92}\) Though the most sensational revelations (for example, the sliding ballot box scandals) were still to come, there were those who blamed corruption for Labor's defeat. See, for example, R. Corish, assistant secretary of the Australian Railways' Union, N.S.W. branch, in Railways' Union Gazette, 9 May 1922.

\(^{93}\) The A.L.P. official view was that sectarianism 'decided the balance of power' (S.M.H., 1 Apr. 1922; a view also expressed in the International Communist ( 1 Apr. 1922). See also A.L.P., State of New South Wales, Report of the Executive For the Year 1921, p.4. Here, Sectarianism was described as 'a primary cause' of defeat. This estimate goes too far, but the general mood of apathy and disappointment with the Labor Party allowed sectarianism to play an important part.
The Return of the Revolutionaries to the Reformist Mass Party

In early 1920, the A.L.P. was engrossed in a faction fight where the lines of division turned upon the scramble for personal advance rather than upon issues of public interest; in particular, there appeared little serious concern for the demands of affiliated unions. But by March 1922, when new state elections took place, the situation had altered.

As we have seen, in late March 1921 at the A.L.P. annual conference, certain affiliated unions had threatened to form a 'Third Party', 'Representing the Workers...'. Subsequently the Bailey-McGirr faction came to be identified with the demands of the unions and lower-income groups; though not increasing its numerical strength, the faction's weight in the A.L.P. increased greatly, as it came to be considered the spokesman for the industrialists both in the inner-party conflicts and in the public eye. No single cause can be found for this development. The unions' truculence was undoubtedly influenced by, for example, the existence of unemployment and the grievances persisting from the 1917 settlement. The wharf laborers' officials (Seale, Mullins and Ward) played a leading role in crystallising union discontent with the parliamentarians' performance, and these officials were particularly sensitive to the effects of unemployment and the presence of non-unionists on the waterfront. Additionally however, they faced close contests for office inside their own union, whose rank and file was very responsive to militant and radical appeals. There was considerable interest in the One Big Union movement, while

94 Above, p.215.
despite official lukewarmness the union reaffiliated in November 1921 to the 'red' Labor Council and through it to the Red International of Labor Unions. This was no more than a sign of the times. On all sides leftist political and social ideas merged with industrial militancy to form a whole, a climate of radicalism. In this climate, it would be hard to overestimate the effect of another event – the renewed interest of the Trades Hall reds in A.L.P. affairs, a renewal influenced as much, no doubt by the inclinations and associations of the union official reds as by the new Comintern line on Social-Democratic and Labor Parties.

It thus turns out that the last months of 1921, in which industrial grievances found a more effective voice inside the New South Wales Labor Party, were also the months in which the Trades Hall reds re-directed their attention towards the faction struggle of that party. While that re-direction was not the sole influence which made the industrial view more effective, it was probably the strongest. The left's new orientation allowed it once again, as before its departure in June 1919, to have an impact on the A.L.P., an impact all the stronger in view of the unsettled climate of the post-war years and the growing unemployment of 1921 and 1922. Thus the return of the revolutionaries to the mass reformist party was of major importance to both.

We see the left's impact grow more marked in the second part of this study, as the policy of re-entry of the mass party is pursued. And we also see the permeators permeated – though they had always been susceptible to permeation, as has been shown. Along with their radical politics and their marked inclination to opportunism in political
affairs, the Trades Hall reds carried with them a bureaucratic approach to strikes and trade union affairs.

Despite its considerable influence on Labor Party affairs which reached a peak in 1925 and early 1926, the final glimpses of the left with mass connections as the thesis closes, will be of a group largely impotent and disintegrating as a faction within the mass party.
PART II: 1922-1927.

'The radicals of yesterday are the moderates of today.'

During 1921 leftists in New South Wales once more turned to argument over the old socialist tactic of permeation. Within the Sussex Street Communist Party there was contention even after the line of the third Comintern congress reached Australia. The Communist Party's formal adoption of the united front with the A.L.P. meant no change in the well-established practice of the Trades Hall reds, but it brought into the A.L.P. other Communists who found the environment strange. Communist opposition to permeation was suspended rather than extinguished.

How many Communists were there at this time? Maurice Duverger has indicated the difficulties in defining a party 'member'. Supporters, adherents, militants, propagandists, form a series of concentric circles of ever-increasing party solidarity*. Additionally, in the case of the Communist Party (a Duvergerian 'mass' party) there is the notion of enrolment as a formal procedure involving 'the signing of a definitive undertaking'¹ and payment of regular dues. But the few existing estimates of total membership do not distinguish clearly between members in this sense, and 'adherents, militants, propagandists'.

At the fourth congress of the Comintern in November 1922, Garden claimed a 'membership of nearly one thousand'. However the

¹ Political Parties, p.61,71.
credentials committee of the same congress announced 900 'members' in Australia, 'of whom 750 [were] full-paying members'. Garden repeated his estimate to the writer in an interview where no reference had been made to his published estimate of 1922. E.M. Higgins, who returned to Australia from England in 1924 and soon became a member of the C.P. central executive, told the writer in an interview that Garden's estimate was 'outrageously inaccurate'.

But it is likely that a substantial drop in party membership occurred just before Higgins' return, after the A.L.P. rejected Communist affiliation in late 1923. Moreover, there were three other Australian delegates listening to Garden at the fourth Comintern congress, and unless one assumes he ignored the risk that they would correct his figures, it seems that his estimate could not have been as inaccurate as Higgins thought. The most likely probability is that there was an element of exaggeration in Garden's figure, and that he included 'adherents, militants, propagandists' as 'members'. Higgins was more familiar with the Australian situation two years later, when Communist strength had decreased; moreover, he was a most precise man who no doubt interpreted 'members' in the strict sense of the word.

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3. Ibid., p.291. Two delegates were invited and, when four arrived, two were given voting rights, two a 'consultative voice.'
The majority of Communists lived in New South Wales. There, between 'unity' (presumably the conference of July 1922) and January 1923, the Communist Party claimed, 102 new members joined its ranks, seventy nine through local branches, twenty three as 'members at large'. The loss of the entire Sydney branch by expulsion at the end of 1922 had been largely made good, if we can believe reports given to the Comintern, by 1924.

While the Sydney Communists had an unusual degree of trade union influence when compared with, say, the British and American Communists, Garden seems to have made exaggerated claims on the matter. At the Comintern fourth congress, he said that the C.P. was able to direct just close on 400,000 workers—that is, including 237,000 in the State of New South Wales—organized workers and 110,000 organized workers in Brisbane, Queensland. The Communist Party is based in Australia on the nuclei system. Every union has its nuclei from 20 down to 2... The Labor Council of New South Wales constitutes 120 unions. Yet the Communist Party has full control of the Executive. Out of the 12 members of the Executive eleven are members of the Communist Party and they direct these 120 unions and the policy of each union.

Garden implied that the influence of the C.P. had increased considerably during 1922, in marked contrast with the British C.P. of which Zinoviev had said earlier:

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4 The Communist, 5 Jan. 1923. (See above p. 94).
5 S.M.H., 2 Dec. 1922; quoting an 'official statement issued at the Trades Hall'; also the Communist, 1 Dec. 1922.
6 From the Fourth to the Fifth World Congress. Report of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, p.84.
If we take into consideration the great amount of unemployment and the suffering of the English proletariat, the slow development of Communism in England is remarkable. It is practically stagnant...8

During the wages and hours disputes of 1922, Garden claimed that the C.P.

... got all the workers together and, instead of allowing one section to go down one after another, we said, "The working class of Australia must stand solid, speak with one voice and act together."... The masses rallied round our banner, and Australia is the first country in the world that was able to withstand the offensive... It was the only country in the world which resisted the capitalist offensive... And the whole policy was directed by the Communist Party... The result of this militant activity has been linking up of the union forces into one big union which is breaking down all craft barriers. 9

His words could hardly have been more misleading. It is true that Communist influence was significant, in Sydney if not elsewhere, but the policy put forward by the most prominent Communists was exactly the opposite of that described by Garden. Garden, the man perhaps most responsible for the go-slow and confined strike tactics, was fully aware of Communist orthodoxy on the matter, and spoke before this international gathering of the orthodox as an orthodox Communist industrial leader. In fact he was not. He stated that the outcome of the disputes was a union victory, where in fact it was a clear defeat. And he implied an increase in Communist influence as a result of the fictitious victory, when it is more than likely that the actual defeat diminished it.

8 Ibid., p.25.
9 Ibid., pp. 231-232.
The left-wing union officials who had initiated the 'breakaway' of 1919 were mostly still with the Communists in 1924, either in their ranks or cooperating freely with them; others who had come close to the Communists (or future Communists) subsequent to the 'breakaway', men such as J. Beasley (Electrical Trades Union) and R.J. Heffron (Marine Stewards) were also still closely associated with the Communists. An exception was A.C. Willis, the powerful secretary of the miners' federation. The Liverpool Street Communist Party alleged that Willis had once signed up in the Sussex Street Communist Party, but already by September 1922 Willis, though still lecturing at the Communist Hall, was advocating a 'constitutional' policy. To judge by their close association with Beasley, a devout Catholic, both the Trades Hall reds and the Sussex Street C.P. could overlook ideological differences on occasions; something they found far harder to take, however, was Willis's alignment with the Dooley faction before and during the faction flare-up preceding the state elections of March 1922.

10 For the story of how Beasley rose to prominence in his union, and what he did then, see Exec. Min. Electrical Trades Union, 11 Mar. 1919, 8,12,24 Sept.1919, Minutes of General Meetings, 3 Sept., 3 Dec. 1919.

11 For the circumstances in which Heffron became State Secretary of the Marine Stewards' Union, see Minutes, General Meeting, Marine Stewards' Union, Feb.-Nov.1921, and Marine Stewards' Journal, 21 May, 15 Oct.1921.

12 See the Communist, 7 Nov. 1922, 5 Jan. 1923.


14 The Communist, 29 Sept. 1922.
Relations between the Communists and Willis steadily deteriorated during 1923 as Willis played a key part in making Lang's triumph possible at the annual A.L.P. conference, and then did little, in Communist eyes, to offset Lang's determination to prevent Communist affiliation to the Labor Party.

During 1923 and 1924, indeed, most of the Communists' energies were devoted to achieving this affiliation. After the decision of the 1923 A.L.P. annual conference to allow affiliation 'in principle', Communists regarded affiliation as certain; but their newspaper added:

The Communist Party has not ceased to be a Communist Party. On the contrary, the Communist Party will now become a real Communist Party...

Workers' Weekly exhorted readers to

Join the Labor Party and Reorganise it.

Join the Labor Party and be an Active Fighter For Communism. 15

In October, the A.L.P. central executive rejected Communist affiliation by sixteen votes to ten, with seven abstentions, and then expelled the Communists Garden and Howie from the state and federal A.L.P. executives. Lang claims much of the credit for these moves though E.W. Campbell, the Communist Party historian, says that deputy-leader Peter Loughlin also played a leading role. 16

15 Workers' Weekly, 22 June, 7, 14 Sept. 1923.
Lang gives his reason succinctly:

As the Communist Party was opposed to the Labor Party, no one could be a member of both parties. 17

Loughlin, perhaps the most capable right-wing ideologue, put the anti-communist case more fully in a pamphlet written shortly after the executive's decisions (Ten Reasons Why Labor should continue to Exclude the Communist Party and Members of that Party from the A.L.P.).

Communists should be excluded because they advocated revolution and armed violence, wholesale confiscation of land and mines, and an 'iron dictatorship', with destruction of parliamentary and local governing bodies, all contrary to A.L.P. support for majority rule. Communists owed 'allegiance to an executive of foreigners in Moscow', preached the united front as a 'matter of tactics to deceive the Trade Unions and Labor Leagues', and had an attitude to religion offensive to 95% of A.L.P. and trade union members. Finally, the admission of the C.P. with 'the right of propaganda would destroy the solidarity of the A.L.P.' Loughlin clearly recognised the fact that Communist ideas were extremely wide-spread in the Labor movement and could scarcely be kept out of the A.L.P., and he stressed that the A.L.P. 'welcomed' men who accepted 'Communist methods' 'in principle' 'without desiring or attempting to compromise the A.L.P. by associating their Communist beliefs with it'.

17 Lang, op.cit., p.187.
But, he continued, 'there are also Communists who desire it to be known that they believe in Communism, but who are too craven to take the responsibility of membership in the Communist Party. True blacklegs by instinct, they have neither the courage to join the Communist Party openly nor the decency to play the game in the A.L.P. Their activities are chiefly directed to "white anting" for the comrades outside.'

Loughlin wrote what many of the anti-Communist Labor men thought. Lang himself was genuinely anti-militant and anti-Communist, an old-style Labor moderate and a Catholic, who, if less ideologically committed to Catholicism than Loughlin, was nevertheless deeply influenced by his religion. Additionally, Lang cherished political ambition, and in this one finds another reason for his wanting the A.L.P. to proclaim itself anti-Communist; he hoped that anti-Communism would increase his electoral popularity and bring him closer to being state Premier. Yet Lang also believed that the A.L.P. must remain anti-Communist if it were to remain the sort of party in which moderate and conservative A.L.P. men could work. The Communists had never hidden the fact that they intended to use the A.L.P. as a means of furthering their influence over unionists and the public generally. The climate of the day was such that it was believed likely to prove a most effective means, and if the Communists succeeded the A.L.P. could be expected to change, in respect both of institutions and climate, in a way uncongenial to the anti-Communists. On the other hand, it might reasonably have been hoped that Communists would
make little headway outside the A.L.P., still regarded as the mass party.

After October 1923, the Communists directed a great deal of effort towards having A.L.P. expulsion decisions rescinded. Motions from unions and A.L.P. branches calling for rescission of expulsions were secured and publicised; and conferences of 'industrialists' were arranged (e.g., the conference of 6 Sept. 1924), the Communists once more reviving the essentially syndicalist notion of 'the industrial wing' versus 'the political wing'. The Communists were decisively rejected by the A.L.P. conference of 1924, but they claimed that the one hundred and fifty nine delegates opposing their affiliation represented only 31,000 members of the Labor Party, while the one hundred and ten delegates who supported their affiliation represented 113,000 members. They listed the unions whose delegates voted for them in their newspaper, and gave the membership of each.

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18 See, for example, the impressive lists in Workers' Weekly, 9, 16 Nov. 1923, 7 Mar. 1924. See also the Minutes of the General Meeting of the Labor Council, 21 Aug. 1924, for a motion from the Boilermakers' Society.

20 Campbell, History of the Australian Labor Movement p.117; Workers' Weekly, 25 Apr. 1924. Support for the Communists was certainly impressive; but as in 1922, the Comintern appears to have been given an exaggerated account. For example, see p.83 of From the Fourth to the Fifth World Congress. Report of the Executive Committee of the Communist International; '... a considerable number of local trade union groups and local Labour Parties have joined the Communist Party and demand the convocation of a special conference of the Australian Labour Party. With the object of settling the question of the position of Communists in the Labour Party and of adherence of the Communist Party to the Labour Party'. 
The Communists of course took up other issues in 1923 and 1924. They published their own program for the labor movement – a 'Labor Government for all Australia', a 'united front against all capitalist organisations', the 'linking up of all trade unions in the One Big Union'; but they did little about this program. They organised a body called 'Workers' International Russian Reconstruction', upon which sat men of widely differing labor viewpoints: J.M. Baddeley, once an official of the miners and now in parliament; H. Pickard (A.E.U), R. Stuart-Robertson, M.L.A., H.E. Boote, editor of the Australian Worker, and H. Ross, member of the Federated Ironworkers' Association and a Communist. They supported the strike by operative bakers against night work, and protested when leading union officials were arrested over union refusal to allow the 'Port Lyttleton', an allegedly unseaworthy vessel, to sail. But these were very minor affairs for the Communist Party; in addition to the campaign for Labor Party affiliation, the other major interest seems to have lain in a mounting conflict with A.C. Willis, secretary of the miners' federation.

This conflict was exacerbated when the Communists criticised the officials' industrial strategy during a lockout in the northern coalfield of New South Wales in mid-1923, and still further intensified when

21 Workers' Weekly, 29 June 1923, 18 Jan., 16 May 1924.
22 R. Gollan, The Coalminers of New South Wales A History of the Union, pp.173-4; Workers' Weekly, 6,20,27 July, 3 Aug.1923; see also a leaflet Solving the Coal Mystery. How the Miners Were Double-Crossed, Worker Print, Sydney, June 1924 (R.S. Ross Collection). The Communists almost certainly had a hand (to judge from the signatories to the leaflet) in reviving the old A.W.U. – originated charges herein.
the Communists alleged that A.C. Willis was sacrificing the miners' newspaper Common Cause in order to assist the Labor Daily. 23

By the end of 1924, a remarkable withering of membership and of morale appears to have set in amongst the Communists. Shortly after his return from England in August 1924, Esmond Higgins (who immediately took a leading part in the affairs of the Communists in New South Wales) could write:

... And then there's the Party. A handful of derelicts marooned away from everywhere, with ¾ of the Party members only 'secret' members as a result of the prohibitions of the Labor Party and therefore absolutely unreliable from the point of view of the Party. This handful restlessly turning over proposals for a way out... Bluff, intrigue, faction, indiscipline, hypocrisy, talk, ineptitude - this is all the poor old party is able to trade on now. 24

Higgin's gloomy impression on the general atmosphere in the party was not shared by Guido Baracchi, who returned from Germany by way of England at almost the same time as Higgins, and immediately assumed a like leading role in the Communist Party; he has suggested that Higgins felt 'let down' at the humble scale of Australian revolutionary affairs by comparison with England's. Baracchi also felt 'let down', he claimed, as he had been in Germany at the time of the revolts of 1923, but he was nevertheless 'quite impressed' with 'certain things' in Sydney, Lithgow and Newcastle; he would not use the word 'derelict', because he felt that many of the cadres were

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23 Workers' Weekly, 20 June 1924.
24 E.M. Higgins Papers.
'up and coming'. Membership figures for Australia at the time are given as 280, the majority living in New South Wales.

However, while Higgins might have overstated the case, things were by no means well with the Communists. During 1924 came warnings that the period of 'united front' with the A.L.P. was drawing to a close, as increasing tension within the Russian Communist Party accompanied the growth of widespread uneasiness within the international Communist movement. Heralding the approaching onslaught upon the 'united front', the executive committee of the Communist International wrote about the New South Wales Communists:

There has ... been a certain confusion in the application of united front tactics. The report of the last party conference shows that united front tactics and its consequences are not yet fully understood.

25 Interview, 11 July 1962. Baracchi gave as examples: the enthusiasm of Charles Nelson and Joe Rogan in Lithgow, of Hector and Hettie Ross and their group in Newcastle; the sale of Communist literature in Balmain branch of the A.L.P.; the popularity of the Communist Party in Balmain, where Labor aldermen, Barrachi claimed, were proud to walk down the street with the leading Communist Tom Payne.


26 Victor Serge, From Lenin to Stalin, pp.69-75.

27 For an account of Russian inner-party conflicts in the British Communist press, then closely read by at least some leading Australian Communists, see the Labour Monthly, vol.6, March 1924, pp. 177-182, 'The Discussion in the Russian Communist Party.' Ruth Fischer, Stalin and German Communism, p.401, writes of the 'indecisiveness, the restlessness, the secrecy that hung over the Comintern in this period.'

28 From the Fourth to the Fifth World Congress, p.84.
In June 1924, the fifth congress of the Communist International proclaimed a new 'left' turn, away from the 1921 'united front', towards an independent stand by Communists in anticipation of world revolution, and the Comintern reversal set on foot widespread discussion amongst Communists in New South Wales.

Despite excellent initial trade union connections, Communist trade union influence had dwindled; by 1924, the central executive rarely discussed trade union affairs and, when it did, such discussions were confined almost entirely to Garden and Denford. Among the reasons for the dwindling Communist union influence was the party's trade union policy, as was shown in chapter III of this study, while of the Communists' work in the A.L.P. Garden said, not without justification:

The main tactic of many Party members was to hide every semblance of being a Communist... 31

Reasons are not hard to find. Communists were usually politically gifted in comparison with Labor Party members. Shining easily in


30 E.M. Higgins (at the time a member of the Communist Party central executive) told the writer this in an interview, 4 Sept. 1960.

31 Workers' Weekly, 19 Dec. 1924. Garden had adapted himself immediately, if briefly, to the new Comintern line.
Labor Party life, they could quickly learn the lure of office and tend to forget their revolutionary purpose. The difficulties of evolving revolutionary tactics in a reformist milieu were great, and would have heavily taxed an infant organisation, many of whose members had only fleeting acquaintance with the Marxist political heritage — where indeed, this had much direct bearing on their circumstances. A Communist Party today, more authoritarian in structure, and reinforced by the world-wide strength of the Communist states, might not lose so many cadres if it involved them in Labor Party work, as its early predecessors did; even so, the modern Communist Party has to deal carefully with its trade union functionaries who, like the Labor Party cadres of the 1920s, hold office in a mass and reformist organisation. Writing in 1925, Baracchi suggested the further reason that a lack of appropriate organisation for Communists working in the Labor Party had contributed to the fading of their political colour. 32

It seems likely that, no matter what course the early Communists had taken, their unique organisational principle of 'democratic centralism' was too new to have been successfully tried under conditions of secrecy in the mass party. Yet it seems just as likely that the early Communist demand for open affiliation to the A.L.P. had no chance of success. Thus, whichever course the first Communists chose, the odds were heavily against them. To such

32 The Communist, Feb. 1925.
difficulties one must add the personal characteristics of J.S. Garden; and finally, the fact that the disintegration of the Communist and Communist-oriented left wing in the Labor Party, and the first crisis of note within the New South Wales Communist Party itself, took place as part of a world-wide revolutionary ebb.

Some of these difficulties were no doubt unavoidable difficulties of growth; but, in keeping with the Comintern's abrupt 'left' turn, many of the New South Wales Communists ascribed them wholly to the 'united front' tactic, and hoped to correct them by following the Comintern's new line. The Communists' annual conference in 1924 accordingly decided to stand Communist candidates against A.L.P. candidates in the next state elections. In 1925, Communist candidates stood for the heavily industrialised electorates of Balmain (Tom Payne, Clerical Association, and Lionel Leece, Clothing Trades), Botany (H.L. Denford, Ironworkers, and Mrs. Nelle Rickie, Theatrical Employees' Union) and Sydney (J.S. Garden, Labor Council, and Pat Drew, Sheet Metal Workers' Union). The Communists said 'Vote Labor and Make Labor Fight' and 'Return a Communist Ginger Group'. They called for nationalisation without compensation, with workers' control, of banks, mines and large scale industries; workers' control of all state and municipal services; a full basic wage to all workers when unemployed or sick; a minimum wage of £6 a week, irrespective of sex; a six hour working day and a five day week. 33

33 Workers' Weekly, 24 Apr., 22 May 1925.
But in all, the Communists polled under 1,000 first preference votes, and in their disappointment they immediately re-opened the debate on perspectives and methods of work.

An important contribution had already been made by Guido Baracchi, editor of the new theoretical organ, the Communist, C.P. central executive member, one of Australia's most sophisticated Marxists, and later described by an official C.P. historian as 'the spokesman for [an ] anti-Party group' which advocated liquidation of the C.P. Baracchi wrote:

Our whole Australian movement, besides being one of the most insignificant and self-satisfied in the world, is at present also one of the rottenest with opportunism. In such an environment, even a Communist Party could scarcely be expected to have kept itself entirely free from the prevailing tendency... In N.S.W., where the C.P. is strongest, this opportunism has particularly revealed itself in the course of the Party's strivings for a United Front in relation to the A.L.P. At least some Communists in the Leagues, instead of winning support for the C.P. from A.L.P. 'ers, have been seduced by the A.L.P. from their allegiance to Communism... The result has been a certain amount of demoralisation of individual Communists, as well as a certain passivity of the whole Party extending beyond its relations with the A.L.P.

Citing as evidence the words of the British delegation to and the theses of the fifth Comintern congress (17 June to 8 July 1924), Baracchi argued that 'opportunism' was no local phenomenon but the result of the slow development of the social revolution.

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34 The final figures in the primary vote were as follows: in Balmain, Payne received 194 votes, Leece 40; in Botany, Denford 147 votes and Mrs. Rickie, 111; in Sydney, Drew received 16 votes, Garden 317 (A.N.R. 19 June 1925).

35 E.W. Campbell, op.cit., p.120.
Opportunism had taken the form of a distortion of the tactic of the United Front. Some of our sectarian friends will accordingly assert that this tactic... should be abandoned. But this is nonsense...36

During the discussions of 1924, foundation Communist Lionel Leece had suggested that the Communist Party be abolished as an open party, that its members join the A.L.P. as individuals, and that the Communist Party carry on either as an open propaganda group, or as a secret committee of the Third International. 37 In 1925 H.E. Quaiffe, an old-time socialist and building trade unionist, proposed that the Communists reconstitute themselves as a secret and tightly-knit organisation within the A.L.P. Baracchi proposed abolishing the Communist Party and substituting for it, on the model of a group already formed by Percy Laidler and Bert Payne in Melbourne, a Communist Propaganda League, which would coordinate left-wing work in the Labor Party and the trade unions.38

But Baracchi's 'sectarian friends' carried the day, and the C.P. reverted to the line espoused before the united front era. By so doing, the C.P. lost a good many of its cadres and sympathisers now immersed in A.L.P. work, including in particular Denford and Garden.

36 The Communist, Feb.1925.
37 Higgin's Papers, late 1924.
38 Interview with Baracchi, August 1961. Reporting Baracchi's later resignation from the Communist Party, the Workers' Weekly, (8 Jan.1926) referred to a small "non-proletarian", "Right-Wing" element who wanted to 'liquidate' the Communist Party.
Garden had unhesitatingly denounced the way in which the 'united front' tactic was being applied in New South Wales, though he himself could well have accepted some of the responsibility for the things he denounced. But after the Communist failure at the state elections in 1925, Garden transferred more and more of his attention to the A.L.P., losing, in the process, what he had possessed in the way of a Communist political approach. There was no formal break between Garden and the Communists for some time, though some of the polemic in the *Workers' Weekly* was clearly aimed at him. The labor movement in Australia, now deeply influenced by Arbitration, had thrown up a type of worker with an exaggerated idea of the United Front... many there were who regarded the Communist Party as an unnecessary piece of duplication and they pictured the A.L.P. being 'white-anted' into becoming quite revolutionary. When the A.L.P. adopted the famous 'Red' objective in the period of reaction that followed the war, the 'mergers' were in great spirit and many were finally completely estranged from the revolutionary movements, especially those to whom the plums of office appeared alluring.

At the end of 1926, the *Labor Daily* reported a speech made by Garden at Young in New South Wales, where Garden allegedly denied that he

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39 Garden had stood for the elections as a Communist candidate. Yet Higgins, who, as Director of the Labor Research Bureau between August 1924 and July 1925, had a room near Garden's at the Trades Hall, told the writer that 'all Labor Council business stopped' during the elections while Garden organised officials in the Trades Hall to work for J.T. Lang and other A.L.P. candidates, particularly for the popular J.M. Baddeley. 'In a curious, devious way', said Higgins, Garden was a Langite long before he was nominally one of Lang's supporters. (Interview, 4 September 1960.)

was a member of either the Communist Party or the Labor Party.\textsuperscript{41}

The Communist central executive asked him to explain himself, and Garden answered that since he was speaking on behalf of the Labor Council, he was entitled to say what he had said. Garden then refused the central executive's request that he declare his membership of the Communist Party and the Communists expelled him, concluding their explanation for this with an attack on the 'Policy of Permeation':

Under the cloak of 'permeation', Comrade Garden has allied himself with the reformist politicians to such an extent that he has been instrumental in enabling these people to 'permeate' the trade union movement and making it become an appendage of the political machine.\textsuperscript{42}

Along with Garden, men who had long been closely associated with him either left the Communist Party, or ceased to work with it; among them were Denford,\textsuperscript{43} Graves, Beasley, Heffron and Rutherford. Others were bemused and politically disoriented by the changes of the last two years and dropped out of political activity altogether, though there were those who continued to work in the Labor Party, some

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 10 Dec. 1926.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 10 Dec. 1926. However, Garden remained on friendly terms with the Communists until their 'social-fascist' period was well under way; in 1929, for example, through Garden's influence, leading Communist J. Kavanagh became chairman of the Labor Council disputes committee which conducted the timber strike in New South Wales.

\textsuperscript{43} Denford ceased to be a financial member at the end of the first quarter in 1926. His reason for leaving, he told the writer (Interview), was C.P. refusal to support his A.L.P. work.
continuing as socialists, others promoting their own careers as best they could. As for the Communist Party, newer men — E.M. Higgins, J. Kavanagh, J. Ryan — stepped into the front rank, along with older members such as T. Wright and Norman Jeffery. The main Communist campaigns for 1926 and 1927 were energetically conducted, but had little impact because most of them were not on the main lines of interest of the unions and the Labor Party. 45

The men and women who set up the New South Wales Communist Party assumed that the post-war and world-wide revolutionary wave would continue. Had it done so, more Australian workers might have abandoned the A.L.P. in favour of the Communist Party, and the Communist Party might have become a mass party. 46 But that revolutionary wave passed and, once it had passed, the revolutionaries were

45 The main campaigns were: 'Hands Off China' (where, as Higgins later said, the Communists gave support with few reservations to the 'great democrat' Chiang Kai-Shek (Interview, 4 Sept.1960; see also the Labor Monthly, 1 Mar.1927); the British seamen's strike; the threatened deportation of T. Walsh and J. Johnson of the Australian Seamen's Union; and the establishment of the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat.

46 Authors of a recent history of the American Communist Party, Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, have a passage which bears closely on this possibility (The American Communist Party. A Critical History. (1919-1957), p.30): 'In its estimate of the European situation, the left wing was more realistic than those who looked forward to social stability in the world made by Wilson, Clemenceau and Lloyd George; but it failed to appraise with equal realism the enormous strength and resilience of American capitalism... If, on the other hand, the revolution in Europe had succeeded, as Lenin was hoping and the American left assuming, then the talk about revolution in which the American radicals so easily indulged might not have seemed quite so bizarre as it now does. Could American capitalism have withstood the impact of a socialist or communist Europe?'
faced with a dilemma upon whose alternative horns we see them impaled during our period. The Communists saw the dilemma in terms of two truths: the first, that when revolutionaries entered the A.L.P. there was a great deal of evidence to suggest that they soon ceased to be revolutionary; the second, that the A.L.P. continued to hold the ear of the masses on political issues. In the debate which was carried on during and after 1924, the side which felt the first of these truths more strongly put forward the solution of carrying on as an open party of revolution; the side which felt the second of these truths more strongly advocated reconstitution, either as an open propaganda body or as a secret committee of the Third International within the Labor Party. By 1925, the former solution had been adopted and the A.L.P. abandoned.

The early years had been hard for the Communist Party. Born as a splinter party, rent with profound controversy over policy, afflicted by the repercussions on the Comintern of the remote struggles within the Russian C.P., the C.P. suffered a high turnover rate in its membership. All this it might have overcome. But with the ebb of the world wave of revolution, the decision to carry on as an open revolutionary party entailed political isolation. In our story of the years following 1925, the radicals organised in the Communist Party of Australia will be found to play no significant role on the main political scene.
CHAPTER VI     THE A.L.P., THE LEFT AND THE UNIONS,
1922-1926.

'Mr Lang is more closely allied with Mr Willis than with Mr Loughlin. Mr Willis's sympathies and friendships run towards the Beasley group and the Reds; Mr Loughlin is an aggressive moderate and an intellectual.... Thus, within both the Cabinet and the A.L.P. are two parties, both sharply antagonistic.'

(The Australian National Review, 20 April 1926.)
In this chapter we must attempt to follow the course of A.L.P. factional struggles which have been termed 'bewildering'. In 1920 and part of 1921 the struggle had suggested that of Tweedledum and Tweedledee but by 1922 a clearer distinction between the main protagonists can be made, as the increased effectiveness of industrial demands meant that they could no longer be treated as lightly as they had in 1920 and early 1921. The Bailey-McGirr faction voiced these demands in a way different from their formal tribute of earlier months.

This increased effectiveness of the industrial voice - a phenomenon associated with the revived interest in the A.L.P. of the Trades Hall reds - is a thread that continues into the period we now enter. There are many shifts and manoeuvres connected with the emergence from within the Dooley faction of J.T. Lang, who sees the time as the moment to 'make his run' - a run that eventually brings him to the solitary heights he occupies in 1930. But Lang's own manoeuvring gives striking testimony to the increased weight of the industrialists; for it is by adopting the role of their spokesman that he takes his decisive steps from 1923 on.

However, in this period one's attention is first drawn by a change in the relations between the component parts of the A.L.P. machine. Comparatively timid in 1920 and 1921, Labor caucus in the New South

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Wales parliament became increasingly bold throughout 1922 in its attitude towards the A.L.P. state executive.

Annual Conference in 1922 had set up a committee to examine McGirr's accusations that the Dooley Cabinet had opposed McGirr over the basic wage and motherhood endowment issues, and that prominent Dooleyties had collaborated with the discredited federal parliamentarian J.H. Catts. The committee's findings favoured the Dooley faction. Since the latter controlled a caucus majority, it is not surprising that caucus refused to accept the now expelled McGirr back in its ranks, but instead bitterly denounced him, passing a resolution of confidence in the ex-Ministers who were alleged to have 'sabotaged' McGirr. When J.H. Catts lent his voice to a caucus counter-attack on the executive, caucus moved for a further enquiry into corrupt practices, with the emphasis on pre-selection ballots. J.M. Baddeley and the Newcastle miners supported this move, thus showing the labor movement that the miners, and A.C. Willis in particular, had come down firmly on the Dooleytie side. Federal executive intervention stayed the hand of the factions until after the 1922 federal elections, but war was re-opened when on 21 December 1922, M. Charlton (Leader in the House of Representatives), Gardiner (Leader in the Senate), and J. Dooley, state parliamentary leader, issued a circular urging pre-conference constitutional changes to give branches (and thus parliamentarians) greater weight than unions at the annual conference. The aim of a return to the pre-1916 situation was further made clear by a call for removal

3 Lang, I Remember, p.198.
of the prohibition against parliamentarian membership of the state A.L.P. executive.  

Hard pressed, the Baileyites cast round for allies and as in late 1921, they met up with the Communists who, for a time, exchanged their largely unqualified support for a Baileyite promise to endorse the Melbourne and Brisbane socialisation objectives and to urge the A.L.P. to accept Communist affiliation. The Communists once more dusted down the concept of the 'industrial' wing versus the 'political' wing and militant unionists were urged to join the Labor Party. Conference was uppermost in their minds.

4 The Parliamentary leaders aimed particularly at the power of the A.W.U.: newspaper ballots were to be abolished, and League rolls signed three months before any ballot by those wishing to vote. The State Executive would no longer be elected from the floor of annual conference, but should instead be constituted of one elected member from each federal electorate in the metropolitan and Newcastle districts; and one from each state electorate in the country districts. But if these proposals were particularly damaging to the A.W.U., they would also decrease the weight in the party of the unions as a whole, and increase that of the parliamentarians.

5 In the official Communist press, there was condemnation of the A.L.P. as a whole in general terms for being a 'reformist' party; and specific condemnation of the 'politicians', the Baileyite faction being known throughout the labor movement as the 'industrialists'. There appears to be no word of criticism against the A.W.U. leaders until Garden left for Moscow shortly after the end of August 1922 (see above p. 169)

At the time of the state elections in March 1922, the Communist-controlled Executive of the Labor Council issued a statement condemning the A.L.P. as a whole as a 'reformist' party, though urging workers to vote for it. (Exec. Minutes, Labor Council, 7 Mar. 1922.) Though the burning topic of the day was that of the two factions within the Labor Party, the Labor Council statement ignored their existence. Earlier however (see note 75 of chapter IV), the Labor Council had made a point of praising McGirr and criticising 'Cabinet', meaning, in the context, the Dooley faction as well.
... The thinkers and fighters in the unions must move to control the party. They must see to it the delegates are honest and not the mere tools of those in control. 6

From this it was a short step to open support for the executive who, after all, stood for the 'industrial wing' in this misleading dichotomy.

As the 1923 annual conference drew nearer, the faction war centred upon efforts by the Dooleyites to convict the Baileyites of corrupt practices in connection with 'sliding ballot boxes' in 1920, and by the Baileyites to convict James Dooley over the wealthy J.B. Suttor. Whether or not it was for gain, Dooley had unquestionably breached Party rules in appointing to the Legislative Council Suttor, a wealthy man whose Party credentials for the appointment were invalid. 7

It is at this time that Lang, hitherto a secondary figure, begins to move — with typical caution — on the path towards a position of unique power in the labor movement of the state. The Baileyite attack prompted an inner-caucus move to unseat Dooley and although this failed, the basis was laid for Lang's later successful move for Dooley to stand down in his favor. Subsequent moves over the Suttor affair led to the

6 The Communist, 1 Dec. 1922.
7 Bailey elicited from Michael Hynes a statement implicating Dooley in corrupt practices, (Molesworth, Set 71 Item 7), and the Executive, amidst a public outcry, appointed a special disputes committee to enquire into the matter.
8 As late as January 1923, the outcome of the pending conference being still uncertain, Lang was careful not to declare himself openly for either faction.
executive's expulsion of Dooley on 1 March. A majority of the parliamentarians then re-elected Dooley as caucus leader, while the Baileyite executive elected McGirr to this position, expelled the Dooleyites and declared the whole question sub judice. Molesworth tells us that, as a sequel to this, the parliamentarians T.D. Mutch, R. O'Halloran, R. Greig and J.T. Lang met with the deposed Dooley, and decided to carry the fight into the Baileyites' camp by raising at annual conference the issue of ballot boxes that had been 'faked' in 1920. During the meeting, writes Molesworth (corroborating a surmise by Louise Overacker)

...To the surprise of certain members present, a document was produced which Dooley was asked to sign by Lang to the effect that if the committee won the fight against the Executive at the conference, Dooley would resign the leadership and make way for Lang. Either Mutch or Greig seized the letter saying - 'This is over the fence, to kill a man when he's down' and tore it up. 11

Noting that the cautious Lang was now prepared to commit his political future in the struggle, it could be surmised that the omens were fairly plain. If further evidence is needed of this, it is supplied by the hint of desperation in the Baileyite manoeuvres. In March, McGirr had openly pledged support for the Socialisation object and the 'united front' of 'all working class organisations,' drawing praise from the Communists. 13 Given the climate of opinion amongst the union rank and

9 A.W., 7 Mar. 1923; Australian Labor Party, State of New South Wales, Report Of The Executive For The Year 1922, p.6-8.
10 Overacker, op.cit., p.139.
11 Molesworth collection, Set 71, Item 3.
12 A.W., 14 Mar. 1923; The Communist, 16 Mar. 1923.
13 The Communist, 16 Mar. 1923.
file, and in particular among the miners, the Dooleyites could not be allowed to appear less 'red' than the Baileyites; former miners' union official J.M. Baddeley persuaded the Dooleyites to give a like pledge, thus neatly cancelling the enemy's advantage. Calling upon its Communist allies, the Baileyite state executive announced a trade union conference on 28 April, inviting unaffiliated along with affiliated unions in an effort to encourage affiliation and secure votes at conference. The Baileyites went to great lengths to convince the leftists of their authentically socialist line even singing the 'Red Flag' at an executive meeting.\(^\text{14}\) About one hundred delegates attended the union conference of 28 April.\(^\text{15}\) Conference resolved that the executive should control the parliamentarians; and that it should be elected directly from unions arranged in 'industrial groups', not from the floor of the annual L.P. conference.\(^\text{16}\) Conference supported both Melbourne and Brisbane socialisation objectives, and demanded the change of L.P. rules to permit affiliation of other working class parties.

\(^\text{14}\) S.M.H., 6, 18 Apr. 1923.

\(^\text{15}\) Labor News 5 May 1923.

\(^\text{16}\) Contrast this with the proposal by the three leading parliamentarians on 21 December 1922: under their scheme, the executive was to be elected from federal and state electorates.
'with the right of propaganda and organisation, while at the same time requiring a loyal acceptance of the decisions of representative Conferences'. Finally, conference elected a committee comprising J. Kilburn, J. Shiels, A.C. Willis, J.S. Garden and H. Denford, to draft appropriate clauses to secure alterations in the A.L.P. constitution in accordance with the decisions of the All-Australian Trades Union Conference of 1922.

Industrious as were the Baileyite-Communist preparations for annual conference, those of its opponents proved better. Strenuous efforts were made by Lang himself, for he had seen the weakness of Dooley's personal position and the fact that it gave him his opportunity. He knew of the widespread trade union disgust with the Baileyites whose reputation for improper practices was far worse than that of the Dooleyites. Thus, in Lang's words:

Most of the organising had been done before Conference met. We realised that we could only defeat the Bailey faction if we could obtain sufficient support from the Trades Hall... 20

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17 Labor News, 5 May 1923.
18 If Willis had any reservations about working with men who had cast their lot in the faction-fight with the Baileyites, he could not express these by refusing to serve on a committee with aims such as this committee had. Even if he had no personal desire to see such aims fulfilled (and it is likely that he did have such a desire), he could not have defended his abstention against attacks from Communists and militants within the miners' union.
19 Even the City Construction section of the A.W.U. itself had, in March of 1923, carried a motion demanding that the executive permit free discussion before conference.
20 I Remember, p.198.
Of the 340 delegates to conference, 2/3rds were from the unions.21 With the aid of J. Tyrell (Municipal Workers' Union), O. Schreiber (Furniture Trades Society), E. Magrath (Printing Industry Employees' Union), J. Culbert (Timber Workers' Union), D. Clyne (Storemen and Packers' Union), W.J. Mills (Sydney Wharf Laborers') and above all, A.C. Willis and J.M. Baddeley of the miners' union, Lang set to work. The unions his side persuaded to affiliate, or to resume lapsed affiliation, included (according to Lang) the Australian Railways' Union and the two engineering unions (the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Australian Society of Engineers). The minutes of the Ship Painters' and Dockers' Union reveal that this union was another.22 Lang insisted that the unions pay affiliation dues for all their members, thereby securing the maximum allowable number of delegates to conference; it had become a common practice, one reflecting the spread of unionist dissatisfaction with and passivity towards the A.L.P., to pay fees for only a small proportion of members.23 Amongst the miners, Baddeley and Willis had been working for 18 months to persuade the three district branches (North, South and West) of the Australasian Coal and Shale Employees' Federation to affiliate, and when the southern district affiliated in June 1923, it was the last to do so, opposition to affiliation having been substantial.24 Through the joint efforts of

21 Ibid., p.198.
22 Minutes, Gen. Meeting, Ship Painters' and Dockers' Union, 21,28 May 1923.
23 Interview with Lang, December 1961.
24 Common Cause, 22 June 1923. Affiliation would have been arranged earlier but for 'certain obstructive tactics adopted by certain individuals' (ibid.).
the enemy factions, ten unions either affiliated or reaffiliated with the A.L.P. between 28 April and 30 May 1923.25

Counting votes in advance, Lang claims to have seen that the miners' vote would be decisive. Two problems therefore arose. First, how could Lang persuade Willis to coax from his fellow delegates a vote against the 'industrialist' alliance of 1916, and against the Communists? Second, supposing Lang did win their help, how were Willis and the other miners' delegates to secure the approval of the rank and file miner? Lang explains how the first problem was solved:

We then found out that Willis wanted to be President...
We found that we could deal with Willis and Baddeley, and in that way split the Industrialists. 26

Lang persuaded Magrath, of the Printers, to stand down for the presidency.27 The second problem was more formidable, as the climate of opinion amongst the miners was leftist, and the Communists were seen as integral parts of, often as the leaders of, the left. In reporting back to the rank and file, miners' delegates to annual conference in 1923 showed that they were well aware of this climate and went to great lengths to demonstrate that the Communists had been untrue to working class tradition; the delegates charged that the Communists at conference had entered into an agreement with the Bailey section to meet their own purpose. It was admitted that a ticket had been agreed upon between the Communists and the Bailey section that the Communists were to obtain 10 of their number on the executive and that the Bailey section

25 A.W., 30 May 1923.
26 I Remember, p.198.
27 Interview with Lang, December 1961.
were to get the remaining 20... In consideration of our position where the Bailey section had consistently opposed our policy and constitution (re the All-Australian Congress proposals) previously we arrived at the conclusion that we would not support the Communists on some issues that did not vitally affect the policy of this union, when they in unmistakeable terms embraced the Bailey section. We could not associate ourselves with the compact because a number of us have consistently advanced reasons to our members that there should be a general clean up of the movement, particularly in the light of statements and charges in respect to faked tickets, crook ballot boxes, etc... Further, we are convinced that the compact entered into with these sections had an effect upon the Communists in not fighting for a clean up of the movement... We regretted to find that members of the working-class would adopt these tactics. 28[sic]

Thus, at annual conference, the dice were loaded against the Baileyite-Communist alliance. The first show of strength revealed this, when H. Denford moved endorsement of a recommendation from the state executive excluding parliamentarians from conference — and was defeated on a division by 130 votes to 121. 29 Denford's motion was very carefully chosen to win the maximum number of any possible 'centre'; the motion scored well, but also revealed that the 'hard-core' Dooleystes had the numbers, which they retained throughout the conference. 30

28 Common Cause, 6 July 1923. At the annual conference of the A.L.P., D. Davies, a delegate from the Northern district branch of the miners, expressed anger at alleged Communist interference in the conduct of a lockout on the north field (A.W., 13 June 1923).

29 A.W., 6 June 1923. Before division, the count was 129-127.

30 For example, a report to conference coming from the Baileyite majority of the state executive was rejected in favour of a minority report from the dissentient eight on the executive (Round Table, vol. 13, 1922-23, p.855).
Conference heard a letter from Michael Hynes indubitably implicating Dooley in forging A.L.P. membership ticket butts so that wealthy J.B. Suttor would be eligible for a seat on the Legislative Council. But the Bailey side seems to have come off worse in the cross-fire of corruption charges, when Dooleyites regaled conference with details of the Baileyite sliding ballot boxes of 1920. In the crucial elections, the Dooleyites had a 'crushing majority'. Dooley was reinstated as caucus leader by 180 votes to 79, and the Baileyite executive nominations for official positions were rejected out of hand, though these had included the most prominent leftists of the time, except for A.C. Willis. When the new state executive was announced, it was found that only one of the old Baileyites had survived - Kate Dwyer, of the Women Workers' Union.

Such a decisive defeat of an Executive has never before been known in Labor's ranks...

mourned the official organ of the A.W.U. Seven left-wing nominees gained positions, however, and they included two declared Communists,


See the Communist, 8 June 1923. For the interstate executive, J. Howie was nominated. For delegates to interstate conference, H.L. Denford, L. Leece. For the state executive, J. Beasley, J.S. Garden, W.Gibb, J.J.Graves, R.Heffron, J.Kilburn, A.McPherson, F.Roels, A.Rutherford. A.W., 13 June 1923.
J.S. Garden and J. Howie, along with their supporters, J. Beasley, J. Kilburn, J.J. Graves, and W.J. Gibb. It is worth noting also that the socialisation objective was adopted by a massive vote. 34

The matter of Communist affiliation gave rise to one of the most heated and most interesting debates at conference. Pledged to defend his fellow expellees of 1919, the new president A.C. Willis had to support the Communists but, allied now to Lang, and angered by Communist opposition to his coalfield industrial strategy of 1923, Willis also wanted to qualify this support so as to prevent the Communists from actually entering the A.L.P. as declared Communists. The subject arose when J.S. Garden, appearing as an alternate delegate from the Clerks' Union, 35 moved adoption of a resolution emanating from the trade union conference of April 28.

For the purpose of bringing about a united working-class front, this conference recommends to the New South Wales State Conference of the A.L.P. the alteration of the rules and the constitution, to allow of affiliation of other working-class parties, with the right of propaganda and organisation, while at the same time requiring a loyal acceptance of the decisions of representative conferences. 36

It was, of course, impossible to fulfil both of the last two conditions,

34 Scarcely surprising, for a leading Baileyite, Arthur Blakely, moved the adoption of the socialisation objective, while leading Dooleyte, J.M. Baddeley, seconded the motion (Daily Telegraph, 11 June 1923).

35 From 1918, Garden's credentials to A.L.P. official gatherings often came from either the Clerk's Union or the Sailmakers' Union.

36 Daily Telegraph, 11 June 1923.
and this first prompted the charge of duplicity from at least one delegate.37

The new vice-president of the A.L.P., E.C. McGrath (Printing Industry Employees' Union), immediately brought up the point Willis was soon to reiterate: the present conference was constitutionally allowed merely to affirm the principle of affiliation by the C.P.; the issue itself must be submitted to the new executive, thence to leagues and affiliated unions, and back to annual conference in 1924. If the A.L.P. allowed Communists inside its ranks as open Communists, said Loughlin, a Country Labor Party would be formed, while Alam, of Dubbo, went further and declared: 'The Communists are murdering this party'.38 The question resulted in a vote of 122 for altering the rules to permit affiliation of other 'working class parties', and 122 against, and was passed on the casting vote of A.C. Willis.

37 T.J. Stein, Railway Industry Branch of the A.W.U., said he was 'amazed' at such a "stunt" by the Communists who claimed to stand for 'square-dealing'. (A.W., 13 June 1923.)

38 Daily Telegraph, 11 June 1923.
The new executive soon expelled the outstanding Baileyites from the A.L.P., including, of course, John Bailey himself, suspended P. Minahan for two years, and censured P. Coleman.

On 31 July 1923, James Dooley resigned his leadership of caucus and, in a contest with W. Dunn, J.T. Lang was elected as leader by twenty two votes to eleven, with Peter Loughlin his deputy-leader. Lang immediately began his efforts to be rid of the Communists, efforts which probably met with no great resistance from A.C. Willis, chairman of the A.L.P. On 20 October 1923, Lang and Loughlin attended a special executive meeting which expelled the Communists by its decision that "no Communist who [was] a member of the Communist Party [could] remain a member of the Labor Party."42 Sixteen voted for expulsion and ten against, while six abstained. The ten opponents of expulsion were J. Flanagan, J. Beasley, D. Clyne, J.S. Garden, W.J. Gibb, J.J. Graves, J. Kilburn, D. Rees, A. Rutherford, and J.T. Sweeney.43 For months after this (as we saw) the Sydney Communists threw all their energies into a campaign for affiliation, but at A.L.P. annual conference in 1924 they failed to secure the necessary support.

Garden, giving the Labor Council's annual report in 1923, alleged that the executive was 'mere putty' in the hands of Lang

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42 I Remember, p.188.

43 The executive's right to expel the Communists found precedents in actions of the Baileyite executive, based on the right of the executive to carry out party policy between annual conferences, a right upheld by A.C. Willis at the 1923 conference.
and Loughlin. And indeed, despite Willis's assertion of executive supremacy at the 1923 Conference, the executive soon revealed its desire for unity with the parliamentarians. As Rawson points out, there was no attempt to control the parliamentarians, and the executive, union-dominated as it was, allowed a big share in party government to branch representatives, traditionally more responsive to the parliamentary wing than were union representatives. The executive also quietly dropped the Labor Council demand that parliamentarians should deposit with the executive signed but undated resignations. This general retreat might be thought to imply that Lang was in a better bargaining position than the executive but this was not so. Though he had secured caucus leadership in July 1923 by a respectable enough margin, he was then, and had long been, unpopular with the unions. For example, Lang's reputation in the Sydney Wharf Labourers' Union was already bad in 1921 because he was held responsible for increasing the rentals of state-owned houses in the Sydney 'Rocks' area. At A.L.P. annual conference in 1923, Roberts and Clyne of the Storemen and Packers' Union had moved that conference recommend the withdrawal of Lang's endorsement for his refusal, when Treasurer in the Storey administration, to pay an increase in wages to Harbour Trust Employees. Some weeks after Lang was elected parliamentary leader, the miners'...

44 'We stand absolutely for Executive control' (A.W., 13 June 1923).
46 Clyne later came to be one of Lang's most faithful henchmen.
official paper *Common Cause* criticised Lang and Loughlin strongly. By 1924, while Lang had still not made his big bid for popularity among the rank and file unionists (that came with his legislation between August 1925 and February 1926) his position in caucus itself had grown shaky, and he retained his leadership by only *one* vote in a contest against T.D. Mutch.

The Trades Hall reds and their allies supported the Baileyite faction in its efforts to retain and (later) to regain A.L.P. leadership, but once again gave their support without serious qualifications or reservations. In doing so, they appear to have shown that lack of concern or sensitivity towards the outlook of the rank and file unionists.  

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47 *Common Cause*, 5 Sep. 1923. E. Ward and H. Denford both told Irwin Young in interviews (*op.cit.*, p.123) that Lang was most unpopular with unionists in the early years.

48 *Daily Telegraph*, 28 June 1924; see also *ibid.*, 30 Sept. 1924.

49 In giving his Annual Report in 1924 as secretary of the Labor Council J.S. Garden condemned the A.L.P. as a whole but managed to pass extremely lightly over the corrupt practices for which the Baileyites were renowned. The parliamentarians, by contrast, were criticised repeatedly. After the annual conference of the A.L.P. had rejected the idea of Communist affiliation, the Communists had got up a petition for a special conference; constitutionally, because the required number of unions and leagues had requested it, the special conference ought to have been granted. However, the A.L.P. executive had persuaded a special meeting of presidents and secretaries of affiliated unions and leagues to agree to a postponement, on the grounds that Lang had said he would force an early election for October 1924. Garden then commented: 'To grant the special conference meant even the loss ... of those who were now supporting them, because they believed that they were trying to clean the Movement through their action in the "Crook Ballot Boxes". The "Crook Ballot Boxes" only affected five persons, and the main one affected (John Bailey) was a thorn in the side of the politicians. But to deal with "crook selection ballots" was a horse of another color, for nearly every politician had gained his selection by crook methods and to expose such was more than the Executive had the courage to do.' (p.10)
ist which characterised their choice of industrial strategy in 1922. Both Dooley and Bailey factions had been involved in corrupt practices and both had a reputation amongst the rank and file for being so involved. As Common Cause, the miners' newspaper, put it:

The clash between two factions must not be allowed to side-track the workers from the chief business, which is to clean up the movement. Allied with both sides are corrupt and reactionary elements. 50

In the eyes of the rank and file, Communist support did not confer upon an ally any mantle of uprightness or working class probity and the Communists, by giving unqualified support to a notoriously corrupt faction, merely lowered their own standing with militants generally. The miners, for example, were especially censorious, and the Communist-Baileyite alignment made it far easier for the miners' secretary A.C. Willis to turn increasingly away from the Communists in the years 1923 and 1924 and harder for the Communists to secure affiliation to the A.L.P. during those years. The 'harmonious relations' Rawson notes51 between executive and caucus during 1923 and 1924 rested partly on the fact that the Willis-dominated executive which swept the Baileyites from power in 1923 did little to urge parliamentarians to press for

50 Common Cause, 16 March 1923. The Communist paper, the Proletarian took a similar stand, in contrast with that of the Sydney trade union Communists: 'Both sides are handicapped by their political reputations; on the surface it is a struggle between two sets of intellectually bankrupt political adventurers... Reformists and reactionaries all, their open opportunism leads them to rival each other in red phrase mongering'. 1 May 1923.

industrialist demands. Communist identification with the Baileyites put the Communists in a poor position to be the tribunes of the industrialists within the A.L.P.; yet this was a role they had chosen for themselves, and it was most important to them that they should succeed.
The A.L.P. and the Trade Union 1924-1925

By August 1924, Lang had already said that he would force state elections in October of that year.51a Once Premier, Lang promised, he would make good his 1923 pledges to the unions. But Lang, along with those of his followers most influential in the union movement (A.C. Willis and J.M. Baddeley), and along with union officials well to the left of these,52 believed that industrial disputes put electoral victory in doubt. Thus when he actually became Premier, Lang's influence was thrown the more effectively against strikes; said J.M. Baddeley, then Lang's Minister for Labor and Industry:

... the policy of the Government... in connection with industrial matters... is to engender good feeling in industry so that strikes may be obviated. 53

Yet though this was certainly the administration's policy, in 1924 and 1925 Lang was not always successful in preventing, putting a stop to, or 'confining' strikes. By December 1924 despite staunch efforts by his union followers, a group of isolated, confined marine transport strikes, begun in October of that year, had taken on the shape of what one might call a 'de facto' extended strike, and at times it looked as if no amount of opposition from anti-extensionist officials would prevent other marine transport unionists deliberately extending it further.

52 For example, R.J. Heffron, secretary of the Marine Stewards' Union, prominent member of the Transport Workers' Group, and, even while a close follower of Garden, apparently anxious to stand well with Lang (see p.289 of this chapter).
Demanding abolition of the Shipping Labor Bureau set up following union defeat in 1917, Sydney waterside workers imposed an overtime ban on intrastate, interstate and overseas ships on 20 October 1924, quickly securing the help of Sydney seamen. Unionists soon realised however that this was 'not injuring the overseas interests, which were the main support of the Bureau'. When ordered by the Commonwealth Arbitration Court to resume work on interstate vessels before 17 November, the waterside workers did so, only to subsequently place a total 'black' ban on all vessels handled through the Shipping Labor Bureau, a ban they later extended to all overseas ships save certain lines obtaining labor through the Waterside Workers' Federation. On 26 November the Marine Stewards' Union was announced to be on the point of joining the dispute as a result of a grievance of its own, the decision being hailed by the Sydney Marine Transport Group as 'helpful' to the watersiders.

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54 Round Table, vol. 15, p. 584.

55 Forty-seven stewards had been dismissed for refusing duty on the high seas, the refusal being described as an example of 'job-control'. The men were given clean discharges but the Marine Stewards' Union was determined to force their re-engagement, even at the cost of a long dispute (S.M.H., 27, 28 Nov. 1924).

56 This should be carefully distinguished from the Transport Workers' Federation which appeared in Chapter One. This organisation was now apparently defunct. The Marine Transport Group was often called the Transport Workers Group, and was set up by the Labor Council in accordance with its policy of federating unions in industrial groups.
On 28 November 1924, the Seamen's Union refused to man ships belonging to the Newcastle and Hunter River Company, on the grounds that, since 1917, the Company had employed 115 permanent wharf laborers who had formed a 'company union' of their own. Thus the seamen were acting in sympathy with the waterside workers and in accordance with the policy of the Marine Transport Group. Jacob Johnson, assistant-secretary of the New South Wales branch of the Seamen's Union, urged the Newcastle Transport Workers' Group to cut off all coal supplies to the Newcastle and Hunter River company as a step towards drawing in all Newcastle unions. By early December marine transport was threatened from yet another direction, for Fremantle seamen had struck in pursuit of increased wages, and by 4 December, the port was almost paralysed as a result of a seamen's blockade.

Thus, willy-nilly, an 'extended' marine strike appeared to be taking shape: waterside workers with their black ban; seamen at war with an important coastal shipping company, and threatening to extend that war throughout Newcastle; Fremantle blockaded; stewards on the brink of entering the fray. What had begun as a limited or 'confined' strike had grown into an 'extended' strike. But this extension was regarded with no enthusiasm by officials (at least in New South Wales, save for Johnson and Walsh of the Seamen's Union) and extension came about largely as the result of rank and file feeling.

When the marine stewards, for example, decided on 4 December to resume work without the reinstatement of their forty seven members,
this resumption was due to pressure from the Federal Committee of Management of the Waterside Workers' Federation and from the Marine Transport Workers' Group in Sydney. Prominent upon the latter body were W.H. Seale and A.H. Moate (already loyal followers of J.T. Lang) and R.J. Heffron. Resumption was urged on the grounds that it would give extra work to waterside workers outside New South Wales, who could then finance the Sydney watersiders in their struggle over the Shipping Labor Bureau; fears of a 'drastic legal process' were also expressed. The stewards' officials had a hard time persuading their members to accept what they took to be defeat, for 'uproar prevailed' at the meeting which took the decision. Some days later, with 'widespread extension' likely and 'certain union officials' claiming 'that the whole industrial movement is looking for an issue upon which to fight out the question of the inadequacy of the present arbitration legislation', the Commonwealth Shipping Line agreed to reinstate the forty seven stewards. It is possible that marine steward officials knew of this advance but were sworn not to reveal it to their members.

59 S.M.H., 5 Dec. 1924.
60 S.M.H., 5 Dec. 1924.
61 S.M.H., 10 Dec. 1924.
62 Lang seems to have been on fairly close terms with members of the Commonwealth Shipping Board, while A.H. Moate, an avowed Langite in 1925, was an executive member of the Marine Stewards' Union. R.J. Heffron was secretary of the Marine Stewards' Union and, like Moate, an influential member of the Transport Workers' Group; in 1927, Labor Daily wrote that Heffron had helped prevent 'many industrial disputes notably with the Commonwealth Line' (13 Jan.1927), and from his record in 1925, this was true for 1925. Garden, then secretary of the Transport Workers' Group, and politically close to Heffron, also appears to have carried out an industrial policy in line with that of avowed Langites, certainly in regard to marine transport disputes (see, for example, S.M.H., 1 July 1925).
a union victory would have had the effect of encouraging other marine unions to try their luck, particularly since, with Christmas in the offing, unionists regarded the circumstances as favourable and their spirits were high. Possibly, too, the Commonwealth Line felt that the stewards' rank and file were likely to re-enter the dispute, for the marine transport industry did not seem to be settling down. Indeed, the very day that the Commonwealth Government convened a conference which was to settle the Sydney watersiders' dispute over the Shipping Labor Bureau, seamen and ship painters in Melbourne refused to work alongside wharf laborers employed on a permanent basis by the Melbourne Harbour Trust.  

At the Commonwealth Government's conference, the employers agreed to abolish the Shipping Labor Bureau as from February, 1925. This victory for 'direct action', upon which Justice Powers commented with disfavour, was brought about in no small part by what was in fact an extended strike. The obvious reluctance of some union leaders to extend the dispute was offset, on the one hand, by the willingness of the rank and file, and of certain union officials, to do so, and on the other hand, by the proximity of Christmas.

63 In Victoria, trade unionists resented these, much as trade unionists in New South Wales resented the permanent employees of the Newcastle and Hunter River Company.

64 Some few members of the abolished Bureau, however, formed themselves into a Permanent and Casual Wharf Labourers' Union, and this, despite vicissitudes, formed the nucleus of the Permanent and Casual Wharf Labourers' Union which came to prominence after the national waterside strike of 1928. See the writer's M.A. Thesis, p.8, 108.

In the marine transport disputes of 1925, Lang and his union associates had more success in confining and settling disputes.

No sooner had 1925 begun than seamen struck work and Justice Powers suggested, as did the Round Table, that the seamen were encouraged to do this by the success of the recent direct action. The union wanted labor to be picked up at a spot of its own choosing, for with a pick-up under union control, the union could arrange a roster system to ensure sharing out of the good and bad jobs, prevent discrimination against active unionists and see that old or sick members were given the easiest tasks. All interstate shipping being held up, the dispute came before the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, and the picking-up places were fixed as those requested by the shipowners, though the Court refused the owners' and the Attorney-General's application for deregistration of the union. Finally the seamen agreed to obey the Court, and on January 29 the dispute was settled, in New South Wales at least. But conflict over the general 'job-control' issue continued.

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69 This explanation was offered the writer by a present-day official of the Federated Ship Painters' and Dockers' Union, Sydney Branch. This body, along with Waterside Workers' Federation and Seamen's Union, today picks up at union rooms. The explanation given in non-labor quarters in 1925 was that the seamen acted in pursuance of 'job-control', though Round Table suggested that behind the dispute lay the principle of who was to choose crews.

70 21 C.A.R., 19
and on 5 June 1925, the Arbitration Court granted the employers' request to deregister the union, Deputy President Webb claiming that "foreign ideas" were at 'the root of the trouble'. The seamen's union did not oppose the deregistration, announcing that in future it would rely on its industrial strength.

The effect of Deputy President Webb's deregistration was to put the union outside the rates of pay and conditions embodied in the award. Thus the owners were now free to engage labor by individual bargaining without referring to the award. Following deregistration, shipowners refused a union request to put in writing a verbal promise to pay award rates and observe award conditions in respect to the steamer Monaro; other similar refusals quickly followed, and the seamen, promptly supported by Melbourne waterside workers, struck work. When the shipowners refused to negotiate with the seamen's union, the Marine Transport Group of unions stepped in. The secretary of this group was J.S. Garden, a Communist, and the president was W.H. Seale, Labor Party secretary of the Waterside Workers' Federation.

The seamen's dispute appeared likely to call forth 'sympathy' actions from other unions, especially from the rank and file; officials were reported, for example, to be developing plans to prevent indiscriminate support being accorded the seamen by members of other organisations without direct instructions how to act had been issued by the executive of the unions concerned [sic].

73 Round Table, vol. 16, p.162.
74 Argus, 15 June 1925.
Sydney Seamen were reported to be confident that the waterside workers would help them, while in Melbourne a 'mutual understanding' to this effect had been reached. 75 By 25 June a meeting of the Sydney Marine Transport Workers' Group decided to 'stand solidly behind' the seamen. 77 Soon, twenty three vessels were laid up, with about 1,000 seamen and 6,000 other workers in related industries off work. But as against indications that extension might spread, there were signs that union officials of the Sydney Transport Workers' Group were anxious to see an end to it all, and were willing to pledge that unionists would take measures to stop the seamen implementing 'job-control'. At the end of June, a union deputation waited on S.M. Bruce, the Prime Minister, its members including J.S. Garden, secretary of the Marine Transport Group, B. Mullins, vigilance officer in the Sydney branch of the Waterside Workers' Federation, and E.J. Holloway and C. Crofts, representing the recently formed Commonwealth Industrial Disputes Committee. Delegates (J.S. Garden prominent amongst them) told the Prime Minister that they wished to see the dispute settled and that the Transport Workers' Group had taken control of it. A union conference had drafted a clause for inclusion in ships' articles designed to stop a ship being held up at sea when a dispute occurred - that is, a clause to extract the teeth of the 'job control' tiger. But Bruce expressed his lack of confidence in the ability of the unions to control the seamen and refused to assist

75 Argus, 19 June 1925.
77 Argus, 25 June 1925.
them. To this Crofts replied:

We are disappointed. We went over the heads of the seamen. 78

Next day, Sydney waterside workers unloaded a ship involved in the dispute although they had agreed to a request from the seamen's union not to do so. In permitting this action, the watersiders appear to have forgotten the aid seamen gave in abolishing the Shipping Labor Bureau and the seamen's struggle on their behalf against the Newcastle and Hunter River Company. W.H. Seale, secretary of the Sydney Wharf Labourers' Union, was also at that time a prominent member of the A.L.P. state executive and, as has been said, for some time there had been harmonious relations between executive and parliamentarians. Seale was particularly close to A.C. Willis, now vice president of the New South Wales Executive Council, and to J.M. Baddeley, Minister for Labour and Industry in the new Lang ministry. Speaking at a banquet at Dubbo, Willis 'made pointed references to the seamen's trouble... Trades unionists were set against an upheaval of any kind at present.' 79

Thus, in examining the watersiders' refusal to extend the dispute, one must keep in mind the fact that the new Labor ministry was anxious to maintain industrial harmony.

Yet extension was in the air; the federal executive of the Marine Stewards' Union arrived in Sydney to decide their policy in case extension should occur; 81 the old union objection to the permanent

78 S.M.H., 1 July 1925.
79 S.M.H., 2 July 1925.
81 S.M.H., 3 July 1925.
employees of the Newcastle and Hunter River Company now gave rise to a further dispute, and unionists at Mort's Dock threatened to strike if the company's employees at the Dock were not dismissed. But the new Labor cabinet was particularly anxious to ensure that the marine trouble did not again spread, as it had between October and December 1924, and on 3 July it was given out that waterfront union officials were in 'daily' consultation with members of state cabinet. On 6 July the management at Mort's Dock paid off the entire staff, announcing its belief that it should retain the men to whom the unions took objection. In reply, 'a big meeting of union officials' discussed 'all outstanding disputes in the shipping industry' - in the presence of J.M. Baddeley, Lang's Minister for Labour and Industry. Soon after this, with Lang's personal help, the Mort's Dock lockout was settled - on the management's terms.

But it was not just the Mort's Dock trouble that was settled by Lang's personal effort. Following 'daily' consultation between marine union officials and the state cabinet, on 6 July 'as the result

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82 Ibid. See also S.M.H., 4 July 1925. 'In consequence of the intervention of the State Government the feeling in Ministerial and industrial circles is that the shipping dispute will be settled at an early date. For the past week leading trades unionists have been in conference daily with certain prominent members of the Cabinet and it is understood that certain influential shipowners have also been approached on behalf of the Government.'

83 S.M.H., 8 July 1925.

84 Labor Daily, 9 July 1925.

85 S.M.H., 10 July 1925. 'Mr. R. Day, on behalf of the disputes committee, said...that the agreement provided that all employees should return to work on the same basis of employment as before the dispute'. A Royal Commission would enquire into the dispute between the Company and the Watersiders and seamen.
of the intervention of the Premier', an agreement was signed with the Commonwealth Shipping Line and the Marine Transport Group. This whittled the dispute down to one between the private shipowners and the seamen. In the arrangement concluded with the Commonwealth Line, the transport unions said that if the seamen flouted the agreement, they would not... oppose any measures affecting the manning of the ships, in order to permit of their continued running. The seamen were present during this arrangement which, in union vernacular, involved agreement by the other unions to work with 'scabs'. The original basis of this dispute had been shipowners' refusal to attach to the ships' articles the wages and conditions prevailing at 4 June 1925, the day on which the seamen's union was deregistered from the Arbitration Court. The seamen won this point from the Commonwealth Shipping Line, but lost the support of the other unions in respect to their most effective weapon in securing demands: in the words of the agreement, the unions would

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85 (continued) The Company kept its union, while the Labor Council agreed that unions concerned at Mort's Dock would work all company vessels.

85a S.M.H., 7 July 1925. Labor Daily (7 July 1925) described the conclusion of the agreement with the words: 'Land Settles the Shipping Crisis', but added that A.C. Willis, secretary of the Miners' Federation and Vice-President of the Executive Council of New South Wales, along with R.J. Heffron, N.S.W. secretary of the Marine Stewards' Union, also helped.

86 For Lang's own account of the matter, see I Remember, p. 245.

87 S.M.H., 7 July 1925.
not countenance any action of the members of the seamen's organisation that will be calculated to delay the sailing of any ship during the currency of the shipping articles. 88

Seamen's conditions had improved vastly since 1919, when the Walsh leadership gained effective control, and this had been done largely by taking direct action in the way now excluded, the way of 'job control'.

The agreement served to indicate to the private shipowners that the other unions had abandoned the seamen. No doubt because of this, the private shipowners decided to attempt a more thorough going policy than that essayed by the Commonwealth Shipping Line: they wanted the seamen to depose the Walsh leadership, a move which they believed would be of great help in abolishing job control. As a member of a union deputation which included Tudehope (Marine Cooks) and Moate, (Marine Stewards) J.S. Garden urged the Commonwealth Steamship Owners' Association to accept the arrangement reached between the unions and the Commonwealth Shipping Line.

'Mr. Garden was ... emphatic that industrial peace in the shipping industry could be guaranteed the shipowners, such as never had existed before, if they would fall in with [this] arrangement... ' 88a

However the private shipowners declined to accept the agreement, saying they did not think the other unions could control the seamen.

The private shipowners had seen that the danger of other unionists joining the seamen was over, for the time being at least. But the

88 S.M.H., 7 July 1925; Labor Daily, 7 July 1925.
88a Argus, 10 July 1925.
seamen, alone of all unions, had militant officials as well as a militant rank and file; furthermore, behind them were six years of many victories and few defeats. They were thus the very fountain head of the spirit of self confidence among the marine unionists. And so, quite shrewdly, the shipowners chose this moment to move in for 'the kill', and seized the initiative by turning a strike into a lockout. By mid-July, it was announced that all Australian shipping would soon come to a stop. 90 The Sydney Morning Herald commented:

Having made job control the issue, the owners are prepared to lay up all their vessels to achieve their object. 91

At the same time the Bruce-Page government revealed its view of the seriousness of the situation when on 15 July, it introduced a Bill to amend the Navigation Act of 1912-1920. 92 Bruce personally appeared to take the private shipowners' view on 'job control'; it had, he said, caused

incalculable loss, stoppages of vessels, and suffering to the community. 93

The owners, like the Prime Minister, gave an almost exclusive emphasis to 'job-control'. However, the shipowners were also demanding that

90 S.M.H., 15 July 1925.
91 S.M.H., 15 July 1925; Argus, 15 July 1925.
92 This became Act No. 8 of 1925. See Comm. Parl Deb., vol.110,pp.1009-1090; assent was received on 19 Aug. 1925 (see ibid., vol. 111, p.1471).
93 S.M.H., 16 July 1925.
several of the conditions embodied in the late award be dropped. While it might have been inaccurate of the shipowners to lay so heavy an emphasis on 'job-control' in their propaganda, it indicated a sound estimate of the strength of the rank and file, for ever since 1919, as we have said, 'job-control' had done a great deal to secure improved conditions for the seamen and to build up their self-confidence to the point where they engaged in union-wide strikes. And it soon became clear that the private shipowners were wise in doubting whether officials of other unions could prevent seamen from taking direct action. True, the Sydney branch of the Waterside Workers' Federation had immediately shown that they adhered to the agreement signed with the Commonwealth Shipping Line, and had unloaded ships manned by non-unionist seamen; but other unions in Sydney and interstate quickly revealed that they would not follow suit. The Melbourne branch of the Wharf Labourers' Union refused to touch the ships manned by non-unionists. At a 'stormy' meeting of the Transport Workers' Group in Sydney, to which gas and electricity union representatives were specially invited,

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94 Payment in lieu of annual holidays was to go, if seamen took 'job-action' or struck on a union-wide basis; the clause in the late award concerning overtime payment for late sailing was to be deleted as it was 'a fruitful cause of job-control' (S.M.H., 22 July 1925). Monthly wage payments were to replace fortnightly payments; a seaman discharged for intoxication, disorderly conduct or other misconduct was not to be entitled to be returned to the home port, nor to wages until his arrival there. Finally, and of particular importance to the seamen, the roster system of engaging labor was to go.

95 S.M.H., 16, 18 July 1925.
a 'general strike' was described as 'imminent' and 'certain'. In Melbourne, 'Trades Hall officials declared that organised labour would stand solidly behind the seamen', 96 the Port Adelaide Trades and Labour Council endorsed the seamen's cause and, following approval by a 'record attendance' of the Brisbane Trades and Labour Council, 'general strike conditions' were anticipated for the next day. 97 Even W.H. Seale, Sydney branch secretary of the W.W.F. and a member of the state A.L.P. executive where the majority were on good terms with Lang, claimed that the owners were not attacking merely the seamen but 'maritime unions generally'; 98 and very soon, the Sydney branch of the Waterside Workers' Federation refused to go on unloading ships manned by non-unionist seamen. Once more, then, the threat of extension manifested itself, and by early August an agreement was reached which seems to have been at least a partial victory for the seamen. The union won its demand for the right to hold monthly stop-work meetings and to have wages paid fortnightly. The seamen agreed to surrender job-control; but both seamen and owners knew that 'job-control' strikes ('wild-cat' strikes in the terms of more recent years) would not stop while the seamen's union retained its self-confidence and its militant leaders. 99 However the union did surrender the roster system of

96 S.M.H., 15 July 1925.
97 S.M.H., 17 July 1925.
98 S.M.H., 21 July 1925.
99 Not long after this, Thomas Walsh, seamen's secretary, ceased to be a militant.
supplying labor and the pick-up place was to be that desired by the shipowners, which made a union-controlled roster system difficult, if not impossible. Rank and file seamen in Sydney were at first surly (some charging marine transport union officials with accepting bribes), and some, supported by Jacob Johnson, their assistant-secretary, made a bid to resume the strike. Considerable bitterness was directed towards marine transport officials, many of whom, including R.J. Heffron, an intimate of J.S. Garden and a Trades Hall red, had drawn very close to Lang:

an industrial upheaval of the first magnitude was only averted by the timely and statesmanlike intervention of the Premier, Mr. Lang, and... Sir William Clarkson, of the Commonwealth Shipping Board. Mr. Lang's threat to inaugurate a line of State ships played a considerable part in bringing the private shipowners into line. 102

100 S.M.H., 3 Aug. 1925; Argus, 1 Aug. 1925.
102 S.M.H., 5 Aug. 1925.
Complimentary Banquet

To The Hon. J.T. Lang, Premier of N.S.W., and his Ministry, by Employees of the Railway & Tramway Service of N.S.W., at Town Hall, Sydney, 28 June 1926.
Lang in Office August 1925 - February 1926

Industrial peace was Lang's demand and his industrial followers did their best for him. But the restiveness of much of the rank and file could not go unnoticed by Lang or by his union-official supporters. W.H. Seale, for example, could be considered as one of Lang's keenest supporters in 1925, yet he had not been able to prevent the Sydney Wharf Labourers' Union, of which he was secretary, from rejoining the stoppage developing in early August. After Lang had passed the legislation of his first parliamentary session (a packed program of reforms with a marked trade union bias), the Australian Railways' Union announced that it would hold a banquet for him, and there present to him that traditional labor token for services rendered, an 'illuminated address'.

But before Lang had passed this most controversial legislation, the Railways' Union Gazette carried comments on Lang's administration (and even upon Lang in person) in terms ranging from wary, contemptuous to mildly threatening.

We have mentioned the Sydney Wharf Labourers and the New South Wales branch of the Australian Railways' Union. In both, the rank and file were militantly inclined on industrial matters; in both, the rank

103 Railways' Union Gazette, 10 July 1926.

104 Railways' Union Gazette, 9 July 1924, 9 April, 10 May, 11 July, 10 Aug., 10 Sept. 1925. For example, on 9 April: 'The history of parliamentary practice is too often marked by the shuffles of Labor politicians on vital industrial planks of Labor policy'; and on 11 July 1925: 'Rise to the occasion, Mr Lang, and display the necessary degree of "backbone" to safeguard the interests of those whom your party presumes to represent.'
and file were responsive to left-wing political viewpoints. While we argue that unionist industrial militancy and political radicalism helped influence Lang to pass controversial legislation long demanded by the affiliated unions, we certainly do not claim that the rank and file were the sole influence upon Lang. An important role was played by such men as A.E. Chapman, a non-Communist socialist considerably influenced by early experiences in the Independent Labor Party of Great Britain, who in 1924 became acting state secretary of the Railways' Union. From late 1921, moreover, the returned secret Communists and the A.L.P.-oriented open Communists had focussed propaganda upon the A.L.P. and the affiliated unions, and this affected officials as well as rank and file. Such influences as these need to be kept in mind when one seeks explanations for Lang's most controversial and pro-unionist administrative and legislative achievements, most of which fell between July 1925 and January 1926. As this period drew to a close, the conservatively inclined Land commented, under the head 'Socialism In Our Time':

The things which the Lang Government is doing are so bad that they could not be any worse if his Cabinet had been chosen by the Communists... he 'repudiates'.

Labor's pre-election speeches seemed to indicate (wrongly, as it turned out) that any Labor administration elected would closely resemble the Storey administration. As with Storey's pre-election

105 Chapman was also one of the pioneers of the Shop Steward Movement in Britain. (Railways' Union Gazette, 9 Sept. 1924).
106 The Land, 15 Jan. 1926.
speeches, promises for legislation favouring the industrialists were swamped by promises of generally ameliorative measures. 107 Lang pointedly ignored the socialisation objective, 108 and A.C. Willis defended him with spirit for this omission. Lang also went out of his way to repudiate the Communists. 109 This might have appeared unnecessary, since the Communists stood six candidates of their own against the A.L.P. But it was already common repute that Lang had the support of union officials known as by no means unfriendly to the Communists, and it was possibly no secret that Garden, even while standing as a Communist candidate, was rallying the Trades Hall in support of Lang. 110 Thus Lang's reputation moved relentlessly to the left, though he was a leftist malgré lui if ever there were one. Said the Australian National Review, peculiarly well informed, as has been said, on the A.L.P.'s most intimate affairs:

It is difficult to imagine Mr. Lang clumsily carving up bank directors and corner shopkeepers with a Bolsh [sic] sword... He seems an inoffensive suburban sort of a person; but you never know! 111

While the election campaign lacked colour by comparison with

107 Labor Daily, 2 May 1925; A.W., 6 May 1925, for Lang's policy speech at the Auburn Town Hall. Round Table (vol.16, p.625) commented upon the 'moderation' of Lang's pre-election policy statements.

108 At Newcastle and at Wollongong, centres of industrial militancy, Lang did make reference to the Socialisation objective, claiming that socialisation was ultimately the goal (A.W., 27 May 1925).

109 e.g. at Temora, 15 May 1925 (A.W., 20 May 1925).

110 See chapter V, note 50.

that of March 1922, electors were evidently interested, for a slightly
greater percentage of enrolled electors voted in 1925 than in 1922.
For the ninety seats available, there were 280 candidates and as in
1920 and 1922, voting was conducted under the system of proportional
representation. The Labor Party formed the new government, with a
majority of two seats and the hope of support from one independent
Labor member. The new government moved fast and in August the Australian
National Review sounded an alarm. By 'ministerial fiat or Executive
Council minute... [the Lang administration] is upsetting much of the
work of its predecessors.' In early September, Attorney-General
E.A. McTiernan introduced a Bill for the Abolition of Capital Punishment and subsequent rejection by the Legislative Council prompted caucus to
give Lang unanimous support in abolishing the Council. Labor met
with more success in a far more controversial piece of legislation,
the Forty-Four Hours Week Bill, introduced by J.M. Baddeley, Minister
for Labour and Industry, on 9 September.

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112 For the members of the first Lang Ministry, see N.S.W. Parl. Deb.,


114 N.S.W. Parl. Deb., 101, p.484, p.528-534, 2 Sept. See also pp.553-
584; 612-639; (9 Sep.) p.719-768 (10 Sept.1925). While McTiernan
said 'The object of this bill is to take out of the law of New
South Wales the death penalty' (ibid., p.528) T. Bavin, Leader of the
Opposition argued (p.720) that the death penalty should be retained
but limited to murder in the first degree.


819-901 (16 Sept. 1925); vol.102, pp.1082-1122 (29 Sept.); pp.1153-
1925); vol.105, p.3629 (18 Dec. 1925-Royal Assent reported).
There was to be an eight-hour day, and a forty-four hour week, though if a five-day week were desired, employees might be asked to work more than eight hours in one day. Where wages were paid on an hourly or daily basis, they were to be increased so that the employee would receive the same amount for forty-four hours as he had for forty-eight. About a third of the state's work force worked under a federal award, but state parliament over-rode Commonwealth Arbitration Court decisions here, in that it asserted that standard hours in federal award cases were to be forty-four, where in many if not most cases they had been forty-eight. However, where forty-eight hours were already being worked under a federal award, employers were not specifically required to reduce these to forty-four but instead, if wishing to persist in asking for a forty-eight hour week, they had to pay a wage increase for the last four hours by way of recognising the new standard and compensating workers. As opposed to the procedure laid down by the Storey administration in 1920, unions did not have to approach the Arbitration Court in order to argue for the shorter hours, as Baddeley announced that forty-four hours was to be introduced by proclamation in all industries.

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117 Act No.16, 1925, Clause 6.
118 For this calculation, see the claim by the Vice-President of the N.S.W. Executive Council, A.C. Willis, in N.S.W.Parl.Deb., vol.111, p.2376, 23 Mar. 1927. Willis's figure is supported by opposition member, J. Ashton.
W.E. Wearne, a leading spokesman for the Progressive Party, warned in opposing the measure that members on his side of the House would 'fight it at every stage', one argument being that the working man already had enough leisure. An important argument for the measure was that the economy would benefit from reduced hours and that increased productivity would follow:

If Henry Ford can make a success of his works with the forty-four hours week, then it can fairly be put forward as an argument in favour of its introduction elsewhere. As argued in parliament, Labor's ground was thus that of their parliamentary opponents, of the employers, and of the Arbitration Courts.

Some days before the Bill was introduced, Labor Party caucus decided to include shearers in the Bill, even though shearers were covered by a federal award. Caucus decided to place the onus on employers to go to Court to prove that industries covered by a federal award could not be included in state legislation. This reflected the wide-

120 N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol.101, p.652. For opposition reasons, see ibid., pp. 658, 662 and 664.
121 The Nationalist member Scott Fell said: 'Surely it is not suggested for one moment that forty-four hours is too long a period to work out of a total of 168 hours. It still leaves 120 hours, and allowing eight hours for sleep... there still remain sixty four hours for recreation. How much more does a working-man want ... We may all be inclined to make things easier, but how can you possibly give these men easier conditions than they now enjoy under the basic wage.' (N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol.101, p.669, 9 Sept. 1925).
123 Cf. also the argument for the forty four hours' week in the pamphlet The Case for the Forty Four Hours Working Week, by Matt Hade, Issued by the Labor Council, Sydney, July 1926 (J.A. Ferguson Coll.).
spread feeling amongst Labor Party followers that rural workers were as much entitled to the benefits of the Forty Four Hours Act as were others. To secure these however, the government needed to make specific provision for the rural workers, as in 1922 the Fuller administration had excluded them from the Industrial Arbitration Act. Thus, when the Lang Government was drafting legislation to amend the Industrial Arbitration Act in 1925, a deputation from the A.W.U. waited upon J.M. Baddeley, Minister for Labour and Industry, and urged him to make provisions to bring rural workers under the new Act. Baddeley agreed to this and rural workers were provided for in Clause 24b of the amendments to the Industrial Arbitration Act drafted concurrently with the Forty Four Hours' Week Act. But on 5 November the Labor Daily reported that the Government had accepted an amendment to the Forty Four Hours' Act in the Legislative Council which excluded rural workers from the Act.

Since late October, Dr. Kater, former president of the Graziers' Association and prominent member of the Legislative Council, had expressed his concern over Labor's ambiguous statements in the Council on the rural workers. On 21 October, Kater said to Willis, Labor's leader in the Council:

You say this bill does not apply to rural industries. By 'rural industries' do you mean all industries connected with working the land, including the pastoral industry?

Kater was not put at ease when Willis replied:

I have gone very carefully into the point you put to me the other day and I think I shall be able to satisfy you. 124

124 N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol. 102, p.1710.
and so later, Kater said:

Whether all rural workers are excluded under the bill or not is somewhat obscure, and it is further obscured by reason of another bill which will shortly reach us with regard to industrial arbitration, as the two have to be read together...

Consequently on 4 November, Kater moved an Amendment which had the effect of definitively excluding from the Act rural workers subject to federal awards. This Amendment became clause 5 of the Act itself. Thus partly at least to steer the bill through the Legislative Council, Willis had controverted caucus's decision on the matter and nullified Baddeley's assurances to the A.W.U. deputation. Exclusion of the rural workers, no doubt made easier by the antagonism of metropolitan and mining unions towards the A.W.U., provoked understandable bitterness in the labor movement, while in parliament, leader of the Opposition Bavin taunted the Labor Party for excluding the rural workers.

It is perfectly clear ... that if honourable members opposite had the courage - which they have not ... to apply the provisions of this bill to rural industries, the cost of production in our primary industries would be increased.

But P.F. Loughlin, deputy leader of the Labor Party, strongly supported exclusion of the rural workers:

Suppose you had a crop ready for the harvest. How could you apply a forty-four hours working week?

126 Ibid., vol. 103, p. 2081, 4 Nov. 1925; A.W., 11 Nov. 1925.
Assent to the Forty Four Hours' Week Act was reported on 17 December 1925, and the Act was proclaimed on 4 January 1926. Almost immediately it became clear that many employers were not prepared to accept the shorter week; in January 1926 the Northern Metal Trades' Employers' Association declared that its members intended to retain a forty eight hour week, pending a possible application to the High Court. The story of the forty four hour week now shifts, however, to the legal and industrial field; the Lang administration had done its job.

On 23 September 1925, W. McKell, Minister for Justice, introduced the Fair Rents Amendment Bill, which, in the words of Round Table, imposed 'drastic restrictions on the management of house property... Nationalist opposition was strong; A.C. Willis, Labor Leader in the Legislative Council, accused the Nationalists of trying to construct a new bill under pretext of amending the Government's. But irritated over Legislative Council opposition to Labor measures, Labor caucus instructed Lang as early as October to secure enough new Labor appointees to Council to abolish it. By December moves to this end were known to be well under way, and these had some effect in modifying Council opposition to the Fair Rents Act. Assent to the Act was received on 10 December. The report on the work of the

130 Round Table, vol. 16, p.625.
131 A.W., 9 Dec. 1925.
Metropolitan Fair Rents' Court for the year 1928-29 showed that net percentage reductions in rent during 1925-1927 were substantially greater than at any time since the court was set up in 1916.  

On 13 October the Minister for Labour and Industry, J.M. Baddeley, introduced the controversial Rural Workers' Accommodation Bill. Baddeley claimed that Queensland had made similar legislative provision for rural workers for twenty years, and New Zealand for ten years. In August the Labor Party had appointed M. Swiney, an A.W.U. official, to be Inspector of Hut Accommodation for shearers and, according to the new Bill, he would be joined later by one further inspector; thus at long last the A.W.U. had succeeded in its efforts to remove inspections from the hands of the police, the arrangement under earlier versions of this Bill. All premises employing no fewer than five rural workers were to be covered by this Bill which, unlike an earlier and similar Queensland Bill, covered agricultural and dairying industries as well as 'buildings, stores and works'. The Progressive and Nationalist Parties were greatly disturbed by the Bill. Captain Chaffey, for example, said:

133 N.S.W. Year Book, 1928-29, p. 757.
It is reasonable to ask why this extreme step has been taken in this State to embarrass every small farmer or person engaged in agriculture, dairying, or fruit or vegetable growing, upon whom the Minister will enforce peculiar and drastic conditions which will make it impossible for such persons to continue in their calling. 135

The Legislative Council opposed the Bill so strongly that it did not become law until 27 September, 1926.

The Australian Railways' Union had kept up a relentless pressure on Lang to have certain of its demands implemented, 136 and had secured the help of the Labor Council on those concerning the consequences of the 1917 defeat. 137 In September 1925, it was revealed in parliament that Lang had ordered the Railway Commissioners to restore seniority to the 1917 strikers in the railway service. 138 The Chief Judge in Equity then declared that the action of the Railway Commissioners in downgrading the loyalists of 1917 was illegal and therefore on 29 October 1925 the government hastily passed a Bill bestowing this power upon the Railway Commissioners. 139 [Summary rejected] 140 by the Legislative Council, the measure was passed despite considerable

136 See, for example, the Railways' Union Gazette, 9 Jan. 1925, 10 May 1925, 10 Aug. 1925.
138 N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol. 101, p. 709, 10 Sept. 1925. Question by Foster, 10 Sept. 1925; for a facsimile of Lang's minute on the subject to the Railway Commissioners, see Labor Daily, 15 July 1925.
139 N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol. 103, pp. 1997-2016 'a bill to validate certain actions of the Railways Commissioners for New South Wales....
opposition, and only after the new Labor appointees took their seats, receiving the Royal Assent on 12 January 1926. Other consequences of the 1917 defeat were also removed, owing to persistent union pressure: for example, five 'bogus' unions were eliminated by the Industrial Arbitration (Amendment) Act, which also replaced the state Arbitration Court and Board of Trade by an Industrial Commission and Conciliation Committees. The 'bogus' unions had been set up after the 1917 defeat and, in the words of H.V. Evatt, labor regarded them as 'creatures of the Commissioners'.

The Workers' Compensation Bill, '... more liberal to workmen than that of any other English-speaking country,' one of the most acclaimed and resisted measures of Lang's most controversial session, was introduced on 4 November 1925. The Principal Act had previously

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141 See, for example, the pamphlet Victimisation of the 1917 Loyalists. The History of One of the most Discreditable Episodes in the Administration of the Lang Government. Published by the National Association of N.S.W., Sydney, 1926 (J.A. Ferguson Collection).

142 N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol.105, p.3944.


144 A.W., 21 Oct. 1925.

145 Round Table, vol.16, p.625.

146 For its purpose, see N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol.103, p.2130, Baddeley, 4 Nov. 1925. For debates on the Act; vol.103, p.2130/2, 2355-2401 (18 Nov. 1925); pp.2431-2472 (19 Nov.); vol.104, pp.2603-2638 (30 Nov.); 2693-2714 (1 Dec. 1925); 2855-2860 (3 Dec. 1925); vol.106, p.41 (10 Feb. 1926); pp.581-600; assent reported, vol.107, p.16 (22 Sept. 1926).
excluded persons earning more than £525 a year, but the limit under the new Bill was to be £750, though there was to be no limit for persons engaged in manual labour; the Bill increased the weekly maximum amount obtainable from £3 to £5. All employers were to contribute jointly to a fund out of which compensation payments were to be made; this was necessary because, when disease was contracted by a gradual process and employees had meanwhile changed their jobs, it was felt impossible to determine whether any particular employment had caused the incapacity. Baddeley proposed to cover 'any disease of any kind providing it was an industrial disease'. Employers were compelled to insure employees unless, over a period of three years, the wages bill averaged less than £20,000 a year. The weekly maximum compensation was also to be given, as in the Queensland Act, for injury sustained on the way to or from the place of employment. A Compensation Commission was to be established, with three members: a chairman, one representative from the employers and one from employees. Minister for Labour and Industry Baddeley explained that the 'fundamental principle' of the Bill was the idea that industry should bear the cost. Members of the Opposition took a serious view of the legislation. Hoskins claimed that the Bill would mean 'that there will practically

147 N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol. 103, p. 2365.
148 Ibid., p. 2362.
149 N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol. 103, p. 2357, 18 Nov. 1925.
be no employment', and that competition with Victoria, already difficult because of the forty four hour week legislation, would become more severe. Hoskins also claimed that workmen's compensation in Broken Hill had given rise to 'unrest, unemployment and dissatisfaction' there, and finally alleged that friendly societies and insurance companies would be placed in a 'very bad position' by the Bill.  

It was claimed that the Bill would cause concern to farmers, and would have 'disastrous effects' in the timber industry: one hundred sawmills, for example, were alleged to have closed down.  

Opposition to the Bill was by no means confined to the Nationalists, the Progressives and the sawmillers. What made it much more serious for the A.L.P. was that opposition was also strong within the Party, and within caucus. Rawson, indeed, cites the case of a protest deputation comprising sawmillers and members of the Timber Workers' Union. The Workers' Compensation Bill did much to consolidate caucus opposition to Lang, and to revive the latterly quiescent faction struggle within the A.L.P.

The Widows' Pension Bill, introduced on 26 November 1925, was to become one of Lang's chief claims to radicalism. Of the measure, Lang claimed:

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150 Ibid., pp. 2396 - 2397.
151 S.M.H., 5, 30 June, 2 July 1926.
It lifts the widow and her children out of the furrow of charity, and it places her on a pedestal where she is in the position of having her rights granted to her by the people of the State.... 153

While some of the parliamentary Opposition denounced the Bill as 'soul-destroying', Opposition leader T. Bavin made the possibly more effective point that, in his election speeches, Lang had promised pensions to widows, whereas the Bill gave money only to widows with children. A widow with children was to receive £1 a week for herself and 10s. for each child, provided that, at the time of his death, her husband had lived in New South Wales.

The legislation passed between August 1925 and February 1926 was, as a recent writer has said, 'genuine Labor legislation', but one major defeat was suffered - the attempt to abolish the Legislative Council. The first Labor appointees refused to abolish the Council, and the Governor, Sir Dudley de Chair, would not appoint a second batch.

154 A.W., 2 Dec. 1925: cf. the A.N.R., 17 July 1925, which labelled the measure Lang's 'Merry Widows' Endowment Act', and described the measure as a 'bribe', a gift with 'no moral or economic justification.'
156 Lang admitted that more generous provisions might have been made, but said that he could not see how the appropriate taxes could be raised (ibid., p. 2766).
The Legislative Council had not offered really formidable opposition to Lang's earliest measures. *Round Table* suggests that the Council held itself 'bound' to pass bills such as the Forty Four Hours' Week Bill and the Widows' Pension Bill because these had 'received popular approval'. And as Evatt points out, the Legislative Council often tended to pass radical measures in the early part of a parliament's three-year life, and reject them as time went on. Additionally, moreover, the question of the Council's abolition had been very much in the spotlight in New South Wales since at least 1913, while in 1920 the Queensland Legislative Council had in fact been 'swamped' with Labor appointees with whose help that body was abolished. Further, in late 1925 the New South Wales A.L.P. had an appearance of unusual determination and unity, with the faction war temporarily somewhat subdued and the affiliated unions in a position of unusual strength within the party organisation.

In October, caucus instructed Lang to make new Labor appointees to Council, with a view to abolishing that body; Labor feeling ran high, and Lang moved swiftly. On 21 December, Governor Sir Dudley de Chair told Lang he would accept the twenty five Labor men

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158 Vol. 16, p. 630.


suggested for the Legislative Council. But immediate doubt was apparent in parliament as to whether the new appointees would in fact vote for Council's abolition, and a Bill for abolition, passed by the Assembly, was rejected a month later by the Legislative Council, 'owing, in part at least, to the defection of several Labour supporters'. The government then tried to obtain further appointments to give it a definite majority in the Council, but on 4 March 1926, the Governor declined to make further appointments, exercising what he believed were his discretionary powers in the matter.

The story of Lang's 'heroic' period thus fades out on a note of impending trouble. But however modest they look from the vantage point of the 1960s, for Australia in the 1920s Lang's first months were months of radical and trade-union-oriented administrative and legislative acts, taking place in a party climate directly influenced by the Trades Hall reds and the Communist Party, and indirectly influenced by the prevailing working class mood of radicalism and militancy.

164 The Land, 5 Feb. 1926.
165 Evatt, The King and his Dominion Governors, pp. 122-130.
The A.L.P. Faction Struggle in the Months of Lang's Most Controversial Legislation

In turning back to the A.L.P. faction struggle in 1925, one notes that Lang's trouble with both executive and caucus antedated the controversial legislation of the months between August 1925 and February 1926, but was still comparatively mild in this earlier time, when compared with the later storms.

At the end of 1924, the Labor Council had criticised the Labor Daily, Willis's 'mouthpiece' and official organ of the Labor Party in New South Wales. The A.W.U. supported this criticism, never having reconciled itself to the Lang-Willis victory of 1923. When, in accordance with A.L.P. rules, Willis resigned the party presidency upon his accession to the Legislative Council (and cabinet), E.C. Magrath, of the Printing Industry Employees' Union, became the new president on 9 July, his chief support on the executive coming from James Tyrell, of the Municipal Workers' Union. Anticipating danger at the 1925 annual conference from that A.W.U.-left-wing coalition which had been seen in late 1921 and at conference in 1923, the Tyrell-Magrath faction on the executive first postponed annual conference to a date to be decided in June and then, when June arrived, joined with Willis in

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166 Minutes Gen.Meeting, Labor Council, 4 Dec. 1924; A.W., 21 Jan.1925; Railways' Union Gazette, 9 Jan.1925. The move failed from lack of support from individual unions (Labor Daily,14,15 Jan.;9 July 1925). On 9 July, for instance, the newly elected state council of the A.R.U. was reported as rescinding a motion declaring the paper 'black'. For what led up to the Labor Council's 'black ban', see Minutes, Gen.Meeting, Labor Council, 13 Nov., 20 Nov. 1924.

167 Labor Daily, 10 July 1925.

168 Ibid., 22 Jan. 1925.
persuading the executive to abandon it altogether.  

Fuel was added to smouldering discontent when E.C. Magrath and J. Tyrell were appointed to the Legislative Council and refused to resign their executive positions.  
The refusal ran counter to Rules 32 and 34 of the A.L.P. constitution in New South Wales, but Magrath claimed support for their action in a 1921 ruling by W.H. Lambert, then president of the A.L.P., that a member of the Legislative Council was not a member of parliament. It was pointed out, however, that A.C. Willis had ruled at the 1923 conference that Legislative Councillors were members of parliament.  

As Lang's legislative program unfolded in late 1925, to these sources of discontent were added A.W.U. resentment over Lang's partiality towards city unionists, and growing caucus unrest. Caucus had long resented Lang's tendency to ignore the official Parliamentary body and take his main counsels from a few intimates such as Willis and Seale. Now, in addition, caucus began to reflect country and city business dissatisfaction with measures such as the Forty four

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169 For the official reasons given, see A.W., 24 June 1925; Australian Labor Party, State of New South Wales, Report of the Executive, for the Years 1924 and 1925, p.5. For a parliamentary comment, see Hill, in N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol. 101, p.234, 19 Aug.1925: 'Why has it not met? They know as I do that if the conference met the communists would be in charge of it.'

170 A.W., 5 Aug. 1925.

Hours Week Act, the Workers' Compensation Act, and the Hut Accommodation Act. A further source of trouble lay in the still current scandals of the years 1920 to 1923; charge and counter-charge, investigations and counter-investigations, had raged throughout 1924.¹⁷²

Responding to right-wing discontent over his too prolonged and too wholehearted partisanship for the industrialists, in November 1925 Lang made his first efforts to cut adrift from the moderate industrialists led by Seale and Willis.

In November, Lang along with C.C. Lazzarini and Peter Loughlin, was purportedly identified with a motion before the A.L.P. executive sponsored by J. Tyrell, a motion refusing affiliation to any union linked with the Labor Council during such time as the Council remained affiliated to the Third International.¹⁷³ P.F. Loughlin, deputy leader of the Labor Party in the Legislative Assembly, endorsed Tyrell's motion, adding his opinion that the ban should also apply to unions which, while not affiliated to the Labor Council, admitted Communists to their ranks. At this time also, Lang refused to sit upon the directorate of the Labor Daily while J.S. Garden, now a Communist

¹⁷² See A.W.U. Convention. Ballot Box Enquiry. Debate: Election Decision. Worker Print, 1925, a pamphlet in the Ferguson Collection; see also the A.W., 18 Mar.; 15 Apr. 1925. In May 1925 the notorious 'blue' pamphlet was published, full of scandalous allegations. See N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol. 102, p.1070 (29 Sept. 1925); p.1245 (6 Oct.); p.1588 (15 Oct.).

in the process of withdrawing from the Communist Party, represented
the Labor Council on that body. A little later, revealing his
(at least momentary) alignment with Loughlin, Lang attacked the Labor
Council for its Communist associations.

Tyrell's immediate aim was doubtless as the Australian Worker
suggested: 'to capture [the] N.S.W. Labor conference', or more precisely,
perhaps, to prevent its capture by a coalition between the A.W.U. and
the left. But Lang saw in the motion his own opportunity to escape
the grip of the moderate industrialists. However, the exclusion sought
would have seriously weakened the A.L.P., since so many affiliated
unions were members of the Labor Council, and Willis opposed Tyrell's
move in caucus:

The Australian Labor Party will be well advised to remedy
the defects of its organisation, and consolidate — not dis­
rupt — its industrial foundations.

The A.W.U. had immediately suggested that Tyrell's motion would weaken
the A.L.P., so widespread were pro-Communist and Communistic sympathies
among the unionists. How, asked the Australian Worker, would one have
identified the Communists; did they have 'green hair'? Soon after
this, some A.L.P. executive members abandoned their support of Tyrell;
as opposition grew, the executive shelved the matter, Lang stepped aside
from the combat, and the affair petered out.

174 Labor Daily, 24 Nov. 1925.
175 Ibid., 25 Nov. 1925.
176 A.W., 2 Dec. 1925.
177 Ibid.
But Willis had taken the onslaught seriously, and he set out to rally the labor movement against Tyrell and Loughlin, thus wooing Lang back to the fold of the moderate industrialists. As he had done in 1921, when wanting to put pressure on the right wing, Willis instigated moves for an all-Australian trade union congress; then, on 1 December, at Willis's instigation, the Labor Daily alleged that the parliamentary opposition were trying to bribe several Labor members; a little before this, Willis appears to have 'staged' a carefully arranged 'raid' on the premises of the Labor Daily. This series of quickfire moves is understandable: Willis feared for his head and not merely because of his militancy between 1919 and 1921. In 1925 he was still identified with the left, not just by his own militant followers in the miners' federation, but also in the public eye. In November 1925 he had underscored this identification by employing as his private secretary the well-known ex-Communist Emil Voigt. Thus Willis took a very serious view of Loughlin's attack and the identification with it of Lang, who had once run in factional harness with Loughlin and could do it again. Willis had good reason to fear, for when the final crisis came for the Lang administration in 1927, caucus did demand, above all, Willis's head, essentially because Willis was irrevocably identified with and blamed for Lang's industrialist penchant.

180 For parliamentary comment on the appointment, see N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol. 103, p. 2555, 26 Nov. 1925.
Between August 1925 and February 1926 the Lang Administration had to its credit the achievement, or the serious attempt to achieve, long-pursued liberal and trade-union demands: the abolition of capital punishment; a fair rent act giving tenants more substantial protection than any earlier form of this legislation; a rural workers' accommodation act; removal of disabilities unionists still suffered as a result of 1917; a workers' compensation act, a widows' pension act, and a forty-four hours week act.

The passage of such measures put an end to the still-lingering concord between Lang and Peter Loughlin, deputy-leader of caucus, and foremost spokesman for the right wing in caucus. Among the most prominent of those who insisted on the measures were A.L.P. executive members such as W.H. Seale and W.J. Mills of the Waterside Workers, J.M. Baddeley and A.C. Willis in cabinet, and officials of affiliated unions such as R. Corish of the Australian Railways' Union, and W. Padgen of the Amalgamated Engineers' Union. The first phase of Lang's legislation was linked with the return of the left to the A.L.P., a process which by 1925 had been in operation for more than three years. By 1925, men such as Seale, Mills, Baddeley, Willis, Corish and Padgen were, in the labor movement, political moderates. But the language they used was still, in varying degrees, that peculiar popular syndicalist-marxist synthesis noted in 1919. For example, J.M. Baddeley, long-time leader of the Northern district of the miners' union but now, in 1925, Lang's Minister for Labour and Industry, said, while speaking in the Legislative Assembly:
I am with my friends outside who prefer direct action and believe that compulsory arbitration is no good without direct action, and that direct action would more quickly bring a change in the industrial system...

He added, it is true:

[But] ... we are carrying on under a capitalistic system, and are compelled to accept some machinery for the regulation of our industrial affairs. Therefore I adopt this machinery ... for the purpose of bringing about some alleviation of the trouble in industries that has been so prevalent. 181

By 1925, the tide of militancy had receded and both officials and rank and file alike were affected by its recession. But the officials felt the ebb-tide for more than the rank and file; left to their own devices, the moderates of 1925 would have softened and reshaded their language far more than they did. The rank and file were less sensitive to the ebb, primarily because the daily clash with the employers remained substantially unchanged. This clash tended to renew continually the militancy of the rank and file, a process which to some extent offset the ebb. Thus the militant language and public posture of the moderate union officials owed much to the more militant outlook of the rank and file.

The left-wing ideology which hardened and gave added direction to industrial militancy had been eroded since 1919, yet it was by no means dead, and the union rank and file were still responsive to the words of officials whose political positions were to the left of the more moderate Seale, Willis and Baddeley. These leftists - J.S.

Garden, H.L. Denford, J.J. Graves, R.J. Heffron, J. Beasley, A. Rutherford - may be defined as Communists or Communist-sympathisers in the act of moving away from the Communist Party. If, between 1919 and early 1921, these men and their earlier co-thinkers had felt that the Labor Party was unworthy of their serious attention, they had changed their mind somewhere near the middle of that year. They did not form an ideologically homogeneous group; we saw that, when allegedly orthodox Communists, they had differed from traditional and prevailing international Communist standpoints. But despite this, some of the most classic and most simple elements of communist ideology remained in the language of the group. Their talk was 'tough' and they used the rhetoric of the class struggle; regularly they enunciated Marx's view on the relation of the state (and especially such of its component institutions as the arbitration courts) to the economic power of the capitalists. (It is not at present relevant that the industrial action they advocated concerning judgments of arbitration courts was out of keeping with the fierceness of their tone of voice.) They preached the virtues of industrial unionism vis-a-vis craft unionism; they spoke of the coming of a re-constructed and socialist society, though less often than they had done in 1921; they portrayed the embattled Soviet Union as a workers' paradise of bread and brotherhood. When exposed to messages such as these, proclaimed now in the midst not merely of the unions but of the Labor Party itself, the followers of the moderate industrialist officials were still extremely responsive. One cannot over-emphasise the fact that the left-wing union officials were now, by
contrast with the years 1919-21, omnipresent in Labor Party circles and their influence inescapable. There was thus, in this way, a limit placed upon the distance to which Seale, Willis, Baddeley and others could move away from their earlier left-wing images.

The union demands fulfilled by the Lang government in its first and second sessions were long standing ones, yet neither McGowen nor Holman, nor later Storey and Dooley, had been able to fulfil them. These demands were fulfilled in 1925 and 1926 largely because those who led the Labor Party union forces in 1925 - Seale, Willis and Baddeley - were much more effective than those who led them in 1920 and 1921. One reason for the additional effectiveness in 1925 was simply that Willis was present within the Labor Party in 1925, and absent between 1919 and 1921. But the other reason was that the moderates of 1925 were in close juxtaposition to leftists of 1925, whose words were heard up and down the Labor Party and trade union world. These leftists, decayed and decaying as leftists though they might have been, nevertheless expressed sentiments which struck profound echoes among the rank and file. Thus the left officials had so powerful an influence that they rendered the moderate union officials immediately in contact with Lang more intransigent than they would otherwise have been.

The situation just described was that of 1925-1926, the period of Lang's most contentious legislation. Decay of the left occurs more rapidly in late 1926 and 1927, a phenomenon of direct relevance to an understanding of the events of this latter time.
CHAPTER VII. "The Big Fella"
In the period covered in the last chapter, J.T. Lang appeared in a role markedly out of character. The unspectacular Treasurer of 1920 who was far from being a favorite of the unions, emerged as the ally of the left-wing and moderate industrialists. Dependent on their support and paying the price for it in a remarkable series of legislative acts, this essentially conservative professional politician was now widely denounced for his dangerous radicalism.

Lang was indeed miscast, and felt himself to be so; but we have seen the failure of his first cautious attempts to break the fetters of an encumbering alliance. It would be no surprise to find him redoubling such attempts at escape in the period we now enter, and perhaps even succeeding; but that is not the actual turn of events. Instead, the need to escape disappears, for the fetters turn to putty. His tough, unwelcome allies turn into subservient tools. And their shrunken stature helps to form a background against which Lang can loom as 'the Big Fella' in these and later years.

This diminution of the industrialist group, then, must receive particular attention in the next pages of this study. Since the strength of its members depended largely on their positions of leadership in the trade union movement, we must acquaint ourselves with developments in this latter sphere, before returning to the story of the Labor Party itself.
The Trade Unions 1926-1927

During 1926 and 1927, Labor's official leaders often informed the unionists (and others) of New South Wales that they were enjoying times of unusual prosperity.¹ Labor Daily, official organ of the New South Wales branch of the A.L.P., went so far as to describe 1926 as a 'boom' year, the 'State's Greatest Year.'²

The Official Year Book of New South Wales judged the year 1925-1926 to be one in which 'prosperity was reflected almost generally throughout those statistics which provide an indication of business conditions and of the economic well-being of the population'; deposits in savings banks showed 'larger increases than had been apparent for several years'; there was a 'continued increase in profits of public companies'; the proportion per cent of total value of output in New South Wales absorbed by 'overhead charges, profits, etc.' 'rose to a point higher than it had been in any of the last fifteen years.'³

There was a steady increase in the prices of stocks and shares, and an expansion of transactions represented by bank clearings. For the year 1926-27, the Year Book continued its estimate of prosperity until late in the year. The volume of primary production 'far exceeded' that of any previous year; 'favourable prices' were realised for primary products; bank clearings which had reflected an increase of over 30 per cent in

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¹ See, for example, J.T. Lang, in Labor Daily, 5 May 1927.
² Labor Daily, 3 Jan. 1927. Even the Australian Worker, organ of the A.W.U., insisted that there had been a substantial increase in the productivity of industry under the forty four hour week. (A.W., 2 Feb. 1927).
³ N.S.W. Year Book, 1928-29, p.818, p.298.
inter-bank cheque transactions from 1921 to 1926, showed a further
growth of 5 per cent in 1926-27. The value of merchandise exported
rose by nearly £2 million and that of imports by over £5 million, one
fourth of the latter increase being on account of machinery and imple-
ments. The unemployment figures of 1926 and 1927 give support to the
view that the times were at least comparatively prosperous. In 1924
and 1925, unemployment varied around ten to fourteen per cent of those
returning data, but fell considerably in 1926 and 1927, at one time
dropping to 5.3 per cent. The weighted average wage payable to adult
males in New South Wales increased from 93.6 shillings in December 1924
to 101.10 shillings in December 1927. However during the 1920's
prices rose steeply, and by 1927, the Commonwealth Labour Report
estimated that the purchasing power of wages had not regained the 1922
level while the New South Wales Year Book stated that, for the year
1925-26, 'wages lagged slightly behind the rising cost of living.'
By a curious circumstance, between August 1925 and June 1927, there
was no variation at all in the state basic wage.

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4 Ibid., p.821.
5 See Table 4, Appendix to Chapter III.
7 Ibid., p.85.
8 N.S.W. Year Book, 1928-9, p.818. See also N.S.W. Industrial Gazette,
31 August 1925, p.155, which noted the 'upward trend' of prices
since December 1924.
9 See p. 355 below.
10 N.S.W. Year Book, 1928-1929, p.821.
Believing the times to be favourable, and experiencing a substantial increase in membership, the unions might reasonably have been expected to carry out a fairly bold industrial policy. However, in point of fact, union reliance upon the legal and legislative process grew even more pronounced in these years, while when forced to take direct action, union tactics were an extreme form of confinement, despite the fact that, in the case of the forty-four hour week dispute for example, employers very early adopted an extended front lockout policy.

On 4 January 1926, the state Forty-Four Hours Week Act came into operation. Employers working under state awards made no objection, but those under federal awards (who employed about a third of the state's work force) refused to accept the Act. In early January, the Metal Trades Employers' Association announced that its members would insist upon a forty-eight hour week, and that the Association planned an appeal against the Act. The thirty federal unions which then met to decide union strategy included some of the state's strongest unions: the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the Australasian Society of Engineers, the Blacksmith's Union, the Boilermakers' Union, the Ship Painters & Dockers, the Printing Trades' Union, Electrical Trades' Union, the Timberworkers and others. The general feeling seems to have been that unionists could work forty-eight hours provided that overtime rates

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11 The number of unionists in New South Wales increased from 284,559 in 1924 to 319,599 in 1925, reaching 345,069 in 1927. (N.S.W. Year Book, 1928-29, p.772.).

12 See note 118 chapter VI.
were paid for the last four hours, and in the meantime 'all legal channels' would be used to compel employers to pay the full wage for forty four hours. The wealthy A.E.U. would take the lead in a fight which was conceived wholly as a legal affair, with no word that direct action would be used in the event of legal failure. The union rank and file, however, worked forty four hours, not forty eight hours, and the employers docked them four hours pay, believing, it was said, that the men would soon 'tire of receiving less wages for the reduced working week...'

By 1 February, John William Cowburn, an A.E.U. member, succeeded in an effort to recover from the powerful Clyde Engineering Company his full federal award rate as a fitter, while working forty four hours under state law. The Chief Industrial Magistrate's Court of New South Wales also found in favour of the A.E.U. in another case where Metters' Ltd. had paid less than award rates to an A.E.U. member refusing to work more than forty four hours. But the employers then appealed to the High Court, and on 19 April 1926 the High Court found in their favour.

The upshot of the contest to this point was that, legally, employers could dock employees of four hours pay where they worked only forty four hours, though this conflicted with Lang's Forty-four Hours Week Act.

13 S.M.H., 8 Jan. 1926.
14 Labor Monthly, July 1926.
15 S.M.H., 26 Apr. 1926; Labor Monthly, July 1926.
To the employers this was nothing more than a promising start. By working forty four hours but accepting a four hours' pay reduction since 4 January, the unions had drifted for some three and a half months, and the employers felt they had the initiative. In the forty eight hour struggle of 1922, employers seized the initiative in direct action only after several months had demonstrated beyond all doubt that the unions were not going to take effective action. But from the first day in 1926, the union officials had made it plain that they would use none but legal methods. When these methods worked to the benefit of the employers, the employers (having no doubt taken the measure of the officials leading their opponents) announced they would lock out all who refused to work a forty eight hour week.¹⁸

A meeting of metal trades' union officials then drew up plans, which the Labor Council subsequently adopted: no overtime was to be worked and no new shifts were to be started until employers 'recognised' the forty four hour 'principle'.¹⁹ Unionists would also continue to absent themselves on Saturday morning, thus working a forty four hour week in five days, as they had since 4 January. Next, the Labor Council set up a disputes' committee, consisting of five delegates from Council and one from each of the unions involved. As secretary

¹⁸ Labor Monthly, July 1926.
¹⁹ Labor Monthly, July 1926.
of the Labor Council, J.S. Garden claimed that the decision to take direct action marked a change for the unions away from 'legal and legislative action'. For years, he said

... the unions had been advised that the best results could only be obtained by legal and legislative action. Nineteen hundred and seventeen had caused the strike weapon to be looked upon askance, and ever since then, when the workers had suggested taking the bit between their teeth and introducing industrial action on the job - 1917 was trotted out, and held up as a nightmare to frighten them from taking direct action. All eyes were therefore concentrated on [this] fight.... 21

J.S. Garden had himself used 'the debacle of 1917' in earlier years to discourage unionists from extending a dispute. And it is very probable that he defended the official strategy of 1926 - 'that the area of the fight should be limited' 22 - in almost the same words. 23

While unionists planned to obey state law by absenting themselves on Saturday morning and refusing to work overtime or to inaugurate new shifts, the Metal Trades' Association dismissed 5,000 unionists, and 20,000 more workers were soon thrown out of work as a result, the figure growing rapidly. 24 To show they had no faith in the strategy of confinement, the Metal Trades' Association threatened to have raw materials cut off from any factory in the iron trades permitting a forty four hour week, while the Motor Trades' Association compelled its members to lock out all employees unwilling to work forty eight hours. The rank and file was evidently inclined to meet this employer...

22 Labor Monthly, July 1926.
23 See the report of a speech by Garden in Workers' Weekly, 28 May 1926.
24 S.M.H., 4 May 1926.
action in similar vein, and after it was all over, J.S. Garden
condemned the engineers, in particular, for their hot-headedness.
N.S.W.
'Down tools', the Engineers in New South Wales had
said, 'and be damned to everyone else.' 25

Other reports during the strike showed that the officials were having
difficulty in restraining the ranks, but despite difficulty, they
succeeded.

By May, the Disputes Committee began peace overtures, and a
conference in the third week of May offered to forego four hours' pay
if employers accepted a forty four hour week. By the end of the
month, a settlement had been reached, whereby forty four hours was
to be worked for forty four hours' pay, with the week's work to be done
in five or six days as the employers desired, though many unions had
worked a five day week since January. 26 The unions would remove all
restrictions on overtime and shift-work, and work these as required by
employers; the disputes committee promised also not to demand increased
wages until a proposed newly-constituted federal tribunal had dealt with
the matter. 27 The disputes committee explained that it envisaged a
'second struggle' for the forty four hour week, which was to take the
form of an appeal to the Commonwealth Arbitration Court for a uniform
forty four hour week for all federal unions, though in outlining the
'second struggle' Garden appears to have forgotten his earlier condem-
nation, just cited, of reliance on the 'legal process':

25 Labor Daily, 5 May 1927.
26 Labor Monthly, July 1926.
27 S.M.H., 28 May 1926.
To give breathing space before the second struggle for the extra money the Disputes Committee agreed to the plan to get all men back on the 44-hours working week, also agreeing to allow the Federal Unions to prepare their case for the Federal Court for a uniform 44-hour working week for the workers of the Commonwealth. 28

Both sides claimed a victory, the unionists believing that the Commonwealth Arbitration Court would grant forty eight hours' pay, 29 and the A.E.U. then initiated a test case in the Commonwealth Arbitration Court on the hours question. This hearing took sixty seven days, during which the A.E.U. agreed to accept a weekly wage reduction of approximately ten shillings. In the interval, employers showed no sign of resting on their laurels; in June, for example, master printers applied to the Industrial Commission for a forty eight hour week for printers, 30 and in the same month, the B.H.P. Company at Newcastle locked out certain engineers for refusing forty eight hours. 31 In December, after sixty seven days, the Arbitration Court's investigation came to an end but no decision was given and various branches of the Australasian Society of Engineers expressed impatience with the continued wage reduction. 32 Finally on 24 February 1927, one year after the Forty-Four Hours Week Act began operation in New South Wales, the Commonwealth

28 Labor Monthly, July 1926, p.13; see also S.M.H., 31 May 1926.
29 S.M.H., 29 May; A.W., 2 June 1926.
30 Workers' Weekly, 9 July 1926.
31 Workers' Weekly, 17 Sept. 1926.
Arbitration Court handed down its judgment, giving the Amalgamated Engineering Union a forty four hour week. In making this finding, Chief Judge Dethridge indicated that the Court would 'probably apply a similar reduction' to other industries 'similar in their conditions as to leisure ... to the engineering industry ... but not in other industries ...'.

This was most unsatisfactory to the unions. When the Arbitration Court had begun its investigation into the forty four hour question in August 1926, union officials had trouble with a restive membership, but had at least been able to point out that the Court's findings would settle the matter for all unionists, as it was understood that the findings were to be generally applicable to all industry. In fact, however, it turned out that unions in each industry had to appear before the Court for a separate hearing, while the Court said that the shorter week pointed up the need for increased productivity through piece-work. Furthermore, because the wage levels of the awards based on forty eight hours were not incorporated into the new awards, the unions believed they had bought their shorter hours by shorter pay.

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33 24 C.A.R., 904. For the finding in full, see ibid., p.755-904.

34 24 C.A.R., 904.

36 A.W., 2 Mar. 1927.
Yet Lang's legislation had specifically declared against any such exchange, all the more distasteful because prices had risen steadily in 1926 and 1927.

The particular combination of legal and extremely confined direct action used in 1926 and 1927 brought unimpressive results and did little, if anything, to enhance rank and file self-confidence during times which were at least comparatively favourable for the unions. In the last quarter of 1927 unemployment rose sharply in New South Wales, and continued to be high throughout 1928. Extremely bitter industrial struggles were not far away, for in 1928 and early in 1929 employers insisted that hours must be increased and wages must be reduced; the courts agreed with them. Unionists then had no alternative but to resist; it is scarcely to be doubted that they would have been in a better position to do so, had bolder action during the easier climate of Lang's regime brought them victories denied them by excessive official reliance upon confinement and upon the legal process.
By January 1926, the A.W.U. had won back a good deal of the ground lost in 1923, and now controlled a substantial minority of the A.L.P. state executive. A.C. Willis having departed to become a member of Lang's cabinet, the most important of the 'moderate industrialist' majority faction on the state executive were now W.H. Seale, J. Tyrell and P.C. Magrath. Their faction was known as the 'Pint-Pot Plotters'.

The O'Reilly group formed a tiny third faction on the executive, even more unstable than the two larger factions themselves, while the Communists, no longer represented on the executive, continued to run in factional harness with the A.W.U.

Manoeuvring for advantage at the 1926 annual conference had started as early as November 1925 with J. Tyrell's attempt to exclude conference delegates from unions affiliated to the Labor Council.

In February 1926, the left wing made its move, holding a trade union conference which not only supported Communist affiliation to the A.L.P. but also brought forward a set of trade union demands which the executive had neglected. As a result of this conference, four prominent A.L.P. unionists (J. Beasley, Labor Council President, J. Kilburn, Bricklayers' Union, C. Tannock, Ironworkers' Association, and A.E. Bennet, Coachmakers' Union) were 'summoned' before the A.L.P. executive and threatened with expulsion on the grounds that the con-

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38 This was a term the A.W.U. bestowed on the majority faction because its meeting place was a 'certain well-known city pub'.

39 See pp. 309-310 above.
ference had been held under the auspices of the Red International of
Labor Unions. Designed to weaken the A.W.U.-leftist bloc at annual
conference, the threat was thus similar to Tyrell's earlier effort,
but met such opposition that, like its early counterpart, it was quietly
dropped.  

As annual conference approached, manoeuvring on the executive
became more spirited: an A.W.U. man submitted a motion of censure
against the 'secret faction' meeting at 'a certain hotel', only to have
President E.C. Magrath rule the motion out of order on the ground that
it implicated a majority of the executive. On the eve of conference
the executive split when the majority replaced anti-Magrath delegates
chosen by the Sydney Electoral Council with others chosen at a later
meeting of the same body, a meeting carefully managed to secure the
election of pro-Magrath delegates. This incident also involved dis-
franchising three branches, and its discussion was to take up a great
deal of time at Conference.

When conference opened it soon became clear that the A.W.U. -

40 A.W., 10 Mar. 1926. It had not, but this was a way in which the
executive hoped to bring pressure upon the Labor Council for its
affiliation to that body.

41 Ibid., 17 Mar. 1926. Among those who protested were the Australian
Worker itself, A.L.P. Executive member T. Falkingham (also a
member of the Boilermakers' Union Executive), W. Bright (Bricklayers'
Union) and Shirley (Amalgamated Printing Trades' Union).

42 Ibid., 3 Mar. 1926.

43 Ibid., 31 Mar. 1926.

44 Labor Daily, 3 Apr. 1926.
left-wing alliance had impressive numbers, and this made the parliamentarians as uneasy as it did the Seale-Magrath supporters, particularly since the Communist Party's leaders were in such good standing that they could openly direct voting procedure. Almost no normal business was done. On the third day, a lengthy tussle over Magrath's right to occupy the presidency ended with conference deposing him as a parliamentarian. A.L.P. vice-president Conroy of the A.W.U. took the chair, the left-wing leader J. Beasley serving as his deputy.

It began to look as if the left wing might obtain a dangerous number of followers on the new A.L.P. executive and other official bodies, and the A.W.U. and the left discussed the number of seats each should have on the new executive. Peter Loughlin then took a leading role in successful moves to reconcile the A.W.U., the Tyrell-Magrath and O'Reilly factions, and at the eleventh hour, the A.W.U. deserted its

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45 This was apparent, for example, in the brush between the Seale-Magrath bloc and the A.W.U.-left bloc on the afternoon and night of the first day over the exclusion of '20 or 30' delegates (Labor Daily, 3 Apr. 1926).

46 Notice, for example, the tone of alarm in Labor Daily on 5 April 1926. Remarking that the factions were temporarily reduced to two, the paper commented that the A.W.U.-left-wing alliance would 'foist... evils' upon the labor movement. An executive controlled by them would 'imperil the life of the Labor Government.'

47 'From an elevated vantage point in the public gallery, Mr. J. Howie openly directed the tactics of the groups, and from a near-by point at the open windows of the Conference Hall, Mr. Garden actively cooperated with him.' (Labor Daily, 5 Apr. 1926).

48 Labor Daily, 6 Apr. 1926.


left-wing allies, and formed a 'new combination' with the Seale-Magrath-Tyrell faction. As a result, the executive elected was a most unhappy assortment comprising seventeen supporters of the outgoing Executive, fifteen supporters of the A.W.U., and Mr. O'Reilly of the Hairdressers' Union; the new President was W.H. Seale. Not one leftist was returned.

Although Lang had done much to bring about the 'new combination', he continued to strike the pose of an impartial leader far above the faction struggles:

I stand for the people and for the people only.
I have set my hand to the plough, and I am not going to turn back. 52

The factions' marriage of convenience barely survived the elections, and broke up even before the end of conference. This was apparent when E.C. Magrath successfully moved that the new executive be instructed not to re-admit those associated with the ballot-box scandals, for the voting was 153 to seventy one, a blow to A.W.U. hopes of reinstating Bailey. This (and earlier) clashes between the new allies threatened to send the A.W.U. back to the arms of the left wing, and so, on the tenth day of conference, when only one of the pro-Seale faction was elected to the agenda committee, Seale declared carried a motion for adjournment of conference till 1927. About 120 of the 200 delegates present dissented and remained, but Seale refused to re-open

51 A.W., 14 Apr. 1926.
52 A.W.; Labor Daily, 7 Apr. 1926.
53 Labor Daily, 12 Apr. 1926.
conference. There was immediately a demand for a special conference, which the executive rejected by fifteen votes to fourteen.

While the steadily mounting resentment over Lang's early legislative concessions to the unionists had found some expression at annual conference, it appeared more sharply in the months following. A deputation from the country sawmilling industry asked Baddeley, Minister for Labour, for a reduction of fifty per cent in rates payable for insurance under the Workers' Compensation Act. Lang was winning the esteem of the unionists. With an air of sternly facing facts, a writer in the Communist Workers' Weekly said in August:

... a great majority of the industrial workers are becoming very interested in the A.L.P. and are placing great trust in it...

But as the workers grew more pleased with Lang, rural and city businessmen became more irate, and their antipathy was not unconnected with an intensification of the A.L.P. faction fight which occurred at this time. On 4 August 1926, the Labor Daily made charges of impending treachery on the part of Labor parliamentarians, and when Lang appointed the

54 'Manifesto to Leagues and Unions. Demand for Special Conference. Extraordinary Position Plainly Stated'. Leaflet in the R.S. Ross collection (Ferguson) A.N.L. Dated in handwriting, 16 Apr. 1926. The signatories were A.W.U. and left-wing industrialists.

55 A.W., 9 June 1926.

56 A.W., 21 July 1926. Caucus criticism on the rates led to establishment of a committee which later recommended a considerable reduction.

57 Workers' Weekly, 20 Aug. 1926.

58 See Leader article, p.2.
independent A.D. Kay as employees' representative on the Meat Board at a salary of £1,500 a year, the Labor Daily alleged that Lang made the appointment to forestall imminent betrayal.\(^5\) Caucus demanded that the Labor Daily retract its allegations,\(^6\) reputedly inspired by the paper's editor, Spedding, but the Labor Daily refused.\(^7\) Both the A.W.U. and its opponents began to feel that a definitive struggle for power might be unavoidable, where either the A.W.U. was effectively excluded from gaining control of the A.L.P., or its opponents would be given no quarter. There were rumours of a special A.L.P. conference to change the rules to this end.

The breach between the industrialist faction (Lang, Willis and Co.) and the moderates ... has been steadily growing wider, and now the noise of the contention is so great that it can no longer be concealed ... \(^8\)

In caucus, anti-Lang sentiment reached the point where deputy leader Loughlin challenged Lang's leadership, and scored twenty three votes to Lang's twenty two. As the ballot was in process, Trades Hall deputations waited on caucus to urge support for Lang. The absent Attorney-General's vote ultimately went to Lang, and with the score even, caucus decided that Lang should continue leader, with Loughlin once more deputy.\(^9\)

\(^5\) Lang himself referred to the bribery charges in justifying appointment of A.D. Kay (A.W., 15 Sept. 1926).
\(^6\) A.W., 11 Aug. 1926.
\(^7\) Labor Daily, 25 Aug. 1926.
\(^9\) A.W., 22 Sept. 1926.
Late in September 1926, J.S. Garden applied (unsuccessfully) to join the Labor Party through Matraville branch. He was only one of a number of Communists and sympathisers, their distinctive Communist viewpoint now eroded, who were drifting away from the Communist Party. Men such as Garden, J. Beasley, R. Heffron, E.R. Voigt, men influential and experienced in labor affairs, were entering into a rapprochement with moderates like W.H. Seale, W.J. Mills and B. Mullins of the Waterside Workers' Federation, and their bloc in turn was joined by E.C. Magrath, J. Tyrell and J. Culbert — in short, by Lang's oldest and earliest moderate supporters. The question thus arises: upon whose terms was this bloc constituted — those of the left, or those of the moderates? Events soon made the answer clear.

'Mr Jock Garden and his friends'... 'flung themselves on the side of Mr. Lang' and the *Australian Worker* asked:

> Does Mr. Lang realise the dangerous position into which he is being so cunningly manoeuvred?

Lang, confronting on one side the rampant country interests, the A.W.U., and a squarely divided caucus, and on the other side the new industrialist bloc, was by no means eager in his choice of the latter; his pre-

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64 *A.W.*, 22 Sept. 1926.

ference would seem to have been for the former. At Lang's invitation, Theodore convened a conciliatory conference which broke down, however, when trade union delegates refused to attend without Garden and the A.W.U. refused to talk with Garden. Then, according to the Australian Worker,

... Mr Theodore was informed it would be better to drop the whole thing for the time being, as misunderstandings seemed inevitable at the Trades Hall if the negotiations continued. 67

Lang's tentative approaches to the right had revealed its intransigence and evoked the wrath of the industrialists. His formerly left-wing friends brought with them the support of the trade unions, but there were enough divergent opinions amongst these friends to make Lang think he could split off key men like Garden, Beasley, and Heffron, especially with Willis's aid. With this in mind, and his leadership of caucus in dire danger, Lang agreed to the holding of the special conference, ostensibly to revise A.L.P. rules.

It was no secret that the balance of power at the conference would be in the hands of the left. Along with most, the left them-

66 Lang denied that he had issued the invitation (Labor Daily, 15 Oct. 1926). Theodore, however, claimed that Baddeley, Minister for Labour and Industry, and one of Lang's most faithful allies, prompted his first consultation with Lang (A.W., 20 Oct. 1926). Theodore's claim was published in a letter brought up to Labor Daily by J. Higgins, M.L.C., and published on 16 October. The Labor Daily, in publishing the letter, in no way sought to challenge its authenticity, though next day Lang and Baddeley did. However it is more than likely that the testimony of Theodore (and H.E. Boote of the Australian Worker, 13 Oct. 1926) is accurate. In denying Theodore, Lang was concerned above all not to let his allies of the centre-left know that (once again) he had tried to desert them in favour of the right wing.

selves anticipated that the revised rules would allow Communists to appear as delegates to conferences, thuscharing election of leading party bodies, while minimising the role of the A.W.U. But Lang had other ideas.

After attacking the State Governor who had thwarted Labor attempts to abolish the Legislative Council, Lang assured conference that the Council would nevertheless soon be abolished, and asked conference to make 'the Parliamentary leader more secure ... [with] ... the tenure of office such as would enable him to carry out his plans.' Moderate and former leftist alike joined in heaping adulation on Lang. Oscar Schreiber (Furniture Trades), supported by the former Communist, A. Rutherford, spoke of

... the great work done by the Lang Government - the best Labor Government New South Wales had ever had.

Beasley, an intimate of J.S. Garden, endorsed this approach;

... in the past the Trades Unions had seen fit to criticise the Premier ... but when they found there were men capable of doing their jobs as the Premier was doing his they were prepared to applaud them and help them on their way. 70

Conference confirmed Lang as parliamentary leader for the duration of the existing parliament,71 enabling him to ignore the hostility of the caucus he thus ruled. But once Lang had achieved this, he then persuaded conference to postpone adoption of the new rules until

69 A.W., 17 Nov. 1926.
70 Ibid., 17 Nov. 1926.
71 See the motion, moved by Schreiber and seconded by Rutherford, in the Labor Daily, 13 Nov. 1926, which, in the words of that newspaper, gave 'All Power to John T. Lang', and was passed by 274 votes to 4.
the regular annual conference of 1927. As drafted by the rules revision committee elected at annual conference in 1926, the new rules permitted Communists to be delegates to annual or special conferences. Had these rules been put up to conference for adoption, they would have been accepted. At Lang's special request, however, all that conference did was to adopt the report of the rules committee, holding over adoption of the rules themselves till the next annual conference. There is little doubt that Willis and the key men in Garden's group agreed to do as Lang wished. In the words of Vol. Molesworth, right-wing Labor journalist and former parliamentarian:

The 'sham battle' staged against the State Governor served... as an excellent smoke screen during which the 'reds' who were mainly responsible for saving Mr. Lang from future caucus discipline were quietly 'dropped' together with the new industrial control rules... The 'reds' manoeuvred to ally themselves with the Lang Forces. Mr. Lang graciously accepted this support to stabilise his position. But the alliance then smashed. Where the 'reds' had expected in return to secure support for adoption of the new rules that would have handed over control and incidentally executive and next selection ballots to them, they had to accept the shelving of new rules until Easter Conference. Where the left had hoped that this conference would see both the adoption of the rules and the dismissal of the existing executive with its fourteen A.W.U. supporters, after Lang had secured his vote of confidence, the A.W.U. helped Lang's supporters to hurriedly close the conference.

The Communists soon saw what had happened, but they were out-gunned.

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72 Rule 59, A.W.U., 10 Nov. 1926.

73 Molesworth Collection, set 71, item 4. Copy for a newspaper article by Molesworth, dated 14 Nov. 1926.
Many of the industrialists who were awaiting a fight on the proposed alterations were astounded and a gathering during the lunch adjournment demanded of Willis, why they had been tricked. Albert's reply was that the resolution had been handed to him by certain trade union officials and he had moved the resolution as requested. The industrialists decided that there was nothing else to do except fall into the trap and support the motion... The smooth workings of the scheme and its successful conclusion give it all the appearance of a frame up. ...

In the new rules, branches and unions alike were divided into 'groups' from which delegates to annual conference would be elected, thus interposing an extra stage between the rank and file and delegates. Unions were grouped somewhat along the lines of the trades hall scheme for industrial groups, and three executive members could be elected by conference delegates representing the nine union groups controlled by the Labor Council, three from the A.W.U.'s delegates, three from the miners. Four executive members were to come from representatives of metropolitan leagues, but A.W.U. spokesmen alleged that the metropolitan trade unions could hope to control some, if not most, of these representatives. Because the trade unions could gain a majority of delegates to annual conference, they could also hope to choose the A.L.P. president and vice president, as these were to be elected directly from annual conference. Thus it would seem that metropolitan and mining unions together might hope to control at least thirty two of the forty six members of the state executive, with up to thirty six if it is true that they could influence metropolitan league representation to annual conference. They certainly could secure some delegates

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74 Workers' Weekly, 19 Nov. 1926.
75 W.F. Ahearn, in A.W., 10 Nov. 1926.
to conference from these leagues. The only doubt is whether they could secure enough of them to ensure that the whole four executive members from metropolitan league delegates were their men, or only part of the four. Metropolitan and country annual conference were set up under the new rules, but effective control remained in the hands of the main annual conference.

The rules were called 'red rules' by their opponents. Rawson and Overacker find that the rules favoured a faction whose numbers were spread over a number of unions and electorates, having the aim of breaking A.W.U. power within the A.L.P. Apart from this, these writers imply that there was little justification for the title of 'red rules'. However, whatever the immediate motives of Willis and others drawing up the new rules, given the situation in the labor movement at the time, these rules would almost certainly have enhanced direct Communist influence unless Communists were explicitly excluded. This result flowed from rule fifty nine, which said that any delegate elected by a plebiscite of his Trade Union Group shall be deemed a fit and proper person to represent his organisation at the Annual Conference or any Special Conference.

In this sense the rules were certainly red rules, and they also denied effective power to the A.W.U., a body essential to offset Communist influence within the A.L.P. Thus there was more than red-baiting involved in the use of the term 'red rules'. Had the rules been adopted at the special conference of November 1926, where the composition was

such that no motion explicitly forbidding Communists to appear as delegates to A.L.P. policy-making conferences could succeed, the Communists would have been in a good position. When the rules were actually adopted, however, at the annual conference of April 1927, at Lang's personal request Rutherford, a former Communist, successfully moved a motion excluding Communists from attending A.L.P. conferences as union delegates.

At his very moment of triumph, Lang was assailed from caucus. On 19 November Peter Loughlin resigned from the Labor Cabinet and, along with V.W.E. Goodin and R.T. Gillies, left the A.L.P. to form the nucleus of a Country Labor Party. Loughlin gave his reasons:

'The party with which I have been associated for many years has been placed in an entirely wrong position. I have done more than my share in fighting against the outside influences which have crept in... Year by year, he said, people who were foreign to Australia and to the Labor Movement... had been seeking to... establish a dictatorship which he believed was abhorrent to the members of Caucus...' 77

Goodin and Gillies (and perhaps, at this early stage, Loughlin as well) were willing to bargain with Lang who wished to save his administration, and when he promised to go no further with budget proposals and hold elections within four months, the three rebels left parliament, thus ensuring failure for a Nationalist Party censure motion on 22 November. Supply was then secured for four months and parliament prorogued.

Before he would agree to return to the A.L.P. Loughlin insisted that Lang must resign the premiership and repudiate the power conferred on

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77 Labor Daily, 20 Nov. 1926.
him by the November special conference. These terms were too onerous. But representatives of the A.L.P. federal executive secured terms from Goodin and Gillies, acceptable to caucus, which quickly became notorious as the 'Goodin-Gillies pact' whose existence was denied even while its terms were the subject of passionate and open debate in the A.L.P.

While it was widely admitted that the Goodin-Gillies pact stipulated that red rules must be abandoned, that the State Electoral Act be amended to give country areas four new seats, and priority given to legislation benefitting country areas, there was considerable doubt as to whether the pact also insisted that Willis must be dismissed from cabinet and leadership of the Legislative Council. There is no doubt that such a provision existed, and Willis knew it. The provision may be found in the Molesworth collection, 'Full Terms of Settlement of the Dispute Last November Between Messrs. Goodin and Gillies and the Labor Party.'

Seale and Voigt, Willis's private secretary and a prominent former Communist, were also fearful for their heads. Willis and Seale were extremely influential in the Labor Daily, and the paper, which had built up Lang as labor's saviour, now began to cautiously threaten him by mobilising rank and file support for Seale and Willis as a weapon to bring Lang to heel if he strayed too far towards the right wing.

80 Set 71, Item 4.
81 Labor Daily, 14 Dec. and December, passim. 1926.
They do not seem to have anticipated that he would prefer his own select group of advisers to either.

And so the battle raged, with the columns of the Labor Daily mobilising support for the Willis-Seale alignment at the 1927 Easter annual conference, which the moderate industrialists saw as a carefully stage-managed arena where Lang would either belavishly extolled or discreetly threatened, according to whether he did or did not appear to understand that his own best interests could be secured by casting his lot with the moderate industrialists. They did not after all intend to ask much of him — mainly that he save their necks.

In January the moderate industrialists lost their slender majority on the A.L.P. state executive which then deposed Seale from the presidency (later expelling him from the party) and moved the date of the approaching annual conference from Easter to June. Two bodies now called themselves the state executive of the A.L.P.: Seale's followers, and the rump, A.W.U.-controlled executive. The deposed Seale announced that he would continue preparations to hold annual conference at Easter, alleging that the postponement was a ruse, concealing an intention to call off conference altogether. The Labor Daily then began to publish the names of those who opposed the A.W.U.-controlled executive's move. While there were many branches on the daily-growing lists published by the Labor Daily, their number was vastly exceeded by that of the affiliated unions listed. A few caucus members come out for Seale and were duly listed too, and support grew steadily. O'Reilly, leader of a tiny faction, announced his support,
Lang announced his support first 'on general principles' and then, as evidence of union support mounted, announced that he would attend the Conference, though as 'peacemaker', and not as 'factionalist'.

At the Easter conference in 1927, a good deal of the time was taken up with the Goodin-Gillies pact. O'Reilly of the Hairdressers' Union asked Willis's secretary Voigt

... if he believed that a pact was arrived at between the renegades and amongst others, the Premier and his two right hand men, to sacrifice Mr. Willis.

Voigt had said earlier:

... Goodin and Gillies have openly given the terms of their pact, and these terms include the victimisation of Mr. Willis and myself. And he continued:

I do not believe ... [the Premier and his two right hand men] were a party to a pact of any kind, though I know nothing. 82

Seale had ruled Goodin and Gillies were 'outside the movement', had himself been expelled by the A.W.U.-dominated state executive, and was most anxious to have conference uphold his rulings and put his case beyond doubt. While expressing the greatest loyalty to Lang, conference finally upheld the expulsion of Loughlin, Goodin and Gillies and repudiated the Goodin-Gillies pact. In short, conference did as the moderate industrialist leaders asked.

Lang's attitude to the pact was then, and is still, ambivalent. Lang was alleged both to have supported and opposed its original acceptance by caucus. 83 Shortly after conference repudiated the pact in

82 Labor Daily, 18 Apr. 1927.
Easter, caucus reaffirmed support for the pact, and Lang was reported to say that he would honour the pact but not repudiate conference, while at a cabinet meeting where members unanimously demanded Willis's resignation, Lang maintained 'complete silence'. In recent years Lang has described conference's repudiation of the pact as a blunder prompted largely by A.C. Willis's 'anxiety to get even with some of those who had been trying to force him out of Cabinet because of his action in making Voigt his secretary...'

Conference also reaffirmed Lang's leadership of caucus, gave him power to reconstruct cabinet if he thought it necessary and adopted the 'red rules' held over from the special conference of November 1926.

Inconvenient as it was for Lang to have Goodin and Gillies expelled and his administration thus put under death sentence, because caucus out for his blood, Lang had to keep conference on side. How fortunate for him, that in the spectrum of demands conference held out as its price, there were none which interfered with what had become Lang's chief concern in late 1926 and 1927: to placate the swinging voter in the electorate rather than, as in 1925 and early 1926, to placate the trade unions in the A.L.P. structure. The concessions demanded by Seale, Willis and other spokesmen at conference involved

84 A.W., 27 Apr. 1927.
85 A.W., 27 Apr. 1927.
86 I Remember, p.320.
Lang in no further economic or social concessions to unionists, but were essentially designed to preserve their own personal influence in the Labor Party. At the Easter conference there was no word, for example, save from J. Kilhurn, on the basic wage, stationary since December 1925 despite marked price increases.

Mr. Kilhurn referred scathingly to the spectacle of a Labor administration collaborating with the Nationalist Party on the wage question ... The Premier painted a good picture of prosperity - but not of ours. For three years the basic rate has remained stationary. The trouble is that the Parliament really does not go. The power of finance restricts them. 88

Many other leftists spoke, but no-one mentioned Lang's poor record on recent union demands. A.E. Bennet, F. Roels, and A. Rutherford fell in behind Seale, without reservation and without raising independent demands as a price for support. Lang made a special appearance at Conference to ask it to exclude Communists from attending A.L.P. conferences as delegates from unions. A. Rutherford moved a motion embodying Lang's request, the only speakers in opposition being M.P. Ryan, (Storemen and Packers' Union), T. Leslie (northern district of the miners' union and self-avowed Communist) and H. Sutherland (Federated Engindrivers'). The Communist Party reproached the leftists bitterly:

The militants had the entire Conference in their hands and could have wielded it in the interests of a militant fighting policy and to secure the domination of the trade unions in the Labor movement. 89

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88 Labor Daily, 16 Apr. 1927. See also Kilburn's argument (ibid., 18 April) that Labor parliamentarians were responsible to the trade union movement and the A.L.P., not the electorate as a whole.

89 Workers' Weekly, 29 Apr. 1927.
The left bloc had fused with the moderate bloc. To Lang the demands of the coalition seemed eminently manageable. Though the moderate union bloc had secured its position in the A.L.P., the needs of the trade union rank and file did not figure in their demands. This fact did much to ensure acceptability of the moderates to Lang, now bent on appeasing the non-industrial elements in the community where once he had been more concerned to appease the trade unions in the party. But it also weakened the identification of the rank and file unionists with the union faction in the A.L.P., and Lang thus felt the faction to be a shadow in the process of divesting itself of its substance. Thus, with very little to fear from the moderate union bloc, and with the A.W.U. organised in a rival Labor Party, the A.L.P. was without strong factions. Conference itself was thus not much more than a shadow.

From that time on, Lang, a man who responded to strength, took less and less notice of conference or of the executive elected from conference. In April 1927 it might have seemed as if conference were dictating to Lang. So it was - in a few matters of importance only to a limited group of union and party officials. But in limiting itself to these matters, and thus passing over the chance to involve the interest of a wide circle of rank and file unionists through pressing trade union demands even against Lang's wishes, conference in effect signified to Lang that he was set free of its control. Already free of caucus because of conference support, he was thus free of all the traditional mechanisms of Labor Party control.
Shortly after conference a by-election occurred at Warringah, and both the federal executive and the A.W.U.-controlled state executive of the Labor Party endorsed one Captain Conway for the seat; the Seale state executive endorsed A.A.L. O'Gorman. The outcome served to show that the strength in the struggle between Lang and his opponents lay with the former, for O'Gorman received over 1,000 votes more than Conway in a white-collar area.

Individual Ministers were now said to have approached the Governor as to whether he would commission one of them, should Cabinet vote Lang out of power, but Lang seized the initiative. When Cabinet refused to endorse his appointment of his private secretary, T. Treble, to a new and well-paid government post, Lang abruptly sought a 'showdown', and on 26 May 1927 asked the Governor to convene a meeting of the Executive Council, at which he tabled a minute to prorogue Parliament, and to follow up with a dissolution. All Ministers except Willis opposed the move; the Governor adjourned the meeting, and Lang handed in his resignation as Premier. The Governor accepted the resignation and commissioned Lang to form a new cabinet, on the understanding that Parliament would be dissolved quickly. The new cabinet had the

90 I Remember, p. 324.
91 Australian Worker, 1 June 1927. The ex-Ministers issued a statement: 'Messrs. Lang and Willis have destroyed the Labor Government. For this dishonourable and treacherous act they alone are responsible.' (Australian Worker, 1 June 1927). Lazzarini commented: 'Future generations of Labor people will remember him as the strong leader who risked the widows' pensions, 44 hours and workmen's compensation, so that he might give a favoured friend and public servant a position at £1850 a year.' For a comment on Lang's tactical shrewdness, see Encel, op.cit., p. 159-60.
support of twenty to twenty one members of the original Labor following of forty six.\(^{92}\)

A federal A.L.P. conference in May 1927 refused to accept delegates from the 'Easter' state executive of New South Wales (the delegates included W.J. Gibb, J.F. O'Reilly, A. McPherson, A.A. Rutherford, and J.J. Graves),\(^{93}\) and repudiated the 'Easter' executive by twenty two votes to eight. But as it became clear that the Easter executive had the strength in New South Wales, the federal A.L.P. took a more conciliatory attitude. The federal A.L.P. executive arranged a 'unity' conference for July and, in laying down its conditions, stipulated that expulsion should not prevent a duly accredited delegate's attendance. The A.W.U.-controlled state executive issued a set of counter-conditions, and expelled Lang himself from the A.L.P. For all this, the A.W.U. lost the day at the 'unity' conference.

Meeting on 23 and 24 July and attended by nearly 400 delegates, the 'unity' conference reaffirmed the decisions of the Easter conference, to the accompaniment of a continuous 'considerable uproar'.\(^{94}\) A delegate from the Cessnock branch had moved the reaffirmation of the Easter decisions, which involved endorsing the expulsion of Goodin and Gillies, the suspension of the A.W.U.-controlled state executive, conferment of extraordinary powers upon Lang, and the new rules which specifically excluded Communists. C. Tannock, supported by J. Kilburn, A.E. Bennet and M.P. Ryan, amended the Cessnock motion to the effect that all


\(^{93}\) Labor Daily, 12 May 1927.

\(^{94}\) A.W., 27 July 1927.
decisions should be endorsed save for those portions which interfered with the right of affiliated unions to be represented by any constitutionally elected delegates, but the amendment was lost by 252 votes to eighty.\textsuperscript{95}

Thus the settlement of April 1927 was confirmed. It had been implemented with the support of Willis, Voigt, Seale, and initiated the leading left-wing union officials. But the fruits of victory went neither to the left nor to the moderates, but simply to Lang, now well advanced on the road to personal rule. In the next section we resume the story of his Government's legislative activity, taking up the story at December 1926 and continuing through the period of intense faction struggle just described - a struggle whose course and outcome helped significantly to shape the legislative program itself.

\textsuperscript{95} A.W., 27 July; Workers' Weekly, 29 July 1927.
Lang in Parliament, December 1926-1927

In late 1926 and 1927, Lang's legislation was of far less benefit to trade unionists and to the lower income groups than his legislation in 1925 and early 1926.

Owing to the faction struggle within the Labor Party, parliament was prorogued from 3 December 1926 until 11 January 1927. However, when the Goodin-Gillies pact gave Lang a slender and patently temporary majority, he reopened parliament on 20 December amid Opposition protests, resubmitted the budget and declared that a general election was unnecessary. One of his first measures was to fulfil in part the clause of the Goodin-Gillies pact relating to further representation for country areas; on 23 December the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections (Further Amendment) Bill was introduced, receiving assent in March 1927. But the Bill provided for only one additional rural member where four had been promised, and Opposition members were quick to point out that the Goodin-Gillies pact had not in fact been fulfilled.

Preceding the two measures of the session which enjoy some radical repute (the Family Endowment Bill and the Large Estates (Taxation) Bill) came the Liquor Amendment Bill. There was a good deal


of resentment over this Bill in the labor movement. A conference of Labor women on 20 February 1927, for example, condemned the Bill because it was 'against the principles of the Early Closing Act'. The Federated Liquor Trades' Union and the Federated Caterers' Employees' Union opposed the Bill on the grounds that it would lengthen their hours of work, expressing their opposition in a deputation to caucus. From many quarters came the charge that brewery money had inspired both the Bill and the volte-face by certain Labor members on the matter, while there was also criticism of the fact that the Liquor Bill had been brought down before legislation dealing with the basic wage, which had not increased for over a year, and before the long-awaited Motherhood Endowment Bill.

In March came a Large Estates (Taxation) Bill which placed a tax described by Round Table as 'not heavy' upon all estates having an unimproved value over £10,000. Very little opposition was displayed to the measure; J.C.L. Fitzpatrick suggested a reason for this when he

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100 See H.V. Evatt on their behalf, in A.W., 9 Feb. 1927.
104 Round Table, vol. 17, 1926-27, p.625.
said:

I do not believe that a large number of land owners will have to pay very much under this bill...

and

Very few estates in New South Wales will be paying the tax... 105

In many countries during the 1920's, child endowment was discussed as an alternative to the basic wage system. 106 In Australia, the idea of child endowment was taken up readily by non-Labor parties, who at the same time insisted upon a reduction in the size of the unit upon which the basic wage was calculated. For example, the New South Wales Board of Trade in 1919 declared a new adult living wage of £3.17.6, which represented an increase of 17/6 a week. To ease the consequent burden on employers, W.A. Holman, 107 then Nationalist Premier of New South Wales, passed a Child Maintenance Act. Under the terms of this Act, the basis for calculation of the living wage was reduced from a unit of four (a man, his wife and two children) to a unit of two (a man and wife); for each child, child endowment of 5/- a week was to be paid. Holman estimated that he would thereby decrease from £14,000,000 to £6,500,000 the burden cast on employers by the 17/6 per

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105 N.S.W. Parl Deb., vol. 111, pp. 2166-2167.
107 This is the interpretation placed on Holman's bill by H.V. Evatt (Australian Labour Leader, p. 478-479) in giving a sympathetic account of Holman's reasons for introducing the Bill.
Labor parliamentarians denounced the Act, some of them fiercely, while John Storey, caucus leader and no leftist, agreed that it was vitally necessary to provide for child endowment, but contended that it should not be carried out by reducing the living wage...

Discussing Lang's family endowment legislation in 1927, J.M. Baddeley, Minister for Labour and Industry, said:

I think if the hon. member looks at Mr. Holman's scheme he will find it is not a different scheme [from Lang's].

There were, of course, differences; but Baddeley, the man responsible for seeing the legislation through parliament, knew what he was saying. Lang's scheme, like Holman's, was based on a reduction in the size of the family unit on which the state basic wage was calculated.

In 1927, child endowment was part of the platform of the Nationalist Party in New South Wales, was, indeed, approved by

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108 H.V. Evatt, op.cit., p.479. Evatt continued: 'Clearly Holman was bustled into making a proposal which, though logically impressive, was ill-timed and unjust. It looked like a deliberate attempt to cheat the employees of increased wages for, on Holman's own figures, the employers would be better off by £7,500,000 if his scheme went through. By precisely the same amount, therefore, the employees as a body would be worse off.' (op.cit., p.479).

109 For example, F.M. Burke (N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol.77,p.2061): 'The employers are to contribute to a charity fund, out of which provision is to be made for the maintenance of the children of poorer workers, but they are to be relieved of the fair burdens that would have been imposed upon them if the determination of the Board of Trade had been allowed to take full effect.' (See also Lazzarini, at ibid., p.2082, and references to A.L.P. criticisms of Holman's Act in the Socialist Labor Party election leaflet in 1927: 'Startling Disclosures. Workers Defrauded of £9,000,000... - R.S. Ross Coll.).

110 Evatt, loc. cit.


112 Item 19 of the platform of the Nationalist Association of N.S.W.
Nationalist Party Prime Minister S.M. Bruce, and seems to have found favour with country interests. The Nationalists believed that in any worthwhile endowment scheme the size of the basic wage family unit had to be reduced. The Nationalists knew that this reduction would be unpalatable to Labor, and were not easy about Lang's scheme until an Act reducing the unit was actually on the statute books. Lang passed the endowment legislation in several Acts, and the Act which met Nationalist wishes by reducing the unit of the basic wage he left until last, almost certainly to put him in the best position to test Labor's reactions. The delay made the Nationalists most uneasy, and T. Bavin, state parliamentary Leader of the Nationalist Party, argued strongly for legislation to reduce the basic wage unit:

The living wage based on the requirements of a man with a wife and two children has the drawback that it imposes on the industries of the country an obligation to pay the cost of the maintenance of 500,000 children who do not exist at all. The radical vice of the present system is, first, that it provides for children who do not exist, and secondly, that it does not provide for a large number of children who do exist. 114

Henry Boote's comment on the last part of this criticism echoed the feelings of many in the labor movement:

That, of course, was all to the advantage of the workers. It ensured a fairly high standard of living, though still a lower one than obtained in four other States and

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113a See, for example, the Land, 17 Dec. 1926.

the Commonwealth, all of which have fixed the basic wage for a man, wife and three children. 115

Lang's Industrial Arbitration (Amendment) Act had substituted an Industrial Commission for the State Arbitration Court, and the Labor Government appointed Mr. Justice Piddington as President of the Commission. Long an ardent advocate of child endowment, Mr. Justice Piddington shared Bavin's view on the four person unit as the basis for the basic wage. 116 No Bill to reduce the unit was introduced until 8 March 1927. But in December 1926, when declaring a living wage for adult males (and simultaneously calling the legislature's attention to the need for family endowment), 117 Mr. Piddington made his calculations on the basis of a two unit family. Anticipating a child endowment of 5/- per child 118 (though Labor caucus planned a 6/- endowment), 119 Mr. Piddington declared a basic wage of £4.4.0 which was exactly the same as it had been in 1925. Had he used the four-unit basis, Mr. Piddington later stated, the 1926 wage would have been £4.15.0 a week, 120 while a five-unit family, as used in arriving at the Commonwealth basic wage, would have resulted in a wage of £5.6.0 a week. 121

115 A.W., 8 June 1927.
117 Ibid., p.159.
119 A.W., 29 Dec. 1926.
120 A.W., 28 Sept. 1927.
Protests from the labor movement were immediate and widespread. E.C. Magrath and Miss I. Cashman (Printing Industry Employees' Union) were staunch Langites, and Lang had appointed them as employees' representatives upon the Industrial Commission; though it was well known that Lang and Piddington had worked together on the endowment issue, Miss Cashman and E.C. Magrath protested against Piddington's action in a Minority Report which accompanied the Annual Declaration of the Living Wage, and their protest received publicity in the Labor Daily. The Labor Daily itself attacked the Piddington declaration, while the Australian Worker claimed that in union circles attention was being drawn to the fact that Lang had made no provision for an increased basic wage in the budget, adding that some argued Lang had known in advance of Piddington's decision. Lang's omission of such a provision is indeed remarkable. Prices were rising, the federal basic wage had risen, and his own Minister for Labour and Industry asserted, in defending child endowment against opposition charges that it would cripple industry:

... employers here were actually looking forward to the declaration of a basic wage at least equal to the Federal declaration of £4.11.6d.

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124 Ibid., 18 Dec. 1926.
125 A.W., 22 Dec. 1926.
An increase in the wage was certainly anticipated in labor circles. Labor Monthly stated that the chairmen of the conciliation committees (set up under the Industrial Arbitration Amendment Act of 1925) had for some time been refusing unions increases in anticipation of an increase in the state basic wage. Labor Council set up a special committee (which included A. McPherson, already one of Lang's most devoted followers) to secure 'united action' to increase the basic wage, while the Australian Worker claimed that

The substitution of child endowment for an increase in the basic wage will put millions into the pockets of the employing class. Though some workers might benefit, the Australian Worker continued, on the whole it was a 'disastrous setback to the working class'. While the Labor Daily took it for granted that the child endowment scheme was a substitute for an increased basic wage, the Communist Workers' Weekly believed that the proposed child endowment scheme had as one of its immediate results the growth of 'antagonism between married and single workers', and warned that workers would probably have to wait some six months before they actually received child endowment. (The estimate proved too low.) This time lag, the Workers'

127 Labor Monthly, 1 Jan. 1927.
128 A.W., 29 Dec. 1926.
129 A.W., 29 Dec. 1926; for unfavourable trade union commentary, see The Railroad, 10 July; 10 Aug. 1927.
130 Labor Daily, 22 Mar. 1927. Protesting against amendments in the Family Endowment Bill by the Legislative Council, the paper said: '... the Council would do well to remember that the Endowment scheme as it stands is a much lighter impost than the basic wage alternative'.
Weekly continued, would mean a further saving for the employers, and a further loss for the employees.

In December 1926, caucus had been divided over the Piddington wage declaration. H.V. Evatt claimed that Piddington had exceeded his legal powers in assuming that child endowment would be introduced in the future and giving a judgment based on that assumption. He added that the government could intervene under the Arbitration Act and increase the basic wage, while inside caucus, D. Murray also urged Government intervention to increase the wage. Caucus was persuaded, however, that prompt attention to the endowment legislation would remedy matters, and soon approved an endowment scheme; but this scheme, like other early plans for endowment differed substantially from the plan which finally came into operation. According to caucus, endowment was to be retrospective to 15 December 1926, and was to be paid at the rate of 6/- a week for each child under fourteen where family incomes were less than £750 a year. In the three items of legislation introduced in February 1927 to cover family endowment, it was stipulated that endowment should be financed from a tax on wages sheets of from

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132 A.W., 22 Dec. 1926.
135 These were: the Family Endowment Bill, the Family Endowment (Tax) Bill and the Finance (Family Endowment Tax) Bill.
six to six and a half per cent. This would bring in £6,598,000, while direct taxation on 'those who [could] afford to pay' would bring in £700,000. By 8 February 1927, the Opposition had forced the Government to reduce the income limit of eligibility from £750 to £364 p.a.

But so far, the unit on which basic wage calculations were made had not been formally reduced. Thus, the Opposition was by no means satisfied. Lang was eager to put through child endowment, as he knew elections could not be far away, and it soon became known that he contemplated reducing the basic wage unit. No doubt to outmanoeuvre Lang, caucus decided by an 'overwhelming vote' on 7 March 1927 that Piddington be asked to declare a basic wage based upon a four-unit family. Lang countered by suggesting legislation for a basic wage of £4.11.6, and, after a discussion with Piddington and Baddeley, he 'expressed his opinion on the advisableness of proceeding at once with a bill to raise the basic wage ... to £4.11.6 a week in view of the adverse circumstances which had overtaken the Endowment Bill in the Legislative Council'. But the Industrial Arbitration (Living Wage) Bill, introduced by Baddeley on 8 March, made no attempt to increase

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136 Baddeley pointed out that this was equivalent to an increase in the basic wage of c. 5/5d a week. (N.S.W. Parl. Deb., vol.110, p.1065, 9 Feb. 1927.)
139 Ibid.
140 Labor Daily, 8 Mar. 1927.
the basic wage but instead, at the insistence of the Legislative Council, reduced the size of the basic wage family unit from four persons to two. Thus Lang and Baddeley evidently acted independently of caucus's wishes.

For some time Lang had made caucus restive with his tendency to behave as he pleased, but his actions over child endowment marked a new confidence on his part. Caucus's instructions on child endowment and on the basic wage had been quite definite; they had even been published in the Labor Daily, and caucus members evidently expected the instructions to be followed. In the Legislative Council, for example, H.J. Connington expressed surprise that the Government had accepted Opposition member Ashton's amendment reducing the size of the basic wage unit: '... I understood, on good authority, that the Government was not prepared to accept it.' he said. Lang had obviously not consulted Willis, the Labor Leader in the Legislative Council, and Willis said of the Ashton amendment:

... so far as I am concerned this bill would go into the waste-paper basket before I would accept it.

The Ashton amendment led Labor parliamentarian M.J. Connington to say:

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142 One particular grievance was that, for some time past, Lang had failed to call Cabinet meetings (Encel, op.cit., p.158).


143Abid., p.2331, 22 Mar. 1927.
per cent

I suggest to the House that 90\% of the workers will receive no benefit whatever from the Family Endowment Bill ... At the risk of being tiresome I have to repeat that the workers of this State are working for a lower wage than the employees of any other State of the Commonwealth. 144

while another Labor parliamentarian, J.M. Concannon, alleged that

... every possible opportunity was embraced by the Government to cut down almost to the bone the benefits proposed to be given to the working-classes. 145

Yet the Ashton amendment was far from being Lang's only concession to the Opposition viewpoint.

Where originally the Labor Party had proposed that all workers earning less than £750 a year should receive endowment, it was later agreed to accept £364 as the maximum. Then, however, the Opposition proposed that skilled workers earning above a certain amount, but less than £364, should receive no endowment. Opposition Leader Bavin described Ashton's amendment to this effect as a 'very vital amendment indeed', as it would 'reduce very substantially the area over which [the] system will operate'. To have a limit of £364 would have been wrong, Bavin believed, because in his eyes

144 N.S.W. Parl Deb., vol.111, p.2472, 24 Mar.

145 Ibid., p.2473, 24 Mar.
The whole system of child endowment does not pretend to do any more than give an adequate subsistence allowance to all those who cannot by their own exertions obtain enough to support their families. 146

Thus Bavin's view coincided with the one condemned in 1919 by Labor parliamentarians as Holman's: 'a charity fund'. 147 Another prominent Opposition member, Buttenshaw, believed that this amendment of Ashton's would reduce the cost of endowment to industry 'by about one-half'. 148

The total sum industry had to provide would now be £3,500,000; where, as was set out earlier, the Labor Party had envisaged industry paying a tax of from six to six and a half per cent of the total amount of wages paid, the percentage was now reduced to three per cent. 149 The Opposition was particularly anxious that special arrangements should be made for employers working under federal awards, for the federal basic wage was higher than the state basic wage; though unsuccessful in attempting to exclude all workers under federal awards from the family endowment, 150 the Opposition was able to secure a reduction of ten per cent in payroll tax for their employers. 151 After all this, in

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146 Ibid., vol.111, p.2507, 24 Mar. In any case, Bavin felt that '... most of the skilled workers of New South Wales would rather not have this endowment... He believed, further '... the bulk of the wage earners do not want assistance from the Government to maintain their families.' (ibid., p. 2508).


149 See N.S.W. Official Year Book, 1926-27,p.601. The tax was not levied on wages paid to domestic servants, or casual hands employed otherwise than in the employer's trade or business.


Footnote 151 on next page.
its final form, the Family Endowment Act paid the full endowment only where total family income was £221. p.a. Beyond this, endowment was decreased by the amount of the family income above £221. Thus a family with three children would receive £39 p.a. endowment if family income were £221, £29 p.a. endowment if family income were £231, and so on.

In recording this compromise with the Opposition at the workers' expense, we end our account of Lang's later legislation on a note typical of its trend. So far as its benefit to unionists is concerned, there is a contrast between the legislation of Lang's third session (in particular, the family endowment legislation) and that of his first and second sessions. Legislation of the earlier sessions was more beneficial to the unionists and lower-income groups than was that of the last session. The change stemmed essentially, we suggest, from the fact that, ever more confidently as the weeks passed in 1927, Lang was able to set aside industrialist pressure and, impending elections vividly in his mind, respond to non-unionist and anti-unionist pressures. In concluding our study, it is of some interest to review the events which led to this outcome.

Lang felt the assault of the farmers and city businessmen after the close of the second session in 1926; at that time he met

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151 Ibid., p.2467, 24 Mar. 1927; p.2530, 24 Mar. N.S.W. Year Book, 1926-27, p.601. The employers' contribution (equal to 3% of the total payments to employees in the form of wages, salaries, bonuses, commission, etc.) was reduced by 10% in respect of wages paid to an employee working under a federal award.
with increasingly stubborn opposition from within caucus, and in particular from his deputy leader, Peter Loughlin. By August 1926 the Lang complex began to shed all semblance of coherence. The Labor Daily's charges of intended right-wing defection prompted Lang to appoint A.D. Kay to the Meat Board, and possibly precipitated Peter Loughlin's bid for caucus leadership. At this very time, important members of the Communist and Labor Party left wing were discarding their five-year-old policy of intermittent support for the A.W.U. faction within the Labor Party and moving towards the Seale-Willis bloc of moderate industrialists. If the new alliance took its shape from the more conservative partner, this was at least partly because steady erosion of the leftists' distinctive view had left few points of real divergence.

Nevertheless, this alliance opened up a chasm between the industrialists and the right-wing factions. Lang's first response, in October 1926, was to dally with the right wing, just as he had done in December 1925. A fierce trade union reaction prompted Lang to retreat temporarily, and he attended the union-controlled special conference of the A.L.P. in November 1926, giving his blessing to the preparation of a constitution for that body which was designed to decrease permanently the power of the A.W.U. officials, to the profit of the metropolitan and mining officials.

As a reaction to what was construed as a trade union victory, came the resignation from parliament of three A.L.P. members with a consequent threat to Lang's slender parliamentary majority. To retrieve it, Lang now deserted his industrialist allies, as we saw,
signing the Goodin-Gillies pact with its provision for sanctions against those allies. The state executive of the New South Wales branch of the A.L.P. split over the pact, and the trade union bloc (now a coalition of left and moderates), knowing that Lang contemplated deserting them and offering the heads of at least Willis and Seale to the right wing, turned to the rank and file for help. In return, the rank and file might have demanded much of the union faction in terms of immediate reforms - but the rank and file could have done this only if it had a tribune in the political faction struggle. But because the coalition between left and moderate unionists had taken place on the terms of the moderates, the coalition bloc faced Lang with demands which strengthened its position in the A.L.P. machine vis-a-vis that of the A.W.U., but which had no direct relevance to the immediate problems of the rank and file trade unionist. Yet the only independent source of power for the coalition was the rank and file of the unions, and by ceasing to press for rank and file demands, the coalition not only made Labor Party internal affairs seem less and less relevant to the unionists; it also forfeited any chance of strengthening its own position vis-a-vis that of Lang and his inner-circle within the party machine. The trade union coalition thus rendered itself harmless; thereafter Lang accepted their votes but rarely sought their advice. With the A.W.U. out of the way through the November rules, with caucus disciplined by conference, with conference rendered an empty shell through the disappearance of the
A.W.U. and of the left wing as an effective force, Lang was able to cut free from all the traditional controlling mechanisms of the Labor Party. Thus, by July 1927, Lang was well on the road towards those heights from which he would rule the labor movement of New South Wales during the Great Depression.
Conclusion

The links of the early Communists with the mass movement were essentially those of the Trades Hall reds, opportunists in political affairs and conservative bureaucrats in industrial affairs. Strong influences arising from the Australian environment did much to shape the cadre which arose from within the mass movement. If one holds that the masses automatically get the sort of leadership they deserve, that a leadership is a sort of mirror image or reflex of the mass mood, then one might conclude that the manifold conservative influences of the Australian environment produced their inevitable outcome. These influences are well known: the traditions of prosperity, the lack of involvement in war, the special place held by unions in the alternative party of government, the arbitration system, the notable weakness of a native intellectual tradition and labor's related poverty of theory. Accordingly this study could have been conceived as an exposition and analysis of the relation between the reds and the reformists; followed by the statement - or rather the suggestion, as is more commonly offered with problems so thorny - that the inevitable triumph of conservative environmental influences has been revealed.

Microscopically examined, however, the matter appears more complicated, with man's will and capacity to choose playing a part that cannot be ignored. The story actually reveals a conflict between two counterposed sets of tendencies, one set making for conservatism, the other for militancy and radicalism. Given the collapse of the world
revolutionary wave, then the triumph of native conservative-bureaucratic and opportunist tendencies was certainly likely, though this tells one nothing about the extent of that triumph. Among the counter-tendencies one must first note the high standard of living itself which, when joined with class struggle ideology, will help create and intensify industrial militancy - as it did in 1917 and 1919. This was further intensified by the effects of the Irish rebellion and the red October. Additionally, the conscription struggles were won, and here the actions of the leading cadre (I.W.W., Victorian Socialist Party, left-Labor) as well as the efforts of the mass, played a crucial part. High among the counter-tendencies one must also rate the spirit of industrial militancy. The 1917 general strike which it precipitated was lost, but the rank and file did not renounce interest in direct action as a result. The Chicago I.W.W. focussed, as would a prism, the mass mood brought about by this complex of influences, while at the same time playing a quite decisive part in fashioning this mass mood. The direct influence of the I.W.W. upon the Trades Hall reds was thus powerful, and its removal had far-reaching effect.

After helping to form, and then abandoning, the Industrial Socialist Labor Party, the Trades Hall reds threw themselves into establishing the Communist Party. Here, partly through past membership in and daily contact with the Labor Party, and partly through ideological conviction, the Trades Hall reds initiated a de facto united front line towards the A.L.P., then governing New South Wales, long before the
Communist Party formally adopted the new line, and even before the Comintern formally proclaimed the united front in mid-1921. Thus in political as well as in trade union affairs, the Trades Hall reds provided the infant Communist Party with mass ties that were possibly amongst the strongest in the world communist movement.

The Trades Hall reds were not without influence upon the A.L.P. even in these early months. But in the A.L.P. faction war the reds backed, in a remarkably uncritical way, the machine of the Australian Workers' Union, inheritor of the union mantle from the earlier 'industrialist versus politician' conflicts. By 1923, despite the help of the Communists, the Baileyite (A.W.U.) state executive was swept from office, and its place taken by a new bloc formed from the old Dooleyites, who were now led by J.T. Lang and numbered in their ranks many union officials. The Communists were refused the right to affiliate with the A.L.P., and a vigorous rearguard action did not succeed in reversing this decision. For some time, the Communists continued to be strangely reticent about criticizing the A.W.U. hierarchs and, up until annual conference in 1926, formed a bloc with the A.W.U. at the annual A.L.P. conferences.

Lang became A.L.P. caucus leader through the support of moderate union officials who were much influenced by labor's general mood of militancy and radicalism, and especially by the Trades Hall reds. In his early months as state Premier Lang consequently fulfilled many cherished and long-standing demands of the affiliated unions. In return
however, Lang required industrial peace amongst other things, and his union official followers, now beginning to number leading Trades Hall reds in their ranks, did their best to restrain the still combative union rank and file.

The mechanics of leadership in the union movement intimately concern the relation between the levels of combativity of the rank and file and of the leaders. Two limit cases may be discerned. Farsighted leaders may formulate an adequate policy which the ranks reject; or, at the other extreme, the rank and file may perceive and be prepared to implement a policy which is effective, but for some reason distasteful to leaders. In the period investigated, the situation approximated the latter extreme.

Briefly, the available evidence suggests that the level of industrial militancy of the rank and file fluctuated between 1916 and 1927; that from 1916 to 1922, there was a fairly high level of militancy, with a temporary fall after 1922 and a revival of some sort after 1925. The noteworthy point is that, throughout these years, whatever the changing requirements of the situation or the mood of the rank and file, the Trades Hall reds clung to one industrial tactic - that defined as 'confinement'. If, before, during and after their association with the Communist Party the Trades Hall reds acted with notable opportunism in political affairs, in industrial activities they tended to be both timid and bureaucratic.

In the political sphere, the Trades Hall reds were confronted with a dilemma: to 'bore from within' the mass party, but risk
disintegration as reds; or to maintain doctrinal purity outside the mass party, but risk political isolation. This was indeed a genuine dilemma. However, in the industrial sphere, matters were very different. The Trades Hall reds were heirs to a living tradition of 'extension', Australian labor's alternative strike tactic to confinement. From 1909 to 1917 many outstanding strikes were conducted according to the strategy of extension. Indeed, Turner has recently suggested that what this study defines as 'extension' was the tradition of the unskilled and semi-skilled 'mass' unions, and that the pre-war militant socialists preferred this tradition both for its utility in achieving immediate reform and for its educational power from a revolutionary viewpoint.

The tactic of confinement, by contrast with that of extension, had the quality of involving the rank and file to a minimum extent. This minimum involvement had the effect of holding down to a minimum the industrial reforms won by labor in economically favourable periods, and also helped limit the political effectiveness of the post-war wave of industrial militancy. Additionally, it played a part in undermining the political strength of the Trades Hall reds.

To many unionists, especially officials, Lang's industrial reforms appeared to demonstrate the futility of direct action. To many Communists, after years of work in the A.L.P., or work oriented towards the A.L.P., such reforms appeared to demonstrate the futility of being revolutionaries, or at best, appeared to demonstrate that there was something seriously wrong with the manner in which they were
pursuing their revolutionary course.

Yet Lang's program of radical legislative reform, so soon to set in motion events leading to a crisis for Lang's administration, would never have been undertaken had it not been for the Communists. Since 1921 and 1922, the Trades Hall reds had played the role of tribune within the A.L.P. for the militancy and radicalism of the rank and file industrialists. Thus they had limited the extent to which the moderate union officials (in particular Willis, Baddeley and Seale) could allow Lang to go back upon his earlier promises of concessions to the industrialists. The irony of it was that, even as Lang carried through his legislation, industrial militancy, already seriously eroded, was being further weakened by the combined efforts of Lang and his industrial followers, efforts in which the Trades Hall reds played a vital part. But rank and file industrial militancy was not to lose its direct political effectiveness until late in 1926, when the old A.L.P.-oriented Communist bloc disintegrated as such, moving over to and becoming indistinguishable from the moderate union officials.

In losing intimate contact with the Communist Party the Trades Hall reds lost much of their clear-cut left-wing outlook and factional position within the A.L.P., moving towards (but never reaching) the right at the very time that a world-wide ebb of earlier revolutionary elan was becoming sharply manifest.

It would be going too far to say that the left's disintegration 'explains' Lang's rise to power. Clearly, Lang had attributes and
achievements which must figure in any such explanation. Though full explanation of Lang's rise is not the concern of this study, one must note this suburban real estate agent's political astuteness, above all in his choice of the then tough-minded union moderates. One also recalls his cold ruthlessness, and the patience which makes the years of caucus membership from 1913 to 1923 seem like a carefully-planned apprenticeship. Additionally, Lang was a liberal Catholic with links with the 1890 vintage labor and socialist stalwarts - a complex peculiarly congenial to Australian labor - though this did not stop him from being, on the whole, politically moderate and opportunist. All these things, along with his rapid enactment of radical legislation, help explain Lang's importance. But the role of the reds was crucial, in making the moderate unionists appear worthy of Lang's choice in the factional struggle. And if one tries to explain not merely why Lang became powerful, but why his power took the extreme form of reducing the A.L.P. machine to virtual impotence, the part of the Trades Hall reds in the A.L.P. faction war assumes an even sharper significance.

When the revolutionaries entered (or re-entered) the mass reformist party, they began to be politically effective. They also contributed critically to making the reformists more effective as reformists. At the same time the revolutionaries exposed themselves to the influence of the reformist milieu, having started out in any case as extremely sensitive to those influences. Is it then sufficient to
say, as was asked above, that the triumph of the environmental influences was inevitable? This would seem far from adequate. It is true that the crumbling of the faction structure within the mass party, which culminated in Lang's ascendency, faced the Trades Hall reds with a peculiarly corrosive milieu. But it must be remembered that the reds' own acts of commission and omission contributed vitally to building up that milieu. Similarly, the Trades Hall reds' choice of industrial tactics played a most important part in shaping labor's industrial morale.

Such questions as these - questions of the responsibility of historical figures, of what alternative choices and policies were possible - seem to arise with peculiar force when one considers the major developments of the period. For this study opened in a time of turbulence, with strike waves, high hopes for social reconstruction, a powerful left wing well placed within the mass labor party, and a widespread conviction that the 'industrial wing' of the A.L.P. was that body's very foundation and should control its 'political wing'. Yet, by 1932, labor had not only agree that 'Lang is Right', that 'Lang is Greater than Lenin', but had lost confidence in its own institutions to the point where cabinet met rarely and caucus never, where the unions were industrially quiescent and their influence on the A.L.P. minimal. The Chief Secretary of New South Wales, Mark Gosling, could say of cabinet:
The Big Fella

John Thomas Lang.

(From the jacket of

The Great Bust, by J.T. Lang, Sydney 1961.)
... they had one leader who announced the policy.
'When he announces it we follow, and as soon as he
announces it we follow, and as soon as he announces
it we know where we stand. We do not seek to know
what he is going to do and are prepared to surrender
our judgment, if necessary, in advance.'
(S.M.H., 29 April 1932.)

There is especial interest, then, in the roles of the major
actors, in the process by which a strong and confident labor movement
fell into the humiliation which these words indicate.

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