

THESES, SIS/LIBRARY  
R.G. MENZIES BUILDING NO.2  
Australian National University  
Canberra ACT 0200 Australia

Telephone: +61 2 6125 4631  
Facsimile: +61 2 6125 4063  
Email: [library.theses@anu.edu.au](mailto:library.theses@anu.edu.au)

## **USE OF THESES**

**This copy is supplied for purposes  
of private study and research only.  
Passages from the thesis may not be  
copied or closely paraphrased without the  
written consent of the author.**

**'BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS TO GET A  
LIVING':  
RELATIONS BETWEEN WORKING-CLASS  
MEN AND WOMEN IN  
WOLLONGONG, 1921-1954**

by  
Leanne Louise Blackley

January 1998

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



I hereby certify that the following work has not been submitted to any other university. Except for the references acknowledged in the footnotes, the work is wholly my own.

L. L. Blackley

Leanne Louise Blackley

January 1998

## *Acknowledgments*

Staff from the National Library of Australia, the Mitchell Library and the State Archives of NSW in Sydney offered assistance with source material for this thesis. I would like to also thank the staff at the BHP Archives for their assistance with source material and proof reading. Michael Organ, the Archivist at the University of Wollongong Archive was always obliging, especially in his capacity to offer free access to the various collections. The staff of the Noel Butlin Archives of Business and Labour offered a personalised and friendly service and were always eager to assist. After an inter-library loan bungle, Dr Erik Eklund kindly sent a copy of his thesis on Port Kembla to me, saving me from a trip to Sydney.

Both Dr Mike Donaldson and Dr Andrew Wells deserve thanks. Supervisors of my honours thesis, they encouraged me to undertake a doctorate at the Australian National University, and were instrumental in my receiving a Australian Postgraduate Award Scholarship enabling me to continue studies.

Professor Ann Curthoys, my PhD thesis supervisor, deserves many thanks. It was my admiration for Ann's work that prompted me to come to the ANU. Her vision and ability to imagine the 'big picture' has been a constant thread through her supervision. She has always engendered confidence, by providing direct supervision and encouraging me to 'own' the thesis. Dr Anthea Hyslop, my main adviser, has offered excellent assistance on detail, especially grammar and expression. Dr Jack Barbalet, an adviser in the early stages provided some helpful readings and probing questions that were instructive. Dr Mike Donaldson merits an additional thank you for his on-going encouragement and ability to motivate - to this end he has continued to read my conference papers, attend my seminars, and read my thesis with a sharp eye. His time and generosity are remarkable when considered in the context of the increasing academic workload.



Many friends assisted with my thesis work - some directly offering advice on content, others offering a good ear, a meal, and their time, which I kindly filled up with whingeing. My three best Canberra friends, Katerina Agostino, Linda Rasmussen and Shannon Read were the first friendly faces I saw when I arrived in Canberra and I am thankful that their friendship has endured.

Fellow postgraduates in History were a tremendous help, always encouraging and willing to listen. Thank you to Ann Player for being a mate during our weekly Departmental seminars, and to my 'neighbour' Val Spear, who kindly used her keen eye to read my thesis in the last stages. Special thanks also to Bill Pender, in his role as Postgraduate Representative on Staff and Departmental Committee meetings. Thank you to the staff in the History Department who offered advice and took an interest in my project. Tracy Deasey and Marian Robson deserve special mention for their administrative insights and friendly disposition, instrumental to the function of the History Department.

The working-class people who responded to my requests for interviews also warrant special mention. Many of the insights into Wollongong, and the working-class men and women that lived there between 1921 and 1954, would not have been possible without their efforts. Their willingness to share their memories and views with me was appreciated, and their hospitality and openness was also welcomed.

Thanks must go to my parents - Carole and Bill Blackley, who have always encouraged me, but, not unlike many working-class people, have often regarded my scholarly interests curiously. Nevertheless, they remain extremely proud. They have offered practical assistance enabling me to continue studying, but above all, they provided the inspiration for a thesis about working-class people. Their stories of working hard 'to get a living' are punctuated with tales of family, friends and community - some are good, some are less so, but their spirit and persistence endures - and it was this aspect of

working-class peoples' lives that I wanted to capture. Their lives and the stories of people I interviewed convinced me it was a story worth telling.

My greatest debt and affection is for my fiancé Kenneth Truelsen. Kenneth endured the latter half of the thesis, when the writing had started - and I increasingly whinged. He always remained enthusiastic and encouraging when I was otherwise inclined. This, and his patience and good humour, sustained me and made me believe in myself. His critical eye and questioning nature was always evident in his reading of drafts. He cooked meals and did my share of 'keeping house' when I could concentrate on nothing else but 'the thesis'. His love and friendship have been remarkable.

In spite of all this encouragement and assistance, what follows is my interpretation and any failings are mine alone.

## *Abstract*

This thesis examines relations between working class men and women in Wollongong, from 1921 to 1954. It assesses how gender and class have shaped the lives of these people in the areas of paid work, family and community.

The thesis is presented in three parts, the first includes two chapters: (i) discusses relevant historiography, theory and methodology, and (ii) provides the reader with contextual information on Wollongong as a place. Part two of the thesis includes four chapters which concentrate largely on paid work and related aspects. The final section of the thesis includes three chapters which focus on: (i) family, (ii) leisure and social pursuits and (iii) community aspects of working class activity.

An exploration of paid work, family and community illuminates the different experiences of working-class men and women in Wollongong for this period, but simultaneously it reveals how their struggles were often mutual.

## *Contents*

Acknowledgments	v
Abstract	ix
Contents	xi
Abbreviations	xiii
Plates and Illustrations	xv
Tables	xvii
Prologue	xix

### *PART ONE: HISTORY, THEORY, AND CONTEXT*

1	Introduction: Historiography, Theoretical Issues, Methodology	1
2	Wollongong: A Working-Class Place	35

### *PART TWO: MEN, WOMEN AND PAID WORK*

3	Work and Unemployment: 'Fortunate indeed to get a job'	63
4	The Politics of the Working Class: 'The destiny of the toilers is at stake'	113
5	Solidarity and Fragmentation: Workplace Relations, 1930s-1941	149
6	Antagonism and Harmony: Workplace Relations, 1941-1950s	183

### **PART THREE: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY**

7	Family and Domestic Life: 'As my family grew and grew...I had plenty to do'	215
8	Leisure: 'We use to entertain ourselves...you had to make your own fun'	257
9	'You didn't admit you were hard up': Notions of Moral Community in the Working Class	301
10	Conclusion	341
	Bibliography	351

### **Abbreviations**

ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AIS	Australian Iron and Steel
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANU	Australian National University
ARU	Australian Railways Union
ASE	Australian Society of Engineers
AWU	Australian Workers Union
BHP	Broken Hill Proprietary Limited
BWIU	Builders Workers Industrial Union
CC	Central Committee of the CPA
CCC	Central Control Commission of the CPA
Comintern	Communist International
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
ER&S	Electolytic Refining and Smelting
FIA	Federated Ironworkers' Association
GUOOF	Grand United Order of Oddfellows
HREU	Hotel, Restaurant Employees Union
IT&LC	Illawarra Trades and Labour Council
ML	Mitchell Library
MM	Metal Manufactures
MMM	Militant Minority Movement
MWM	Militant Women's Movement of the CPA
NSW	New South Wales
SCLC	South Coast Labour Council
UAW	Union of Australian Women
UK	United Kingdom
ULVA	United Liquor Victuallers Association

UWA	University of Wollongong Archives
UWM	Unemployed Workers' Movement
WIR	Workers' International Relief
WWF	Waterside Workers' Federation

## *Plates and Illustrations*

0.1	1997, The familiar smoke stacks of Wollongong	xxi
2.1	Map of the Wollongong District	41
2.2	1867, Eugene von Guerard etching near Wollongong, before settlement	44
2.3	Aerial view of Lake Illawarra	46
2.4	Lake and Tallawarra Power Station at Sunset	47
2.5	1887, Wollongong	49
2.6	1936, Wollongong	50
2.7	1930, near Port Kembla	51
2.8	1958, Wollongong	53
2.9	1966, aerial view of Wollongong	54
3.1	Workers at work establishing the steelworks	68
3.2	Miners on the way home	75
3.3	Steelworkers at work	80
3.4	Shop work was typical for Wollongong women	84
3.5	1941, Advertisement	112
7.1	A typical Depression shack, this one at Port Kembla	220
7.2	Some typical weather board houses in Wollongong	221
7.3	Some typical weather board houses in Wollongong	222
7.4	1927, Advertisement	224
7.5	1928, Advertisement	225
7.6	1950, Advertisement	235
8.1	1938, May Day March	269
8.2	1938, May Day March	270
8.3	1938, May Day March	271
8.4	1938, May Day March	272
8.5	1952, Workers' Picnic	290

8.6	1952, Workers' Picnic	291
8.7	1952, Workers' Picnic	292
8.8	1952, Workers' Picnic	293
8.9	1952, Workers' Picnic	294
9.1	Layout for GUOOF Meetings	313
9.2	The Thirroul Co-operative Store	320
9.3	1946, Southern District Miners' Women's Auxilliary	332

## *Tables*

3.1	Highest Three Employers by Industry, 1921-1954	70
3.2	Sexual Division of Highest Three Employers by Industry, 1921-1954	72
3.3	Highest Three Industry Classifications Employing Women and their Percentage of Total Workforce, 1921-1954	86
3.4	Sexual Division in Illawarra's Top Two Manufacturing Industry Types, 1947 and 1954	89
3.5	Annual Earnings for Breadwinners, 1933	100
7.1	Marital Status of Total Marriageable Population Over 15 Years of Age, 1921-1954	246

## *Prologue*

The scene from the mountainous pass is familiar. Today it is windy which means my view is occasionally obscured. The tall green trees wave frantically as the coach journeys around yet another bend. The sea and slender smoke stacks can be glimpsed only for a few seconds before the image recedes again behind the greenery.

An exposed cliff a little further on affords a different view. The seascape and the glass-like lake are illuminated by the winter sunlight. The lush escarpment forms a border to the left. To the right of this tranquil scene is an expanse of land patterned by boxes composed of drab red and brown bricks. This aspect fades into the distance.

The coach ventures closer to its descent down the treacherous part of the winding pass. The dense abundant rainforest forms a canopy as we crawl down the road, but the pungent smell of the wet rainforest scarcely penetrates the confines of the coach. Memory allows a vivid impression, though, for this is not the first time I have made this journey. We arrive at the bottom of the pass, the blue of the sky is revealed and the coach once again gathers speed.

Soon I will be home.

My home is Dapto. Yes, the Dapto of 'Dapto Dogs' fame. Suspecting that most are unfamiliar with Dapto, I often first remark that I am from Wollongong. This comment inevitably evokes recollections of hideous caricatures, namely Norman Gunston or Aunty Jack. As a local I am affronted by such associations. What of the beautiful beaches that line the east coast, or the picturesque escarpment to the west? Wollongong and its surroundings deserve more savoury images.

The industrial city is by far the most entrenched image of Wollongong. Coal mining and steel production are the things that loom largest in the minds of those people even vaguely familiar with Wollongong. Yet these images, too,

have failed to evoke positive resonances (see Plate 0.1). A credible current affairs program on the ABC once employed imagery of soot and smoke stacks to reinforce its description of Wollongong, and its nearby suburb Cringila, as the worst address in Australia. There seems no end to pernicious portrayals of Wollongong as the dark dingy city of industrial decay. Australian scholar Donald Horne has written that 'Wollongong is a mystery thrown up from the puzzles of industrial change...creative disorder'.<sup>1</sup>

I am an occasional visitor now to what once used to be my home. I moved a few years ago to undertake a doctorate at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra. My lucid images and favourable memories which were once secure and fixed have consequently been contested. As a visitor, a passer-by, my reality is different. The choice to make Wollongong the subject of historical enquiry has further reconfigured and challenged these past impressions.

In conversation historian, John Merritt recalled how some of Australia's earlier labour historians were, in many ways writing family histories.<sup>2</sup> I continue in this tradition. To quote Mark Peel, writing about his home town Elizabeth, I feel that Wollongong 'is not distant from me'.<sup>3</sup> This thesis, then, is in some respects my family history.

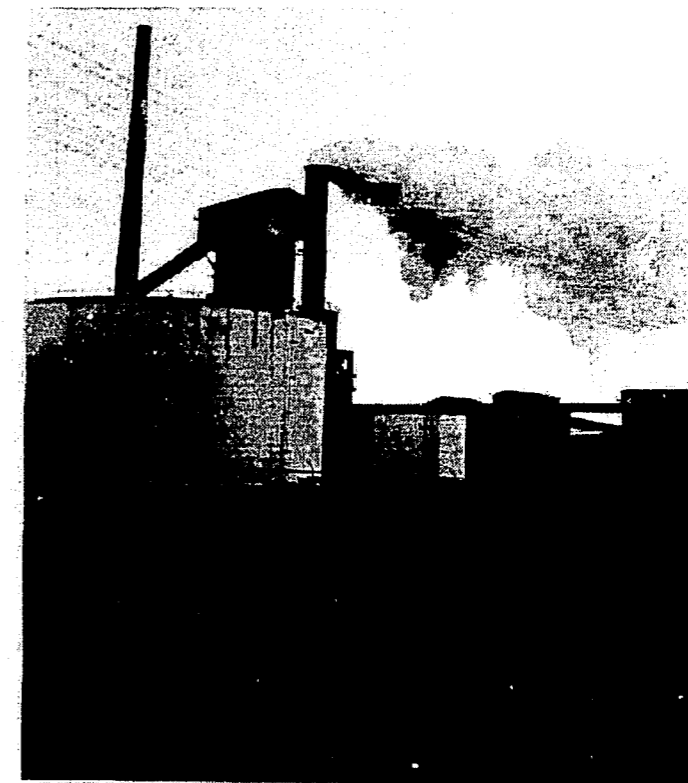


Plate 0.1 - The familiar smoke stacks of Wollongong

(Source: Blackley Family Photographs)

<sup>1</sup>D. Horne, *The Lucky Country*, second edition, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1965, 38.

<sup>2</sup>Comment made by John Merritt at an address given to the ACT Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 7/12/1995. James Hagan wrote a history of the printer's union, his father was a printer. Tom Sheridan wrote a history of the Engineers Union in Australia, his father was an engineer in England.

<sup>3</sup>M. Peel, 'Making a Place: Women in the 'Workers' City'', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol.26, no.102, April 1994, 23.



# 1

## *Introduction: Historiography, Theoretical Issues, Methodology*

Gender relations is now a burgeoning area of study.<sup>1</sup> This gendering of history has not escaped contest and the difficulties of combining class and gender relations have been particularly controversial.<sup>2</sup> This thesis addresses this debate directly by assessing the manner in which gender and class have shaped the experiences of working-class people in Wollongong between 1921 and 1954.

Feminist labour historian Ava Baron proposes that an exploration of masculinity is 'a key ingredient in the making of a gendered working-class history'. The 'absence of women' is no longer justification for neglecting gender as an analytical category.<sup>3</sup> The masculine characteristics of Wollongong allow an opportunity to examine this proposition in detail. While the study features both masculinity and femininity, greater space is given to the former, owing both to the newness of masculinity in historiography, and the nature of the available source material.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>K. Saunders and R. Evans, (eds) *Gender Relations in Australia*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sydney, 1992. The introductory chapter of this book offers a succinct and very useful summary of many of the points raised in the literature and debates on gender relations. I am using the term gender relations to describe relations between men and women and relations amongst men and women and will elaborate upon its use further, in the theoretical issues section of this introductory chapter.

<sup>2</sup>There are numerous historiographical works that address this point in varying degrees. Some include, L. Fink, *In Search of the Working Class: Essays in American Labor History and Political Culture*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1994, chapter 9; A. Baron, 'On Looking at Men: Masculinity and the Making of a Gendered Working-Class History', in A. Shapiro, (ed) *Feminist Revision History*, Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 1994; T. Irving, (ed) *Challenges to Labour History*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, Sydney, 1994; A. Kessler-Harris, 'Treating the Male as "Other": Redefining the Parameters of Labor History', *Labor History*, vol. 34, no. 2-3, Spring-Summer 1993, 190-204.

<sup>3</sup>Baron, in Shapiro, 148.

<sup>4</sup>L. Legault, 'Review Essay - Gender in History: The New History of Masculinity', *Histoire sociale/Social History*, vol. XXVII, no. 54, November 1994, 457-469.

The thesis argues that an analysis of gender and class must attend to the historical dynamic of social structure and individual agency. An analysis of this kind enables the historian to capture the complexities and contradictions experienced and lived by people. It argues against approaches which assume that gender or class alone shape working-class peoples' lives. In seeking to illuminate the complex ways in which class and gender simultaneously shape each other, the thesis offers both an alternative to essentialist and polarised views of gender relations and a challenge to uncompromising structuralist readings of class.

### *Historiography*

This thesis is informed by several different strands of historiography. Feminist and labour history are clearly important, while social and cultural history also direct and shape the thesis in significant ways. In my view no exemplar for this thesis exists amongst Australian historical scholarship within these genres. The ideas for the thesis are formed around the debates and discussions in Australia on the state of these histories - feminist, labour, social and cultural. The thesis is individual in its attempt to combine disparate insights from these historiographical debates, and apply them in a consistent way. Specific histories on Wollongong have also provided useful information to supplement primary research.

Women's or feminist history has championed the cause of gender history which in Australia has had a strong alliance with labour history.<sup>5</sup> When activists in the women's movement of the 1970s set out to discover 'herstory' labour history provided an environment in which this was

<sup>5</sup>A. Curthoys, 'Labour History and Cultural Studies', *Labour History*, no.67, November 1994, 20. For a discussion of women's history, feminist history, gender history and their progression see Editorial Collective, 'Why Gender and History?', *Gender and History*, vol.1, no.1, Spring 1989, 1-6; G. Bock, 'Women's History and Gender History: Aspects of an International Debate', *Gender and History*, vol.1, no.1, Spring 1989, 7-30, and M. Lake, 'Women, Gender and History', *Australian Feminist Studies*, no.7 and 8, Summer 1988, 1-9.

possible.<sup>6</sup> Many of the first feminist histories of this period in Australia discussed questions about women and work, both unpaid and paid. In 1975, for example, when women's history was still in its infancy, the journal *Labour History* published a special issue examining women and work. It was the first time an Australian journal had devoted a special issue to this topic.<sup>7</sup> Also, many of the first feminist histories were written as labour histories.<sup>8</sup> Beverley Kingston's *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann*, and Ryan and Conlon's *Gentle Invaders* are notable examples.<sup>9</sup> In the 1970s and 1980s, when John Merritt was editor, the journal *Labour History* gave particular emphasis to topics on women.<sup>10</sup> Verity Burgmann observed rightly that the journal's founders were men, 'but they were never patriarchs within the history profession'. She claimed feminists of the 1970s 'found it comparatively easy to establish an intellectual dialogue with the *Labour History* men'.<sup>11</sup> Similar co-operation between feminist and labour history was evident internationally.<sup>12</sup>

This co-operation was possible because labour history was also undergoing change at this time. Australian labour historian Greg Patmore associates the beginning of labour history with the 1890s. John Norton's *The History of Capital and Labour in all Lands and Ages*, George Black's *The Origin and Growth of the Labor Movement in New South Wales* and

<sup>6</sup>A. Curthoys, *For and Against Feminism*, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1988, 31-40.

<sup>7</sup>This comment is made in 'Sources on Women', the last article in A. Curthoys, et al. *Women at Work*, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Canberra, 1975.

<sup>8</sup>R. Frances and B. Scates, (eds) *Women, Work and the Labour Movement in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand*, (special issue of *Labour History*, no.61), Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Sydney, 1991, p.vii.

<sup>9</sup>B. Kingston, *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia*, Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1975; and E. Ryan and A. Conlon, *Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1989.

<sup>10</sup>Curthoys, 1994, 13.

<sup>11</sup>V. Burgmann, 'The Strange Death of Labour History', in B. Carr, et al. *Bede Nairn and Labor History*, Pluto Press in Association with the NSW ALP, Leichhardt, 1991, 77.

<sup>12</sup>J. P. Zinsser, *History and Feminism: A Glass Half Full*, Twayne Publishers, New York, 1993, 49; J. Rendall, 'Uneven Developments: Women's History, Feminist History and Gender History in Great Britain', in K. Offen, R. Roach Pierson and J. Rendall (eds) *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1991, 48, and A. Baron, 'Gender and Labor History: Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future', in A. Baron, (ed) *Work Engendered: Towards a New History of American Labor*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1991, 1-46.

William Guthrie Spence's *Australia's Awakening* were all products of this era.<sup>13</sup> Yet, as Robin Gollan said in 1962, in the first edition of the journal for the newly formed Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, much good labour history was 'narrow' in its focus. He stated that Australian labour history:

has been confined largely to biography and political history. Work on trade unions has been practically restricted to the central trade union bodies and the general relations between unions and political and legal institutions.<sup>14</sup>

Gollan questioned 'the established tradition'<sup>15</sup> and called for a broader focus to labour history.

Yet, as John Merritt observed twenty years later, the shift was a gradual one and 'narrower' histories 'flourished', partly because institutional history had certain advantages, like 'a fairly clearly defined starting point' with 'major themes' that 'lent itself to easily contrived endings'.<sup>16</sup> According to Stephen Garton, by the 1970s 65 per cent of *Labour History* articles were still preoccupied with subjects like 'unions, union leaders, the Labor parties, labour ideologies, strikes and industrial disputes'.<sup>17</sup>

By the 1980s, however, labour history was overtaken by the 'elusive upstart called social history' which shifted the focus of history from the public institutions to areas like the family and community.<sup>18</sup> American feminist historian Judith Zinsser has observed how 'the French Annalists, the social and cultural emphasis of the European Marxist historians, the

---

<sup>13</sup>G. Patmore, *Australian Labour History*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1991, 1-2.

<sup>14</sup>R. Gollan, 'Labour History', *Labour History*, no.1, January 1962, 3.

<sup>15</sup>Gollan, 1962, 4.

<sup>16</sup>J. Merritt, 'Labour History', in G. Osborne and W.F. Mandle, (eds) *New History*, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1982, 120-121.

<sup>17</sup>S. Garton, 'What Have We Done?' *Labour History, Social History, Cultural History*, in Irving, 47.

<sup>18</sup>Burgmann, 69.

techniques of the French and English demographers, and the political awareness of the revisionist historians in the United States' all contributed to the re-writing of history. The lens of history was no longer as sharply focused on the 'powerful male elite'.<sup>19</sup>

As noted earlier, these ideas had been percolating through Australian historical debate from the 1960s onwards, yet the social and political milieu of the 1980s saw social history come to the fore. Verity Burgmann linked the demise of labour history with the labour movement's failure to embrace the interests of 'the new social movements', arguing that people scorned labour history largely because they had lost faith in the movement as a whole. The 'new social movements', and hence social history, appeared better able to articulate the demands of the oppressed.<sup>20</sup> In many ways this idea was supported by the actions of Australian labour historians. The journal *Labour History* had reconfigured itself by amending its title to include the words 'social history' and many of its articles responded directly, (some indirectly), to the demands of social history. This did not prevent Burgmann from suggesting that labour history was dead.<sup>21</sup>

Others within the profession were not as hasty to announce its demise. Raelene Frances and Bruce Scates took 'issue with the coroner's verdict', arguing against Burgmann, that labour history was 'alive and well'.<sup>22</sup> In doing so however, they exposed more problems than answers, for the examples of recent labour history which they gave mostly demonstrated the failure of labour historians to come to terms with many of the themes pioneered in social history. Thus the ALP centenary histories published in 1991 were charged with neglecting 'the grass-roots of the Party' and of being 'overbearingly male in their focus'.<sup>23</sup> Frances and Scates could

---

<sup>19</sup>Zinsser, 20.

<sup>20</sup>Burgmann, 80.

<sup>21</sup>Burgmann, 69.

<sup>22</sup>R. Frances and B. Scates, 'Review Article: Is Labour History Dead?', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol.25, no.100, April 1993, 471 and 481.

<sup>23</sup>Frances and Scates, 1993, 472-473.

point only to some union histories, general survey texts, and primary source collections, as illustrations of labour history's attempts to respond to the social history agenda. In their view, John Shields' edited collection, *All Our Labours: Oral Histories of Working Life in Twentieth Century Sydney*, represented 'the most successful marriage of labour history and the new social history'.<sup>24</sup>

American and British labour historians seemed more successful than their Australian counterparts in working with the new themes in practice and producing substantial histories. Tamara Hareven's *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship Between Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community* is one such study that successfully combined an analysis of family, work and community to reveal the richness and variety of working-class life.<sup>25</sup> The work of Elizabeth Faue also realised the outstanding possibilities of a community study with a class and gender focus attentive to the social history of labour.<sup>26</sup> Reviewer Lawrence Glickman remarked that as a 'community study', it sees 'both the forest and the trees':

Faue combines analyses of local politics and trade union strategy with close attention to the household, family dynamics and gender relations both in public and private.

Glickman regarded Faue's book as 'an attempt to merge two forms of labour history - the workplace study and the community study', which, he suggested have 'remained artificially separate'.<sup>27</sup>

Erik Eklund noted how 'many of these scholars have extended labour history's traditional focus on unions and the industrial workplace to

<sup>24</sup>Frances and Scates, 1993, 479.

<sup>25</sup>T. Hareven, *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship Between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982.

<sup>26</sup>E. Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945*, The University of North Carolina, North Carolina, 1991.

<sup>27</sup>L. Glickman, 'Books Reviewed', *Labor History*, vol.34, no. 2-3, Spring-Summer 1993, 387.

consider patterns of community formation, the strength of local identity and household formation'.<sup>28</sup> Many of the scholarly studies intent on wrestling with the complexities of gender and class relations, have focused on particular towns, cities or regions.<sup>29</sup> Lucy Taska considers that such work in the UK or the USA is more significant than the work which has been done by labour historians in Australia.<sup>30</sup> However, Greg Patmore has noted that, while there is still some reluctance amongst labour historians to study the 'broader community', the 'more explicit and theoretically sophisticated community studies' can aid our understanding of labour mobilisation and under his direction a collaborative labour history and locality project is underway.<sup>31</sup>

Social history has not presented the only challenge to labour history, having now been questioned by 'new currents within the humanities', particularly by cultural studies.<sup>32</sup> In a recent article, which provoked vigorous debate, Ann Curthoys commented on Frances' and Scates' response to Burgmann. She expressed 'concern' at Frances and Scates' 'conflation of social and cultural history' and argued that these 'are *not* the same thing'.<sup>33</sup> Curthoys identified cultural studies as a product of numerous interconnecting fields of study:

<sup>28</sup>E. Eklund, 'The state of local history', *H-Net New Zealand and Australian Discussion List*, 6/8/1997.

<sup>29</sup>See for example: C. Turbin, *Working Women of Collar City: Gender, Class, and Community in Troy, 1864-86*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1992; M. Blewett, *Men, Women and Work: Class, Gender and Protest in the New England Shoe Industry, 1830-1920*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1988; J. Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1990; S.O. Rose, *Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1992;

<sup>30</sup>L. Taska, 'The state of local history', *H-Net New Zealand and Australian Discussion List*, 7/8/1997.

<sup>31</sup>G. Patmore, 'Community and Australian Labour History', in Irving, 169 and 185, and 'E. Eklund, 'The state of local history', *H-Net New Zealand and Australian Discussion List*, 6/8/1997. A report of these endeavours is also given by R. Tierney, 'Labour and Locality: Conference Report', *Labor History*, no.73, November 1997, 232-235.

<sup>32</sup>Garton, in Irving, 55.

<sup>33</sup>Curthoys, 1994, 13-14.

Thompsonian Marxism, Annales social history, Foucault, and Bakhtin - intertwine closely with thinking in linguistics, philosophy, literary criticism, and anthropology...

To this list she also added feminist theory, gender and post-colonial studies.<sup>34</sup> Curthoys claimed labour historians vigorously opposed and feared cultural studies, misreading its potential to construct 'the less powerful people of the past as actors'.<sup>35</sup>

The fear about cultural studies amongst labour historians is closely connected with their concern with the post-modernist mood, which suggests that 'we can only know the world in terms of its discourses and texts' and risked denying the 'set of constraints and hardships' that working-class people have confronted. Cultural historians, in Terry Irving's view, were disconnecting culture from the 'social or economic reality'.<sup>36</sup> American historian Lynn Hunt also outlined the forces which have shaped the direction of cultural history. She said that the emphasis 'in cultural history is on close examination - of texts, of pictures, and of actions - and an open-mindedness to what those examinations will reveal', but she denied that cultural history was about 'new master narratives or social theories' seeking to 'replace the materialist reductionism of Marxism and the Annales School'.<sup>37</sup>

Despite Hunt's remarks, like Irving, I too remain sceptical of the agendas and purposes of cultural history. Yet, an emphasis on the reading of texts, pictures and actions need not necessarily contradict a 'materialist' conception of history. Indeed it can strengthen it. As the final section of this chapter argues, historical materialism is well equipped to ground social change in both social structure and individual agency. Materialism ensures

<sup>34</sup>Curthoys, 1994, 18.

<sup>35</sup>Curthoys, 1994, 19 and 21.

<sup>36</sup>T. Irving, 'Introduction: Labour History, Crisis and the Public Sphere', in Irving, 6.

<sup>37</sup>L. Hunt, 'Introduction: History, Culture and Text', in L. Hunt, (ed) *The New Cultural History*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989, 22.

that the dynamics of power remain central to all kinds of history, cultural or otherwise.

In addition to the historiographical trends which direct this thesis there are several scholarly histories on Wollongong and the Illawarra region based on extensive archival work and rigorous analysis. Len Richardson conducted a study of the Wollongong labour movement, as part of a doctoral thesis in 1974, published with few modifications as *The Bitter Years* in 1984.<sup>38</sup> Richardson stated that his thesis was neither 'a social history of Wollongong workers nor a history of labour'.<sup>39</sup> He was principally concerned with the Depression experience in Wollongong and how this affected and shaped the labour movement, between 1928 and 1939. The work is still the major study of the history of the Wollongong labour movement, providing an insight into the experiences of both workers and the unemployed, and a sophisticated understanding of class and class relations. He considers working and living conditions in the context of the political and industrial changes of the Depression period, arguing that the political success of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) in Wollongong from the late 1930s was due to workers recognising the CPA's efforts on social, political and industrial issues throughout the Depression. He further argues that the CPA filled the gap created by the formal labour movement, which was crippled and failed to respond to their concerns.<sup>40</sup>

More theoretical in orientation is Beverley Firth's detailed study of industrialisation in Wollongong. Concentrating on Australian Iron and Steel Proprietary Limited (AIS) from 1926 to 1976 with a particular focus on 'the trinity of class, state and capital',<sup>41</sup> it clearly illustrates the benefits gained from rich empirical research combined with sophisticated

<sup>38</sup>L. Richardson, *The Bitter Years*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1984.

<sup>39</sup>L. Richardson, 'The Labour Movement in Wollongong, New South Wales: 1928-39', PhD, Australian National University, 1974, vii.

<sup>40</sup>Richardson, 215-223.

<sup>41</sup>B. Firth, 'The Industrialization of Wollongong with Special Reference to Australian Iron and Steel Proprietary, 1926-1976', PhD, Macquarie University, 1986, xiii.

sociological theory. She argues for a study of the industrialisation process that attends to the strategies of capital, the role of the state, but also to the community of workers.

An equally impressive contribution to the history of the Wollongong area is Erik Eklund's doctorate on Port Kembla.<sup>42</sup> Focusing on the relationship between class and locality, he investigates the competing and contradictory meanings of these concepts in the specific context of Port Kembla between 1900 and 1940. He argues that the uniqueness of Port Kembla as a locality was eroded between these years, and by 1940 the town was subsumed under the more regional labels of Wollongong or the Illawarra. Eklund's thesis serves a special purpose drawing on theories about space, locality and geography, and while he admits his focus excludes gender, his investigations of class are important. He reveals how local and class 'allegiances were often co-existing and contingent', and he rejects the idea that 'non-class allegiances' are simply 'false consciousness'.<sup>43</sup>

The final and most recent history which discusses Wollongong is an edited collection by James Hagan and Andrew Wells. Commissioned to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the City of Wollongong in 1947, it is described by its editors as 'the first scholarly and comprehensive history of Wollongong and its region'.<sup>44</sup> Topics covered include the Aboriginal history of the region, the economy, local government and politics, the labour movement, work and leisure, education and the arts. Intended for a general audience, it contains less original research than the theses of Richardson, Firth and Eklund. On the other hand, its comprehensive approach has captured the ways in which paid work and industry have shaped the Illawarra and the lives of Wollongong people.

<sup>42</sup>E. Eklund, 'Putting into Port: Society, Identity and Politics at Port Kembla, 1900 to 1940', PhD, University of Sydney, 1994 (a), 2.

<sup>43</sup>Eklund, 1994 (a), 298 and 301.

<sup>44</sup>J. Hagan and A. Wells, (eds) *A History of Wollongong*, The University of Wollongong Press, University of Wollongong, 1997, 1.

Another study of a specific location has also shaped the direction of this thesis. Mark Peel's monograph *Good Times, Hard Times*, about Elizabeth, an outer suburb of Adelaide, is noteworthy for its detail of workers outside the work place.<sup>45</sup> He writes passionately about the changes that have affected the suburban landscape of Elizabeth and the people who have planned and inhabited its streets since the 1950s. Whilst he acknowledges that 'this is not the kind of book which aims to "capture" Elizabeth in all the detail of its life and its living', his chapter on the worker's city is revealing. There Peel describes the world of the male provider and breadwinner and the place of women in the home, because, in the main, it was 'only men' who could earn a wage in Elizabeth.<sup>46</sup> He is keen, however, to challenge the stereotypes which are so often linked with such descriptions. He says the 'implicit assumption that women were minor partners in a patriarchal working-class world, is one only outsiders could assert with any confidence'. Instead, he contends that divisions along gender lines 'were as much about women's ability to create and confirm the core territories of life as they were about the power of male planners or husbands' wages'.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, studies by Janet McCalman on Richmond and Ray Broomhill on Adelaide also show the diverse ways in which women contributed to working-class families even when not in paid work.<sup>48</sup> These insights have been particularly instructive for my analysis of Wollongong.

Sociological studies concerned with contemporary situations have also influenced the direction of this thesis in important ways. Claire Williams' study of work and family among the working class employs marxist and feminist concepts to explore 'the everyday work life of the male

<sup>45</sup>M. Peel, *Good Times, Hard Times: the Past and the Future in Elizabeth*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1995, 134-145.

<sup>46</sup>Peel, 1995, 133.

<sup>47</sup>Peel, 1995, 121-122.

<sup>48</sup>J. McCalman, *Struggletown: Public and Private Life in Richmond 1900-1965*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1984; and R. Broomhill, *Unemployed Workers: A Social History of the Great Depression in Adelaide*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1978.

manual workers and the women who organise consumption within capitalism and play the major part in the reproduction of labour power'. She states from the outset that her work is a response to the 'dearth of sociological studies of the working class in Australia...especially ones which endeavour to link paid production and family life.' Williams also argues for a study of social relations in the workplace and a study of other structures in society, particularly the family, and emphasises the links.<sup>49</sup>

Mike Donaldson's sociological study of labour and love in the working class aimed 'to look simultaneously' at the family, the labour process, the community and gender as 'parts of everyday life'. In contrast to much recent scholarship, which has been influenced by post-modernism, post-structuralism and post-colonialism, or the post-ism turn in theory<sup>50</sup>, it draws on marxist feminism and more generally on historical materialism.<sup>51</sup> Donaldson's chief insight is that the interactions between the family-household and the workplace are central to the formation of consciousness amongst workers,<sup>52</sup> he investigates the complexity of these interactions with reference to class and gender, for both men and women.<sup>53</sup>

This thesis then can best be described as an exercise in historical sociology; it seeks to bring together the best aspects of history and sociology. Historian E.H. Carr once wrote:

the more sociological history becomes, and the more historical sociology becomes, the better for both. Let the frontier between them be kept wide open for two-way traffic.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup>C. Williams, *Open Cut*, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1981, 10.

<sup>50</sup>For ease of expression and explanation, I have labeled these three terms the 'triad of post-isms', because although in someways different they have acted together in recent years as a force of change within academia.

<sup>51</sup>M. Donaldson, *Time of Our Lives*, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1991, 1.

<sup>52</sup>Donaldson, 1991, 98.

<sup>53</sup>See particularly Donaldson, 1991, chapters 1-3.

<sup>54</sup>E.H. Carr, *What is History?*, second edition, Penguin, Ringwood, 1987, p.66.

Undergraduate training in both history and sociology has convinced me that strengthening this nexus between history and sociology is a worthy pursuit. Polemical theoretical debates appear implicitly or explicitly in all the studies outlined above. Likewise, because of its historical and sociological emphasis, this thesis draws upon and reacts to a range of theoretical debates.

### *Theoretical Issues*

My major purpose is to negotiate and understand the complex operation of class and gender in history. In the initial stages of my project I was convinced that I was contributing to the 'feminist interrogation' of labour history, for I agreed with feminist historian Marilyn Lake that labour history was deficient in its response to the criticisms from feminists.<sup>55</sup> It was apparent, I thought, that labour history required a serious injection of gender analysis. But, a closer examination of both labour and feminist history revealed a more complex and contradictory situation; for labour historians had endeavoured in substantive ways to incorporate some of the issues raised by feminists, and the labour and socialist movement they wrote about had also historically been sympathetic to such matters. As Lise Vogel stated in a discussion of nineteenth century theoretical contributions to socialist thought:

Despite weaknesses, the socialist movement offered the most sustained and thoroughgoing support then available to the struggle for sex equality and women's liberation.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup>M. Lake, 'The Constitution of Political Subjectivity and the Writing of Labour History', in Irving, 75.

<sup>56</sup>L. Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory*, Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 1983, 96.



This statement, applied to labour historians, is still appropriate in the late twentieth century.

As my research progressed, I increasingly became dissatisfied with the main feminist approaches to history. While I understood that definite problems remained with class and gender analyses amongst labour historians, many of the solutions which feminists offered to the dilemma of class and gender also seemed inadequate. I began to agree, somewhat reluctantly, with those scholars who claimed that the gender relations literature had been instrumental in undermining the relationship between labour history and marxism.<sup>57</sup> I wanted to write a gendered history of the working class in Wollongong that reflected the lives of the men and women I was researching, as *they* experienced them. I thought a large proportion of feminist writings promoted a theoretical framework and way of examining working-class men and women that made this impossible.

Rather than a feminist interrogation of labour history, a marxist or historical materialist interrogation of feminist history is imperative. Historical materialism is a contested topic however. Beginning with Marx and Engels there were various stages in its development, and the shift from classical marxism to Western marxism resulted in a range of re-interpretations and mutations.<sup>58</sup> What do I then understand to be historical materialism? While Sally Alexander has argued that it 'pushes the questions of sexual divisions and difference to the periphery of the historical process' because it identifies 'class struggle as the motor of history', I contend that this need not be the case.<sup>59</sup> I agree with Ellen Meiksins Wood, who has suggested that 'the kernel of historical materialism was an insistence on the historicity and specificity of capitalism, and a denial that its

<sup>57</sup>A. Wells, 'Marxism and Labour History', in Irving, 27-29.

<sup>58</sup>P. Anderson, Considerations on Western Marxism, NLB, London, 1976. Anderson provides a lucid account of the evolution of marxist thought detailing the contributors and their histories, as well as the issues and forces that have shaped the direction of marxist debates.

<sup>59</sup>S. Alexander, 'Women, Class and Sexual Differences in the 1830s and 1840s: Some Reflections on the Writing of a Feminist History', History Workshop Journal, Issue 17, Spring 1984, 127.

laws were the universal laws of history'.<sup>60</sup> Jorge Larrain has developed a 'reconstructed historical materialism' and also claims that it is a theory opposed to the idea of 'a fixed and ineluctable course of history which seems to be preordained prior to any concrete analysis'.<sup>61</sup> It is this sense of historicity that I regard as central to historical materialism; but I consider a notion of social structure and individual agency to be crucial in this sense of historicity. In my view, important to this way of thinking is the realisation that social structure does not exist independently of individuals; therefore social structures must be conceived as a product of human practices.

The ways in which the concepts of gender and class are formed in historical writing have significant ramifications for a materialist-feminist history. British historian Richard Price has stated that often gender and class are viewed as 'competing categories of analysis'<sup>62</sup> and Ross McKibbin provides a clear example of this view, seeing gender analysis as weakening labour history because it often denies the centrality of class. He equates class only with men and the masculine, and believes gender opposes class. In his view, while men are unambiguously defined by their class, it remains inconclusive whether women are defined by their class or by their gender.<sup>63</sup> McKibbin clearly believes a gender analysis applies to women and a class analysis to men.

McKibbin's view rests on a very particular and limited understanding of class. The predominance of marxism within discussions on class and class relations has contributed to the current difficulties making it a vexed question within the humanities.<sup>64</sup> McKibbin's view is characteristic of what

<sup>60</sup>E. Meiksins Wood, Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, 5.

<sup>61</sup>J. Larrain, A Reconstruction of Historical Materialism, Allen and Unwin, London, 1986, 121.

<sup>62</sup>R. Price, 'The Future of British Labour history', International Review of Social History, XXXVI, 1991, 258.

<sup>63</sup>R. McKibbin, 'Is It Still Possible to Write Labour History?', in Irving, 38-40.

<sup>64</sup>A. Kuhn and A. Wolpe, (ed) Feminism and Materialism, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1978, 220.



Ellen Meiksins Wood calls 'uncritical Marxism', a version of marxism based on a number of assumptions:

first, a conception of the economic "base" in non-social, technicist terms, incompatible with anything but the most mechanical application of the "base/superstructure" metaphor; second, a conception of history as a mechanical, pre-ordained and unilinear succession of modes of production...and third, an ahistorical conception of historical transitions...which assumes precisely what needs to be explained...<sup>65</sup>

This mechanical interpretation of class was what feminist Joan Scott had in mind when she suggested labour historians had essentialised class.<sup>66</sup> It was criticised too by Australian sociologist Andrew Metcalfe when he argued that 'naturalism' was employed by labour historians and class theorists when explaining class.<sup>67</sup>

There are a number of reasons why this reductionist understanding of class has dominated discussions. Wood argued that the 'post-modern moment' meant this 'ahistorical, metaphysical materialist tradition of Marxism has won a kind of victory', for the choice between 'economistic determinism and post-modern contingency' has been made solely with reference to the 'old brand of uncritical Marxism' and no attempt has been made to employ the more useful and difficult option of historical materialism.<sup>68</sup> Occasionally too marxists resist revision and critique of the mechanical or vulgar versions in defence of the marxist genre, only creating greater inflexibility and suppressing further innovations in class analysis.<sup>69</sup>

While uncritical marxists' misconstrue class, some feminists also misconstrue gender. Curthoys has remarked on 'how easy it has been as

<sup>65</sup>Meiksins Wood, 3-6.

<sup>66</sup>L. L. Frader, 'Dissent Over Discourse: Labor History, Gender, and the Linguistic Turn', *History and Theory*, vol.34, no.3, 1995, 217.

<sup>67</sup>A. Metcalfe, 'Sex and Solidarity, Fraternity, Patriarchy and Labour History', in Irving, 88.

<sup>68</sup>Meiksins Wood, 9.

<sup>69</sup>M. Albert and R. Hahnel, *Unorthodox Marxism*, South End Press, Boston, 1978, 7-8.

feminist historians, critics and philosophers, to fall into seeing gender as the primary distinction, and race and class as a secondary distinction, frequently submerged, eluded, forgotten'.<sup>70</sup> Of course, this is not a recent revelation. As Kuhn and Wolpe said of the women's movement in the 1970s:

Women, irrespective of nationality and class position, were seen to comprise a homogeneous group bound together by one characteristic held in common - their "oppression" in all aspects of life.<sup>71</sup>

Although the idea of a feminist movement depended politically on the notion of homogeneity, there were always challenges to this notion from socialist feminists of the 1960s and 1970s who aimed to 'merge' the insights of marxism and feminism.<sup>72</sup> These feminists did not accept marxism uncritically. While recognising that 'the socialist tradition is deeply flawed' Vogel, for example, advocated the use of a marxist theoretical framework to explore the oppression of women.<sup>73</sup> She claimed that Juliet Mitchell's contribution to the debates on marxism and feminism offered a 'perceptive overview of the classical Marxist literature' which challenged both 'mechanical versions of Marxism' and 'radical feminism'.<sup>74</sup>

Socialist feminism was, however, not without its problems, which emerged with its involvement in the theoretically sophisticated domestic labour debate in the 1970s. That analytical categories could be taken directly from Marx's *Capital* and applied to domestic labour was supposed to confirm the appropriateness of marxism for analysing the situation of women.<sup>75</sup> But this resulted in the idea that the mode of production was

<sup>70</sup>A. Curthoys, 'The Three Body Problem: Feminism and Chaos Theory', *Hecate*, vol.17, no.1, 1991, 15.

<sup>71</sup>Kuhn and Wolpe, 1.

<sup>72</sup>Vogel, 1.

<sup>73</sup>Vogel, 2.

<sup>74</sup>Vogel, 16.

<sup>75</sup>Vogel, 21.

about class and the mode of reproduction was about gender (or more correctly women); and rather than bridging the gulf between marxism and feminism, the debate simply widened it, allowing marxism 'to retain in basically unchanged form its theory of economic and social relations' on to which it simply grafts a theory of gender.<sup>76</sup>

The socialist feminist theoretical framework proved inadequate for many feminists seeking to address the question of women's oppression. By the late 1980s Pauline Johnson, one of those committed to socialist feminism, recognised that the question of the relationship between socialism and feminism was a 'rather unfashionable topic'.<sup>77</sup> Socialist feminists felt themselves to be 'thrown on the defensive' by 'anti-working-class ideas' that had come to dominate feminist thought, which saw women's oppression as caused by men, especially by working-class men.<sup>78</sup> For many the task of reconciling class and gender just became too hard. The socialist feminist project was almost abandoned and remained incomplete.

In setting out to resume and rework the analyses of both class and gender together, I am then well aware of the difficulties. While as Curthoys says, 'an historical approach that focuses on social relations based on sex and gender' constantly confronts other differences,<sup>79</sup> accurate analyses are not assisted by *always* emphasising one oppression over another, which is exactly what radical feminism does with its emphasis on gender.<sup>80</sup> Paradoxically, in its challenge to marxist theory the very radical feminist theory which 'offered a breath-takingly audacious understanding of relations between the sexes' also excluded women's subjectivity and agency

<sup>76</sup>Vogel, 28.

<sup>77</sup>P. Johnson, 'More on the Socialism in Socialist Feminism: A Response to Pringle', *Australian Feminist Studies*, no.7 & 8, Summer 1988, 179.

<sup>78</sup>L. German, *Sex, Class and Socialism*, Bookmarks, London, 1989, 211-212.

<sup>79</sup>A. Curthoys, 'Identity Crisis: Colonialism, Nation, and Gender in Australian History', *Gender and History*, vol.5, no.2, Summer 1993, 165.

<sup>80</sup>P. Brewer, 'The Rise of Right-Wing Feminism', *Links*, no.7, July-October 1996, 5-24. Brewer provides a recent summary of this issue analysing what it means for the socialist project in terms of class and gender. Brewer argues cultural feminists and postmodern feminists emphasis gender with out considering questions about class.

in history. As Alexander put it, while men have much to explain, 'the envy and fears and desires of one sex can't carry all the determination of history'.<sup>81</sup> A much more sophisticated understanding of gender relations is essential.

Part of the answer to these dilemmas of class and gender may lie in the developing study of masculinity. In the past gender studies focused on 'women and not men' and while men dominated the pages of books there was little concern with their gender.<sup>82</sup> As Jeff Hearn observed:

Men may be talked of as fathers, workers, bosses, medics, brothers, mates, or more colloquially as "buggers", "sods" and "fuckers", even as "real men" (as distinct from "men"), but rarely as *men*.<sup>83</sup>

Michael Roper and John Tosh argued that the historical profession was once 'highly resistant' to analysing masculinity but in recent times the intense interest in masculinity has obviously meant that gender analysis can no longer be concerned only with understanding the experiences of women.<sup>84</sup> While masculinity studies are a direct result of feminists' insistent calls for gendered analyses, they have at the same time caused some ambivalence amongst feminists. Curthoys has commented on the 'importance of masculinity' but has also cautioned feminist historians 'to ensure that the interest in masculinity is not merely an avenue to return to the comfortable pastures of men's history'.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>81</sup>Alexander, 128.

<sup>82</sup>L. Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities Changing Men*, Virago Press, London, 1990, ix.

<sup>83</sup>J. Hearn, 'Research in Men and Masculinities: Some Sociological Issues and Possibilities', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol.30, no.1, April 1994, 50.

<sup>84</sup>M. Roper and J. Tosh, (eds) *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, Routledge, London, 1991, 2. See also the useful summary in J. Tosh, 'What Should Historians do with Masculinity?: Reflections on Nineteenth-century Britain', *History Workshop Journal*, issue 38, Autumn 1994, 179-202.

<sup>85</sup>A. Curthoys, 'Gender, Ethnicity and Australian History', *Museum National*, vol.4, no.1, August 1995, 15.

Masculinity studies, then, should not be an excuse to return women to the fringes of historical consciousness. Rather they should enrich our understanding of women in history; challenging those scholars who conflate gender with women and class with men, to much the same effect as the bifurcation of production and reproduction, which was a feature of the domestic labour debate.<sup>86</sup> They should also assist by problematising the concept of patriarchy, on which many feminists have depended to provide feminism with its unified zeal.<sup>87</sup> For too long patriarchy has been used in a natural way; and by recognising that gender is 'not about the ahistorically predictable interactions of biological givens', but rather, it is 'both a social category and a socially relational category imposed upon 'sexed bodies', we can begin to better understand the lived experience of both men and women.<sup>88</sup>

Lynne Segal claims that Australian sociologist Bob Connell has made 'the most ambitious attempt' at theorising masculinity yet, by elaborating a theory 'capable of weaving together personal life and social structure'.<sup>89</sup> By including a voice for the individual and a place for social structure, Connell avoids fixed ways of thinking about class and gender which bear very little resemblance to, and fail to come to terms with the complexities and contradictions that result from the lived and shared experience of men and women in the working class. I agree with Segal. Connell's emphasis on the social structure and the individual is timely, but moreover it is his accent on the dynamic relationship between these two that is most significant, thereby guaranteeing that the notion of power is never absent.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>86</sup>Baron, 147.

<sup>87</sup>S. Ormrod, 'Feminist Sociology and Methodology: Leaky Black Boxes in Gender/Technology Relations', in K. Grint and R. Gill, (eds) *The Gender-Technology Relation: Contemporary Theory and Research*, Taylor and Francis Ltd, London, 1995, 33. Also see Baron, 153-154.

<sup>88</sup>K. Saunders and R. Evans, 'Visibility Problems: Concepts of Gender in Australian Historical Discourse', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol.27, no.106, April 1996, 144.

<sup>89</sup>Segal, 95.

<sup>90</sup>Connell's perspective is outlined in: R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1987; and R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1995. Lynne Segal's notes in her review of *Masculinities* how Connell

Nonetheless fixed and rigid conceptualisations of class and gender still pervade current scholarship, hindering research which aims to capture the 'multiple and historically changing complexities' of life.<sup>91</sup> Gender analysis has increasingly occurred under the guise of postmodernist and poststructuralist analyses, many feminists seeing them as the 'natural ally of feminism,' and offering flexibility.<sup>92</sup> Historical materialism on the other hand is seen to lack flexibility, feminist labour historian Alice Kessler-Harris even suggesting that the dissatisfaction with 'materialist conceptions of history' arises from the problem of including gender with class.<sup>93</sup> I argue here, in contrast, that it is postmodernist approaches which are the less flexible, simplifying and stereotyping modernist thinking, of which both the historical materialist project and the ideas about class are a part. For instance, American feminist Nicholson said:

Twentieth-century Marxism has used the generalizing categories of production and class to delegitimise demands of women, black people, gays, lesbians, and others whose oppression cannot be reduced to economics.<sup>94</sup>

---

maintains an understanding of men's power, but at the same time explores the suffering of men 'especially when their own feelings of powerlessness contrast with the status and authority masculinity presumptively confers'. She points out that for precisely these reasons Connell's book 'has been denounced by men's movement supporters in the United States for ignoring men's pain and mocking their efforts to overcome it'. See L. Segal, 'Reviews', *Signs*, vol.22, No. 4, Summer 1997, 1059 and 1060.

<sup>91</sup>Saunders and Evans, 1996, 147.

<sup>92</sup>L. Nicholson, (ed) *Feminism and Postmodernism*, Routledge, New York, 1990, 5. See also J. Flax, 'Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory', *Signs*, vol.12, no.4, Summer 1987, 621-643 and M. Valverde, 'Poststructuralist Gender Historians: Are We Those Names?', *Labour/Le Travail*, no.25, Spring 1990, 227-236. For a critical discussion of the nexus between the triad of post-isms and feminism see J. Hoff, 'Gender as a Postmodern Category of Paralysis', *Women's History Review*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1994, 149-168, and also an editorial following the publication of Hoff's article: J. Purvis, 'Women's History and Poststructuralism', *Women's History Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1996, 5-7.

<sup>93</sup>Kessler-Harris, 193.

<sup>94</sup>Nicholson, 11.

Seeing marxism as monolithic and as only about 'economics', Nicholson fails to imagine that the possibilities offered by post-modernism may also be found in marxist thought.

The triad of post-isms have intervened in debates on class and gender both explicitly and implicitly. They claim to challenge that strand of theoretical thinking which aims to demonstrate 'general, all-encompassing principles' which illuminate 'the basic features of natural and social reality'.<sup>95</sup> Yet, as Ignacio Olabarri noted in his discussion of "'new" new history', whilst there are 'considerable differences between modern and postmodern historiography' there exist 'elements of continuity'.<sup>96</sup> Nicholson, for example, has called for a theory that is 'inimical to essentialism' or 'explicitly historical, that is, which situates its categories within historical frameworks',<sup>97</sup> and this in many ways is what historical materialism does, or at the very least is able to achieve.<sup>98</sup>

While critical of feminist history for its rejection of historical materialism, I am not implying it has entirely failed to engage with the question of class and gender. Many feminists have advocated this engagement very strongly. Jane Rendall, for example, wrote that:

The history of gender should not be regarded as narrowly conceived in a single mould: engagement and debate, with marxist theory as with the historicisation of the concept of patriarchy must enlarge our understanding.<sup>99</sup>

Alexander has remarked similarly, noting how 'dichotomies' like 'Women and Labour, Sex and Class, Feminism and Socialism have been the intimate

---

<sup>95</sup>Nicholson, 2.

<sup>96</sup>I. Olabarri, "'New" New History: A *Longue Dure'e* Structure', *History and Theory*, vol.34, no.1, 1995, 25.

<sup>97</sup>Nicholson, 9.

<sup>98</sup>Palmer makes this point and others in his excellent article. See B.D. Palmer. 'Critical Theory, Historical Materialism, and the Ostensible End of Marxism: The Poverty of Theory Revisited', *International Review of Social History*, 38, 1993, 133-162.

<sup>99</sup>Rendall, in *Offen*, Roach Pierson, Rendall, 52.

inhabitants of both my psyche and my intellectual work'.<sup>100</sup> My frustration with feminist historians extends more specifically from their fetishisation of theory, which has impeded their capacity to write good history, particularly when addressing the complex and contradictory operation of class and gender within history. Jill Matthews addresses the disparity between the plethora of writings 'that extolled theory as essential to feminist history' and the practical results. She claims that when 'such exhortation was not the sole purpose of writing and some historical analysis ensued', pointing out it was clear that there was a 'disjuncture between the obligatory theoretical gesture at the beginning and the rest of the historical text'.<sup>101</sup> Matthews further asserts that theory with a capital T has taken over; 'this genre has become the only game in town, the only theory that many academic feminists recognise anymore'. She admits she is not writing 'against theory in general', but 'against fashionableness' which characterised recent theory.<sup>102</sup>

Feminist history, it has seemed to Matthews, was beset with 'a theory' that was 'impenetrable' and 'lacking in (if not explicitly refusing) historical consciousness'. She calls for feminist historians to discard 'the apocalyptic feminist vision' which rests on 'singlemindedness', for holding on to it 'would be dogmatic'. Furthermore, she asserts, feminists' 'disdain of the empirical' should be dispensed with. While one 'Truth' is not possible, she argues, 'there are many truths' and: 'As historians, part of our task involves discovering and identifying those truths and believers as accurately and as respectfully as we are able'.<sup>103</sup> Matthews' statement is a call for the notion of historicity to be returned to history.

---

<sup>100</sup>Alexander, 127.

<sup>101</sup>J. Matthews, 'Doing Theory or Using Theory: Australian Feminist/Women's History in the 1990s', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol.27, no.106, April 1996, 51.

<sup>102</sup>Matthews, 1996, 53-54.

<sup>103</sup>Matthews, 1996, 53-55.

For this reason this thesis advocates a way of thinking about history, and in particular the operation of gender and class, which is inspired by, but not confined to, writings in socialist feminist theory and the historical materialist project. This way of thinking does not involve taking preconceived ideas and assumptions about gender and class and making evidence fit. On the contrary it is a theory that is open to and engages with, history. As Curthoys argued some years ago, in order 'to explain sexual division historically', a theory is required that is neither 'too specific...nor too general'.<sup>104</sup> But, most importantly, as Connell identified, it is the relationship between subject and structure and their mutual determinations which are crucial.

Subjectivity need not be excluded from historical materialist analyses. Historical materialism was important in the study of subjectivity for it insisted on a 'material root' to oppression and challenged 'an idealist tendency within the left' which argued that the oppression of women could be overcome with liberal ideals about rights. At the same time, Vogel argued, socialist feminism has had a 'special concern with psychological and ideological issues' and opposed 'the crudities of an economic determinist interpretation', highlighting the importance of valuing both the psychic realm, and the material circumstances in an analysis of social relations.<sup>105</sup> Lake argued that by including 'an account of the structure of feeling - of anger, loss, pleasure and desire' scholars could understand the interplay between the given and the possible in peoples' lives.<sup>106</sup> Donaldson and others included this 'structure of feeling' in their work by highlighting workers' subjective experiences and showing how these are important in shaping their identities as men and women.<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup>A. Curthoys, 'Feminism and the Classes: A Reply to Alison Ravenscroft', *Arena*, no.64, 1983, 152.

<sup>105</sup>Vogel, 29.

<sup>106</sup>Lake, in Irving, 80.

<sup>107</sup>Donaldson, 1991, and R. Sennett and J. Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1972.

Analyses and understandings of subjectivity must always be part of an analysis of social structure. Like historical materialism, the term "social structure" has been a source of contention amongst both marxists and non-marxists. Connell has pointed out that the term social structure is 'ambiguous'; but, taken generally, social structure means the 'constraints that lie in a given form of social organisation'. Specifically, this means that when a society is organised around, and produces divisions like class, gender and race, constraints on social action, such as the sexual division of labour, are especially significant, particularly when the structures themselves are products of human practices.<sup>108</sup> As Perry Anderson observed, 'structure and subject have in this sense always been interdependent as categories' and one cannot exist without the other.<sup>109</sup>

A theoretical framework of this kind is potentially able to capture the way people experience life. It does not concentrate on an individual's subjectivity to the exclusion of the social circumstances in which an individual exists, nor does it replace human subjectivity with an abstract "master narrative". It is a theory committed to charting the tensions and ambiguities that result at the intersection of social structure and individual agency, precisely making it invaluable to the historian.

Curthoys said that 'in searching for explanations which held for all societies, feminists interested in explanation have posed for themselves exceptionally difficult questions'. She labelled this 'search for an *internal principle*', to explain women's oppression in capitalist society unnecessary,<sup>110</sup> and I agree. Theoretical propositions based on assumed universal givens will always fail. As Wood put it, '[d]eterminism is always bound to be disappointed by history'.<sup>111</sup> Vogel has observed that 'theory is, by its very nature, severely limited'. It 'simply provides guidance for the

---

<sup>108</sup>Connell, 1987, 92.

<sup>109</sup>P. Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism*, Verso, London, 1983, 54.

<sup>110</sup>Curthoys, 1983, 152.

<sup>111</sup>Meiksins Wood, 9.

understanding of actual societies, past and present' and does not produce change or reflect specific circumstances. These things are only possible with 'concrete analysis and historical investigation', and of course, human action.<sup>112</sup> As Matthews recently stated, 'what matters is not doing theory but using it', the point being not only to understand the world but to change it too.<sup>113</sup>

### *Methodology*

The location and use of appropriate sources assume great significance in the quest for a theoretically informed materialist history. Cook and Fonow believe that a methodology should not just describe the techniques and processes used in gathering information, but should examine their 'underlying epistemological assumptions'.<sup>114</sup> This thesis is concerned with both the methodology, the 'theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed', and the method, the techniques and operations of the research process.

In sections of the thesis, but particularly that concerned with paid work, the *Commonwealth Census of Australia* from 1921 to 1954 was used. Some feminist scholars caution against using census data, particularly when discussing women workers. They assert that, for a number of reasons, census records may misrepresent the nature and intensity of paid work undertaken by women.<sup>115</sup> The Wollongong women who answered the job

<sup>112</sup>Vogel, 137.

<sup>113</sup>Matthews, 1996, 55.

<sup>114</sup>J.A. Cook and M.M. Fonow, 'Knowledge and Women's Interests: Issues of Epistemology and Methodology in Feminist Sociological Research', in J.M. Nielsen, (ed) *Feminist Research Methods: Exemplary Readings in the Social Sciences*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1990, 71.

<sup>115</sup>J. Matthews, *Good and Mad Women*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1984, 50-51. See also E. Eklund, 'We are of Age': Class, Locality and Region at Port Kembla, 1900-1940', *Labour History*, no.66, May 1994 (b), 74-75. Eklund makes the point generally in relation to 'public records' but also about electoral rolls the the occupation listings given for women. He says 'electoral rolls underestimate women's participation in the paid workforce, especially in the case of the petty bourgeoisie'. The research of Desley Deacon has also made clear the

advertisement seeking 'women canvassers' to sell household products in 1927 would probably not have appeared in the census data as paid workers, as the advertisement suggested the job was a short-term one.<sup>116</sup> Activities in the home for which women may have received payment would most likely not have been counted either. Nevertheless, while census data clearly does pose a number of substantive problems for historians investigating women, newspaper evidence and oral histories can help us read it carefully.

The archives searched for this thesis include the Noel Butlin Archives of Business and Labour (NBA) in Canberra, the University of Wollongong Archives (UWA), the Mitchell Library Manuscripts (ML), the State Archives of New South Wales and the Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP) Archives in Melbourne. Using these was difficult because their collections were never catalogued or indexed according to location, leading to the frustration of searching voluminous amounts of records for hints of 'Wollongong', 'Illawarra', 'South Coast'. Strategies developed to lessen this problem included searching around particular dates or events noted in secondary sources. Sometimes, though, documents were found more by good luck than by any specific method. To overcome this persistent problem, much of my research effort was concentrated at the UWA. Many of its collections related specifically to the Illawarra region and this allowed for a more fruitful retrieval of information. The collections were nevertheless often partial and incomplete, particularly for the period before World War Two.

Unfortunately, too, archives continue to concentrate their holdings around institutions and prominent individuals, revealing very little of everyday experiences of ordinary people. The UWA was no different in this respect and contained very few documents relating to the subjective

problems associated with using census data to discuss women's work, see D. Deacon, *Managing Gender: the State, the New Middle Class and Women Workers 1830-1930*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989, 143. Deacon, vii - refers to nineteenth century census data as a 'quagmire' for interpreting women's work.

<sup>116</sup>*South Coast Times*, 6/5/1927.



dimension of workers' lives. The local newspapers, the *Illawarra Mercury* and the *South Coast Times*, were essential resources and were consulted frequently and widely, and were especially useful in providing information on some subjective or personal details. My efforts to find private letters or correspondence by advertising in the local newspapers were unsuccessful. This undoubtedly reflected a number of different but related issues, not least the failure of people to see the value of the ordinary and everyday to the historian, or the value of history to themselves.

Oral sources have helped compensate for the paucity and social bias of archival records and other documents. Douglas, Roberts and Thompson contend that oral history challenges 'the nature, methods and purpose of history'.<sup>117</sup> It shifts the focus from "important" people to "ordinary" people, and it has developed in close association with social history.<sup>118</sup> Paul Thompson believes 'it can give back to the people who made and experienced history...a central place'.<sup>119</sup> It enriches historical accounts that depend on insufficient or fragmented written sources<sup>120</sup> and it means that history is no longer totally dependent on a 'fetishism of [written] documents'.<sup>121</sup> Oral history can be especially useful for addressing the subjectivity of individuals. That it is primarily sociologists and psychologists who have been instrumental in exploring the subjectivity of workers is partly explained by the nature of source material and available data. Arthur B. Shostak and William Gomberg's edited collection *Blue-Collar World: Studies of the American Worker* is heavily influenced by sociology and psychology and is a reasonably successful attempt at accessing workers' subjectivities. The editors felt research should present 'a picture of the members of the working class as people' and their work was a corrective

<sup>117</sup>L. Douglas, et.al. *Oral History: A Handbook*, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1988, 1.

<sup>118</sup>B.M. Robertson, *Oral History Handbook*, third edition, Oral History Association of Australia (South Australia Branch), Adelaide, 1994, 3 and 8.

<sup>119</sup>P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, Oxford University Press, London, 1978, 2.

<sup>120</sup>K. Daniels, et.al. (eds) *Women in Australia: An Annotated Guide to Records*, Volume.1, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1977, xix.

<sup>121</sup>Carr, 16.

to analyses that presented the worker only 'as an instrument of production'.<sup>122</sup> They were able to achieve their objective by employing a variety of methods and sources, for example, sample interviews.

But how can historians discuss subjectivity? Sociologist Jeff Hearn has asked, in relation to his research on masculinity, 'Where do we find the subjectivity of men? Where do we find out about, say, sexual practices in the 1890s?'<sup>123</sup> This is a dilemma especially for historians working on periods where their subjects are no longer living and have not left diaries, letters or other substantive documents that might include some personal reflections and insights. For those researching later periods, however, oral sources are proving useful.

Australian historian Ian Watson uses interviews and the life-history method to unravel class identity. He contends that the life history method can account for 'silences and ambivalences' and their role in shaping and forming class identity.<sup>124</sup> Attention to specific life histories is also advantageous because they are 'specific and concrete' rather than 'universalistic and abstract',<sup>125</sup> offering a way of understanding and exploring the complexity of class identity. The complexities, contradictions and tensions inherent in class relations and identity are lost in structured questionnaires; for, as Watson argues, class consciousness is 'a concept of much greater complexity than "attitudes", and that it is almost impossible to operationalise it in a meaningful fashion for use in questionnaires'.<sup>126</sup> The same could be said for gender consciousness.

With these insights in mind, I have used interviews and contemporary recorded testimonies to tease out some of the complex and contradictory ways in which men and women relate to and think about paid

<sup>122</sup>A. B. Shostak and W. Gomberg, (eds) *Blue-Collar World: Studies of the American Worker*, Prentice-Hall, London, 1965, xii.

<sup>123</sup>Hearn, 55.

<sup>124</sup>I. Watson, 'Class Memory: An Alternative Approach to Class Identity', *Labour History*, no.67, November 1994, 25.

<sup>125</sup>Watson, 26.

<sup>126</sup>Watson, 25.

work and the family, and their interdeterminacies. I listened to taped interviews that other researchers had conducted for their own studies, many held in the UWA and some in the Oral History section of the National Library. Existing oral histories did not always, however, offer useful evidence for the requirements of my thesis: some interviews were too general in their focus, whilst others addressed structured questions or particular issues, thereby limiting their use.<sup>127</sup> An interview conducted by Dr Tom Sheridan with Bill Frame and Ted Arrowsmith on the 1945 steel strike was useless because of its poor sound quality.<sup>128</sup>

Taped interviews conducted by myself with Wollongong men and women proved more useful, since these flexible unstructured interviews allowed me to pursue avenues of particular interest. The interviewees were contacted by a variety of methods. I issued a press release to the local daily newspaper outlining my research and inviting people to contact me; this resulted in two articles: one in the *Illawarra Mercury* and another in the free weekly, the *Illawarra Advertiser*. Only three people responded about possible interviewees, but, from these three I was able to make contact with other interviewees they recommended. A number were reached through the Unanderra Hostel for the Aged. My mother works as a Nurse's Assistant in the Nursing Home associated with the Hostel and was able to make arrangements in consultation with the Matron. My own activity in the local Australian Labor Party (ALP) for the past seven years also helped me to make contacts. The nature of industry and unionism in the Illawarra means the ALP is intimately linked with the labour movement as a whole

---

<sup>127</sup>A collection of various interviews conducted by Wollongong Institute of Education students as part of their 'Education History' course were like this. The interviews addressed the topic of children in Wollongong during WW2. Most of them were on structured lines and many of them were too short. Interviewers often moved on to the next question or issue when I wanted to pursue some issues that related directly to the thesis topic in greater detail. UWA, B23, Various-Children in Wartime Wollongong, 1981.

<sup>128</sup>UWA, B17, Interview with Bill Frame and Ted Arrowsmith - 1945 Steel Strike by Dr Tom Sheridan.

and through my past experience as an ALP branch secretary I had links with stalwarts of the Illawarra labour movement like Fred Moore.

Oral history is, of course, not without its limitations. A central issue of concern for oral historians is the issue of memory and the validity of evidence.<sup>129</sup> Ian Watson has dealt with this issue in his work, arguing against using oral sources simply as a way of retrieving 'stored information', and instead suggesting 'viewing memory as a process of reconstruction'.<sup>130</sup> He claims that an exploration of the contradictions, inaccuracies and ambivalences that may exist in the oral evidence also affords a view of self-identity and the subject that can be useful to the historian. I have adopted this way of thinking about my oral evidence. I also believe my use of multiple methods helps me to counter the more conventional criticisms of it.

I also employed photographs and images as evidence in this thesis. Feminist historian Diane Kirkby has noted the usefulness of 'visual representations' for the historian.<sup>131</sup> Photographic evidence can be of particular significance for the historian interested in class and gender. Kirkby noted how often 'people inferior to the dominant white male middle class' were the subject of photographic evidence. By implication, such evidence was imbued with 'power relations captured in a moment of time'.<sup>132</sup> I have attempted to use photographs in this way, as well as for illustration.

Photographs were gathered from a variety of sources for this project. An archive collection at the UWA contained an assortment of images depicting the changing landscape from the late 1890s onwards. The May Day

---

<sup>129</sup>Memory has become a topic of much interest in recent years. See: K. Darian-Smith and P. Hamilton (eds) *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994.

<sup>130</sup>Watson, 28.

<sup>131</sup>V. Kirkby, 'Writing the History of Women Working: Photographic Evidence and the 'Disreputable Occupation of Barmaid'', in Frances and Scates, 1991, 7. See also R. Samuel, *Theatres of Memory. Volume 1: Past and Contemporary Culture*, Verso, London, 1994, Part 5.

<sup>132</sup>Kirkby, in Frances and Scates, 1991, 7.



collection, also at the UWA, included many photos reaffirming its celebratory nature. Unfortunately the largest part of this collection refers to the years beyond my study, nevertheless a few excellent photographs exist for some May Days in the late 1930s.

The *BHP Review* contained photographs on various topics and copies of these were obtained when appropriate and available. Black and white images of industry and the landscape taken by myself in mid-1997 are also included in the thesis to capture a sense of Wollongong. As I took these photographs, the power of capitalism was made clear to me. Twice, I was told by BHP employees that I was not permitted to take photographs from inside the steelworks.<sup>133</sup> Instead, I was told to use the purpose-built viewing platforms along Flinders Street (Port Kembla) and Springhill Road (Wollongong). I followed these directions. Due to "no parking" on Springhill Road I drove inside the works and parked at the Visitors Centre whence I planned to walk to the viewing platform outside the works. My presence had obviously been noted and communicated to BHP gatekeepers throughout the steelworks. A BHP employee approached me a second time informing me again that I was unable to take photographs from inside the steelworks' boundary.

By far the most useful and accessible photographs were those located in the Local Studies section of the Wollongong City Council Library. Approximately 2000 scanned images could be viewed on CD-ROM using subject searches. Other unscanned photographs were filed according to subjects and topics and could be requested through the librarian. Some of these photographs were also contained in Gibb and Warnes' pictorial history of Wollongong.<sup>134</sup> I also used a small number of photographs from my family's collection.

---

<sup>133</sup>Dr Mike Donaldson informs me that workers are forbidden to take cameras to work too.

<sup>134</sup>A. Gibbs and C. Warne, *A Pictorial History: Wollongong*, Kingsclear Books, Alexandria, 1995.

Taken together, these various research methods have directly affected the scope of the thesis. The gendered nature of all forms of evidence was particularly acute and meant that I often could not elaborate upon the experience of women in detail. In the early stages of my research it was my intention to give equal space to the experiences of men and women; but evidence which detailed the experiences of women in all areas, particularly in paid work, was not nearly as abundant as it was for working-class men. This imbalance is obvious in the body of the thesis and has accordingly shaped the history I have written.

The thesis is presented in three parts. In addition to this introductory chapter, Part One includes Chapter Two, an historical survey of Wollongong providing background information on the place and its people. Four chapters form Part Two which explores paid work and labour relations in Wollongong. The sexual division of labour, the structure of paid work and the number employed, workers' relations with management, unions and other workers (paid and unpaid) are some of the issues critically examined in this section. In the third and final part, three chapters investigate aspects of family and community, revealing that time not spent at work was time spent with the family or in the community and is significant for understanding the life experiences of working-class people.

In concentrating my efforts on capturing the richness and complexity of working-class peoples' lives, there are a number of issues omitted or not elaborated upon in this thesis. Other classes in Wollongong do not receive detailed treatment. In the main the ruling class has not lived there and the middle class has always been relatively small.<sup>135</sup> The evaluation of non-British immigrant workers' experiences is only slight for this is another story, important from the late 1940s onwards, but particularly in the 1950s

---

<sup>135</sup>Eklund, 1994 (b), 74; H. Lee, 'A Corporate Presence: The Economy, 1906-1945', in Hagan and Wells, 1997, 67-68; and Firth, 58.

and 1960s, when the number of non-British arrivals increased sharply. My study is a detailed exploration of the dynamic interaction of class and gender relations in a localised and specific context focused on the working-class men and women of Wollongong from 1921 to 1954.

## 2

### *Wollongong: A Working-class Place*

This study could have been undertaken in any Australian city or town; but for reasons already explained, I chose to explore Wollongong.<sup>136</sup> This chapter examines Wollongong: the place Donald Horne describes as a 'mystery'.<sup>137</sup> It focuses on how it has been perceived and represented, its landscape and natural form and most importantly, the people who have lived and worked in it and its surroundings.

#### *Perception*

In his history of Elizabeth, Mark Peel remarked how the Adelaide suburb and its people were continually subject to 'sneers'. He claimed only 'vague generalisations' were used in attempts to describe Elizabeth, and other similar working-class locales. Outsiders inevitably adopted a polarised and superficial understanding of the landscape and the locals. Negative perceptions assume the greatest validity for most outsiders, and like

---

<sup>136</sup>For ease of research and analysis it was essential to decide on the boundaries for the study. Like historian Len Richardson, I used 'Wollongong' to indicate the entire district, not just the city (Richardson, 1974, viii) and I often used 'Wollongong' and 'the Illawarra' interchangeably. I have restricted my statistical analysis and evidence collection to the area that presently constitutes the local government area of Wollongong, which was formed in 1947. Prior to 1947 this area resembled four different government areas, namely the Illawarra Central Municipality, the Illawarra North Municipality, the Wollongong Municipality and the Bulli Shire (*Commonwealth Census of Australia*). The census data for these four areas was used in 1921, 1933 and 1947 and constitutes Wollongong, the Wollongong area, or the Illawarra region simultaneously. The 1954 Census for Greater Wollongong represents the same. Eklund states that the use of this term for the entire region is misleading and 'fails to capture the social complexity of the different towns in the region'. (See Eklund, 1994 (a), 10.) Although accepting and appreciating Eklund's point, I have persisted with Richardson's conceptualisation believing it is more useful for my purpose.

<sup>137</sup>Horne, 38.

Elizabeth, Wollongong has been the object of negative critique and characterisation.<sup>138</sup>

Jeff Caswell, an academic, is the central character in Margaret Barbalet's novel *Steel Beach*. Caswell takes study leave in the northern suburbs of Wollongong to seek inspiration for his research about the life and writings of D.H. Lawrence. We learn that Wollongong is a retreat from the restricted confines of the Coombs Building at the ANU in Canberra. But Caswell is ambivalent about his decision to come to Wollongong, for 'no one would get away to Wollongong if they had a choice'.<sup>139</sup> Even the local real estate agent, dressed in 'his neat, ugly clothes', asks "'What on earth would take anyone to Wollongong?'" For this local, Wollongong is where '[y]ou'll be swimming in oil slicks and get miner's lung!'<sup>140</sup> This is not Caswell's first visit to Wollongong either; he has had occasion to visit there before. He relates how:

The very thought of Port Kembla was enough to make me shudder. I'd once had the misfortune to have to drive through it.<sup>141</sup>

When Caswell is caught looking out at the Pacific Ocean, which forms the picture-like view from his rented house in Thirroul, it is obvious that it is the Port he detests most. He thinks about D.H. Lawrence's novel *Kangaroo*, also set in this suburb and observes:

The Thirroul of 1922, the world of years ago is far more real to me than this world now, this long line of beaches that scallop the edge of the land as far south as I can see, to their end, the exclamation point of the Port Kembla chimneys.<sup>142</sup>

---

<sup>138</sup>Peel, 1995, 2-3.

<sup>139</sup>M. Barbalet, *Steel Beach*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1988, 3. Dr Mike Donaldson informs me that Barbalet wrote her novel in his house at Thirroul.

<sup>140</sup>Barbalet, 3-4.

<sup>141</sup>Barbalet, 24-25.

<sup>142</sup>Barbalet, 47.

Once again modern Wollongong is marked, a victim to the images of industrial squalor. Jeff Caswell, like many other outsiders, clings to this imagery of desperate Wollongong, seeing only this as worthy of exclamation.

In 1983 *The Bulletin* reported on the recession and its effects on Wollongong. The article, entitled 'A steel city sings the blues' pointed out that: 'People in Wollongong are used to being the butt of jokes'. Once more the comedians Norman Gunston and Aunty Jack were remembered because of their association with Wollongong, and the way they 'sent it up'. David Armstrong, author of the article, also wrote:

Too far from Sydney to be regarded as a suburb, too close to have a clear identity as a separate city, it is seen as the industrial pits, a place characterised by migrants and sulphurous smoke.<sup>143</sup>

Armstrong warned that 'Aunty Jack's *Wollongong the Brave* is in danger of becoming *Wollongong the Broke*'. Severe cuts to the steel industry in the eighties saw massive increases in unemployment and poverty.<sup>144</sup>

It is probably true to say that these negative images became most pronounced some years after Wollongong was well established as a thriving industrial town. But, Lauchlan Chipman, who later became a resident of Wollongong, said that even in 1958 he:

knew little about it. Despite having matriculated in Geography I believed - as many Melbournians still do - that it was somewhere near Newcastle, which I plotted wrongly as half way between Sydney and Brisbane.

---

<sup>143</sup>*The Bulletin*, 19/4/1983, 27.

<sup>144</sup>*The Bulletin*, 19/4/1983, 27-28.

It was not until 1975 when Chipman returned to settle in Wollongong that he said, 'I heard much more':

Wollongong, I was assured, was a sort of joke place inhabited by the Italian equivalents of Dad and Dave. Moreover it was "full of pollution" and the "culture-hating cretins" who lived there would never understand or appreciate a university...<sup>145</sup>

Although it was almost twenty years on, and he was able to plot its whereabouts on a map more accurately, the imagery of Wollongong still conveyed a place hardly worth knowing.

Beverley Firth, a Sydney-sider, who wrote her doctoral thesis on the industrialisation of the Wollongong region, reflected on the landscape she experienced on her numerous visits for archival research:

The physical beauty of that narrow stretch of coast between Helensburgh and Port Kembla never failed to amaze me. Even the depressing grey smog which often tried to obliterate the spectacular views from the escarpment added poignancy to the scene below. My dominant impression was that Wollongong was a paradise lost and this was reinforced by the descent from the escarpment into the congested, blighted streets.<sup>146</sup>

Here Firth begins to capture some of the ambiguity of Wollongong. Nevertheless, for Firth Wollongong is still 'a paradise lost', and beautiful only at a distance. For Jeff Caswell, Lauchlan Chipman and Beverley Firth, Wollongong was not a place you would choose to visit. All three are visitors to Wollongong because of their work.

Not all outsiders have viewed Wollongong with such disdain. A visitor from Queensland wrote to the editor of the local newspaper in 1941 'after a pleasant sojourn in your beautiful town' to 'pay tribute to the beauty

<sup>145</sup>L. Chipman, 'Wollongong - "Fair city of the South": The town that Norman Gunston can't close down', *Quadrant*, no.122, vol. xxi, no.9, september 1977, 34.

<sup>146</sup>Firth, xxii-xxiii.

and cleanliness of Wollongong'. He remarked: 'Never before have I seen such magnificent scenery as that which is the natural gift of Wollongong'. Indeed, he said he had 'seen panoramas that would please the most fastidious'. He was so impressed that he could not leave without making mention of that other great attraction in the town, he 'found the young ladies of Wollongong to be at the least the equal in appearance and deportment to any I have ever seen'.<sup>147</sup>

Walter Benjamin once said about foreigners and their views on places and locations strange to them: 'The superficial inducement, the exotic, the picturesque has an effect only on the foreigner. To portray a city, a native must have other deeper motives - motives of one who travels into the past instead of into the distance...'.<sup>148</sup> Which is not to say that the impressions of locals are more accurate, or less one-sided. Before the arrival of the steelworks both locals and new arrivals spoke positively about the region. An editorial in 1921 noted that, 'The residents of Illawarra recognise that they have a district which is practically without a rival as a tourist district...'.<sup>149</sup> Perhaps, these same residents would have been impressed with Mr C.H. Hoskins, when, in a public address discussing the proposed steelworks, he observed that Wollongong people 'had a good district - one of the finest in New South Wales'.<sup>150</sup>

In many ways, though, Illawarra locals have been just as preoccupied as the visitors with the negative images of their region. Recently, in July 1997, Wollongong was chosen as the location for the annual Cointreau Ball, 'known as *the* social event of the year in Sydney, if not Australia'. The ball was hailed as a great opportunity for the region to finally rid itself of its industrial image. The *Illawarra Mercury's* editor Peter Cullen drew inspiration from the fairy tale Cinderella when he led his editorial

<sup>147</sup>*South Coast Times*, 23/5/1941.

<sup>148</sup>As quoted in M. Davis, *City of Quartz*, Vintage, London, 1992, xlii.

<sup>149</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 15/4/1921.

<sup>150</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 22/4/1921.

comment on the ball with the title: 'Cointreau Ball dispels city's Cinderella image'. He believed that::

Bringing, as it did, influential show business and advertising figures to the region, the Cointreau Ball was a great opportunity to bury the city's image as a grimy steel centre with nothing else to offer...<sup>151</sup>

Part of the magic of the spectacle was that the location of the ball was kept secret from the select 400 celebrities who were invited, until the very last moment.<sup>152</sup> Some thought the pageant would be staged somewhere in Sydney, or perhaps the Blue Mountains, or even the Hunter Valley. The promoters of the Cointreau Ball said they chose Wollongong 'for its proximity to Sydney and because people were not likely to guess the destination'.<sup>153</sup> Wollongong is no place for pomp and pageantry, and the likelihood of anyone actually living in it attending the Ball was remote.

#### Place

The city of Wollongong is located in New South Wales 90 kilometres south of Sydney. The area that constitutes the Illawarra region, is a narrow stretch of land confined by the sea on one side and a mountainous escarpment on the other.<sup>154</sup> (See Plate 2.1) The escarpment varies in height along the coastline, from 300 to 600 metres, running north to south. Geographer Bob Young speculates that it was a result of the Tasman Sea

<sup>151</sup> Illawarra Mercury, 21/7/1997, 14

<sup>152</sup> Illawarra Mercury, 21/7/1997, 4.

<sup>153</sup> Illawarra Mercury, 21/7/1997, 1.

<sup>154</sup> R. W. Young and A.R.M. Johnson, 'The Physical Setting: Environmental Hazards and Urban Planning', in R. Robinson, (ed) *Urban Illawarra*, Sorrett Publishing, Melbourne, 1977, 48.

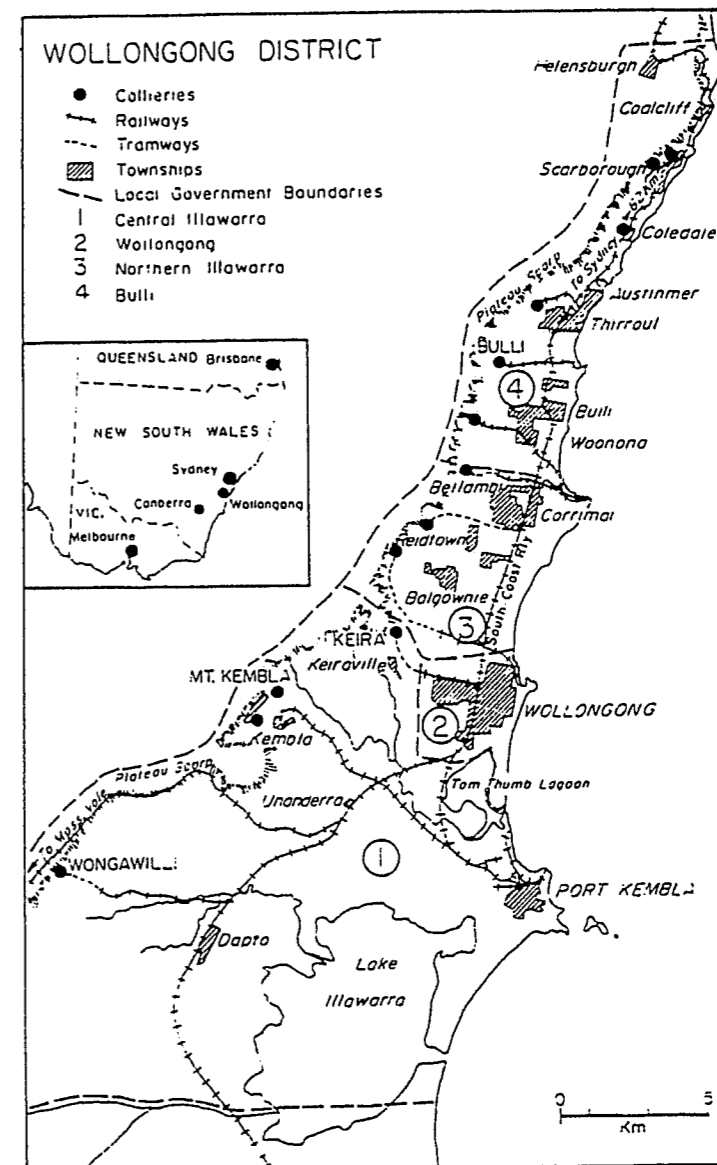


Plate 2.1 - Map of Wollongong District

(Source: L. Richardson, *The Bitter Years*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1984, xiii.)

floor separating 80 million years ago and forcing the eastern coastline upwards toward the sky.<sup>155</sup>

From the escarpment and numerous other vantage points along the coast it is possible to capture a view of the ocean. The white, cotton wool-like waves dominate the seascape. At other times, when more subdued, the sea appears like an artist's canvas painted blue for the very first time, with only the occasional glimpse of white breaking through the indigo. Near Flagstaff Hill, I would sometimes sit in the shadow of the white lighthouse drawing inspiration from the panoramic vista that lay before me. On the crest of the seascape ships wait for their journey into the Port where they load or unload their cargo. They are almost camouflaged by the five islands that sit at a distance from the coast. Five Islands was one name used to describe early European Illawarra.<sup>156</sup>

The Illawarra was once an abundant field of flora and vegetation. Research has revealed 'an ancient forest buried beneath the beach sand' of Thirroul and Bulli beaches. Rising sea levels some 7000 years ago ensured that these forests were hidden from the view of modern Illawarra residents.<sup>157</sup> Denise Black notes how 'wind-pruned Whalebone Trees and Brush Cherries' can be seen near Bass Point, along with Coastal Banksia, Coast Tea-tree and Bangalay. Coast Wattle and Coast Tea-tree can also be found near sandy beaches patch-worked with a variety of ground covers including Spinifex, Marram Grass and Bitou Bush.<sup>158</sup> The shores of Lake Illawarra accommodate trees like the Samphire and Swamp Oak, the Swamp Paper Bark and Cabbage Gum. The gullies of the escarpment are home to rare deciduous trees like the Red Cedar, White Cedar and the small Koda Tree. A luxuriant mass of trees hides in rainforest areas including

---

<sup>155</sup>R. W. Young, 'Evolution of the Illawarra Landscape' in Stephen Dovers, (ed) *Illawarra Heritage*, Environmental Heritage Committee, Wollongong, 1983, 9.

<sup>156</sup>A. Cousins, *The Garden of New South Wales: A History of the Illawarra & Shoalhaven Districts 1770-1900*, second edition, Illawarra Historical Society, Wollongong, 1994, 22.

<sup>157</sup>Young, in Dovers, 11.

<sup>158</sup>D. Black, 'Vegetation of Illawarra - General Vegetation Patterns', in Dovers, 20.

Brown Beech, Churnwood, Moreton Bay Fig, Lilly Pilly, and Scrub Beefwood. Often these trees are enmeshed in White-bellied Wonga Vines and Water Vines whose 'woody lianes...tangle and twine among the trees'. Occasional shots of colour can be glimpsed from the salmon pink flower of the Coachwood, the 'pink sugar lump-like fruits' borne by the Giant Stinging Tree or the 'sweetly scented native Daphnes'. Black points out that natives like the Illawarra Flame Tree, the Cabbage Palm and the Moreton Bay Fig 'have been adopted by the local people with some degree of affection' and can still be seen on the plains that have become the urban landscape of Wollongong.<sup>159</sup>

It is no wonder that historian Arthur Cousins and others referred to the Illawarra as 'The Garden of New South Wales'.<sup>160</sup> An etching by Eugene von Guerard in the 1860s provides an impression of the flora of an earlier time (Plate 2.2). He observed: 'This sylvan scene is situated at a distance of little more than ten kilometres from Wollongong'. He noted how it was located 'at the foot of a noble range of mountains', and how the various species were 'woven together into a dense and almost impenetrable mass of foliage'. By the 1860s, however, von Guerard had cause to lament the demise of such picturesque scenery. He spoke of the unfortunate destruction 'of these magnificent forests' due to 'the progress of settlement'. In the foreground of the sketch the beginnings of such destruction are evident, 'the stately giants were rapidly falling before the pitiless axe of the hardy pioneers of civilisation'.<sup>161</sup>

---

<sup>159</sup>Black, in Dovers, 21-22.

<sup>160</sup>Cousins, 7.

<sup>161</sup>Dovers, 24.



Plate 2.2 - 1867, Eugene von Guerard etching near Wollongong, before  
settlement

(Source: in the Eugene von Guérard Australian Landscapes Collection, Melbourne, from S. Dovers, (ed.)  
*Illawarra Heritage: an Introduction to a Region*, Environmental Heritage Committee, Wollongong, 1983,

24.)

Rising sea levels were also responsible for forming Lake Illawarra. Although the lake is 9.5 kilometres long and 5.5 kilometres wide it is very shallow. Malcolm Harris, a member of the Lake Management Committee, describes the lake as 'a natural treasure' with many 'fish, prawns and bird life' frequenting its beds and shores.<sup>162</sup> On a clear day the Lake is visible from the winding bends of Robertson, in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales, and near Windang (Plate 2.3) the Lake melds with the ocean. The stacks of the Tallawarra Power station are a permanent feature of the lake and make for a curious contrast with the beauty of a sunset (Plate 2.4). I have fond childhood memories of venturing out in the dark night with family and friends for prawning exhibitions on the Lake. Intricately woven green nets with pale wooden handles were used to catch the crustaceans as we waded through the water, equipped with sandshoes and gas lamp.

Ross Robinson, geographer and urban theorist, states that Wollongong 'represents a fascinating laboratory for urban research'.<sup>163</sup> But the urban and industrialised Illawarra is a twentieth century reality. Prior to the 1850s, the few land grants issued were mainly for cattle grazing and dairying.<sup>164</sup> Governor Macquarie wrote in December 1817 that: 'An extensive rich new Tract of Country, fit for the purposes of pasturage and agriculture, has, some little time since, been discovered,...on a part of the Coast generally known by the name of the "Five Islands", but called by the Natives "Illawarra"'.<sup>165</sup> After a survey by Mitchell in 1834, Wollongong was established as an official township.<sup>166</sup> William Stanley Jevons gave a description of the town in 1856 noting that while 'its streets are broad and well laid out in rectangles...they are not filled up with houses and...there are no signs of any building going on yet'.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>162</sup>M. Harris, 'Wetlands (Lake Illawarra)', in Dovers, 15.

<sup>163</sup>R. Robinson, 'Contemporary Urban Illawarra: an Overview' in Robinson, 15.

<sup>164</sup>T.M. Perry, 'Exploration and Settlement of the Illawarra', in Robinson, 63.

<sup>165</sup>Cousins, 22.

<sup>166</sup>J. McQuilton, 'Settlement', in Hagan and Wells, 1997, 31 and Lee, in Hagan and Wells, 1997, 36.

<sup>167</sup>Firth, 1.





Plate 2.3 - Aerial view of Lake Illawarra

(Source: B. De Miller, in S. Dovers, (ed.) *Illawarra Heritage: an Introduction to a Region*, Environmental Heritage Committee, Wollongong, 1983, 14.)

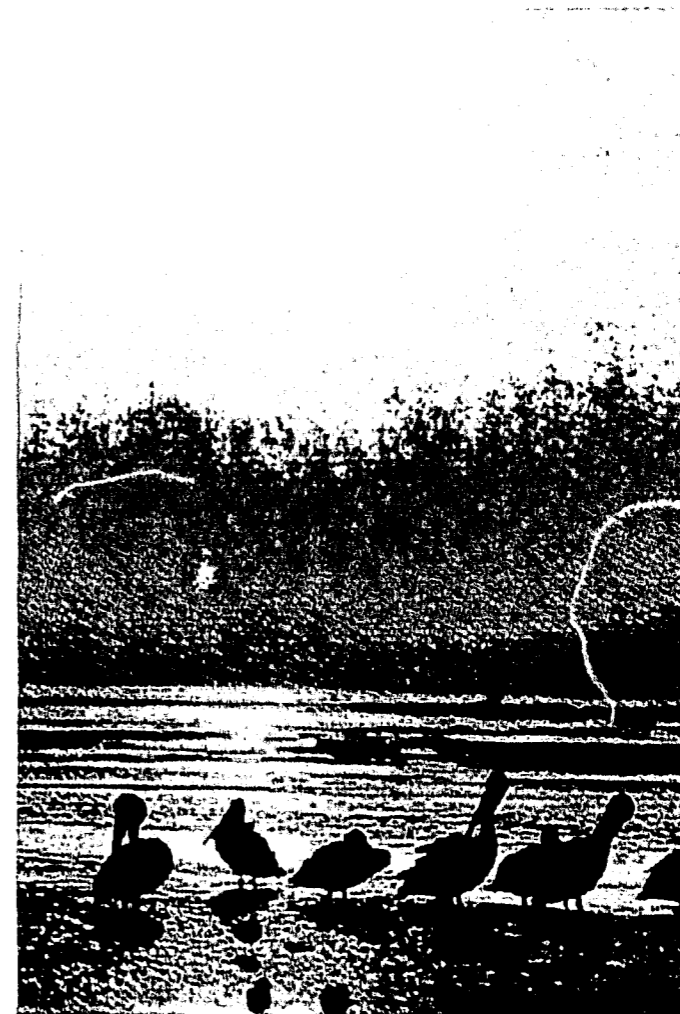


Plate 2.4 - Lake and Tallawarra Power Station at Sunset

(Source: B. Fisher, in S. Dovers, (ed.) *Illawarra Heritage: an Introduction to a Region*, Environmental Heritage Committee, Wollongong, 1983, 14.)



By 1887 changes are obvious (Plate 2.5). Looking south-west from the Court House tower we see buildings have been erected. The Presbyterian Church, on the corner of Church and Crown Streets looms largest in the scene and provides another indication of permanency and progress. The housing, and buildings like the flour mill (its chimney visible behind the church) sit comfortably interspersed with pockets of land for farming and agriculture. Some structures are more substantial than others. Railway labourers camped in tents can be seen in the distance, at Wollongong South (Coniston).

By 1936 (Plate 2.6), the main streets of Wollongong were dressed with two storey buildings catering for the many who had come to the district since 1928, seeking work at Australian Iron and Steel (AIS) nearby in Port Kembla. Electricity wires and the numerous automobiles gave little indication though of the suffering people had endured from the late 1920s onwards as a result of the Depression. Near Port Kembla in 1930, smoke stacks were visible in the midst of the houses and development that was occurring there to serve the burgeoning industry (Plate 2.7). Houses were sprawling across the lands, replacing the virgin forests that von Guerard had described. Some steelworkers and many unemployed families camped in places like Flinders Street Port Kembla, where canvas tents were pervasive. The *Illawarra Mercury* reported, as late as 1936, that the Health inspector had found the camp 'unsuitable for human habitation'.<sup>168</sup>

---

<sup>168</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 27/3/1936.

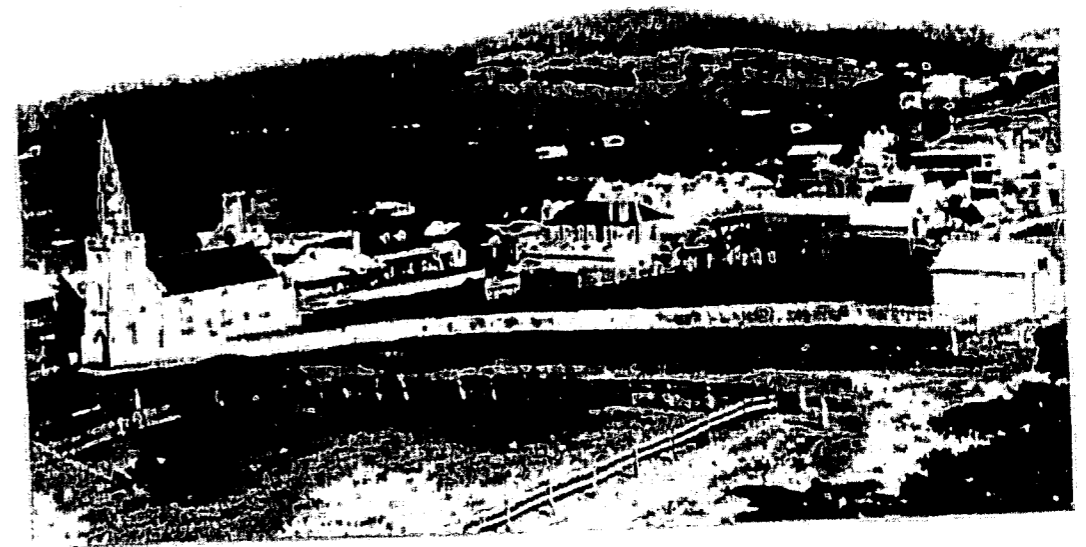


Plate 2.5 - 1887, Wollongong

(Source: From the Collections of the Wollongong City Library and Illawarra Historical Society)



Plate 2.6 - 1936, Wollongong

*(Source: From the Collections of the Wollongong City Library and Illawarra Historical Society)*

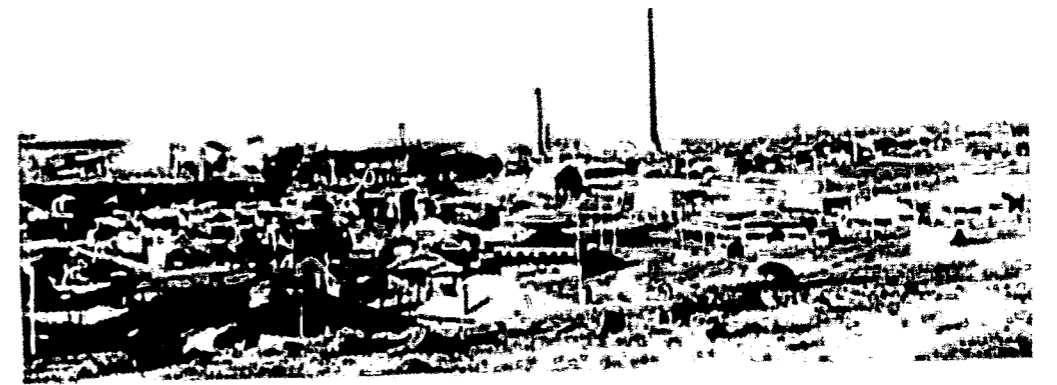


Plate 2.7 - 1930, near Port Kembla

*(Source: Wollongong City Library in A. Gibbs and C. Warne, A Pictorial History of Wollongong, Kingsclear Books, Alexandria, 1995, 109.)*

Indications of urban growth and development are obvious in a 1958 photograph (Plate 2.8). Cars clutter Crown Street - Wollongong's main street. The sea is barely visible in the distance. The pine trees, scattered the length of South Wollongong Beach compete with the advertising signs and logos that sit well positioned on the rooftops of the shops. The town is abustle with shoppers suggesting this is a Saturday morning when people seek bargains along Crown Street. There is no evidence of the number of patrons at the hotel on the corner of Keira and Crown Street, they are hidden from our view. We might speculate, however, that there are a number propping up the bar.

The urban sprawl and prosperity of the post-World War Two years is clear from a 1966 aerial view of Wollongong (Plate 2.9). Development has spread steadily since 1887, when the Presbyterian Church was the most outstanding feature of the Wollongong landscape. By 1966 houses almost touch the water's edge. The steelworks appears off stage, in the wings at the right. Absent from the picture, its presence is obvious when we contrast the picture of Wollongong 1966 with Wollongong 1887. The Illawarra is no longer a sleepy rural village but a large urban industrial centre.



Plate 2.8 - 1958, Wollongong

*(Source: From the Collections of the Wollongong City Library and Illawarra Historical Society)*



Plate 2.9 - 1966, aerial view of Wollongong

(Source: Roads and Traffic Authority, in A. Gibbs and C. Warne, *A Pictorial History: Wollongong*, Kingsclear Books, Alexandria, 1995, 128.)

## People

The people who have lived in these diverse and rapidly changing landscapes have likewise changed dramatically with time. Before the European invasion and the white usurpation of land, the Illawarra was home to five Aboriginal tribes: the Dharawal, Wadi-Wadi, Gurandada, Dharuma and Wandandian. The Gundungarra people were located west of Wollongong on the Wollondilly, Wingecarribee and Nattai Rivers. Caryll Sefton claims that little communication existed between the Gundungarra people and the coastal clans, due to the physical barrier posed by the Great Divide.<sup>169</sup> Michael Organ and Carol Speechley employ archaeological findings to suggest that Aboriginal occupants existed 'at least 30,000 years prior to the arrival of Europeans'.<sup>170</sup> They are forced to admit, however, that '[w]e know little of the Aboriginal economy and society in the Illawarra prior to and immediately following the arrival of white settlers'.<sup>171</sup> The Illawarra coast caught the eye of James Cook in 1770, and later that of Bass and Flinders,<sup>172</sup> who recorded encounters with Aborigines in the Illawarra in 1796, after travelling there in the vessel the *Tom Thumb*.<sup>173</sup> Governor Macquarie visited the Illawarra in early 1822 when he had a 'meeting there with about 100 natives'. He wrote that they were 'of various tribes', and noted how 'some of them had come all the way from Jervis Bay'.<sup>174</sup> An account a few years after Macquarie's also indicates a substantial Aboriginal presence in the region. Alexander Stewart was a boot-maker who settled in the district in 1828. Writing in 1894 for the *Illawarra Mercury* he remarked that 'The blacks were very numerous in the district at that time especially about the Tom Thumb Lagoon, Mullet Creek and the Lake for they lived

<sup>169</sup>C. Sefton, 'Prehistory - The Aboriginal Heritage', in *Dovers*, 33.

<sup>170</sup>M. Organ and C. Speechley, 'Illawarra Aboriginies', in Hagan and Wells, 1.

<sup>171</sup>Organ and Speechley, in Hagan and Wells, 2.

<sup>172</sup>Perry, in Robinson, 61.

<sup>173</sup>W. Mitchell and G. Sherington, *Growing Up in the Illawarra: A Social History 1834-1984*, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, 1984, 2.

<sup>174</sup>Mitchell and Sherington, 3-4.

mostly on fish ... About 100 blacks including gins and children assembled not far from the house'. Like Macquarie, Stewart noted how the 'gathering was made up of blacks from different parts of the district', but he said there 'were only portions of those from the different parts'.<sup>175</sup> Organ and Speechley suggested that an estimated 3000 Aboriginies lived in or around the Illawarra in 1820, but this was reduced to 93 in Wollongong in 1846. By mid-nineteenth century the lifestyle of the Aboriginal population in the Illawarra had been drastically altered by the white intrusion.<sup>176</sup>

Whites visited and made attempts to settle in the Illawarra region numerous times throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>177</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century, Wollongong was a service area for a growing dairying industry. Central Illawarra in particular was 'sparsely populated', but had 'an extensive dairy farming industry'.<sup>178</sup> In 1852 Colonel Godfrey Charles Mundy described, in *Our Antipodes*, the Illawarra's 'neat little dairy farms with all their picturesque appurtenances...embowered in vines and woodbines and climbing roses'.<sup>179</sup> Dairy farmers in the Illawarra were among the founders of the 'South Coast and West Camden Co-operative Society', formed to market their produce, claimed by Arthur Cousins to be the first large co-operative society in Australia.<sup>180</sup> Streets Icecream Company was also established in 1920 in Corrimal, because it had access to a plentiful supply of milk in the Illawarra.<sup>181</sup> Dairying flourished after extensive cedar forests had been hastily cleared and the timber exported for furniture production in the first

<sup>175</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 4/5/1894, in Mitchell and Sherington, 4.

<sup>176</sup>Organ and Speechley, in Hagan and Wells, 21.

<sup>177</sup>Perry, in Robinson, 64.

<sup>178</sup>Richardson, 1984, 2-3.

<sup>179</sup>Gibbs and Warnes, 56.

<sup>180</sup>Cousins, 122.

<sup>181</sup>Cousins, 137.

half of the nineteenth century.<sup>182</sup> Wheat and other grains failed because of rust and smut.<sup>183</sup>

It was the Illawarra's association with coal, discovered in Coalcliff in 1797 and commercially mined in the later half of the nineteenth century, that was most significant.<sup>184</sup> Horizontal shafts were dug in the side of the escarpment to retrieve coal from the Osborne-Wallsend (Mount Keira) colliery which was opened in 1857. Don Fraser says that the 'southern coal trade was flourishing by the late 1870s' and eleven collieries were in operation by 1889.<sup>185</sup> Mining was concentrated mostly in the northern areas of the Illawarra, as the coal seams to the south were less plentiful.<sup>186</sup> These northern mines along the escarpment bred tight-knit communities largely isolated from the coastal areas of the Illawarra district. Numerous scholars have offered insights into the labour process, industrial conflicts and working-class culture of these earlier mining communities in Wollongong.<sup>187</sup>

<sup>182</sup>Cousins, chapter 1.

<sup>183</sup>Cousins, 107.

<sup>184</sup>Richardson, 1984, 1.

<sup>185</sup>D. S. Fraser, 'An Investigation of the Response of the Coal-Mining Community of the Southern New South Wales to Adversity During a Period of Economic Depression Between 1893 and 1897, in an Endeavour to Ascertain How Unified that Community was and the Degree to which it Provided an Effective Industrial Force in Support of the Fledgeling Political Labour Movement', BA Honours Thesis, University of Wollongong, 1994, 6; and Firth, 2.

<sup>186</sup>Young, in Dovers, 8.

<sup>187</sup>W. Mitchell, 'The Miners of Southern New South Wales: A History of the Union to 1896', MA Thesis, University of New England, 1964; J. Hagan, and C. Fisher, 'Piece Work and Some of its Consequences in the Printing and Coal Mining Industries in Australia 1850-1930', *Labour History*, no.25, November 1963, 19-39; D.P. Dingsdag, 'Responses to the Bulli Colliery Disaster of 1887, with Special Reference to the New South Wales Government and the Bulli Mining Company', BA Honours Thesis, University of Wollongong, 1980; D.P. Dingsdag, 'The Restructuring of the NSW Coalmining Industry, 1903 -1982', Ph.D Thesis, University of Wollongong, 1988; S. Piggin and H. Lee, *The Mt Kembla Disaster*, Sydney University Press in association with Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992; B. Pender, 'The Illawarra Colliery Employees' Association and the Arbitration Court, 1900-1906: An Examination of Compulsory Arbitration', BA Honours Thesis, University of Wollongong, 1993; and H.P. Lee, 'The Development of a Coal Trade in the Wollongong District of New South Wales, with Particular Reference to Government and Business, 1849-1889', Ph.D Thesis, University of Wollongong, 1993; and Fraser. See also W. Mitchell, 'Wives of the Radical Labour Movement', in Curthoys, 1975, 1-14.

Richardson notes that despite the mining of coal, the Illawarra region remained primarily rural until the establishment of the steelworks,<sup>188</sup> which heralded the gradual transformation of the Illawarra from a rural town to an urban and industrialised city. In April 1921, after being 'accorded a civic welcome in the Mayor's room' during the day, Mr C.H. Hoskins attended a Chamber of Commerce and Industry dinner at the Wollongong Hotel to discuss the construction of a steelworks at Port Kembla. Mr A. E. Field, a guest at the dinner, suggested 'the advent of the steelworks would shake the sleepy old town of Wollongong up, and would advance the district'. British Trade Commissioner Mr Simpson said: 'Port Kembla is a centre of great possibilities, and the establishment of the new industry would act as a magnet to draw other industries', adding that 'the residents would not know their own district in a few years'. An *Illawarra Mercury* editorial also welcomed the announcement saying it was 'indeed good news for the district'. It remarked on the anticipated increase in population, predicting that the district's 'progress should be very great in the next decade'.<sup>189</sup> The editorial was not mistaken, although it was some years before the people of Wollongong experienced the signs of prosperity clearly expected from the steelworks. Problems with the quality of land, lack of infrastructure, and inadequate capital delayed the start of the steelworks.<sup>190</sup> Moreover, the 'mean decade' was around the corner.<sup>191</sup> In early 1927 the *South Coast Times* noted: 'The number of swagmen passing through Wollongong of late constitutes a record for very many years'.<sup>192</sup>

Firth noted that the definition of terms like 'proletariat' and 'bourgeoisie' was not a significant problem when discussing Wollongong. The extremes in the nature of work and industry meant it was

<sup>188</sup>Richardson, 1984 3.

<sup>189</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 22/4/1921.

<sup>190</sup>Richardson, 1984, 9.

<sup>191</sup>J.R. Robertson, '1930-39', in F. Crowley, (ed) *A New History of Australia*, Heinemann Educational Australia, Melbourne, 1974, 415.

<sup>192</sup>*South Coast Times*, 1/4/1927.

'uncontroversial to categorise Wollongong as a working class city'.<sup>193</sup> She showed also that even when Wollongong came to be at the centre of massive industrial production with an equally massive turnover in profits, the bourgeoisie did not reside in it. Those who reap benefits from the labours of others do not settle in the region. Arthur Cousins noted how in 1816, when the first five land grants for the Illawarra were issued by Surveyor General Oxley, none of the owners lived in the area: 'They sent managers and stockmen to look after their property there'.<sup>194</sup>

Wollongong is now widely recognised as an area with a high British and non-British migrant population. Michael Morrisey and fellow researchers chose the Wollongong region as an area to study immigration and industry restructuring in Australia because it has, proportionately, 'one of the largest overseas-born populations of any area in Australia'.<sup>195</sup> This is largely a post World War Two phenomenon and a consequence of government immigration policies after 1947.<sup>196</sup> In 1986, approximately 27 per cent of the population of the Wollongong area were born overseas (in contrast to 10.5 per cent of the Newcastle population) and immigrants and children born to immigrant parents together constituted nearly 45 per cent of the Illawarra region's population.<sup>197</sup> Migrants came from Eastern Europe, Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, Lebanon, South America and South-East Asia as well as from Britain.<sup>198</sup> In fact in 1986 more than 50 per cent of those people born overseas but living in Wollongong were non-British.<sup>199</sup>

This situation is markedly different for the period between 1921 and 1954. In 1921 approximately 19 per cent of people were born overseas with

<sup>193</sup>Firth, 58.

<sup>194</sup>Cousins, 35 and 38; and Eklund, 1994 (a), 276.

<sup>195</sup>M. Morrisey, et.al. *Immigration and Industry Restructuring in the Illawarra*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1992, 1.

<sup>196</sup>J. Martin, 'Forms of Recognition', in A. Curthoys and A. Markus, (eds) *Who Are Our Enemies?: Racism and the Working Class in Australia*, Hale and Iremonger in Association with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Neutral Bay, 1978, 189.

<sup>197</sup>Morrisey, 37.

<sup>198</sup>J. Schultz, *Steel City Blues*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1985, 13.

<sup>199</sup>Morrisey, 37.

over 18 per cent from the United Kingdom (UK). There were only 60 people born in the area the census classified as Asia. Even by 1954 only a subtle change had occurred. Nearly 22 per cent of the total population of 90852 was born overseas, over 13 per cent from Britain or the UK, and 9 per cent (8153) from elsewhere<sup>200</sup> The period from 1921 to 1954 is thus fairly cohesive in terms of ethnicity with British immigrants comprising between 18 and 13 per cent of a population which itself was largely British in origin. By 1954 the Illawarra region was just beginning to grapple with the population changes that would transform the area in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s as dramatically as industrial expansion transformed it from the 1920s to the 1950s.

The significance of industry reverberates throughout the entire Wollongong landscape. Feminist geographer Hilary Winchester investigated the Wollongong Mall as part of her research on the gendering of the urban landscape. The mall is a structure spanning two blocks of the Wollongong Central Business District. The 'huge arches of steel supporting a domed steel mesh canopy' form the architectural centrepiece of the structure which many locals regard as hideous. The British outsider Winchester argued that the 'steel supports are indicative of the steel backbone of Wollongong's industrial heritage'.<sup>201</sup> While planners and the city elite were intent on paying homage to the "great BHP", Wollongong workers and their families, increasingly relegated to the unemployment

---

<sup>200</sup>Commonwealth Census of Australia, 1921-1954.

<sup>201</sup>H. Winchester, 'The Construction and Deconstruction of Women's Roles in the Urban Landscape', in K. Anderson and F. Gale, (eds) *Inventing Places: Studies in Cultural Geography*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1992, 145.

queues throughout the eighties, were offended by the steel monstrosity that their shopping mall had become.<sup>202</sup>

The period from 1921 and 1954 was a period of industrial consolidation for the Illawarra. This was when 'the steel backbone' was built and strengthened. The next chapter considers the consequences of that industrial expansion focusing on the men and women of Wollongong's working class who made such expansion possible.

---

<sup>202</sup>When I worked as a bank teller in the Mall customers would occasionally express their disappointment with the mall. Crime in the mall, particularly at night, was also an issue.

### 3

#### *Work and Unemployment: 'Fortunate indeed to get a job'*

In their book *Gender at Work*, Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle argue that '[g]ender is fundamental to the way work is organised; and work is central to the social construction of gender' and they seek to highlight 'the ways in which gender relations and class relations shape each other'.<sup>203</sup> These points form the kernel of this chapter which explores the nature and meanings, including the genderedness, of paid work using mainly census data, oral evidence, and personal testimonies.<sup>204</sup> It then discusses unemployment, particularly during the Depression of the 1930s, when it was most acute.

Between 1921 and 1954, modern capitalist accumulation and development permeated Wollongong. Throughout these years it gradually expanded into a powerful industrial centre. A reliance on mining and heavy manufacturing produced a distinctive and rigid sexual division of labour. Paid work was intensely masculine and the position of women in the labour market was precarious.

#### *The Nature of Paid Work in Wollongong, 1921-1954*

In her research on the industrialisation of Wollongong, Firth observed the 'country' aspects of the area in the 1920s. The local newspapers

---

<sup>203</sup>A. Game and R. Pringle, *Gender at Work*, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1983, 14 - 15.

<sup>204</sup>Unless otherwise stated the statistics related to paid work are from the census data. See *Commonwealth Census of Australia, 1921, 1933, 1947 and 1954*.



gave lengthy reports on fishing, hunting and straying stock, and the Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Association was very active. She concluded that 'the spirit of Wollongong, as portrayed in the local press remained rustic'.<sup>205</sup> But by 1921 the 'neat little dairy farms' that Mundy had remarked upon in 1852 had all but vanished,<sup>206</sup> and only 7 per cent of workers were still employed in primary production in the Illawarra. Dairying remained the most predominant agricultural activity, but all agricultural endeavours continued to decline between 1921 and 1954, so that by 1954 only 1 per cent of the total Illawarra workforce were working on the land.<sup>207</sup> While Wollongong may have exhibited a propensity to cling 'to the rural lifestyle' in the early 1920s, clearly very few people relied directly on primary industry to earn a living.<sup>208</sup> In Australia generally, the number of people employed in primary production declined as farming shifted from a labour intensive to a more capital intensive industry.<sup>209</sup>

Unlike cedar cutting, dairying, and cattle grazing, the significance of coal mining to the Illawarra economy endured from its nineteenth century beginnings. In 1921 just over 34 per cent of paid workers in the Wollongong area were employed in mining and quarrying. Like many industries throughout the Depression, mining was subject to a series of volatile fluctuations. Coal was selling at 11 shillings a ton in 1935, compared to 19 shillings in 1928.<sup>210</sup> Strategies implemented by mine owners to counter this decline in prices included limiting the number of working days a week, reducing wages and hewing rates, and employing fewer workers.<sup>211</sup> In 1927 the *South Coast Times* reported: 'Intermittency of work is still prevalent at the majority of the collieries'.<sup>212</sup> According to Richardson, 2471 miners in

<sup>205</sup>Firth, 13-16.

<sup>206</sup>Gibbs and Warnes, 56.

<sup>207</sup>*Commonwealth Census of Australia*, 1921, 1933, 1947 and 1954.

<sup>208</sup>Firth, 13-16.

<sup>209</sup>Matthews, 1984, 51.

<sup>210</sup>Richardson, 1984, 29.

<sup>211</sup>Richardson, 1984, 29-31.

<sup>212</sup>*South Coast Times*, 20/5/1927.

the Southern District lost their jobs between 1926 and 1933.<sup>213</sup> The *South Coast Times* claimed in 1927 that many 'of the mines are idle through slackness of trade' and suggested that 'if this continues application will be made to the Government for relief work'.<sup>214</sup> The mining of coal continued, however, to play an important part in the economy between 1921 and 1954. In 1938 the Miners' Federation newspaper *Common Cause* urged workers to demand a greater share of the capitalist prosperity generated from industry in the district, a central ingredient of which was the '250,298 tons of coal, valued at £229,096, ...shipped...from the Illawarra coalfields' in 1937.<sup>215</sup> But the number employed in the mining industry continued to decline over the long term: by 1954 just under 12 per cent of male workers in Wollongong were involved with mining. This reduction was due to numerous factors, but primarily because of changes in technology and work practices within the coal mining industry itself.

Between 1921 and 1954 Wollongong experienced a growth in manufacturing which occurred in concert with the expansion of manufacturing in Australia generally causing manufacturing employment to be the major factor in the employment growth throughout the 1930s.<sup>216</sup> There had been some manufacturing activity prior to 1921 in the Illawarra. In 1897 the Smelting Company of Australia erected a smelter at Dapto, employing over 350 people and processing ore from mines in New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania. It closed down in 1902, but five years later the copper smelting plant Electrolytic Refining and Smelting Company (ER&S), was established in Port Kembla.<sup>217</sup> Metal Manufacturers (MM), involved in producing brass wire, telephone cables, tubes, plates and alloys

<sup>213</sup>Richardson, 1984, 29.

<sup>214</sup>*South Coast Times*, 13/5/1927.

<sup>215</sup>*Common Cause*, 22/1/1938, 5.

<sup>216</sup>E.A. Boehm, *Twentieth Century Economic Development in Australia*, third edition, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1993, 165.

<sup>217</sup>Cousins, 215; R. V. Cardew, 'The Formative Years: Urban Settlement in Illawarra', in Robinson, 98 and Richardson, 1984, 5.

completed a new plant near the refinery in 1916.<sup>218</sup> Australian Fertilisers Proprietary Limited began in 1921 and manufactured superphosphate fertilisers.<sup>219</sup> By 1921 15 per cent of paid workers were employed in manufacturing.

It was in the later 1920s however, that the 'birth of a Steeltown' was witnessed.<sup>220</sup> Charles Hoskins purchased 400 acres of land at Port Kembla in 1921 to build a steelworks.<sup>221</sup> Since the late nineteenth century the Hoskins family had operated an engine and machinery manufacturing plant at Ultimo in Sydney. With some assistance from the NSW government Hoskins was able to acquire the Esbank Ironworks at Lithgow in January 1908 which had been established in 1875, but had experienced continual financial difficulties.<sup>222</sup> Valued at £324,000 the plant cost Hoskins only £202,000.<sup>223</sup> Despite the bargain price, the Lithgow works faced a number of obstacles including industrial discord, high freight costs, and insufficient quality coking coal in the Lithgow area. These concerns became more acute after 1915, when BHP opened its Newcastle steel plant close to port facilities and the Northern coalfields, which offered excellent coking coal, overcoming many of the obstacles the Hoskins' plant faced.<sup>224</sup>

If Hoskins was to remain competitive he needed to move the Lithgow plant and the decision to relocate to Port Kembla was made as early as 1916, when he purchased Wongawilli Colliery, near Dapto, about eight miles by rail from Port Kembla.<sup>225</sup> Construction of the iron and steel plant did not begin until 1926 however,<sup>226</sup> and it finally began operations in 1928

<sup>218</sup>Richardson, 1984, 8.

<sup>219</sup>Firth, 88.

<sup>220</sup>Richardson, 1984, chapter 1.

<sup>221</sup>D. G. Hoskins, *The Ironmaster: The Life of Charles Hoskins*, University of Wollongong Press, North Wollongong, 1995, 71.

<sup>222</sup>Firth, 90-92.

<sup>223</sup>Firth, 92.

<sup>224</sup>Firth, 93-105.

<sup>225</sup>Firth, 99.

<sup>226</sup>Hoskins, 103.

under the name Australian Iron and Steel (AIS).<sup>227</sup> A 1928 Memorandum to shareholders noted the company wharf at Port Kembla, Wongawilli Colliery, and the Illawarra's proximity to Sydney by rail as the main reasons for re-locating.<sup>228</sup> Firth claims that the choice made by Hoskins 'uprooted Lithgow ironworkers and their families and created a "steel crisis" for the town they vacated'. For Wollongong, the decision transformed 'the quality of life' and propelled it 'into the forefront of Australia's industrial development'.<sup>229</sup>

Although the building of the plant symbolised the start of Wollongong's industrial expansion, its own beginnings were rudimentary by today's standards. Donald Hoskins observed: 'Much of the initial work was done with men wielding pick and shovel, and earth-moving with horse and dray. Concrete was mixed on site, and men with barrows delivered it where required'.<sup>230</sup> (See Plate 3.1)

The development of a strong manufacturing base in the Illawarra between 1921 and 1954 was not without its problems. In its early years of operation AIS struggled. The Depression period in particular posed a lengthy and hostile challenge. The net profits for AIS in 1929 were £215,040, this dropped to £76,430 in 1930, £18,071 in 1931, £2,203 in 1932. According to Donald Hoskins, net profits rose again in 1933 and 1934, but these rises were insufficient in assisting AIS to sustain its operations. Profits fell again in 1935, which resulted in the merger with BHP.<sup>231</sup>

<sup>227</sup>BHP Archives, PE032/43, *BHP Review*, vol.54, no.2, July 1978, 10.

<sup>228</sup>Firth, 109.

<sup>229</sup>Firth, 110.

<sup>230</sup>Hoskins, 103.

<sup>231</sup>Hoskins, 107.

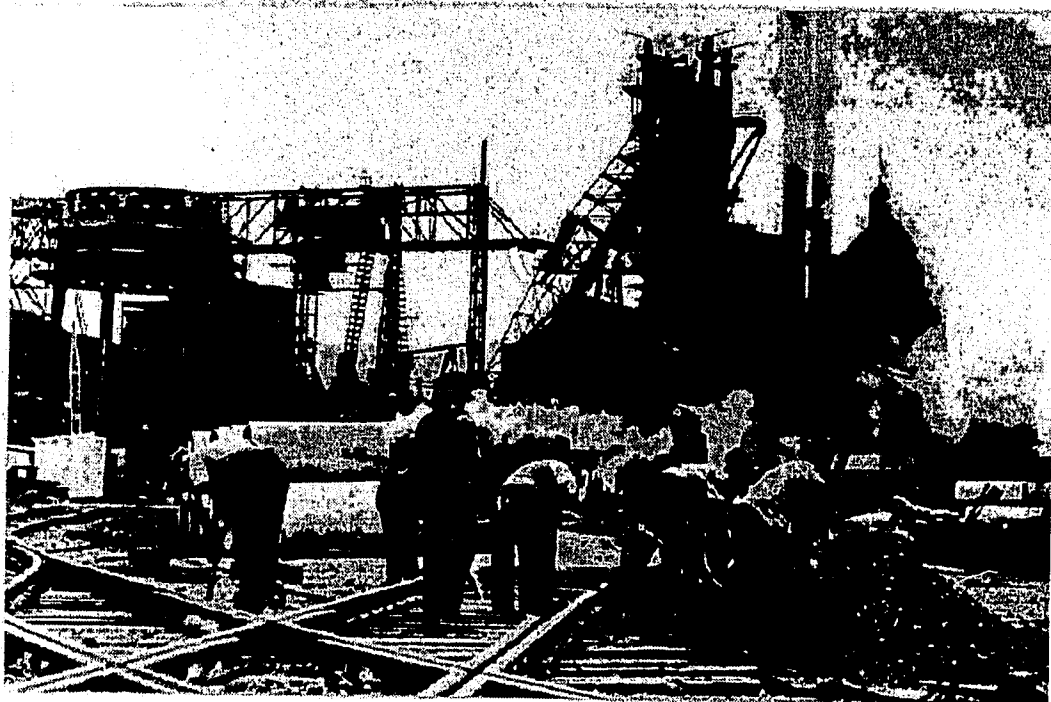


Plate 3.1 - Workers at work establishing the steelworks (n.d)

*(Source: From the Collections of the Wollongong City Library and Illawarra Historical Society)*

Industry progressed steadily after the Depression period. Boehm noted how the Second World War 'provided a considerable stimulus to the growth of Australia's manufacturing industries'.<sup>232</sup> The 1947 census indicated that out of 25,323 Illawarra workers 10,512, or 42 per cent of the total workforce were working in manufacturing industries. By 1954 this had risen to over 45 per cent.

These increases were concentrated around particular types of manufacturing. In 1947 founding, engineering and metal work employed nearly 73 per cent of the total working in manufacturing industries in the Illawarra. In 1947 clothing manufacturers employed only 8 per cent of the total manufacturing industry with manufacturers of food, drink, paper and books all employing fewer. By 1954 the percentage of workers employed in founding and engineering had risen to 75 per cent, and the next largest, clothing manufacturers employed only 7 per cent of workers in manufacturing.

In summary, as clearly shown in Table 3.1, the Wollongong region relied heavily on mining and manufacturing from 1921 to 1954, with them employing between 36 and 56 per cent of the workforce.

---

<sup>232</sup>Boehm, 166.

Table 3.1: Illawarra's Highest 3 Employers by Industry Classification, 1921-1954

<u>Census Year</u>	<u>Industry Classification</u>	<u>Percentage of Total Workforce</u>
1921	Mining	34
	Manufacturing	15
	Commerce/Finance	10
1933	Mining	24
	Manufacturing	12
	Building/Construction	12
1947	Manufacturing	42
	Mining	14
	Commerce/Finance	12
1954	Manufacturing	45
	Commerce/Finance	13
	Mining	10

(Source: Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1921-1954)

*Sexual Divisions in Paid Work*

The concentration of paid work in mining and heavy manufacturing produced a very sharp sexual division of labour in the Wollongong workforce. Put simply, a sexual division of labour occurs with 'the allocation of work on the basis of sex, within both the home and the workplace...'.<sup>233</sup> Game and Pringle suggest this division 'operates through a series of dichotomies' which relate to gender and other divisions in capitalist societies.<sup>234</sup> Biology and social assumptions about men and women become tangled in a complex process which results in particular jobs becoming marked as men's work or women's work.<sup>235</sup>

British and Irish studies have shown how the sexual division in coal mining has been especially marked.<sup>236</sup> Mining was heavy and dirty work, and described as unsuitable for women. Working-class people in Wollongong adhered to this way of thinking. Table 3.2 lists the highest three employments by industry classification, according to gender. It shows that throughout the period from 1921 to 1954 mining was the most masculinised industry in the Illawarra and that woman accounted for only between 9 and 16 per cent of the mining and manufacturing workforce together. The 1933 census records that only one woman worked in mining and quarrying. While this sexual division of labour is sharp by industry, it was probably even sharper by occupation. Any women in the coal and steel industries would have been clerical workers and the like, not miners and steelworkers.

<sup>233</sup>Game and Pringle, 14.

<sup>234</sup>Game and Pringle, 15.

<sup>235</sup>Curthoys, 1988, 127-128.

<sup>236</sup>A. John, *By the Sweat of their Brows: Women Workers in Victorian Coalmines*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1984, and A. John, *Coalmining Women: Victorian Lives and Campaigns*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984.

Table 3.2: Sexual Division of Illawarra's Highest 3 Employers by Industry Classification, 1921-1954

<u>Census Year</u>	<u>Industry Classification</u>	<u>Males, as Percentage of Industry</u>	<u>Females, as Percentage of Industry</u>
1921	Mining	100	0
	Manufacturing	91	9
	Commerce/Finance	79	21
1933	Mining	99.98	0.02 <sup>237</sup>
	Manufacturing	95	5
	Building/Construct.	100	0
1947	Manufacturing	84	16
	Mining	100	0
	Commerce/Finance	64	36
1954	Manufacturing	86	14
	Commerce/Finance	62	38
	Mining	100	0

(Source: *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1921-1954*)

<sup>237</sup>This accounts for one woman only.

J.K. Gibson-Graham has observed how in the imagination of sociologists and socialists alike 'the coal miner appears manly and strong, grim and grimy-faced' and 'an icon of the working class'. They suggested that the coal miner occupied a 'clear-cut location' in a 'landscape of class', and moreover noted how in:

films, folk songs, novels and news reports the coal miner appears in the guise of working-class warrior, politically mobilised, armed with real industrial muscle, ready to man barricades in the class war.<sup>238</sup>

A closer examination of the personal experiences of coal miners, however, reveals a much more complicated picture than that presented on screen, between the covers of a novel, or by Gibson-Graham.

As an elderly man, coal miner George Hammond reflected on how he 'didn't want to go in the mine' and that he regarded the job as 'awful hard work'. The young George was constrained in his choices. He had accepted a job in the pit only after numerous attempts to find other work. In 1924 the industrial expansion which was soon to engulf Wollongong was not yet underway. The steelworks or the Port were not an option for him, 'there was', he says, 'none of that kind of work for me to be havin'. Before he started in the mine George made himself a job selling fruit and vegetables. Eventually he found a job at MM, but it lasted only a year. 'I was going real well, but the Depression hit it too, and it closed down...then I was out of work again and looking for it'. It was at this stage that George accepted that he must work in the mine. He said, 'I went back home from Port Kembla up to Kembla [Heights] and I went and asked them for a job at the pit; I didn't want to go in the mine, but I asked them for a job and they gave it to me'. Despite his disappointment at working in the mine, he

<sup>238</sup>J.K. Gibson-Graham, 'Beyond Patriarchy and Capitalism: Reflections on Political Subjectivity', in B. Caine and R. Pringle, (eds) *Transitions: New Australian Feminisms*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1995, 173.

made the adjustment and in reconciling himself to his decision he said, 'Anyhow, I got a job, and from there on I worked in Kembla Collery. I worked meself up from a clipper boy, up to being a deputy'.<sup>239</sup> While there is a sense of pride evident in George's statement about "making good" and progressing through the various stages 'to being a deputy', it is also clear that mining never held much attraction for him; it was simply the only job available to George at the time. The gender order, and the breadwinner ideology that accompanied it, dictated that for a man it was essential to have a job. As Victor Seidler and the Achilles Heel collective stated, '[m]en's identity, our sense of ourselves, our sense of worth or of failure, is closely bound up with jobs'.<sup>240</sup>

Ron Skerritt was equally ambivalent about his working life in the coal mines. He started at the Wongawilli Mine in April 1946 and recalled that there were 'sad times' and that these were 'when my mates were killed and crippled'. Skerritt classed himself as 'lucky' though, because he got out of the industry 'with only a knee replacement'. Despite facing the threat of injury or death, Skerritt said he 'made hundreds of friends in...the mines and I enjoyed every moment of it'.<sup>241</sup> Fred Moore also recalled that 'It was hot and dusty and it was extremely dangerous work...'. Fred believed that coal mining was 'probably one of the most dangerous jobs in the world...'.<sup>242</sup> He spoke of 'the old comradeship' and its importance in constructing relationships in the workplace. Most miners worked in gangs and he said 'that's why miners are so close...no miner is an individual...you've got to work as a team'.<sup>243</sup> (See Plate 3.2)

<sup>239</sup>Interview with George Hammond, 30/1/1996 and 26/2/1996.

<sup>240</sup>Notes from the Collective, 'The Sexual Politics of Men's Work', in V. Seidler, (ed) *The Achilles Heel Reader: Men, Sexual Politics and Socialism*, Routledge, London, 1991, 126.

<sup>241</sup>W. Davis, (ed) *Dapto Oral History: The Third Volume*, Dapto Senior Citizens Talking Group, Dapto, 1994, 69.

<sup>242</sup>Davis, *Dapto Oral History*, 74.

<sup>243</sup>Interview with Fred Moore, 29/2/1996.



Plate 3.2 - Miners' on their way home from a day in the pit, covered in dirt and sweat

(Source: *Smith's Weekly*, 6/8/1938, in L. Richardson, *The Bitter Years*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1984, 163.)

George Hammond also stressed the importance of mateship. In the coal mines 'you always had a mate...you had to have a mate because for safety sake alone...'. George's mate was Johnno Simpson, 'he was my mate nearly all my life...'. 'I taught him when he came to the mine...he was so much younger than me...and we got on very well together...I taught him to clip, and I taught him to wheel, and then when it came time to come on the coal, he said "George, will you take me, you've taught me everything else."'. George said 'of course...my days on the coal finished with Johnno'.<sup>244</sup>

This aspect of close friendship on the job is sometimes described as 'what makes the job bearable - the only thing that makes up for the lack of intrinsic interest in the work'.<sup>245</sup> Yet, the constant danger that structured the miners' workplace meant their livelihoods also depended on mateship in more fundamental ways than those of other workers. On the morning of 28 June 1927 John Hynd went to work at the Mount Pleasant Colliery as usual, 'in the best of health'. Underground in Carney's Road, No. 7, Hynd was electrocuted when he went to the aid of his "mate", seventeen year old clipper John Fitzsimmons who had touched an overhead bell wire. At the Coroner's Inquiry it was revealed that in attempting to rescue Fitzsimmons, Hynd 'got hold of the wires with one hand'. Both men fell to the ground, and a dazed Fitzsimmons ran for assistance leaving Hynd 'lying on the ground and moaning'.<sup>246</sup> The local newspaper reported that Hynd 'was held in high esteem and was always civil and obliging', thus contributing to his own death.<sup>247</sup> In failing to help, he would have risked ostracism in his workplace and community.

The danger came not only from industrial accidents. Richardson noted how a special study by the New South Wales medical officer of industrial hygiene, Dr C. Badham, found that, in the Southern Districts, coal

<sup>244</sup>Interview with George Hammond, 30/1/1996 and 26/2/1996.

<sup>245</sup>Seldler, 133.

<sup>246</sup>Story reconstructed from newspaper reports, *South Coast Times*, 1/7/1927 and 8/7/1927.

<sup>247</sup>*South Coast Times*, 1/7/1927.

miners experienced "phenomenal exposure to dust" and that 192 of the 471 south coast miners examined had a "fine type of fibrosis of the lungs". Lack of substantive research on the effects of coal dust on workers meant compensation was insufficient and frequently non-existent.<sup>248</sup>

Manufacturing is not necessarily as exclusively masculine as mining; Raelene Frances' excellent work on the labour process for example, has detailed women's activity and experience in the clothing, boot and printing industries in Victoria.<sup>249</sup> Wellongong's manufacturing industries were concentrated around iron and steel production and were heavily masculinised. Table 3.2 shows how in 1921 over 90 per cent of workers in manufacturing were male. While women's participation increased slightly over the period to 1954, men still constituted just over 86 per cent of the manufacturing workforce in 1954.

Whilst mining had a well-known reputation of danger, iron and steel manufacturing was also dangerous. The union paper *The Red Blast* described the frequency of deaths at the steelworks due to injuries at work as a 'grim record for one company'. In 1940 it reported that train driver Harold Williams died as a result of injuries received during railway work. His death was the third fatality on the locomotives in 1940 and brought the total deaths in the steelworks for that year to five. Unionists concluded that the 'dreadful regularity of these manglings is the result of inefficient administration' and 'that men are not given time to be thoroughly trained, but are hastily served up on toast at the first opportunity...'.<sup>250</sup> In November 1941, Fred Ashted, a shunter at AIS, was killed. *The Ironworker* reported that Ashted 'was so badly burned with molten slag...that he died the same day'. J. Snow, a crane chaser at the rail bank, was killed when he

<sup>248</sup>Richardson, 1984, 34.

<sup>249</sup>R. Frances, *The Politics of Work: Gender and Labour in Victoria, 1880-1939*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1993.

<sup>250</sup>BHP Archives, W002/101/001, Australian Iron & Steel Ltd. Port Kembla Steelworks. Industrial Department. General Correspondence Files, Propaganda, 1940, *The Red Blast*, vol.1, no.4, 25/10/1940.



was crushed by 'a lift of billets'. Another worker died of burns after an explosion which was 'caused by tipping hot slag from the furnace into a ladle in which there was a quantity of water'. In 1941 *The Ironworker* remarked: 'The death toll at these works is increasing'.<sup>251</sup> Steelworkers also discussed the prevalence of dust on the job said that 'a few years at the Steelworks will convince anyone that Miners are not the only workers facing the dangers of this fearful malady. Steelworkers are very much alive to the prevalence of dust on many jobs'. The union claimed that the worst areas for dust within the steelworks were the number one and number two brick sheds and the raw coal bins.<sup>252</sup>

Frank Gamble started in the machine shop at ER&S in 1932, after he left school. He was assisted in obtaining the job by his father, who also worked at ER&S. Nevertheless he still believes that 'You had to put up with what you could get'. He remembers: 'The plant hired casual workers every day....If you didn't perform too well you got your "two bob" and away you went'.<sup>253</sup> Mr M. Finch was one of the Lithgow steel workers who eventually made it to Port Kembla. He arrived in August or September 1933. He was a millhand in the '10 inch mill. He recalls that 'it was very hard work' and that 'it all used to be done by hand'.<sup>254</sup> He remembered: 'You used to apply for a job by assembling on the hill. If there was a breakdown and they might need ten extra men, they'd get ten extra men. The job could last four hours to two or three days. You registered at the hill, but you didn't get a job in your turn. They'd say "you, you and you".'. Gamble remarks that 'It wasn't always the biggest and brawniest that were the best workers....When you were on the hill, if you didn't want to do it, there were a hundred, or five hundred, up there who would, and the

<sup>251</sup>*The Ironworker*, vol 2, no.12, December 1941, 1.

<sup>252</sup>BHP Archives, W002/101/001, Australian Iron & Steel Ltd. Port Kembla Steelworks. Industrial Department. General Correspondence Files. Propoganda, 1940, *The Red Blast*, vol.1, no.4, 25/10/1940.

<sup>253</sup>W. Davis (ed) *Our Memories: Your History: An Oral History of Port Kembla*, n.d., 18.

<sup>254</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 85.

conditions in the Steelworks were terrible'.<sup>255</sup> He worked at the steelworks until 1975, aged sixty-five.<sup>256</sup>

Gamble and Finch obtained work at AIS through different avenues. Gamble got the job only because of his father. As Mitchell and Sherington noted, due to the scarcity of work: 'Men employed at Metal Manufacturers and E.R. & S. made sure that their sons got any jobs going'.<sup>257</sup> Neither comments in glowing terms about their work experience, Finch describing the conditions of work as 'terrible' and Gamble noting how 'industry in those days was pretty hard'.<sup>258</sup> Yet, regardless of how these workers saw their life at the steelworks, they were keen to emphasise that they were among the successful few to obtain work. In times of unemployment, work, of whatever kind, re-affirmed men's identity as men. Tommy Lockwood had tried working for himself carting materials in his lorry around Port Kembla. However, it did not work out: 'We just went broke. I finished up owing Verdon's Garage money....'.<sup>259</sup> After a time, Lockwood got shift work at the steelworks where he stayed for five years. 'I thought it was great, but after a while I don't think it was so great - the night shift didn't agree with me. I got about four pounds a week and worked eight hours a day'. He felt it 'wasn't dangerous, and generally, it wasn't too heavy. We were crushing dolomite for the furnace'. He was ambivalent about his time at the steelworks, adding, 'some nights were good and some nights were bad....'.<sup>260</sup> (See Plate 3.3)

While mining and manufacturing always employed the majority of male paid workers in the Illawarra, other major areas where men were concentrated included building and construction work and commerce and finance work (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2).

<sup>255</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 87.

<sup>256</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 85.

<sup>257</sup>Mitchell and Sherington, 97.

<sup>258</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 18 and 87.

<sup>259</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 101.

<sup>260</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 102.



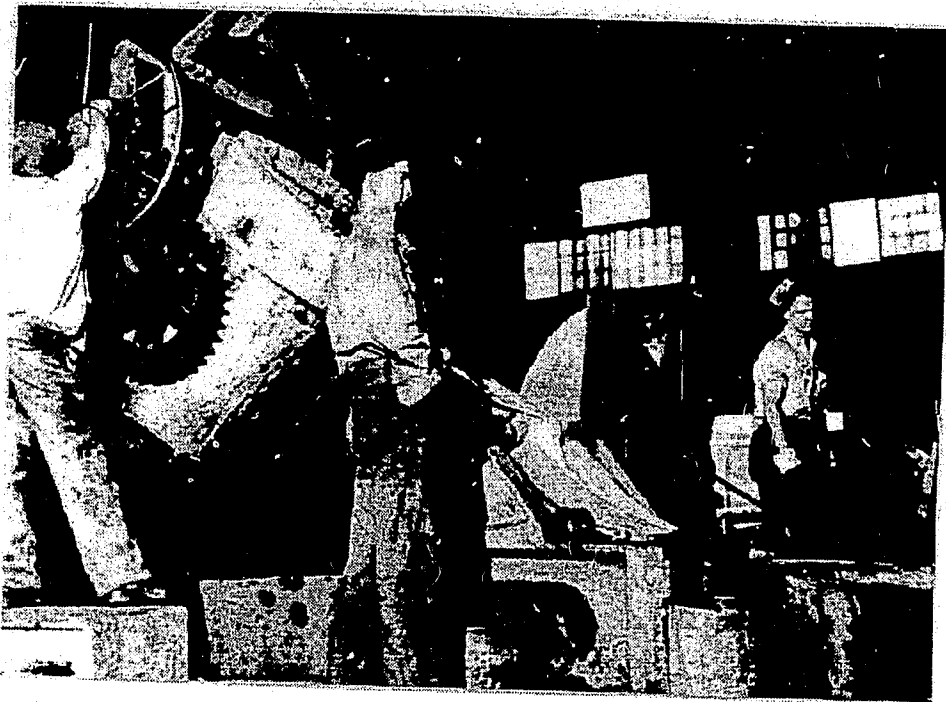


Plate 3.3 - Steelworkers at work, n.d.

(Source: From the Collections of the Wollongong City Library and Illawarra Historical Society)

Colin Warrington was born in Port Kembla in 1918.<sup>261</sup> He remembered delivering newspapers when he was still at school: 'I'd deliver papers six days a week and I think I got two bob for a week's work'. He recalled that he gave his two shillings to his mother when he was paid on Saturday.<sup>262</sup> Colin later left school to work full time at Buckland's Hardware Store, near Port Kembla. He said, 'While I may have preferred to have a different job, in those days you were very fortunate indeed to get a job...'. He knew that his mother and father wanted him to continue with his schooling, 'but I knew quite well that they could not afford it so I went and organised this job for myself'. He recalled how he 'got a savage kick in the backside when my father found out about it'; yet he continued to work there instead of completing his leaving certificate.<sup>263</sup> He was aged fifteen when he started and earned ten shillings and six pence per week. But, after two years, 'I had a difference of opinion with the manager of Buckland's Wollongong store, so I left.'<sup>264</sup>

Many male workers did not get the jobs they wanted. The dominance of mining and manufacturing in the Illawarra placed limitations on the aspirations of many male workers. The experiences of these male workers, whether in mining, manufacturing or the other less significant industries, illuminate how the choice of a job and the attitude to work are heavily influenced by the social and economic conditions in which people find themselves. Roy O'Meley was employed as a postman in the late 1940s at Dapto. He recalls: 'Like most youths, I began my working life with a lot of enthusiasm. The job wasn't what I would have chosen in other circumstances, but I resolved to make a go of it. The term "public servant" had meaning for me...'.<sup>265</sup> Coal miner George Hammond was another who desired different paid work to that which he eventually obtained. He had

<sup>261</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 23.

<sup>262</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 27.

<sup>263</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 31.

<sup>264</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 32.

<sup>265</sup>Davis, *Dapto Oral History*, 97.

hoped to find a job with the railways or banks. His aspirations were dashed; instead he worked for a lifetime in the pit. The Depression 'wouldn't let' him do anything else.<sup>266</sup>

The same is true for women workers in Wollongong. Dolly Waples had four brothers and six sisters, and her family typified the strong sexual division of labour that existed in the Illawarra. One boy was employed in Wongawilli mine, the other brothers obtained work in the post office and the railways. Dolly, by contrast, worked in the office of J.G. Fairley's, the local store, from the age of 14 until she married in 1934 at the age of twenty-five.<sup>267</sup> The area in which Dolly Waples was employed, 'commerce and finance', was the third largest employer of women in the Illawarra, as indicated in Table 3.3.

In 1921, close to fifty percent of women workers stated that they were involved in domestic work. Some of these women may have worked for Miss Blake, of the "Estelle" guest house, located in Rawson Street, Wollongong.<sup>268</sup> Miss Blake let out furnished rooms with 'own kitchenette' in the centre of Wollongong, and wanted a young girl to do housework.<sup>269</sup> A selection of advertisements from the *Illawarra Mercury* in 1927 illustrates the types of jobs on offer to women:

Wanted Capable Girl for Housework....Wanted young girl to assist in house duties....Wanted, young girl to assist generally....Wanted Tailoresses, Coat hand, £3/10/ week....Wanted, Girl or young lady to do housework, good position and wages...Wanted, Young Girl, just leaving school preferred. Light house work....Wanted Journeywomen, also Girls, 16 years of age, with knowledge of dresmaking [sic]...<sup>270</sup>

<sup>266</sup>Interview with George Hammond, 30/1/1996 and 26/2/1996.

<sup>267</sup>W. Davis, (ed) *West of the Water East of the Line: Dapto, An Oral History*, NSW Department of Technical and Further Education, n.d., 86-87.

<sup>268</sup>*South Coast Times*, 1/7/1927.

<sup>269</sup>*South Coast Times*, 24/6/1927.

<sup>270</sup>*South Coast Times*, 1/7/1927.

Here the preference for young women, or more directly, 'girls' is readily apparent. (See Plate 3.4)

Ruth Sanderson was one of those who left school and 'had the chance of going to Wollongong to be a companion to Dr Wade's widow'. While another 'girl' did the housework, Ruth would assist Mrs Wade 'and keep her company'. 'I would just help her with things like making a cup of tea, maybe help her into bed and the like'.<sup>271</sup> This kind of domestic work was often an extension of the sexual division of labour that existed in the family. Annie Hazelton started work when she was 15 and a half years old. She worked for a family minding children: 'I suppose you could call it a mother's help'. She lived for eighteen months with the family she worked for and received 9 shillings a week. Annie remembers it as a positive experience, 'I was treated as one of the family....I ate with them and slept in a room with two of the children'.<sup>272</sup> The social assumptions of this period about both paid work and unpaid work in the home meant it was unlikely that those who placed an advertisement for 'Housekeeper, sleep out, one gentleman, two boys' would expect anyone but a women to apply.<sup>273</sup>

<sup>271</sup>Davis, *Dapto Oral History: The Third Volume*, 21-22.

<sup>272</sup>Davis, *West of the Water*, 68.

<sup>273</sup>*South Coast Times*, 17/11/1939.

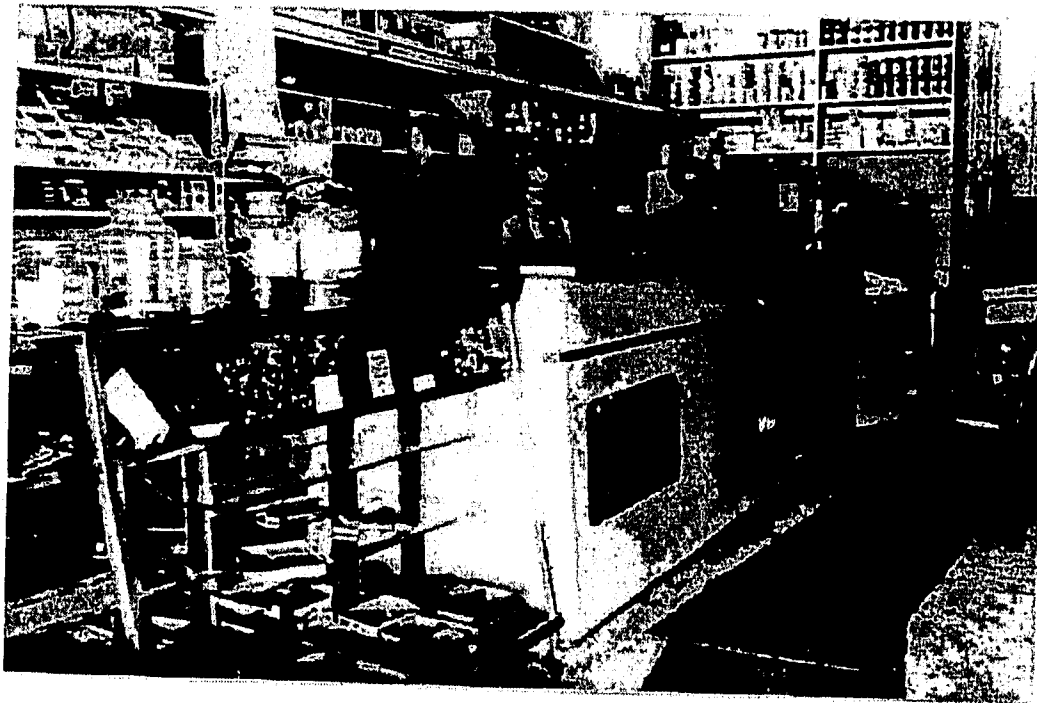


Plate 3.4 - Shop work was typical for Wollongong women, c.1950 in Corrimal

*(Source: From the Collections of the Wollongong City Library and Illawarra Historical Society)*

A corollary of these social assumptions was that the work was often poorly paid and for long hours. Not all were as fortunate as Annie Hazelton. Molly Morton was employed as a domestic at the Lorry Guest House at Port Kembla. She confessed that at night, after a full day's work, 'she was almost too tired to eat'. Gwen Brennan worked as a housemaid-waitress at the same Guest house. Brennan's daily work schedule was outlined during a hearing of the Industrial Magistrates Court, where it was alleged that the guest house proprietress, Mrs Daisy Giles, had failed to pay her workers overtime:

There were about 30 guests at the house. She commenced work at 6 o'clock and had to cut the lunches. Two breakfast [sic] were served, the first at 6.30 and the second at 8. After breakfast she had to do out the bedrooms...and finished the day about 8 o'clock...

Although Brennan had some time off during the day, it is not clear how much, and therefore it is unclear how long she worked each day. Molly Morton tendered some evidence at the hearing however, and said she worked 12 hours a day with one day per week off.<sup>274</sup>

<sup>274</sup>South Coast Times, 3/11/1939.

Table 3.3: Illawarra's Highest 3 Industry Classifications Employing Women and these Industries as a Percentage of Total Illawarra Workforce, 1921-1954

<u>Census Year</u>	<u>Industry Classification</u>	<u>Percentage of Female Workforce Only</u>	<u>Women - Percentage of Total Workforce in Industry</u>
1921	Domestic (A & H)	46	8
	Professional	19	6
	Commerce/Finance	17	10
1933	Domestic (A & H)	28	6
	Professional	16	5
	Commerce/Finance	13	10
1947	Manufacturing	36	42
	Commerce/Finance	22	11
	Domestic (A & H)	16	5
1954	Manufacturing	34	45
	Commerce/Finance	27	13
	Professional	18	7

(Source: Census of the Commonwealth of Australia)

The number of women employed in domestic work over the period of this study declined dramatically. In 1954, only 15 per cent (994) of women workers stated that they were working in 'amusements, hotels, etc', which included domestic work. Kingston outlined the reasons for this decline in *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann*.<sup>275</sup> Game and Pringle also refer to the 1920s, as 'the decade of electrification and the rapid spread of appliances', which were 'purported to solve "the servant problem"'.<sup>276</sup> New appliances were suppose to lessen the time and effort required to clean and maintain the house, and therefore reduce the labour directly required for such tasks, which were previously very labour intensive.

Other industries which employed women were categorised under the census as 'professional' or 'commerce and finance'. In 1921 19 per cent of women workers stated they were in professional work, and 17 per cent were in commerce and finance. Included in these categories were jobs like working in a shop or office. Violet Blaxter worked from the age of 13, first in a newsagency and later in the office of a general store.<sup>277</sup> Miss Croft had worked in the office of the Wollongong Council 'for about 15 years'. She was subsequently forced to resign from her job, however, after it was discovered that the assistant Town Clerk had embezzled council funds, leaving the council short of cash.<sup>278</sup> Florence Sullivan and her daughter Patricia both worked in a professional capacity at AIS. Florence had started work in about 1936 at AIS, where she was employed as a technical librarian. She also collected information on the Port Kembla operations which appeared in the *BHP Review*, the company journal distributed to all employees. Patricia, who started work in 1940, was a statistician in the Combustion Department. In this role she calculated the fuel consumption of various sections in the Port Kembla works.<sup>279</sup> Women who answered

<sup>275</sup>Kingston, 50, 54-55.

<sup>276</sup>Game and Pringle, 127.

<sup>277</sup>Davis, *West of the Water*, 25-30.

<sup>278</sup>*South Coast Times*, 13/5/1927.

<sup>279</sup>BHP Archives, PE032/013, *BHP Review*, vol.19, no.1, December 1941, 8.

the job advertisement seeking 'women canvassers' to sell household products were also participating in a commercial enterprise. The advertisement suggested the job was short term, as it offered 'Four or more week's employment Salary £2 10s and Commission'.<sup>280</sup>

The 1947 and 1954 census indicated a dramatic increase in the proportion of women workers in manufacturing. By 1947, manufacturing, at 36 per cent, now employed the largest proportion of women. Table 3.4 shows how job segregation according to gender existed within these particular manufacturing industries. Manufacturing classified under founding, engineering and clothing accounted for just over 80 per cent of total manufacturing industry in the Illawarra region in both 1947 and 1954.

<sup>280</sup>South Coast Times, 6/5/1927.

Table 3.4: Sexual Division in Illawarra's Top 2 Manufacturing Industry Types, 1947 and 1954

Manufacturing Type	1947		1954	
	Percentage of Males in Industry	Percentage of Females in Industry	Percentage of Males in Industry	Percentage of Females in Industry
Founding/	95	5	95	5
Engineering				
Clothing/	7	93	11	89
Boots				

(Source: Commonwealth Census of Australia)

Discussing the steelworks, Wollongong resident Joy Crisp noted that in this period: 'There were no women working there....Women were not allowed to work in industry....The M.M. was the only place that employed women in those days. Women worked on the floor at M.M.'.<sup>281</sup> From 1942 Australia moved into the period of 'total war'. According to Kay Saunders and Geoffrey Bolton, this meant 'a reassessment of women's participation'.<sup>282</sup> Mrs Ryan recalls how, during the war, MM 'wanted girls' to assist with making cables. She used to get up at 5.30am and walked to work for 6am; 'she knocked off at 2.00pm'. About her work at MM Mrs Ryan said that it 'was nothing really outstanding'. 'It was the same work each day'. She was 'shifted into two or three different positions' while at MM, yet she still felt there 'was nothing really exciting about it. I was working on a special cable, but I didn't have any extra pride. I was just putting out work'.<sup>283</sup>

In February 1941, women working at the Cable Factory section of MM's who were also members of the Ironworkers Federation, wrote to *The Ironworker* about their work. They described it as 'tedious', saying that sometimes it was 'detrimental to the health of the girls'. They said: 'we have very poor working conditions'. It was claimed that girls received £1/8/11 per week and adult women received £2/14/-, while 'men are also very lowly paid': they received £4/10/- per week and boys aged 16 received £1/12/8. Women workers stood on their feet all day as no stools were provided. The letter also noted: 'Girls have to supply their own gloves if they wish to keep their hands free from grease and paper cuts'. The paper cuts were 'very painful'. More alarming, however, was the comment on the 'Girls working in the Red Lead Department'. These women 'have to be periodically examined for fear of red lead poisoning, yet they are paid no

<sup>281</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 74.

<sup>282</sup>K. Saunders and G. Bolton, 'Girdled for War: Women's Mobilisations in World War Two', in Saunders and Evans, 1992, 388.

<sup>283</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 80.

more than we'. Miners and steel workers clearly had no monopoly on dangerous work.

One area of manufacturing where women were more acceptable was the clothing industry. In 1954, 45 per cent of women working in manufacturing industries were employed in making clothing, knitted goods and boots. Out of all workers so engaged 89 per cent were women, with only 126 males. Manufacturing of clothing was clearly "women's work", as it was elsewhere, but this type of manufacturing was relatively marginal, when compared with the entire manufacturing industry in Wollongong. Factories manufacturing clothing, knitted goods and boots employed only 9 percent of all workers involved in manufacturing. Crystal Clothing Industries Pty Ltd was part of this small group. It opened a factory in Ellen Street, Wollongong, in June 1944. When it commenced operations it employed '16 girls', specialising in making pyjamas and shirts, and it proved so successful that Crystal Clothing Industries opened another factory in Marshall Street Dapto in 1953. The Wollongong factory started with 16 employees, but by 1956 there were 250. The Dapto store employed 150 in 1957.<sup>284</sup> In late 1945 Berlei Limited also opened 'Berlei House', a factory in Dennison Street, Wollongong.<sup>285</sup> The clothing manufacturers, L.E. Isaacs Pty Ltd., opened new premises in 1945 in Gladstone Avenue, Wollongong.<sup>286</sup> Isaacs had begun operating in Wollongong in 1943, as the first clothing factory 'under the new policy of decentralisation of industry'.<sup>287</sup>

Women's increased presence in manufacturing in the 1940s and 1950s was largely an extension of their activities in the home. Like other manufacturing industries in the Illawarra it was heavily sex-segregated, and in this instance confined mostly to women. Although it represented a shift

<sup>284</sup>BHP Archives, M092/10 Press Clippings. Miscellaneous. *South Coast Times*, 1957 Industrial Review, 21/11/1957, 73.

<sup>285</sup>*South Coast Times*, 5/10/1945.

<sup>286</sup>*South Coast Times*, 23/11/1945.

<sup>287</sup>*South Coast Times*, 10/9/1943.

from paid domestic work, manufacturing of this kind (and which was considered most appropriate for women) was still insignificant when compared with the steelworks and associated workplaces. Yet few women were found there, in 1954 men constituted 95 per cent of workers in foundry and engineering work.

#### *Men's Paid Work - A Life Time Experience*

When comparing the nature of paid work for women with the previous comments on the nature of paid work for men, I have given much less attention to the subjective experiences of women workers. This partly reflects the limitations of source material and the nature of the evidence available, but also, as will be borne out in the following, because of fundamental differences in the way paid work was experienced by Wollongong women in contrast to Wollongong men. Although as many women as men were interviewed, the women often had less to say about their paid work experience because, I suspect, it constituted a less important part of their lives. The majority of men in Wollongong were in paid work. In 1921 about two-thirds of men worked, a participation rate which never fell below 60 per cent to 1954.<sup>288</sup> For most of Wollongong men, paid work was a lifetime experience. Many men started at an early age and continued working until retirement at 60 or 65. Jack Shephard said it was common to leave school when you were 14, unlike 'most professional people [who] came from the moneyed classes'. In 1929, at the age of 14, believing professional jobs were not available to him, Jack started work in the

---

<sup>288</sup>I realise that these percentages are drawn from the total population. If the figures included the population of working age and/or the population fit to work only the figures would be different, but I suspect the percentage would not differ greatly. I have used this approach when speaking of both men's and women's participation, and therefore, despite this issue feel confident in comparing and contrasting them.

steelworks.<sup>289</sup> Before George Hammond started work in the coal mines at seventeen years of age, he had already had two other jobs. He continued working in the Mount Kembla coal mine until he retired at the age of 60.<sup>290</sup> Eula Paton recalled that her husband worked in the Wongawilli mine for 43 years.<sup>291</sup>

Most of the workers that reflected on their working lives expressed some ambivalence, and even regret about their choices. In hindsight most stressed its dangers and difficulties. Nevertheless, their criticisms and remarks were often buttressed with statements justifying their lifetime of work. When Jack Shephard went to junior technical school he was taught 'a mixed bag' - history, geography, arithmetic, metal work, and woodwork. He tried for an apprenticeship at the steelworks, but was unsuccessful. He strongly believed that 'I'd probably [have] made it', but due to the Depression and his youth 'they put me on hold'. At night, after a day employed at the steelworks, he attended technical school for 18 months to learn fitting and turning. But, 'I had to give that away because I was working shift work'. When Jack eventually had to choose between a moulding trade or going into the rolling mills, he decided on the rolling mills.<sup>292</sup>

When discussing the positive responses and reflections on paid work from workers in her study, Hareven suggested that these may be a result of 'a nostalgia enhanced by distance in time'. She also noted, however, that 'when work is an almost all-encompassing experience there is little other justification for one's life'. As one of Hareven's interviewees commented, 'When you work twelve hours a day, you have to find pleasure in work'.<sup>293</sup> Hareven argued that workers' acceptance of, and satisfaction in work was not merely a consequence of 'blind submissiveness'. Instead, Hareven said

---

<sup>289</sup>Interview with Jack Shephard, 1/2/1996.

<sup>290</sup>Interview with George Hammond, 30/1/1996 and 26/2/1996.

<sup>291</sup>Davis, *West of the Water*, 59.

<sup>292</sup>Interview with Jack Shephard, 1/2/1996.

<sup>293</sup>Hareven, 81.

workers 'accepted difficult conditions and the bosses' authority...because they had no choice'.<sup>294</sup> Often the least choice and opportunity was manipulated by workers and actively turned into 'the best of a worst situation'.

#### *Women's Paid Work - A Brief Experience*

Women's experience of paid work was unlike men's, being an anomaly rather than the norm. In 1921 less than 10 per cent of women (1550 of the 15634) in Wollongong were in paid employment. Throughout the entire period under study, the participation rate for women in paid work rose only slightly to 14 per cent in 1933, 15 per cent in 1947 and just under 16 per cent in 1954. There is a marked disparity between these participation rates and those of men.

It is probable that the shortage of paid work for young Wollongong women, led many of them to leave the district to obtain work. In 1921, Mrs Whiddett aged only 14, left school to mind children. 'I used to work where I could get it'. In 1929 she moved to Hornsby, near Sydney, to work as a nursemaid. 'I had to do some housework too...There was another girl...[We received] thirty shillings a week and our keep, and we used to work from 5.30 in the morning till 7.00 at night'.<sup>295</sup> My own great aunts say they had to go to Sydney to work as there was very little paid work suitable for women in Wollongong.<sup>296</sup> Frank Gamble recalled that his 'girlfriend couldn't get a job'. Virtually the only unskilled work available for women was 'cleaning houses and minding kids'.<sup>297</sup>

<sup>294</sup>Hareven, 83.

<sup>295</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 1-2.

<sup>296</sup>Author's personal communication.

<sup>297</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 19.

The shortage of paid work for women was noted at the opening of the L.E. Isaacs Ltd clothing factory in 1943. The Honourable J.S. Rosevear, Speaker of the Federal Parliament, attended the official opening of the factory and stated:

The enormous growth of the population in this district in recent years had been largely brought about by transferring men to the heavy industries. One thing had been forgotten, however, and that was work for the women.<sup>298</sup>

Despite a number of initiatives like the Isaacs Factory, throughout this period the shortage of suitable jobs for the women of the Illawarra remained.

Low participation by women in paid work is fundamental for understanding gender relations in Wollongong. Equally significant is the very different age and marital status of female and male workers. While census data does not record this directly for Wollongong, newspaper advertisements suggest that many of the women in paid work in Wollongong were young. In 1939 the 'Elite Refreshment Rooms' placed two advertisements in the positions vacant: 'Wanted Girl for Domestic Duties' and 'Wanted Young Lady for Shop Work, 16-17 years'.<sup>299</sup> Mrs Kimber of Wollongong: 'Wanted, refined young woman, about 18 to help with light household duties'. A butcher shop advertised for: 'Girl 17-18' to 'take charge of set of books'.<sup>300</sup> Nicholson Bros and Co. wanted girls aged 15 to 18 to fill vacancies for machinists. Boyded Pty Ltd requested: 'Girl 15 - 16 years of age with bright personality and courteous disposition for general office duties'.<sup>301</sup> In 1945, at the opening of Wollongong's Berlei Factory, Mr Arthur Burley, the Managing Director remarked:

<sup>298</sup>*South Coast Times*, 10/9/1943.

<sup>299</sup>*South Coast Times*, 17/11/1939.

<sup>300</sup>*South Coast Times*, 1/2/1946.

<sup>301</sup>*South Coast Times*, 17/1/1947.



Most of our girls come to us in their teens, and leave us only to be married...The average working life of a girl in Berlei House is about five years, between her teens and her marriage...<sup>302</sup>

Ceasing work on marriage was a widespread occurrence during this period, Lynn Beaton suggesting that 'before World War II, working women were mostly either single, deserted, or economically disadvantaged'.<sup>303</sup> After leaving school at 13 and a half years of age and working at the Dapto newsagency, Violet Baxter had an 'opportunity' to work at Mooreheads General Store, 'I worked there until I was married in 1921'.<sup>304</sup> Miss O. Stanton worked in a variety of clerical positions at the Port Kembla Steelworks, including the office of the 36 inch mill, the secretary's department, and the general manager's department. The staff of Hoskins Kembla works held a farewell for her when she left to marry. Mr A.S. Hoskins 'referred to the esteem in which she was held by all who knew her' and presented her with a canteen of cutlery and a cheque wishing her well 'for her future happiness'.<sup>305</sup> Ruth Sanderson met her husband George Thomas Fox at the Wade's residence, where she worked. Ruth said, 'I left my job there to get married'.<sup>306</sup>

Women's brief paid work experience, as will be explored further in the following chapters, is a decisive factor in determining both men's and women's attitudes to paid work, unionism, and the family. It also helps explain why, in oral histories or life histories, married women contribute less on their paid work experience and more on family, and why men

<sup>302</sup>South Coast Times, 5/10/1945.

<sup>303</sup>L. Beaton, 'The Importance of Women's Paid Labour: Women at Work in World War II', in M. Bevege, et.al. (eds) *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1982. Also Eklund, 1994 (a), 108.

<sup>304</sup>Davis, *West of the Water*, 26 and 30.

<sup>305</sup>BHP Archives, PE032/009, *BHP Review*, vol.15, no.1, December 1937,

<sup>306</sup>Davis, *Dapto Oral History*, 21-22.

provide detailed accounts of paid work experience and limited references to family life.

### *Unemployment in the Depression*

Historical and sociological studies have repeatedly highlighted the importance of paid work to the individual.<sup>307</sup> In the 1930s, when levels of unemployment were high, psychologists' investigations were premised on a concern about mental illness among those without paid work.<sup>308</sup> S. M. Miller and Frank Riessman contend that 'striving for stability and security' is central to working-class life and that unemployment stands in opposition to this quest.<sup>309</sup> These discussions and debates about paid work and its role in defining an individual's identity have sometimes evoked a discussion of gender. David H.J. Morgan has suggested that unemployment might call into question, challenge or threaten men and masculinity.<sup>310</sup> Unemployment then should be an issue of interest for scholars aiming to gain insight into class and gender relations and their interaction.

Historian Len Richardson claimed 'unemployment was an accepted fact of life in Wollongong well before the depression struck'.<sup>311</sup> As early as 1921 mention was made of the 'depression in the industrial position at E. R. and S. company's works....Men who have been employed by the company for the past eleven years have received notice to quit'.<sup>312</sup> Unaware of what lay before them it was stated that '[h]opes are still entertained that the

<sup>307</sup>H. J. Loether, 'The Meaning of Work and Adjustment to Retirement', in Shostak and Gomberg, 525.

<sup>308</sup>These studies are discussed in L.A. Ferman, 'Sociological Perspectives in Unemployment Research', in Shostak and Gomberg, 512.

<sup>309</sup>S.M. Miller and F. Riessman, 'The Working-Class Subculture: A New View', in Shostak and Gomberg, 29.

<sup>310</sup>D.H.J. Morgan, *Discovering Men*, Routledge, London, 1992, 47.

<sup>311</sup>Richardson, 1984, 57.

<sup>312</sup>South Coast Times, 27/5/1921.

slackness will not last long'.<sup>313</sup> Firth has noted unemployment in 1922, quoting an *Illawarra Mercury* article which stated:

The ugly spectre of unemployment, with its consequent hardships and disappointments, is unfortunately in daily evidence at Port Kembla. Trusting to be among the happy few who occasionally find a day's work at the respective local industries, there musters at the various gates each morning as many as 200 men on occasions, each anxious to keep the wolf from the door, and exercise the right of earning an honest existence.<sup>314</sup>

Five years later, unemployment remained significant, the *South Coast Times* noting: 'One has only to notice the number of men standing idle in this district to realise that the problem of unemployment is acute'. Men were 'coming to Wollongong and Port Kembla from many parts of the State in the belief...that employment would...be made available...Italian newcomers are being given preference of employment over residents of this district'.<sup>315</sup> In January 1928 the other local newspaper commented: 'The number of unemployed in this district is now so large that the Government should at once take action to provide work'. At the same time Mr W.J. Cochrane, of the Wollongong Labour Bureau was so concerned about the issue that he sent a wire to the local member, Mr Davies, M.L.A., saying: 'Situation becoming serious, try and see if something can be done to relieve position'.<sup>316</sup> The problem was only to get worse. As Robin Gollan observed, 'one in ten workers were unemployed' in the 1920s and 1930s and this rose to 'one in three or four during the worst period of the depression'.<sup>317</sup>

<sup>313</sup>*South Coast Times*, 3/6/1921.

<sup>314</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 12/5/1922 in Firth, 19.

<sup>315</sup>*South Coast Times*, 13/5/1927.

<sup>316</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 20/1/1928.

<sup>317</sup>R. Gollan, 'Some Consequences of the Depression', in R. Cooksey, (ed) *The Great Depression in Australia*, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Canberra, 1970, 182-183.

Wollongong rates were similar: according to the 1933 census 32 per cent of male workers in Wollongong were unemployed, a marked increase on the 8 per cent figure recorded in the 1921 census. In 1921 only 17 per cent of men who were unemployed stated that it was a consequence of the scarcity of work, in 1933, 91 per cent of those unemployed gave work scarcity as a reason.<sup>318</sup>

In speaking of the unemployment situation that existed during the Depression, many interviewees mentioned 'The Hill', a term used to describe the area near the steelworks where workers would wait in the hope of being called up for work. Norman Martin left Lithgow to come to Port Kembla in 1932. He was fortunate to get work because he had mill experience from his time in Lithgow but he recalls the 'men waiting at the hill'.<sup>319</sup> Jack believed The Hill 'was actually an unfair process, and it went on all through the Depression, and if you wanted to be sure to cop a job, if it was there, that's what you did'.

Figures showing the annual earnings for individuals in 1933 confirm the devastating economic reality (see Table 3.5). Sixty-six per cent of the total male population were breadwinners, and of these, 18 per cent received no income and 53 per cent of those who received an income earned less than the basic wage of £156 per annum. The situation was even more precarious for women. Eighty per cent of the total female population were dependents, and of the 19 per cent who were breadwinners, 11 per cent received no income and of those who did, 82 per cent earned less than the basic wage.<sup>320</sup>

<sup>318</sup>In 1921, 60 per cent of unemployed men stated it was due to illness.

<sup>319</sup>Interview with Norman Martin, 31/1/1996.

<sup>320</sup>*Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, New South Wales, 1933, and Richardson, 1984, 55. The *Statistician's Report* for the 1933 Census defines breadwinners as 'persons of all ages who are employers, working on own account, wage or salary earners, unemployed persons, relief and sustenance workers, helpers not receiving wage or salary, pensioners, retired persons, those of independent means, also persons engaged in religious and benevolent institutions' (page 332). The breadwinner data related to income therefore does not automatically equate with the breadwinner data related to the number of men and women in industry or the workforce.

Table 3.5 Annual Earnings of Breadwinners/Income Earners for Illawarra Population, 1933

<u>Status</u>	<u>Percentage of</u>	
	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Dependent	33	80
Breadwinner	66	19
<u>Income of Breadwinners</u>		
No Income	18	11
< than £52	25	52
£52 - £103	15	19
£104 - £155	13	11
£156 - £207	12	4
£208 - £259	8	1
£260 or >	8	2

(Source: Commonwealth Census of Australia)

While unemployment had a devastating effect on the family and community as a whole (covered in detail in later chapters) the types of industry, structure of the workforce, and sexual division of labour, and assumptions about the gender order all combined to make unemployment an issue of particular concern for men.

Jack Shephard was one of the many unemployed living in Wollongong when the Depression hit. He remembers: 'I had a fulltime job for about three and a half months, and then I was put-off. I had periods....about three periods at the steelworks, round about two and a half, to three and a half or so months unemployed, than I'd get a job then I'd lose it, than get a job.' Unemployment interrupted the work patterns of these men and often severely affected their progression through the various stages of the mining industry. Coal miner George Hammond remembers that he ended up wheeling coal trucks 'for eight long years', instead of the usual three: 'I was a long time [wheeling], the Depression made it so bad that we weren't getting very much work, we was only getting one day one fortnight and two days the next fortnight'.<sup>321</sup>

Nor were those who set up their own business, hoping to escape the tie of a boss, secure. A self-employed fisherman fell victim to unemployment, probably because many of the unemployed caught the fish they could no longer afford to buy. He said 'I have been under the impression that being my own boss I could not be materially affected by the depression'. But things had changed, so that he and other fishermen 'earned only enough to buy petrol for the running of our launches' and many had to go on the dole for there seemed 'no prospect of improvement'.<sup>322</sup>

Social welfare policy analyst, T. H. Kewley, has noted how during the Depression Australia had no 'regular system of unemployment relief'.<sup>323</sup>

<sup>321</sup>Interview with George Hammond, 30/1/1996 and 26/2/1996.

<sup>322</sup>*Workers' Weekly*, 10/4/1931, 4.

<sup>323</sup>T. H. Kewley, *Social Security in Australia*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1965, 154.

In July 1926, the Royal Commission on National Insurance presented its *Second Progress Report* which found unemployment relief to be largely the same as that which had existed in the nineteenth century.<sup>324</sup> The responsibility for dealing with unemployment lay with the state government at this time. Stuart Macintyre has argued that despite the attempt by Lang and his New South Wales government to put unemployed people 'before the dictates of international finance' the government was deficient in dealing with the question of unemployment.<sup>325</sup> There were three forms of relief or assistance available to unemployed during the Depression: sustenance or rations, emergency relief work, and ordinary relief work. The method and process of distribution of these varied throughout Australia.<sup>326</sup> In New South Wales unemployed workers were issued rations, or 'the dole', after registering at the State Labour Exchange. Any property you owned, with the exception of your home, had to be sold before your application would be considered. As with the basic wage the family and not the individual was used to establish the level of relief allowed.<sup>327</sup> It was not until 1932 that New South Wales implemented schemes other than sustenance.<sup>328</sup> Ordinary and emergency relief work was provided to some, where payment was made in wages rather than rations.<sup>329</sup> In Australia generally, most unemployed remained on the dole until 1935.<sup>330</sup>

By 1933 relief work sponsored by the government provided some jobs and industry slowly started to pick up.<sup>331</sup> Employment Councils were set up

---

<sup>324</sup>Kewley, 151.

<sup>325</sup>S. MacIntyre, *Winners and Losers*, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1985, 70-71.

<sup>326</sup>See F.A. Bland, 'Unemployment Relief', in L.J. Louis, and I. Turner, (eds) *The Depression of the 1930s*, Cassell Australia Ltd, Melbourne, 1968, 100.

<sup>327</sup>Bland, in Louis and Turner, 100-101.

<sup>328</sup>Bland, in Louis and Turner, 105.

<sup>329</sup>See Bland in Louis and Turner, 105-108, who outlines an account of relief work in greater details.

<sup>330</sup>C. B. Schedvin, *Australia and the Great Depression: A Study of Economic Development and Policy in the 1920s and 1930s*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1970, 340.

<sup>331</sup>Richardson, 1984, 55.

in 1932 to co-ordinate the funding of relief projects, including water supply and sewerage, road construction, and rural development, which became the main kinds of relief work undertaken between 1932 and 1935.<sup>332</sup> Relief work was of assistance to only some of the unemployed. In Schedvin's estimate £50 million was needed to give work to at least half the unemployed,<sup>333</sup> but only £5.8 million was provided. Relief workers for Wollongong Council were deprived of much needed work when it rained in the winter of 1934. In a letter signed 'Permanent Dole Slaves', they protested to the council:

We relief workers, men deprived of our livelihood of the right to any standard of living whatever, are forced in our extremity to accept the degrading work for the dole, this being so, our concern is to get our time in and get away from the job, as the Gov,(sic) in its charity allows us to supplement our income by doing a few odd jobs in our spare time, if we can find them....<sup>334</sup>

For men with family responsibilities, unemployment was humiliating and embarrassing. A letter in 1934 addressed to the Director of Government Relief from R. Roberts of Thirroul highlighted the shame some men felt when they were unable to support their families. Roberts wrote:

I am sorry to have to state that I have been unemployed for the last 4 years, and I have a very sick Wife, who has been ordered by the Dr. to get her teeth extracted, and as I am financially (sic) embarrassed I hereby appeal to you for aid under the Gov Relief Scheme....<sup>335</sup>

---

<sup>332</sup>Schedvin, 337 and 339.

<sup>333</sup>Schedvin, 339.

<sup>334</sup>NBAC, N57/2017, J. Normington-Rawling Deposit, *The Magnet* (Organ of Wollongong Relief Workers), 26/7/1934, issue 13.

<sup>335</sup>NSW State Archives, Chief Secretary's Correspondence, (1934), 5/9270, letter number 4504, From R. Roberts, Phillip Street, Thirroul, to Director of Gov. Relief, 11/5/1934.

In 1936, around the time of the May Day Celebrations, Mr W. Greenland, dole recipient, wrote to the May Day Committee pleading for work to support his family. Stating that he had been unemployed for 6 months, Greenland said he had 'got a weeks work at the Balambi [sic] Jetty Loading coal on the 20th of March' after which 'I was put off relief work'. He went on: 'we can not get relief work only the Dole & I have a wife & 2 children to support'.<sup>336</sup>

Since the government failed to provide adequately for the unemployed many sought alternatives. George and Maud Rodgers decided to rent their house to holiday makers but they did this only once, fearing retribution from the authorities if they continued to take in paying boarders. Maud recalls someone whose daughter worked for the doctor had his dole stopped,<sup>337</sup> and since twenty-five per cent of the money received from boarders was to be declared to the authorities as income, she was worried that the same would happen to them.<sup>338</sup> Many had to travel elsewhere for work. Mrs Ryan remembers how her father and her eldest brother would venture to Nerrigan to fossick for gold.<sup>339</sup>

Despite this attempt to earn money in order to stay in their home, the Rodgers were eventually evicted. Many other families were similarly forced to move out. Twenty-eight year old Sarah Elizabeth Moore and her thirty year old husband Samuel lived at Woonona and were dependent on a B1 scale food relief, which was valued at 33/6d. In May 1934 Mr Moore had been unemployed for 3 years, and a Bulli Police Constable claimed the Moore family were 'undoubtedly in poor circumstances'. The couple rented a house but it was reported that they were £60 in arrears and had 'been served with a notice to quit the premises'. With a baby daughter, aged 16 months, neither Sarah nor Samuel possessed any property, nor did they

<sup>336</sup>UWA, May Day Committee, D22/3/2, Letter from W. Greenland to Sir (May Day Committee secretary), 24/4/1936.

<sup>337</sup>Interview with Maud Rodgers, 30/1/1996.

<sup>338</sup>Bland, in Louis and Turner, 101.

<sup>339</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 77.

have any savings or income worth noting. They were so poor they could not afford the cost of a 2nd class rail fare to Wollongong to enable Mrs Moore to get her eyes tested to assess her eligibility for government spectacles. The Lavington family was a little better off than the Moore family. They also rented a house, for which they paid 15/- a week, and were only 4 months in arrears owing approximately £12/15/-. Yet, unlike the Moore family, Ethel Lavington and her husband, who lived in Wollongong, had eight children between the ages of 18 and 6 to support.

Bad times and dire circumstances pervaded the community in the 1920s and 1930s. Few escaped the financial and emotional strain which was a product of the Depression. Circumstances were so bad that a resident of the small Helensburgh community reported a fellow resident to the Inspector of Food Relief, signing the letter 'yours on the dole',

Sir you have ove-looked a family which wants raking up they are a family of the name of duffy they live off the maind [sic] Road from the Station well the father & 2 sons were on the dole for 2 & half years & Mr Duffy has a daughter bringing in 5 pounds a fortnight since they had to work for the dole the three men father & 2 sons had been bringing in about six pounds a fortnight why should this be they have not told the truth

Before ending, 'yours on the dole' added 'there are others want looking into'.<sup>340</sup> The subsequent investigation found that the Duffy family were doing nothing illegal, and 'to support the four children and parents' were only receiving B2 and A scale food relief.<sup>341</sup>

Women's ambiguous and intermittent relationship to the workplace meant that unemployment had a different meaning for them. Particularly during the Depression period, women's identity in the Illawarra area was

<sup>340</sup>NSW State Archives, Chief Secretary's Correspondence, (1934), 5/9258, letter number 2368, Letter to Inspector of Food Relief, from "yours on the dole", 3/2/1934.

<sup>341</sup>NSW State Archives, Chief Secretary's Correspondence, (1934), 5/9258, letter number 2368, Letter from Officer in Charge at Sutherland Government Relief Depot, to the Director Government Relief, Chief Secretary's Dept, 5/3/1934.

not shaped by their experience of paid work in the same way as that of men and they responded to unemployment more in terms of their family responsibilities and obligations.

Perhaps one of the most severe cases concerned Mrs J Worthington from Balgownie. In June 1934, Mrs Worthington wrote to Mr Davies, the local member of state parliament, requesting 'a little help'. She said: 'I have 3 children and myself to keep...I have nothing to live on I am in very bad circumstances'. She asked Davies to help her obtain the dole as 'I have no clothes for the little girl...I went for the Dole four time and they knocked me back I have no Husband'.<sup>342</sup> Mrs Worthington's husband had died in June 1934.<sup>343</sup> She received food relief and in July was awaiting the finalisation of her claim for a widow's pension.<sup>344</sup> Davies wrote in August to the Director of Government Relief about clothing and blankets for Mrs Worthington, saying 'this is a very urgent case'.<sup>345</sup> Worthington's application for clothing was refused, however, because after only two months since her husband's death, possibly driven by necessity, she had remarried.<sup>346</sup>

Women wrote seeking work not for themselves but on behalf of their menfolk. Mrs E. J. Sparks from Coledale Heights wrote to the May Day Committee in 1939, saying:

I have two son one 21 and the other 23 years of age and never had a days work and their fathers a relief worker. I would be pleased if you could give them a job on May Day boiling

<sup>342</sup>NSW State Archives, Chief Secretary's Correspondence, (1934), 5/9281, letter number 6635, Letter to Mr Davies MLA, from Mrs J Worthington, Mt Pleasant, Balgownie, 26/6/1934.

<sup>343</sup>NSW State Archives, Chief Secretary's Correspondence, (1934), 5/9281, letter number 6635, Report from Administrative Section of Government Relief, Chief Secretary's Department, to the Director of Relief, 31/8/1934.

<sup>344</sup>NSW State Archives, Chief Secretary's Correspondence, (1934), 5/9281, letter number 6635, Letter to W. Davies Esq, MLA, from Mr Treble, Director of Government Relief, 18/7/1934.

<sup>345</sup>NSW State Archives, Chief Secretary's Correspondence, (1934), 5/9281, letter number 6635, Letter to Mr Treble, from W. Davies, 20/8/1934.

<sup>346</sup>NSW State Archives, Chief Secretary's Correspondence, (1934), 5/9281, letter number 6635, Report from Administrative Section of Government Relief, Chief Secretary's Department, to the Director of Relief, 31/8/1934.

water or anything else. I have eight children and a day work for my boys would be very acceptable [sic].<sup>347</sup>

The fact that her 'boys', aged 21 and 23, had 'never had a days work' clearly concerned Mrs E.J. Sparks who sought work not for herself, but for them.

The idea of men primarily supporting the family or being the family breadwinner is important also for understanding the gendered implications of the social relations of paid work. However, it was not all *men* who were supporters and providers, but more precisely married men or family men. Winifred Rooke of Corrimal embodied these ideas in a letter she sent to the North Illawarra Council after her husband was 'dispensed with' when he was working on the Department of Main Roads. She stated:

Enclosed you will find the bill of rates for the house we occupy in Underwood St. As the ganger on the Main Roads thinks it more suitable to turn down married men, with families to support, perhaps you would kindly pass on the enclosed to him, he may take the hat around to the single men and outsiders on the job, and thus enable us to pay the rates, which we are being deprived of doing by the persistence of someone in authority, who will give preference to single men. Of the six men paid off on Friday, three to my knowledge, were married. We wives get tired of this injustice.<sup>348</sup>

Such comments show the strong support wives gave their breadwinners in times of crisis. Women's support for their family translated directly into support for the right of married men to paid work, since there was almost no place for them in the labour market. Single women and mothers did not have a "family place" in the labour market through a breadwinning husband. Mrs M. Sandell of Wollongong submitted a 'tender for supply of music for old time dances' at the 1936 May Day Celebrations, saying she

<sup>347</sup>UWA, D22, May Day Committee, D22/3/5, Letter from Mrs E.J. Sparks, Coledale Heights, to Mr Penrose, Miners Hall, n.d. but in 1939 folder.

<sup>348</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 4/6/1926.



could supply three performers playing the piano, violin and either cornet or drums, for £1/17/6. She concluded her letter with the hope that she would be successful for 'I am a widow & [have] two children to support'.<sup>349</sup> How she fared is not known, but that the letter was written indicates self-support was a possibility for this woman. Given the social assumptions at this time, a similar letter from a married woman would be highly unlikely.

The absence of paid work for women in Wollongong continued to be a problem, even during the Second World War. It was the reason given for launching there a recruitment state-wide country campaign for the services, which was recruiting a total of 1000 women per month at this time, in May 1943. The recruitment committee remarked on the success of a 'voluntary appeal in Newcastle for the Land Army' and hoped for a similar response in the Wollongong region. Miss Mercia Mason, Public Relations Officer for the Manpower Directorate, stated that they wanted '500 at least for the W.R.A.N.S., A.W.A.S., A.A.M.W.S., W.A.A.F. and Land Army'. Mason also said that 'Wollongong and district had one of the highest percentages in the State of women not gainfully employed or in essential occupations', but she pointed out that whilst many 'were eager to do war work...there was no industry to put them to, only the Services'.<sup>350</sup> During the war, occupations in the steel and coal industries were reserved, many Wollongong men were unable to enlist to assist the war effort and were needed to work in the steelworks which expanded as a result.<sup>351</sup>

This lack of employment for women in the Illawarra prompted state member of parliament, Mr W. Davies, to ask Mr Knight, the Minister for Labour and Industry, to 'approach the Federal authorities to establish industries capable of employing female labour'. Davies argued that the provision of work in the region where the women lived would mean

<sup>349</sup>UWA, D22, May Day Committee, D22/3/2, Letter from Mrs M. Sandell, Wollongong, to Mr Salmon, Secretary, May Day Committee, 25/3/1936.

<sup>350</sup>*South Coast Times*, 7/5/1943.

<sup>351</sup>See H. Lee, 'A Corporate Presence: The Economy, 1908-1945' in Hagan and Wells, 1997, 64-65, and J. McQuilton, 'Wollongong at War', in Hagan and Wells, 1997, 139-140.

savings on transport costs and the utilisation of 'labour that is now wasted'.<sup>352</sup> Wollongong trade unionist Len George remarked on the need to 'marshall the huge reservoir of woman-power' for the war effort. He was particularly concerned about 'the nation's food problems' and the 'lack of rural man power'. He noted: 'There are hundreds of women in this district anxious and willing to help the War Effort, but there is no work for them'. George claimed that, while both Great Britain and the Soviet Union were making progress in employing women in industry and agriculture, 'conservatism still hampers progress in preparing Australia for a total war effort'. He agreed 'that women cannot be sent untrained on to dairy farms'; but, he had no doubts that given the proper training Australian women were 'the equal of British and Soviet women in industry, brains and resourcefulness'. George called on the government 'to give them a chance' and that this would 'help to make a real approach to the acute man-power position'.<sup>353</sup>

Concern with women's employment at this time was linked to the particular circumstances of male workers in Wollongong during the Second World War, many of whom were not released to fight. Frank Gamble said he continued working during the war: 'I made several attempts through the company to try and go, but they felt that I was more valuable here'.<sup>354</sup> R. P. Jones, a rigger at the steelworks, lost an appeal against the Manpower Board when he wanted to leave his job and join the merchant navy. The board resolved that 'his services would be better utilised in his present position'.<sup>355</sup> In 1941, an advertisement in the *South Coast Times* reiterated

<sup>352</sup>*South Coast Times*, 21/5/1943.

<sup>353</sup>*South Coast Times*, 2/4/1943.

<sup>354</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 18.

<sup>355</sup>*South Coast Times*, 15/1/1943.

the need for worker's to do their bit (See Plate 3.5). It showed a photograph with the face of a worker and a list of his statements almost resembling the Ten Commandments. One key statement was, 'I believe therefore that we will stick at our jobs as our mates in khaki are sticking to theirs'.<sup>356</sup> During the war, women's unemployment became for the first time a matter for concern, but the heaviness of work in essential industries like coal and steel meant that in the Wollongong region, women continued to be excluded from paid work.

Industrial expansion and development transformed paid work in Wollongong between 1921 and 1954, but in ways very different for men and women. A lifetime in paid work meant men were bound to the workplace in ways that women were not. The fortunes of working-class women depended heavily on this association and it guaranteed men their place in the family as the sole breadwinner in the labour market. The Depression, in denying so many men the work that was basic to their masculinity, challenged the idea that all men worked for a lifetime. Even in more prosperous times, the divisions between men and women in relation to paid work remained a marked feature of the Wollongong workforce. The strong sexual division of labour, coupled with the intensity of the challenge to men's masculinity throughout the Depression years, and the feelings it engendered, ensured these differences between men and women remained. While more substantive capitalist development created wealth and prosperity in the post-Depression period, women continued to be employed only for brief periods. Between 1921 and 1954, paid workers in Wollongong were mainly men, a pattern that was more marked, and lasted much longer,

---


<sup>356</sup>South Coast Times, 4/7/1941.

than in most other Australian cities and towns. In this period, at least, Wollongong was clearly a working man's town.<sup>357</sup>

---

<sup>357</sup>Interview with Carmalita Steinke, 25/8/1994. I conducted this interview while researching my honours thesis. Steinke said she made this assessment of Wollongong when she arrived in the early 1960s.





**I Believe**

—that as a worker, giving long hours of toil in a free democracy, I am entitled to a comfortable standard of living, to economic security for my family, to a complete education for my children and to adequate provision against sickness, misfortune and old age.

I believe that my living standards can be improved and that they should be improved. Meanwhile, we, my mates and I, must finish the supremely urgent job that matters now—the winning of this war.

I believe that Hitlerism is the greatest enemy of the workers and that my freedom of employment, my right to trade union organisation and the standard that I have built up for myself and my children will all be swept away if the guns and tanks and planes built by the men and women in Nazi slavery continue to outnumber ours.

I believe therefore that we will stick at our jobs as our mates in khaki are sticking to theirs.

I believe that my employer and myself have a great responsibility to maintain industrial peace and keep industry turning at its highest pressure until Hitler is crushed.

I believe that any man—employer or employee—who fails to do his utmost to increase production of the equipment and supplies required by our troops at home and abroad is not only short-sighted but is false to his own children, to his fellow workers and to his mates who fight or have fallen because they believe, as I believe, that the way we live is the only way to live: IT IS DEMOCRACY.

Plate 3.5 - 1941, Advertisement

(Source: *South Coast Times*, 4/7/1941.)

## 4

### *The Politics of the Working Class: 'The destiny of the toilers is at stake'*

An appeal 'from a worker to a worker' in the *South Coast Times* in mid-1927 reminded readers that: 'Once again the election of a government draws near, and once again the destiny of the toilers is at stake' and urged them to support the ALP<sup>358</sup>, noting that while the 'Labor Government may not be able to do all that is desired of it,...the loss of the reins of power is too serious to contemplate'. The appeal continued: 'an obligation is on every worker to do a great deed - one that does not require any revolutions or victories, but a consciousness of class merit and a will to do the proper thing'.

Mrs M. Smith, an active member and secretary of the Wollongong branch of the ALP, was the correspondent. She and her party professed to represent the political interests of workers in Wollongong.<sup>359</sup> Considering the heavily masculinised nature of paid work in Wollongong, it seems remarkable that it was a woman who spoke on behalf of workers in this way. This chapter explores such an apparent anomaly with an investigation of working-class politics in Wollongong and the various forces that contributed to it between 1921 and 1954. It discusses the importance of gender in shaping these institutions and the ways in which they in turn determined gender relations in the politics of the working class. Understanding how workers represented themselves politically in the

<sup>358</sup>Although at various times in its history it has been referred to differently, I will adopt the 'ALP' throughout this thesis when referring to the Australian Labor Party. However, when primary sources differ, the original reference is used.

<sup>359</sup>*South Coast Times*, 15/7/1927.

community of Wollongong involves describing both the formal and institutional aspects of political parties and the more intimate and informal account of workers' activity in political parties and associated organisations.<sup>360</sup>

The ALP was but one of the principal organisations claiming to represent the working class in Wollongong between 1921 and 1954. Others included the CPA and the Illawarra Trades and Labour Council (IT&LC).<sup>361</sup> In the Illawarra the political fortunes of these organisations were overwhelmingly determined by paid workers and trade unions, but more specifically paid work in the coal mines, steelworks and waterfront. This bond intensified over time, and the pre-eminence of the IT&LC in the political life of Wollongong towards the end of the period was indicative of the close association formed. A consequence of this formidable nexus in Illawarra politics meant that women's already limited political participation was curbed even more significantly. Between 1921 and 1954 working-class politics was essentially male in focus and intent, with the more numerous men's unions predominating.

#### *Representing the "Worker"*

#### *The Australian Labor Party*

The ALP has been central to the industrial politics of the Illawarra. Mrs Smith's call for 'a great deed' by Wollongong workers, by which she meant a vote for Labor, emphasised 'class merit and a will to do the proper

<sup>360</sup>Political representation can be construed in a number of ways. It refers to the formal and institutionalised aspects of political parties, and the individuals that represent workers in governments and parliaments. This is discussed in detail, for Wollongong in this period, in the history edited by Hagan and Wells.

<sup>361</sup>The Illawarra Trades and Labour Council changed its name to the South Coast Labour Council (SCLC) in 1949.

thing' seeing no need for 'any revolutions or victories'. Smith and her fellow ALP supporters believed in the moderate solution of parliamentary power. This should come as no surprise: ALP historian Graham Freudenberg, among others, has noted how 'the pursuit of its goals *through parliament*' was the factor that provided most 'continuity and consistency' to the history of the ALP.<sup>362</sup> While Vere Gordon Childe castigated the ALP because it 'degenerated into a vast machine for capturing political power', Freudenberg celebrated this aspect and endorsed Manning Clark's view that the ALP was a 'party of evolution rather than revolution'.<sup>363</sup>

From the ALP's beginnings, it was a significant feature in Wollongong history. While it did not come into existence officially until 1891, there were numerous earlier attempts of various sorts to obtain parliamentary representation for the working class. Hagan and Turner have argued that to understand the formation of the ALP in the Illawarra region requires an understanding of the miners and their industrial organisation'.<sup>364</sup> A 'bond between the miners' union and the Labor Party'<sup>365</sup> existed, and despite their ambivalent relations at times, this close association endured beyond the nineteenth century<sup>366</sup> with the mining unions amongst the first to establish electoral leagues.<sup>367</sup> The Illawarra area was no exception, and an Illawarra miner, J.B. Nicholson, was among the 45 men who first stood for Labor in the 1891 NSW election. Nicholson was the first elected Labor candidate in the Illawarra and, at this time, also secretary of the Illawarra branch of the Amalgamated Miners' Association.<sup>368</sup>

<sup>362</sup>G. Freudenberg, *Cause for Power: the Official History of the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Labor Party*, Pluto Press, Leichhardt, 1991, 2.

<sup>363</sup>Freudenberg, 274.

<sup>364</sup>J. Hagan and K. Turner, 'The Origins of the Labor Party in the Illawarra', in ALP, (ed) *Traditions for Reform in New South Wales: Labor History Essays*, Pluto Press, Leichhardt, 1987, 18.

<sup>365</sup>Hagan and Turner, 1987, 34.

<sup>366</sup>An excellent overview of how, when and why the ALP began in the Illawarra is provided in Hagan and Turner, 1987, chapter 2.

<sup>367</sup>E. Ross, *A History of the Miners' Federation*, Halstead, Sydney, 1970, 98.

<sup>368</sup>W. Mitchell, 'John Barnes Nicholson: New South Wales Miners' Labour Member 1891-1917', *Labour History*, no.10, 1966, 13-19.

It is difficult to estimate the membership of the ALP and its various branches in the Illawarra between 1921 and 1954. In 1927, the Wollongong ALP branch boasted that at an early May meeting the attendance was 'the largest seen in the Miners' Hall at any meeting of the league'.<sup>369</sup> Yet this was not the state of all branches on the South Coast. Allan Howie, Secretary of the Bulli Labor League, wrote to the editor of the local newspaper that his branch had resolved to call itself 'the Bulli-Woonona Labor League' and invited 'the members of the now defunct Woonona League to join' them. Although the Bulli branch was 'only a month started', he observed, 'we have a big membership, and are getting some very good meetings, but, of course it would always be a better League with a lot more in it...'.<sup>370</sup> It was also reported in 1927 that 'Great efforts are being made by the secretaries of the various organisations to re-form a branch of the ALP at the Port'. The newspaper report claimed: 'At one time the Port Kembla Branch was the strongest on the South Coast' and members were now intending 'to run labour candidates for aldermanic honours'.<sup>371</sup> Hagan and Turner have noted how in the early years ALP branches in the Illawarra stopped and started, and 'revived, if at all, only when elections loomed'.<sup>372</sup> It is possible this pattern persisted well into the twentieth century. Other Illawarra branches of the ALP, like Dapto, did not come into existence until the early 1950s,<sup>373</sup> reflecting Dapto's gradual shift in the 1950s and 1960s from a predominantly agricultural centre to a suburban area accommodating miners and their families.

Mrs Smith advocated ALP representation for the Illawarra. However, a proposal that she, or any other ALP woman in the area would be a candidate, was never seriously considered between 1921 and 1954, even

<sup>369</sup>South Coast Times, 6/5/1927.

<sup>370</sup>South Coast Times, 15/4/1927.

<sup>371</sup>South Coast Times, 4/3/1927.

<sup>372</sup>Hagan and Turner, 1987, 22.

<sup>373</sup>The branch had been going for 40 years when I was Dapto branch secretary in the early 1990s.

though women had had the formal right to stand in the Commonwealth parliament since 1902.<sup>374</sup> Millicent Preston Stanley was the first woman to be elected at state level in 1925 under the system of proportional representation, but she lost in 1927 under the single-member system<sup>375</sup> and in 1943, Edith Lyons was elected as the first female member of the Federal parliament.<sup>376</sup> The social assumptions in this period about appropriate activities for men and women militated against such choices generally, and even more so in the Illawarra, a mining community of men closely linked with the ALP. The first few ALP women elected to parliament before the 1950s usually came from electorates with a more diverse workforce, both by industry and by gender, or inherited the seats when their father or husband died.<sup>377</sup> The nature of the ALP in the Illawarra, particularly the block votes of respective trade unions prevented women from achieving political success beyond a certain level. This remains the case up to the present day.<sup>378</sup>

Division and dissent have been a strong feature within the ALP, even though parliamentary representation of the working class was its overriding goal and purpose and most of its activities were directed to meet this end. But women were not found contesting parliamentary positions, due to the ALP's structure and links with the union movement, on which Illawarra parliamentary candidates still relied heavily to get pre-selected and elected.<sup>379</sup> Illawarra women's brief experience of paid work meant either

<sup>374</sup>M. Sawyer and M. Simms, A Woman's Place: Women and Politics in Australia, second edition, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1993, 1.

<sup>375</sup>Sawyer and Simms, 96 and 102.

<sup>376</sup>Sawyer and Simms, 112.

<sup>377</sup>Sawyer and Simms provide perhaps the best overview. Lillian Fowler was elected in 1944 to the NSW seat of Newtown. A working class area, it was more industrially diverse, not relying on one or two industries (or unions). May Holman (WA) replaced her father and Fanny Brownbill (VIC) replaced her husband.

<sup>378</sup>A recent ALP preselection battle over the Illawarra federal seat of Throsby saw two women candidates defeated when the sitting member, Mr Colin Hollis was re-elected. Both the rank and file, and left and right wing unions overwhelmingly supported Hollis. See Illawarra Mercury, 8/12/1997, 2.

<sup>379</sup>L.L. Blackley, "Performing Poodles and Packhorses?": Women in the ALP, 1940s-1990s', BA Honours, University of Wollongong, 1994, 50.

limited union activity or none, which, along with the social assumptions about women's central place in the home and with family, prevented them from achieving parliamentary representation in the Wollongong area.

ALP politics was very much about representing men. In 1921, Corrimal resident L. Tyrrell alluded to this during an argument about the nature of political action in the editorials of the *South Coast Times*. Mr Dunleavy, a Corrimal ALP member<sup>380</sup> had suggested that the ALP's political processes allowed arguments and ideas to be put forward and eventually, through democratic procedures, accepted as policy. Tyrrell responded with criticisms of the parliamentary process, making particular note of the divisions within the ALP:

It is not so amazing, as Mr. Dunleavy seems to think, that there are some workers who still think that political action is useless, when we take into consideration the small amount of benefit that has accrued to the workers from its exercise, coupled with the type of men who wield it. Take, for instance, the Easter conference of the A.L.P. with its bickerings and intrigues between the Lambert and Catts' factions; should it not force the fact on the intelligence of the average man that as they would so readily fight, betray and blackguard each other for office in the A.L.P. so they would just as readily betray the workers (and have repeatedly done so) when the gains to themselves were greater.<sup>381</sup>

Tyrrell was referring to the fracas between Lambert and Catt, both members of the NSW executive, during which Catt was gagged a dozen or so times when trying to speak about allegations of corruption and 'illicit money'.<sup>382</sup> The ALP's tumultuous history of splits and splinters at state and federal levels of the party also affected the dynamics of ALP politics locally between 1921 and 1954. The question of who was guilty, however, was of little

<sup>380</sup>S.A. Dunleavy is mentioned in a separate advertisement for the Corrimal ALP in the *South Coast Times*, 15/4/1921. I have concluded that this Dunleavy is the same Mr Dunleavy that intervened in the debate between Davies and Tyrrell.

<sup>381</sup>*South Coast Times*, 29/4/1921.

<sup>382</sup>Freudenberg, 133-134.

consequence for Tyrrell. In his opinion, the ALP was discredited as a workers' party capable of representing 'the average man', and the 'bickerings and intrigues' only reinforced his view.

The ALP's quest for parliamentary power was continually an issue of contention in the Illawarra, where unionism was particularly strong and influential. Jack Lang's campaign for power and control of the NSW political arena was the cause of increasing acrimony throughout the state in the latter 1930s. In 1938 Lang's 'Inner Group'; a collective of his supporters (including party officials, some unionists and publicists) caused some dissension amongst unionists and was blamed for the loss of the 1937 federal election.<sup>383</sup> The Group was also charged with interfering in union elections to influence preselections for the state election, scheduled for March 1938.<sup>384</sup> Some ALP members and members of key unions decided to halt the destructive tactics of Lang and his followers. An anti-Lang Conference on 22 January was called by the NSW Labor Council and included many branches who were unimpressed by Lang's recent actions.<sup>385</sup> The Corrimal branch of the ALP was reportedly '[d]isgusted with the conduct of the "Inner Group"' and 'decided to wind up the branch and send back the charter to headquarters'. The Corrimal branch said it would form a Labor Party branch 'under the provisional Executive' formed at the January conference.<sup>386</sup> The Corrimal branch was not alone. J. Lindsay, secretary of the North Wollongong branch of the ALP, said his branch was committed to fighting against the Inner Group, being 'wholeheartedly behind the provisional executive set up to cleanse the movement' and firmly resolved to 'take all future directions and suggestions from the newly appointed

<sup>383</sup>Hagan and Turner, 1991, 84 they note that the Inner Group were followers and supporters of Lang. See also Freudenberg, 184-185.

<sup>384</sup>Hagan and Turner, 1991, 91.

<sup>385</sup>Freudenberg, 185.

<sup>386</sup>*Common Cause*, 19/3/1938, 5.

general secretary, Mr. W. Evans'.<sup>387</sup> The Corrimal and North Wollongong branches, then, were clearly amongst Lang's opponents.

This was not the first time that Lang had faced opposition from the Illawarra. Hagan and Turner have noted the anger of the Thirroul ALP branch in 1933, over the pre-selection for a by-election in the state seat of Bulli. Albert Willis was the rank and file's favoured candidate, and was guaranteed votes from the Miners' Federation and the Australian Railways Union (ARU). These unions were all male and their members constituted the greatest proportion of Thirroul ALP branch members, which was the largest ALP branch in the Bulli electorate. Under Lang's ruling, the Bulli preselectors were denied a rank and file ballot and instead, the 'aged nonentily' Sweeney was endorsed by the executive.<sup>388</sup> This raised the ire of miners and railway men and Willis's name still appeared on the ballot paper for the Bulli by-election, but as a Miners' Candidate. Sweeney was returned with over 45 per cent of the vote, but Willis obtained just over 23 per cent of the vote, which compared very favourably with the CPA candidate P. Martin, who received just under 5 per cent of the vote.<sup>389</sup> The Miners may have lost, but their solid result made a powerful statement about their capacity to influence Illawarra politics.

Their influence, and that of the Federated Ironworkers' Association (FIA) was also evident in the divisions between the Official ALP and the State ALP that existed at times in the Illawarra. A split in the ALP again resulted in mid-1940, after Federal ALP intervention in NSW. It exposed further divisions between the reformist elements of the ALP and the more Left-wing-industrial element.<sup>390</sup> In August 1940, the Wollongong ALP

<sup>387</sup>*Common Cause*, 19/2/1938, 5.

<sup>388</sup>Hagan and Turner, 1991, 87.

<sup>389</sup>C.A. Hughes, and B.D. Graham, *Voting for the New South Wales Assembly, 1890-1964*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1975, 258.

<sup>390</sup>A Unity Conference was held in 1939 to mend some of the rifts in the ALP; but division continued. Lang and his cohorts formed the non-communist ALP in April 1940 believing that the CPA controlled the ALP. The 'Hands Off Russia' resolution passed by the Hughes-Evans cohort at the NSW ALP's annual conference was the catalyst for Lang's suspicions. Prompted by Curtin, in July 1940 the Federal ALP Executive suspended the NSW ALP State Executive

endorsed the more moderate Official ALP and said it supported the 'action of the Federal Executive in suspending the N. S. Wales executive'. The newspaper reported how Wollongong branch 'is the largest A.L.P. on the South Coast and the resolution is an endorsement of Mr H.P. Lazzarini, M.H.R., as the official Labor Candidate for Werriwa'.<sup>391</sup> Although the decision to select Lazzarini was endorsed 'by a large majority', the preceding debate, which lasted for three hours, indicated that a number of supporters were in some doubt.<sup>392</sup> Other sections of the Illawarra labour movement were adamant that Lazzarini was not the man to represent workers in parliament.

Rex Connor opposed Lazzarini in 1940 with the support of the Evans-Hughes led State ALP. At the September launch of Connor's election campaign, Evans remarked how the 'Labor movement had fought for unity, but its efforts had been frustrated by politicians in the Federal and State Parliaments'. He believed that the 'politicians of to-day, were prepared to split the movement for the sake of their own preservation'. He advised electors 'to choose wisely from three sets of Labor candidates'. When he was asked 'why Labor did not put its own house in order before coming before the electors', Evans replied, 'the Labor Movement was quite in order. It was a few politicians that were out of order'. In this and subsequent debates, the word 'politician' was a loaded term and shorthand for all that was negative and disreputable.

The president of the IT&LC, Mr E Burgess followed Evans in addressing the meeting. He expressed the labour movement's resentment

under the control of Hughes and Evans. The NSW ALP executive made attempts to interfere in the debate on the National Security Act and Curtin claimed 'The State Executive attacked unity in the Labor Movement'. The Hughes-Evans NSW ALP executive gathered support from the NSW Labor Council and Sydney ALP members and contested the 1940 election as the State ALP. Lang's non-communist ALP also contested the election. The Federal ALP contested the election as the Official ALP. See Freudenberg, 188-194 and Hagan and Turner, 1991, 92-93. Also J. A. Merritt, *A History of the Federated Ironworkers' Association of Australia: 1909-1952*, PhD, Australian National University, 1967.

<sup>391</sup>*South Coast Times*, 30/8/1940.

<sup>392</sup>*South Coast Times*, 30/8/1940.

at interference from the federal executive. He said Curtin 'was emulating other politicians who were concerned only in carving out a career for themselves under Capitalism'. Again Burgess drew a line between himself and career politicians. He stopped short of describing them as effeminate, yet the machismo-laden comments of Connor, which followed Burgess's address, made this point.

Connor said he was hoping for 'support at a time of crisis...a time that requires clear thinking and plain speaking'. He told Wollongong electors that 'he had always fought for what he considered to be right' and that 'only one movement - Labor...would lead to the salvation and happiness of the people of Australia'. He recalled the Maritime Strike and 'Labor with all its fine ideals'. After the 1890s, however, he believed 'the professional politicians fastened themselves' upon the ALP:

They "ratted" in 1916 on military conscription and now in 1940 they "ratted" on industrial conscription. But there are some men now coming forward who will fight the good fight for all that is good in the Labor movement. Men have risen and have fallen, but the movement has gone on. It was active before Lang, Beazley or Curtin were born and it will go on when they are under the sods.<sup>393</sup>

Connor regarded himself as one of the men willing to 'fight the good fight for all that is good in the Labor movement'. He implied that the movement was bigger than the individual; but, no doubt, whether consciously or not, being a man of strength was central to Connor's sense of ALP politics and fighting 'the good fight'. In making this point, Connor suggested that Official ALP representatives were not up to this task and this was as much about masculinity as it was about class. He was the good and strong man able to fight, which contrasted with the Official ALP men, regarded as weak and therefore contemptible.

<sup>393</sup>*South Coast Times*, 13/9/1940.

A man of strength was also a central consideration to A. Sinclair, who wrote to the *South Coast Times* editor in support of Connor. He cared little for party machinations, but agreed there was 'a dearth of political talent'. He believed that Connor was 'a man who has done a good job of work in Wollongong Council and who can do just as good a job as our Federal member'. He continued, praising Connor's efforts and his contribution to the local area:

He entered the council to fight a lone hand, and many people asked what can one man do? The results are there for all to see. The fighter can always evoke response from the people, and although a lot of people have lightly called Connor a rebel, it is rebels of his type that we want, if rebel he be.

Sinclair felt the district needed 'a good shake up' because, while Menzies 'sent the plums of armament expenditure to Victoria', Wollongong men were 'walking the streets in search of work'. He concluded:

It is a member's job to work for his district as well as his party, and anyone who is prepared to fight for his constituents interests should get support, irrespective of party.<sup>394</sup>

Sinclair's comment was an appeal to unemployed men 'walking the streets' to vote for Connor. According to Sinclair, the notion of fighting and being a rebel was what real political representation was about and in his view this was clearly linked to appropriate expectations about masculinity.

Needless to say, the rift in the ALP continued locally. At the 1941 state elections, the State ALP stood candidates against William Davies and J.T. Sweeney, who were both Official ALP candidates and sitting members for the seats of Wollongong-Kembla and Bulli, respectively. The seat of Wollongong-Kembla was a newly established seat due to the area's 'large

<sup>394</sup>*South Coast Times*, 13/9/1940.



increase in population' and was based on Port Kembla and Wollongong proper. The old seat of Illawarra was altered and was contested for Official ALP by a Wollongong ALP member named Fowles.<sup>395</sup> The State ALP failed to stand a candidate in the seat of Illawarra and Fowles' only opponent was a United Australia Party candidate named Faulkner.<sup>396</sup>

An official of the FIA, William Frame, challenged Davies, realising 'that in nominating as the State Labor Candidate against W. Davies, I am tackling one of the most experienced professional politicians in this State'. He said, 'I know that many of you have consistently voted for him from force of habit - but every bad habit must end'. He claimed that Davies was among the 'professional politicians, disguised as Labor men'.<sup>397</sup> Like Connor before him, Frame believed the professional politician had tarnished the ALP ethos, and the distinction between the 'professional politician' and 'Labor men' brought this into sharp relief.

Burgess, a coal miner, and at the time the President of the IT&LC, said he would not apologise for his own nomination as a State ALP candidate. In his view the Official ALP had offered nothing substantial to this coal mining electorate. He also argued that 'they never will in a so-called Labor party without industrial support', for it was the unions that had 'always been in the forefront of the struggle'. According to Burgess, the Official ALP was about 'collaboration with the boss'. He stated: 'They ask miners' sons to fight their war and miners to pay for that war with crushing taxes on wages'.<sup>398</sup> He talked battle and struggle, highlighting the supremacy of the State ALP over the Official ALP. Moreover, while there was clearly a class component to the comments by Burgess, his remarks also appealed to the masculinity of workers by invoking a sense of humiliation amongst those allowing the 'crushing taxes' and their sons to go to war.

<sup>395</sup>South Coast Times, 25/4/1941.

<sup>396</sup>South Coast Times, 25/4/1941.

<sup>397</sup>South Coast Times, 25/4/1941.

<sup>398</sup>South Coast Times, 25/4/1941.

Locally, the election results were the same as for the whole of NSW with the Official ALP victorious.<sup>399</sup> The State ALP failed to capitalise on the conflict that riddled the ALP organisations. Nevertheless, the fact that Frame, a FIA Official, and Burgess, a coal miner and IT&LC official, were the State ALP candidates indicated some discord and dissension between the local unions and their state bodies, which, according to Hagan and Turner, supported the Official ALP.<sup>400</sup> It also demonstrated the strength of certain unions and industries within the Illawarra political scene. While the State ALP were unsuccessful, the rigorous claims put forward by their candidates and their high profile within the Illawarra labour movement together substantiate the claim that paid workers and trade unions were influential in working-class politics. Even successful Official ALP candidates had connections with unions. Sweeney was a previous secretary of the Miners' Federation and William Davies was also a miner and active in the Miners' Federation. Even Connor had indirect links with the Miners' Federation, having completed law articles at the solicitor's office that conducted legal matters for the Miners' Federation.<sup>401</sup> The bonds between the ALP, paid workers and their trade unions were long and enduring, and it was this that in part militated against women's greater participation.

To suggest that women were inactive in the ALP, however, would be erroneous. There were some outstanding women members over the years. In 1927 Mrs M Smith was the Wollongong ALP's delegate to the Women's ALP Conference in Sydney.<sup>402</sup> At the annual meeting of the New

<sup>399</sup>Despite these contests, in NSW as a whole, the State ALP proved largely unsuccessful, nor could they attract support from CPA-controlled unions like the Miners' Federation, the ARU and the FIA who sided with the Official ALP. At the 1940 NSW election, the Official ALP was the overall state-wide winner and Freudenberg contends that it was this 'triumph' that 'effectively ended the split'. The Hughes-Evans State ALP continued until 1943, but eventually merged with the CPA when the ban on it was lifted. Lang's non-communist ALP rejoined the Official ALP in February 1941. See Freudenberg, 194, and Hagan and Turner, 1991, 93.

<sup>400</sup>Hagan and Turner, 1991, 93.

<sup>401</sup>J. Hagan, 'Politics in the Illawarra', in Hagan and Wells, 171.

<sup>402</sup>South Coast Times, 11/2/1927.

Wollongong ALP branch in 1939 both men and women sought office,<sup>403</sup> and Mrs Croft, a member of the Wollongong ALP, was later that year elected as a branch delegate to the Regional conference.<sup>404</sup> Mrs Croft had earlier in the 1930s been Secretary of the South Coast Relief Committee, and was involved in a deputation to Prime Minister Lyons in 1935 about the deplorable living conditions that existed in the Illawarra as a result of unemployment.<sup>405</sup> Croft had also received 'special mention' from Mr Clarrie Martin after he was returned as the ALP representative for Waverley in 1935 for she had assisted, in some capacity, with his campaign.<sup>406</sup> Later, in 1953, Mrs Irene Ryan, a member of the Mount Kembla branch was also a force in local ALP politics who, according to her fellow branch members 'played a very energetic part' as Secretary of the Illawarra State Electorate Council.<sup>407</sup>

Most women contributed to the ALP in more specific ways. The ALP was a social and cultural focus for working-class people of Wollongong, and women were active particularly in organising social occasions, mainly to raise funds for election campaigns. Mrs Chesher was 'unanimously elected' as the 'social secretary' of the Wollongong branch of the State ALP' and took a hand in organising such activities which were a constant feature of ALP activities.<sup>408</sup> In 1927, the Wollongong branch of the ALP 'cordially invited' everybody to the euchre parties held once a month in the 'Charlton Cafe' at which there were 'excellent prizes to the value of 15/- each'.<sup>409</sup> In 1940 the Melbourne Cup was an occasion for fund-raising when a guessing competition was held.<sup>410</sup> These social functions also related to issues of

<sup>403</sup>South Coast Times, 24/3/1939.

<sup>404</sup>South Coast Times, 1/12/1939.

<sup>405</sup>South Coast Times, 18/10/1935 in S. Nixon, 'The Illawarra Trades and Labour Council in Depression, Recovery, and War, 1926-1945', BA Honours, University of Wollongong, 1984, 63.

<sup>406</sup>South Coast Times, 2/6/1939.

<sup>407</sup>UWA, D126/1/1, Mount Kembla ALP branch minutes, 16/2/1953.

<sup>408</sup>South Coast Times, 1/5/1942.

<sup>409</sup>South Coast Times, 6/5/1927.

<sup>410</sup>South Coast Times, 13/12/1940.

social justice and equality; in 1928, for example, the Wollongong branch of the ALP responded to high unemployment with a 'Picture Benefit to help the unemployed and their dependants'. The *Illawarra Mercury* reported that 'A very substantial sum is expected to be made, and it is hoped that the entertainment will receive the support it deserves'.<sup>411</sup> In 1940 the Wollongong ALP organised a Victory dance with monies raised going towards the Air raid victims fund.<sup>412</sup>

Thus, Illawarra women's involvement in ALP politics occurred at a more local level, and within the conventions of what was expected of women at this time. Involvement in ALP politics beyond this was largely unattainable for women because of the ALP's strong ties with trade unionism. Even the CPA, which has been depicted as a more conscious advocate of women's rights, failed to offer opportunities for women beyond the local branch.<sup>413</sup>

#### *Communist Party of Australia*

Gollan argued in his history of the CPA that, despite the existence of various groups exhibiting 'radical tendencies', a communist party along Communist International (Comintern) lines did not exist before 1922.<sup>414</sup> This changed with the formation of the CPA which contemporaries claimed 'was one of the decisive revolutionary acts of the Australian working class'.<sup>415</sup> Unlike the ALP, the CPA was born with revolution as a central

<sup>411</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 20/4/1928.

<sup>412</sup>South Coast Times, 13/12/1940.

<sup>413</sup>J. Stevens, *Taking the Revolution Home: Work Amongst Women in the Communist Party of Australia: 1920-1945* Sybylla Co-operative Press, Melbourne, 1987, 17.

<sup>414</sup>R. Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1975, 5-6.

<sup>415</sup>L.L. Sharkey, *The Trades Unions*, Current Book Distributors, Sydney, 1959, 17 in W.J. Brown, *The Communist Movement and Australia*, Australian Labor Movement History Publications, Haymarket, 1986, 26.



tenet of the program which it sought to follow nationally and in the Illawarra. The struggle against reformism was significant for its activists in determining their relationship to ordinary workers. Gender relations too were influenced acutely by this revolutionary zeal.

Not surprisingly, recruitment was not easy for the CPA. In August 1927 the South Coast branch presented a written report to the Enlarged Executive of the CPA describing how they had 'endeavoured to arouse interest among Comrades on South Coast, but owing to scattered area have been unable to function'.<sup>416</sup> By June 1929 the 'Kembla Group' was noting a 'loss of members'. 'Only comrades Nixon and Gardner remained and it was proposed to co-operate with comrade Briemle in forming a Party Group in Wollongong'.<sup>417</sup> After a combined meeting of other CPA groups on the South Coast it was decided that a Central District Group would be formed at Wollongong.<sup>418</sup> Comrade Sharkey from the Central Committee (CC) attended Wollongong in early August of the same year.<sup>419</sup> Comrade Jeffrey planned to visit in late August 'to revive' the Wollongong branch of the Militant Minority Movement (MMM),<sup>420</sup> which was a CPA initiative aimed at attracting mass support from workers.<sup>421</sup> The CC was also considering sending speakers to Wollongong each fortnight for propaganda meetings.<sup>422</sup> These organisational problems were not confined to the Illawarra. In late 1931 it was apparent that locally the Unemployed Workers Movement (UWM) had problems with a decline in both membership and branches, but the State Executive of the CPA reprimanded other UWM branches and district committees throughout NSW for failing to supply reports and

<sup>416</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021 ADD ON 1936, Box 3, CPA Records, Central Executive, 1920?-1929, Report of the Enlarged Executive of the CPA, 20/8/1927.

<sup>417</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021 ADD ON 1936, Box 3, CPA Records, Minutes of C.C., 24/6/1929.

<sup>418</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021 ADD ON 1936, Box 3, CPA Records, Minutes of C.C., 8/7/1929.

<sup>419</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021 ADD ON 1936, Box 3, CPA Records, Minutes of C.C., 4/8/1929 and 12/8/1929.

<sup>420</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021 ADD ON 1936, Box 3, CPA Records, Minutes of C.C., 12/8/1929.

<sup>421</sup>Stevens, 26.

<sup>422</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021 ADD ON 1936, Box 3, CPA Records, Minutes of C.C., 12/8/1929.

statistical information on the Movement, which was established to encourage rank and file activity during the Depression.<sup>423</sup>

In general, however, the Illawarra region did offer opportunities for the CPA, particularly when it sought to attract members through industry and associated trade unions. In 1934 the Party recognised that 'Big heavy industries have developed at Port Kembla' and that these would be significant in war preparations. The CPA had to this point been fairly inactive in recruiting workers from these industries, and according to one informant 'no contact at all' had been made with any of them except 'on a superficial and social democratic basis', and chiefly involved going out 'shouting on street corner [sic] and waving the red flag'. In 1934, 12 to 18 months after the CPA in Wollongong had 'commenced to face industry', it could claim approximately 41 members directly in industry, compared with 12 or 13 earlier. In assessing the situation, Comrade Blake stated: 'Probably 11 of them are of no use to the Party, 3 or 4 of them came from the ranks of the unemployed and were members of the Party before they got into the industry'. Blake concluded therefore that there were really approximately '30 members effective on the South Coast in industry'. While this was considered 'an improvement', it was still 'lagging'.<sup>424</sup>

Similar problems existed with recruitment amongst miners. After the dole for intermittent workers was stopped in 1932, the CPA organised a meeting in their support. Although support was forthcoming initially, miners later decided not to strike, on the advice of the officials of the Miners' Federation. This prompted the CPA to form a Council of Action, but Comrade Beresford reported that it had 'gone to pieces' and was a mistake. He was convinced that a strike committee 'formed at local lodges' would have been more effective. He suggested that '[o]n the South Coast in

<sup>423</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021, Box 85 (159), CPA Records, Historical Materials, Secretarial Report on the Position of the U.W.M., 28/12/1931. Joyce, 10 says the UWM was a 'mass organisation'.

<sup>424</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021, ADD ON 1936, Box 3, CPA Records, Minutes, CPA Fourth Plenary Session, 31/3/1934-2/4/1934.

the future, we will make better progress through the M.M. [Militant Minority Movement]'.<sup>425</sup>

The problem with recruiting CPA members on the South Coast was mostly ideological. In late 1929 the CPA accepted directives from the Comintern 'to conduct open warfare against...class collaboration' and for the CPA to 'assert itself as the only true working class Party'.<sup>426</sup> This involved antagonistic relations with 'social fascists' (social democratic parties, like the ALP), and purging the CPA of anyone who had sympathies for such parties.<sup>427</sup> Barbara Curthoys claimed that such tactics curbed 'free-ranging debate and discussion' in the CPA, where 'self-criticism meant ostracism and possible expulsion'.<sup>428</sup>

This antagonistic character of CPA operations manifested itself in the Illawarra. Referring to the Illawarra during a party meeting, Blake explained that the CPA 'had partial success' with dole workers and the unemployed, but 'in industry...the Party had almost been entirely neglected'. He claimed that CPA members 'had almost completely isolated themselves from the rest of the miners' on the South Coast and he argued that this was 'the clearest example of fossilisation'. Isolation between miners and the CPA occurred when 'sectarian ideas took the form of criticising numbers of miners officials...and designating them as social fascists'. Blake continued:

Whilst many of these officials had incomplete understanding, many were inclined to come towards the party and follow it. Immediately that those miner officials disagreed with the line put forward by the Party, which was almost invariably wrong, then those miner officials were designated as social fascist.

<sup>425</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021 ADD ON 1936, Box 3, CPA Records, C.C. Meeting Minutes, Third Plenary Session, 25-27/12/1932, page 92.

<sup>426</sup>B. Curthoys, 'The Communist Party and the Communist International (1927-1929)', *Labour History*, no.64, May 1993, 63.

<sup>427</sup>B. Curthoys, 1993, 57.

<sup>428</sup>B. Curthoys, 1993, 56 and 67.

He argued that misusing 'the term social fascist has done more to break down the influence of the Party than anything else'. It was considered that members of the CPA were hastily judging the credentials of prospective members and occasionally people were not approached because they had done something previously which had not been forgotten. Blake chastised members for this, saying that they were 'not prepared to recognise that changing conditions must throw up new elements prepared to struggle'.<sup>429</sup>

This sectarianism and an unwillingness to compromise retarded growth in membership in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In late 1934 it was suggested at a CC meeting that '[p]ossibilities are great in the South Coast, but the comrades are not taking advantage of them'. Criticisms were made about the recent election, in which Comrade Blake stood as a CPA candidate for the seat of Werriwa. Although there were 17 helpers assisting with the campaign, not one was recruited into the party. The CC was also amazed that there was no CPA unit in the township of Thirroul, where Blake received 350 votes, noting with surprise that it was 'here the comrades say it is impossible to recruit to the party'.<sup>430</sup>

The organisation of women's groups in the CPA was not easy either. The CPA decided early that women's groups were necessary for the purposes of educating and organising women for the class struggle.<sup>431</sup> Although a separate group, the Militant Women's Movement (MWM) was initially devised to limit divisions between men and women, uniting them both around class issues, but this created tensions.<sup>432</sup> In June 1928, after a group of the MWM was successfully established in Cessnock, the Organisation Department of the CPA noted that groups were to be formed

<sup>429</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021, ADD ON 1936, Box 3, CPA Records, Minutes, CPA Fourth Plenary Session, 31/3/1934-2/4/1934.

<sup>430</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021, ADD ON 1936, Box 3, CPA Records, C.C. Meeting Minutes, 20/10/1934.

<sup>431</sup>J. Damousi, *Women Come Rally*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1993, 144.

<sup>432</sup>Stevens, 26-27.

in Townsville and on the South Coast.<sup>433</sup> However, by February 1929, a Conference of the Organisation Department of the Central Executive noted that 'The Party work among women has not been sufficiently related to Party work as a whole' and that it had 'not received adequate direction....'. At this meeting a 'special Party apparatus' was proposed to deal with women activists. It was noted that the organisation of women 'is the concern of the whole Party and should not be left to the women members alone'.<sup>434</sup>

In July 1929, the *Illawarra Mercury* reported the formation of a Militant Women's Movement group in Wollongong. Miss Jean Thompson, who had travelled down from Sydney for the formation meeting, said in an address to the IT&LC:

Little attention had been previously paid to the women of the working class and it was essential that they should be organised to aid along with the men in resisting the attacks of the employers...

Mrs G. Yolkin, Secretary of the new Wollongong group, agreed there was a great need for such a body. She called on the IT&LC for assistance, and they 'unanimously agreed to give the movement every support'.<sup>435</sup>

Notwithstanding organisational problems, ideological differences, and a strong emphasis on tactics and strategy, it was the CPA's steadfast commitment to issues of social justice and equality that eventually won it solid support, particularly in the Depression years. Where the ALP was known for sacrificing its principles for parliamentary power, the CPA remained committed to its ideals, above and beyond all else. Richardson

<sup>433</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021 ADD ON 1936, Box 3, CPA Records, Central Executive, 1920?-1929, Minutes of Organisation Dept., 24/6/1928.

<sup>434</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021 ADD ON 1936, Box 3 (76), CPA-Conference of Organisation Department of C.E. and members of provisional Executive of the Militant Women's Executive of the Militant Women's Movement, re-Party work among women, 10/2/1929.

<sup>435</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 19/7/1929.

suggests it was the activity of various CPA members on the ground assisting the unemployed, via social protest, soup kitchens and the like that guaranteed the elevation of CPA members to prominent union positions in later years.<sup>436</sup> Ray Markey and Andrew Wells also comment on 'communists and "fellow travellers"' and how they 'filled the political and organisational vacuum as the traditional labour movement was paralysed by the Depression'.<sup>437</sup>

These socially conscious activities also afforded women a place in the CPA in this period. Early in 1930, the Wollongong Council moved to prosecute workers participating in protests on the streets. Unionists formed a Free Speech Committee to counter the Council's stance and demanded 'the right to express an opinion'.<sup>438</sup> In September 1931, CPA activists Lella Allen and Esther Curnuck were arrested and gaoled along with seven men for participating in an unauthorised street meeting at the corner of Crown and Keira Streets, Wollongong. Allen and Curnuck 'were convicted and bound over to be of good behaviour for 12 months, in default 7 days. Also to pay £2/12/- costs, in default 6 days'. The women were gaoled after they refused to be bound over. The *Workers' Weekly* reported that 'comrades cheered as they were taken to the cells'. The policeman said onlookers 'would be the next to go in for riotous behaviour if they persisted in cheering'.<sup>439</sup> In writing a report on the conviction for the *Workers' Weekly* 'EC' stated:

There can never be anything but this class hatred when a few monopolise all the good things of life, and the majority are unclothed and starving, and workers thrown into prison just for upholding the right of free speech and assembly...<sup>440</sup>

<sup>436</sup>Richardson, 1984, 181.

<sup>437</sup>R. Markey and A. Wells, 'The Labour Movement in Wollongong', in Hagan and Wells, 88.

<sup>438</sup>Richardson, 1984, 76-77.

<sup>439</sup>*Workers' Weekly*, 5/2/1932, 4.

<sup>440</sup>*Workers' Weekly*, 5/2/1932, 4.

Allen's husband, Robert, was also arrested. A miner, he was at the time a reporter for the *Labor Daily* and police identified him as a CPA sympathiser.<sup>441</sup> In keeping with the dominant assumptions of the time, the police saw Lella as a passive activist who 'usually speaks from the same platform as her husband expressing his views'.<sup>442</sup> The police reported on Esther's coal miner husband, Alfred, who was also arrested, and noted how the couple were 'Communists' and that 'their home is one of the meeting places'. They also reported that Mrs Curnuck, when addressing meetings, 'always advocates Revolution for the overthrow of the present System of Government'. The Sergeant added: 'They have an adult family, who are stated to have left home owing to the extreme views of their parents'.<sup>443</sup>

The womens' arrests attracted extensive support from the local unemployed and sections of the labour movement. The Corrimal Branch of the UWM petitioned McKell, NSW Minister for Justice, and requested him 'to immediately release the free speech fighters from Wollongong gaol'. Its acting Secretary J.W. Davison said: 'We commend these comrades, particularly the women'. He called their action a 'vallant stand taken on behalf of the workers to retain the right of free speech', and declared it to be more admirable than 'bowing to the dictates of the spineless capitalist apologists on the Wollongong Council'.<sup>444</sup> Some Corrimal workers wrote to McKell with the same request, adding 'that the Government should not have allowed the two women to be in prison for even a single day'.<sup>445</sup>

<sup>441</sup>NSW State Archives, Attorney General's Files, 7/809, report from Sergeant 2/c, Corrimal Police Station, to Constable Watts, Balgownie, dated 18/2/1932.

<sup>442</sup>NSW State Archives, Attorney General's Files, 7/809, report from Sergeant 2/c, Corrimal Police Station, to Constable Watts, Balgownie, dated 18/2/1932.

<sup>443</sup>NSW State Archives, Attorney General's Files, 7/809, report from Sergeant 2/c, Corrimal Police Station, to Constable Watts, Balgownie, dated 18/2/1932.

<sup>444</sup>NSW State Archives, Attorney General's File, 7/809, letter no. 779, Letter from J.W. Davison, Secretary, Corrimal Branch Unemployed Workers Movement, to The Hon W.J. McKell, dated 14/1/1932.

<sup>445</sup>NSW State Archives, Attorney General's File, 7/809, letter no. 768, Letter from Samuel Beresford, of Corrimal, to Hon W. J. McKell, dated 13/1/1932.

Not all party women received the level of support accorded to Allen and Curnuck. In the early 1930s, for reasons not clear, a Mrs Panser was expelled from the CPA by her Illawarra comrades. Her case illuminates some of the dynamics in the CPA at the time. She appealed the expulsion, which led to a long interview with the Central Control Commission (CCC), which concluded 'that this comrade cannot work in team work with Illawarra comrades'. They suggested that 'she is politically backward', and moreover, 'does not understand and in some instances does not want to understand party discipline'. It was acknowledged that 'she was always active' and that 'she worked regularly in her sphere and was always doing things for the party and the unemployed'. However, the CCC said: 'In our opinion her flouting of the Section leadership is intolerable, she treats with defiance Directives from the party organs in the Illawarra and the situation reached the stage when warfare between her and the section committee existed'. While Illawarra comrades told the CCC 'that it is impossible for her to be in the party in the Illawarra and the work be carried out harmoniously', the CCC recommended 'that she sign a statement of self criticism drafted by the CCC'.<sup>446</sup>

The 'statement of criticism' stated:

that having given the matter due consideration it is clear now that my attitude to the Section Committee and the responsible organs of the party in the Illawarra section were not conducive to the best interests of the party...my conduct appeared to be open defiance of the party organs and as such must have made the responsible comrades think that I was trying not only to discredit them but also go against the party...it is my real desire to be a member of the party and assist in its work because being outside of the party not only prevents me from carrying on correct working class activity but also isolates one from the revolutionary movement in Australia...I acknowledge the authority of the section committee and the responsible organs to discipline party members and myself in particular and that I will in

<sup>446</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021, ADD ON 1936, Box 16 9760, CPA Records, 'C.C.C. Correspondence, 1924-1934', Report on CPA members, signed by N Jeffrey, n.d.

future conduct myself so as to eliminate the differences that have occurred and which lead to my expulsion.<sup>447</sup>

Whether the statement was signed by Panser is not clear. Such castigation of critics was not uncommon in this Stalinist period of the CPA when outspoken people were jettisoned.<sup>448</sup> Yet, it seems that Panser attracted more attention because she was a woman - defiant and 'flouting' the leadership, she also crossed the boundary of what was considered acceptable feminine behaviour, even for CPA men. Carole Ferrier suggests there was a similar ambivalence about CPA activist Jean Devanny, who was also expelled from the party, despite her tireless efforts.<sup>449</sup> Devanny also mentions a number of instances in her biography that parallel Panser's case, including that of a South Coast woman known for her 'splendid work'. The similarities between Devanny's story and the incident involving Panser are striking, suggesting that Panser and the woman Devanny describes are one and the same. According to Devanny the South Coast woman 'spoke bitterly' about 'the treatment accorded her by men comrades'.<sup>450</sup>

By the late 1930s, the CPA had consolidated and strengthened its position in the labour movement generally. Historian of the CPA, Alistair Davidson, noted that, from quite early in its history, the CPA 'set to work among the trade unions'.<sup>451</sup> The main activity undertaken by communists between 1926 and 1928 was the distribution of propaganda among unionists,<sup>452</sup> in order to educate workers about class struggle.<sup>453</sup> Although

<sup>447</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021, ADD ON 1936, Box 16 9760, CPA Records, 'C.C.C. Correspondence, 1924-1934', Letter of self-criticism, to Central Control Commission, 23/1/1934.

<sup>448</sup>B. Curthoys, 56.

<sup>449</sup>C. Ferrier, (ed) *Point of Departure: The Autobiography of Jean Devanny*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1986, xvi.

<sup>450</sup>Ferrier, 153-154.

<sup>451</sup>*Argus*, 27/9/1921, in A. Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia: A Short History*, Hoover University Press, Stanford, 1969, 12.

<sup>452</sup>Davidson, 35.

<sup>453</sup>Davidson, 37.

Davidson suggests that this way of accessing the trade unions was only moderately successful.<sup>454</sup> CPA strategies were successful enough amongst Illawarra miners, as they constituted a 'considerable proportion' of CPA membership.<sup>455</sup> The Miners' Federation was the first federal union 'captured' by the CPA in 1934.<sup>456</sup> The CPA also gained control of the FIA in 1936.<sup>457</sup> Pat McHenry, Bill Frame and Ted Arrowsmith were CPA members and dominated the Port Kembla branch of the FIA throughout this period. As Mavis Robertson noted, the South Coast branch of the CPA 'was overwhelmingly male' and was organised 'primarily in the mines and heavy industry where no women had direct experience'.<sup>458</sup> For the CPA, consolidation through male-dominated unions and industries (as in the case of the ALP) meant that participation by women was limited.

#### *The Illawarra Trades and Labour Council*

The ALP and CPA were not the only voice for workers on the South Coast. As early as 1914, a Trades and Labour Council was established in the Illawarra. Markey and Wells claimed it was 'one of the country's earliest regional' Labour Councils, though it 'barely...survived the war years',<sup>459</sup> and after that it appears to have lapsed until 1926, when the Wollongong ALP branch initiated its re-formation.<sup>460</sup>

<sup>454</sup>Davidson, chapter 2.

<sup>455</sup>Davidson, 57.

<sup>456</sup>Davidson, 60.

<sup>457</sup>Davidson, 88; and Merritt, 1967, 249-252. See also the published account of the FIA, R. Murray and K. White, *The Ironworkers: A History of the Federated Ironworkers' Association of Australia*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1982.

<sup>458</sup>M. Robertson, 'Sally Bowen: Political and Social Experiences of a Working-Class Woman', in E. Windschuttle, (ed) *Women, Class and History* Fontana Books, Melbourne, 1980, 414.

<sup>459</sup>Markey and Wells, in Hagan and Wells, 88, and Nixon, 15.

<sup>460</sup>A. Lloyd, *Guide to Records of the South Coast Labour Council 1928-1987*, University of Wollongong Archives, Wollongong, 1988, ii.

The task of reforming the IT&LC was not easy. Even with imposing 'inclement weather' there was 'a fair attendance of members' at the ALP branch meeting, where a notice of motion was moved by Mr A.O. Leeper. He noted that the time was 'opportune' and that a T & LC was 'in the interests of the movement'. The Wollongong ALP proposed that a meeting be convened for June, with 'representatives of every union operating between Helensburgh and Kiama, including Port Kembla' requested to attend. The Sydney T & LC was also called upon 'to assist in the establishment of this body'.<sup>461</sup> In early February of 1927, however, the Wollongong ALP was still calling for the establishment of a T & LC 'to serve the South Coast Unions':

This will be the fourth attempt, and the League will convene the inaugural meeting, to which all Trades Unions are asked to send two delegates...

The meeting was to be held at the Miners Hall on 12 March.<sup>462</sup>

The miners were pivotal to the success of the IT&LC, but their failure to participate earlier seems to explain the problems with the inaugural meeting. Richardson noted the miners were initially reluctant to support the IT&LC, for fear that 'their freedom of action would thereby be compromised'.<sup>463</sup> Nixon also commented on how the 'Miners' Federation was jealous of its role as the doyen of unions in the Illawarra'.<sup>464</sup> This hesitation was eventually overcome and miners took a leading role in the IT&LC. Archivist Annabel Lloyd noted that Patrick 'Paddy' Malloy and Steve Best were President and Secretary, respectively.<sup>465</sup> Both of these men were miners and politically active.<sup>466</sup> The election of miners may have

<sup>461</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 21/5/1926.

<sup>462</sup>South Coast Times, 11/2/1927.

<sup>463</sup>Richardson, 1984, 16.

<sup>464</sup>Nixon, 21.

<sup>465</sup>Lloyd, ii, iv, v, and 9.

<sup>466</sup>Some newspaper reports of IT&LC earlier activities contradict Lloyds account and list other names as office holders - for example, the South Coast Times, 22/4/1927 reported that

meant a compromise by the ALP, or it could have simply reflected the power of miners in the union movement, but either way, the dominance of miners in the industrial scene was assured.

The Australian Workers Union (AWU), ARU, Waterside Workers' Federation (WWF), carpenters, Colliery mechanics, Miners' Federation, United Labourers and Meat workers were amongst the first unions to affiliate with the IT&LC. By February 1928 the Municipal Employees joined, making a total of nine affiliates, and by the end of 1929 there were fourteen.<sup>467</sup> After June 1930 there was a 'general trend...towards disaffiliation';<sup>468</sup> Markey and Wells maintain that by late 1931 the IT&LC was 'rendered ineffective by the Depression and mass unemployment'.<sup>469</sup> Some unions were unable to afford affiliation fees and other unions ceased payment, believing the IT&LC was less effective due to fewer funds. In 1931 the WWF IT&LC delegate resigned arguing that 'the council in no way functioned for this branch'.<sup>470</sup> Nixon concluded that by late 1931 the IT&LC operated in an 'informal way only'.<sup>471</sup> Steve Best continued to represent it informally.<sup>472</sup> With the CPA, the IT&LC remained active, protesting on issues like free speech, unemployment, evictions and housing.<sup>473</sup>

In September 1935 the IT&LC was officially re-established.<sup>474</sup> As the Depression receded it was better able to establish itself as a force in union and industrial activities, and its support for a number of local strikes in the mid to late thirties was a catalyst in its rejuvenation.<sup>475</sup> A statement of

---

Ted Heining, the Secretary of the IT&LC, called a meeting for a Saturday evening and requested 'a large attendance of delegates'. The only reason given for the meeting was; 'Business important'. Perhaps the contradictions are a result of temporary officers being appointed prior to the official election of an executive.

<sup>467</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 13/12/1929 in Richardson, 1984, 26 and Nixon, 22.

<sup>468</sup>Richardson, 1984, 54.

<sup>469</sup>Markey and Wells, in Hagan and Wells, 88.

<sup>470</sup>Nixon, 37.

<sup>471</sup>Nixon, 38.

<sup>472</sup>Richardson, 1984, 183.

<sup>473</sup>Nixon's thesis gives a useful account of these activities.

<sup>474</sup>Richardson, 1984, 183.

<sup>475</sup>Richardson, 1984, 184.



income and expenditure for 1937 indicated that the miners contributed £140 in affiliation fees, approximately 69 per cent of total fee income. The next largest affiliate was the Port Kembla branch of the FIA, which contributed £25, or approximately 12 per cent of total affiliation fees to the IT&LC.<sup>476</sup> By the end of 1940 the IT&LC had the following unions as its affiliates; Miners' Federation, WWF, Shop Assistants Union, Carpenters and Joiners Society, Australian Society of Engineers, Moulders Union, Boilermakers Society, Ironworkers Union, AWU, United Labourers, ARU, the Hotel, Club and Restaurant Employees Union (HCRU), Bread Carters Union, Printing Industry Employees Union, Federated Engine-Drivers' and Fireman's Association, and the Bricklayers Union.<sup>477</sup>

Given these affiliates, it is clear the IT&LC was overwhelmingly a male domain with male delegates. A comical illustration of this is the IT&LC's preoccupation with beer. Questions about the supply, price and availability of beer were subject to constant debate at numerous meetings. In December 1940 the IT&LC declared its 'unqualified opposition to the increased price of beer'. Comrades Roach and Sullivan argued the 'big increases' were 'unwarranted and a sheer imposition'. They called on 'all unions to declare South Coast hotels "black" from midnight Thursday,...unless satisfactory reductions are made by the publicans'.<sup>478</sup> In May 1951, it appears IT&LC received a request from the executive of the Coalcliff Miners' Lodge to convene a meeting with the United Liquor Victuallers Association (ULVA) 'to have schooners from opening of hotels until hotel closes'. Comrade Francis, however, felt conferences with the ULVA were 'a waste of time', and instead he noted how the 'worker can

<sup>476</sup>NBAC, T31/7, Australian Coal and Shale Employees Federation - Southern District (NSW), Illawarra District Trades and Labour Council-Statement of Income and Expenditure for period 1/1/1937 to 31/12/1937.

<sup>477</sup>NBAC, T31/7, Australian Coal and Shale Employees Federation - Southern District (NSW), Illawarra District Trades and Labor Council - Secretary's Annual Report, 18/2/1941.

<sup>478</sup>NBAC, T31/7, Australian Coal and Shale Employees Federation, Southern District (NSW), Illawarra District Trades and Labor Council minutes meeting 11/12/1940.

control the position if he will'.<sup>479</sup> Revolutionary practices for this unionist were not confined to the question of wages and conditions of work. It is unclear, however, whether Francis was advocating action against the ULVA and the hotel keepers, or, suggesting his fellow workers should resist the drink.

Of course, beer was by no means the only issue of concern. Reflecting its increasingly important role in the Illawarra labour movement following the Depression, the IT&LC asserted its position on issues of political importance to the region. For instance, immediately before the 1940 Federal election, the IT&LC issued a statement concerning which ALP candidate should receive the support of workers in the seat of Werriwa. The IT&LC commented on the 'confusion' that had occurred over 'military and industrial conscription', which the 1940 ALP Easter Conference had agreed to oppose. The IT&LC sided with the State ALP, attacking Lazzarini, Member for Werriwa, and his Official ALP cohorts:

Labor politicians, who should be the servants of the movement, ignored this rank and file decision and voted with the Menzies Government to give powers to Munition and Armament makers to conscript Labor for the benefit of making profits - to the detriment of existing award rates and living standards.

The IT&LC endorsed Connor, State ALP candidate for Werriwa. They claimed that Lazzarini had acted 'contrary to the wishes of the rank and file' and therefore, had 'forfeited all rights to the support of the Trade Union movement'.<sup>480</sup> Although the ALP had been instrumental in its establishment, the IT&LC now regarded itself as a defining force in Illawarra politics and well within its rights to comment on such matters.

<sup>479</sup>UWA, D169, series 1, box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 2/5/1951.

<sup>480</sup>NBAC, T31/7, Australian Coal and Shale Employees Federation -Southern District (NSW), Illawarra District Trades & Labour Council minutes, 18/9/1940.

The IT&LC gradually established its authority to define the opinions of the Illawarra labour movement. After the invasion of the Soviet Union by Germany in 1941, it directed all unions to push aside differences based on Party and religion to ensure the 'great unity' within the IT&LC continued.<sup>481</sup> At other times it made demands on the CPA and the ALP, thus demonstrating its central position in Illawarra's working-class politics. For example, in early April 1944 Len George, then IT&LC Secretary, wrote to J.B. Miles, General Secretary of the CPA, informing him that the IT&LC had carried '28 votes to 2' the resolution: 'That this Council urge the Executive of the A.L.P. to grant the right of affiliation to the Aust. Communist Party'. The IT&LC argued 'that such affiliation will result in the further strengthening of the Labour Movement'.<sup>482</sup> This was not surprising, because by the mid-1940s the CPA controlled IT&LC.<sup>483</sup> Its demands, of course, were not met.

By 1954 the IT&LC could claim it represented directly a significant proportion of workers and political activists in the Wollongong area. Although not a political party in the same sense as the ALP or the CPA, it counted the particularly large and powerful Miners' Federation and the FIA among its affiliated unions and spoke with increasing confidence on political and industrial matters.

The IT&LC remained a male domain because of the kinds of unions and industries it represented. From its beginning women had been marginal to its activities. There were, however, several attempts to include them. In October 1941 calls were made for the formation of a Women's Auxiliary in the IT&LC, to raise funds through social activities.<sup>484</sup> The call

<sup>481</sup>NBAC, T31/7, Australian Coal and Shale Employees Federation -Southern District (NSW), Copy of resolution from Illawarra District Trades and Labour Council meeting of 22/10/1941, re war and aid to the Soviet Union.

<sup>482</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021 ADD ON 1936, Box 5 (76), CPA Records, 'A.L.P. AFFILIATION CAMP[AIGN] 1946', Letter from Mr L.S. George, Secretary, IT&LC, to J.B. Miles, General Secretary, CPA, dated 5/4/1944.

<sup>483</sup>Davidson, 90.

<sup>484</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, Box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 29/10/1941.

was repeated again in early 1942 during a discussion on the Council's financial position, Ted Roach and delegate Salmon asking 'that a ladies auxiliary be set up for the purpose of organising regular socials and dances'.<sup>485</sup> This call proved successful, and an Auxiliary was formed that year. From all accounts the Auxiliary was successful in raising funds: it conducted Sunday night socials in the Trades Hall,<sup>486</sup> and, in 1942 it organised the May Day dance, for which the IT&LC congratulated them because they raised £22/9/0 compared with the £12/0/1 1/2 collected from the May Day meeting as a whole.<sup>487</sup> The Auxiliary was also called upon to contribute ideas on how to curb spending due to the government bans during World War Two.<sup>488</sup> In October 1942 when Mrs Payne reported on the work of the auxiliary to the IT&LC the 'ladies' were 'congratulated on their efforts'.<sup>489</sup>

In July 1942, an appeal was made at a IT&LC meeting which noted the auxiliary's activity in relation to the war. The appeal said:

The Women's Auxiliary of the Trades & Labour Council appeals to all organisations for assistance in helping to build up the membership. The Auxiliary is taking an active part in assisting the War Effort and help is required to man the C.A.S. Post at the Trades Hall.

Interestingly, the appeal was addressed to men attending the IT&LC meeting: 'If your women folk are interested, tell them to contact Miss Una Warrington at the Trades Hall'.<sup>490</sup> Yet another indication that few women frequented the Hall or took a direct hand in the meetings of the organisation proper. The accolade to the Auxiliary came a week or so after the *South Coast Times* reported that:

<sup>485</sup>NBAC, T31/7, Australian Coal and Shale Employees Federation - Southern District (NSW), Minutes of Illawarra District Trades and Labor Council, 4/3/1942.

<sup>486</sup>UWA, D169, series 1, Box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 15/4/1942.

<sup>487</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, Box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 13/5/1942.

<sup>488</sup>*South Coast Times*, 28/8/1942.

<sup>489</sup>*South Coast Times*, 23/10/1942.

<sup>490</sup>UWA, D169, series 1, box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 8/7/1942.



Far from being a men's preserve the Trade's Hall is rapidly becoming a centre for women unionists and wives of unionists. Many unions now have women members and their presence at meetings is noticeable.

This comment was followed by a remark on the 'spic and span kitchen' at the Hall, and how this was 'a credit to the members of the Auxiliary and their friends'.<sup>491</sup> The same newspaper report stated:

South Coast Trade Union history was made at a meeting of Hotel and Restaurant employees on Wednesday morning...Miss K. Burke, was elected to represent the union on the Illawarra Labour Council...<sup>492</sup>

Apart from this sole union representative (for a union in the hospitality industry), women's involvement was confined to domestic and fund-raising tasks. While duties of this kind were extremely valuable, it could hardly have been seen as encroaching on 'a men's preserve';<sup>493</sup> if anything it confirmed that the IT&LC was indeed a masculine entity.

When I conducted oral interviews with some women active in the Wollongong labour movement they were unaware that an IT&LC women's auxiliary had ever existed.<sup>494</sup> It is likely that the Auxiliary was a war-time measure only. Despite its success in a number of areas during 1942, the Auxiliary was clearly struggling for members. At another IT&LC meeting, later the same month, Mrs Allen 'appealed to delegates to give more support to the Women's Auxiliary', as 'their numbers were all too few to carry out the work necessary'. She also argued that 'there were many ways in which the men could assist.'. Following her comments, Comrade

<sup>491</sup>South Coast Times, 9/10/1942.

<sup>492</sup>South Coast Times, 9/10/1942.

<sup>493</sup>South Coast Times, 9/10/1942.

<sup>494</sup>Interview with Dolly Potter and Sally Bowen, 29/1/1996.

Salmon argued that 'the organisational methods used were incorrect, in so far as they were appealing inwards for assistance from the Council when they should be going out in a broader manner'. The Secretary, Len George, claimed also that 'there were many reasons for the slow development of the auxiliary'. A meeting between the IT&LC Executive and the Auxiliary's executive was proposed, 'so that the position could be analysed and plans made to overcome difficulties and mistakes in organisation'.<sup>495</sup> The men clearly felt they could lead and direct the Auxiliary.

The Auxiliary disappeared, however, sometime after 1942, and probably before the end of the war. In 1953, with the IT&LC facing financial problems, an executive member proposed 'a Melbourne Cup Sweep' to alleviate the problem, and also that 'the Executive give attention to the development of a Women's Auxiliary'.<sup>496</sup> The 1953 request for women to assist with fund-raising indicated also that there had been little progress on the woman question in the IT&LC.

Women's issues gained some support from the IT&LC during the early 1950s. In 1952, when Betty Perry asked the Council for its support of local meetings of the recently formed Union of Australian Women (UAW), the IT&LC obliged and allowed the UAW's secretary to 'circularise unions setting out the aims and constitution of the Union'.<sup>497</sup> In April 1954, a motion 'That Council views with pleasure the utterances of Mr Landa relative to the anticipated legislation of the State Government relative to equal pay for the sexes' was carried unanimously.<sup>498</sup> Support for women, however, was given in the context of the social and cultural assumptions of the men at the helm of the IT&LC. For example, in 1952, when rainer and communist Dave Bowen raised the problem of unemployment amongst women in the district with the IT&LC, he did so complaining that single

<sup>495</sup>UWA, D169, series 1, box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 22/7/1942.

<sup>496</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 22/7/1953.

<sup>497</sup>UWA, D169, series 1, box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 30/7/1952.

<sup>498</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 28/4/1954.

girls were dismissed while married women remained in employment. He accepted the prevalent idea that women did not work after marriage unless obliged to do so.<sup>499</sup>

The labour movement in Australia generally endorsed this way of thinking about women and paid work. In particular, women's marital status and their defined role in the family informed decisions about rates of pay. The assumption that women were not primarily responsible for the financial support of family members had wide currency at this time and resulted in their income being regarded as secondary. During World War Two the labour movement argued for equal pay to protect "men's jobs" and to enable a degree of control of the labour market while many of its members were away at war,<sup>500</sup> the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) adopting equal pay as official policy in 1941.<sup>501</sup> The presence of women in the labour market during the war meant the issue became one of 'considerable activity' in the immediate post war years,<sup>502</sup> and in the postwar period mixed motives often lurked behind the labour movement's push for equal pay.<sup>503</sup>

In Wollongong equal pay appears to have received solid support from the IT&LC, with little contention. Wollongong's strongly sex segregated labour force explains why the IT&LC gave favourable support to

<sup>499</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 19/11/1952.

<sup>500</sup>P. Johnson, 'Gender, Class And Work: The Council of Action for Equal Pay Campaign in Australia During World War II', *Labour History*, no.50, May 1986, 1136.

<sup>501</sup>J. Hagan, *The History of the ACTU*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1981, 112.

<sup>502</sup>A. Curthoys, 'Equal Pay, a Family Wage or Both: Women Workers, Feminists and Unionists in Australia since 1945', in B. Calne, E.A. Groz, and M. de Lepervanche, (eds) *Crossing Boundaries: Feminism and the Critique of Knowledges*, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1988, 132.

<sup>503</sup>M. Thornton, '(Un)equal Pay for Work of Equal Value', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol.23, no.4, December 1981, 468. Here Thornton argued in the case of unions covering clerical workers at universities that the union's support for equal pay 'is limited to the very few occupations where men and women are doing the same work. Male support does not extend to advocating equal pay for women in segmented areas of the workforce'. But I argue there are more complex and sometimes contradictory motives for supporting equal pay, and that the labour movement's response to equal pay was never a unified one and can not be explained according to one factor alone. Labour market conditions, the family wage, and notions of skill are some factors that in association resulted in a variety of ambiguous and contradictory responses from the labour movement.

equal pay demands in this period. Equal pay was uncontroversial when the bulk of the men worked in single sex industries and concepts like the "male breadwinner" and "the family" wage remained unchallenged because the sexual division of labour was so entrenched. In 1956, after attending the World Conference of Working Women, held in Hungary, Mrs Taylor addressed the IT&LC, urging support for equal pay. Her address was received favourably and Council members agreed to arrange meetings in the Illawarra where Mrs Taylor could address 'girls' on the issue. The IT&LC also moved to contact "female unions" like the Miscellaneous Workers', Hospital Employees Union, the Illawarra Teachers Union and the Women's Auxiliaries of trade unions in the area, to encourage them to support the campaign for equal pay.<sup>504</sup> These moves indicate the IT&LC regarded equal pay as an issue for women and related to "women's work", and for these reasons they saw no problem in offering their unconditional support.

It was for similar reasons that women had limited impact on the structure and membership of the IT&LC. The marked sexual division of labour meant women had limited opportunities for participation in IT&LC activities and structures. In 1953, Mrs B Perry was an IT&LC delegate for the Teachers' Federation<sup>505</sup>, and in 1954 Miss M Everitt was a delegate from the Clerks' Union<sup>506</sup>. However, like the women delegates, these unions were in a minority in a council dominated by unions representing miners and the burgeoning heavy industries, and therefore held little sway and power.

The ways in which the IT&LC claimed to represent the political interests of working-class people in Wollongong were clearly different from those of both the ALP and the CPA. The IT&LC did not put up political candidates or actively seek parliamentary power, nor did it share the CPA's desire for revolution. Nevertheless, from the very beginning, sympathisers

<sup>504</sup>UWA, D169/2/1 series 2 box 8, SCLC Records, Minutes, 25/10/1956.

<sup>505</sup>UWA, D169, series 1, box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 4/3/1953.

<sup>506</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 15/9/1954.

from both parties were included in its ranks, and this shaped the council's approach to political issues of concern to the working-class people of Wollongong. More so than either the ALP or the CPA, the IT&LC acted as a mediating force and a place where consensus was forged for the Wollongong labour movement, for whose agenda the goal of unity was central.

Speaking of the 1990s, Barbara Pocock has argued that the continuing under-representation of women in Australia's trade unions is influenced by factors such as the types of industries people work in and whether working part-time or full-time - structural issues.<sup>507</sup> This argument can be applied to the gender relations in Wollongong's working class political organisations between 1921 and 1954. Women were largely absent and underrepresented due to the close and dependent links between the political organisations, paid workers and their trade unions. Women were often visible only in the separate women sections of the organisations and these provided only limited forms of political activity.

Ultimately male workers, both directly and indirectly, shaped the political agenda of all organisations claiming to represent the political interests of Wollongong's working class. Such a restricted focus was inevitable, but nevertheless guaranteed that a robust labour movement was central to the political ethos of the Wollongong community. It went largely unquestioned, even by working-class women, because, at this time their futures and fortunes were dependent on those of their husbands', which depended on a secure industrial base. If Mrs Smith had been an activist in a community less determined and influenced by this industrial base, her fortunes, and the fortunes of her class, might have been very different.

<sup>507</sup>B. Pocock, 'Gender and Activism in Australian Unions', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 37, no. 3, September 1995, 378.

## 5

### *Solidarity and Fragmentation: Workplace Relations*

#### *1930s-1941*

In September 1940 *The Blast* sent a message to 'workers whose circumstances force them to apply to the A.I.S. for employment'. They said simply 'we extend our sympathy'. *The Blast* alleged that workers were 'herded like cattle into a barbed wire [sic] enclosure to be looked up and down by the Employment Officer' and they argued that 'humiliation such as this must cease'. The only solution was to have the unions engage labour and 'workers should support this and force the company to observe decent conditions'.<sup>508</sup> *The Blast*, a union/CPA newsletter was urging the collective action of workers against employers.

As with many industrial centres, the organisation of paid work in Wollongong was terrain contested by both workers and capitalists.<sup>509</sup> This was particularly so in the severe Depression years, and during the Second World War, when people faced extreme pressures and restrictions. Increased profit motivated capitalists' continuous search for more efficient ways of organising work in opposition to the struggle by workers for higher wages and a better working life. Tamara Hareven suggested in her study that paid work was regarded 'as a collective enterprise', breeding 'a communal work ethos' which then 'governed workers' relations with each

<sup>508</sup>BHP Archives, W002/101/001: Australian Iron and Steel Ltd. Port Kembla Steelworks. Industrial Department. General Correspondence Files. Propaganda, 1940, *Red Blast*, no.2, 9/9/1940.

<sup>509</sup>R. Edwards, *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in Twentieth Century*, Basic Books, New York, 1979, 16.

other'.<sup>510</sup> Rick Fantasia also noted how these codes, or 'values and practices of mutual solidarity', historically have informed the 'ethos and practice' of the union movement.<sup>511</sup> An influential force, 'within the constraints of capitalism', it shapes and organises work on behalf of workers<sup>512</sup>; but these relations are also contested.<sup>513</sup> Solidarity between workers and the union movement is tenuous and often ambivalent, for sometimes it is 'diluted, deflected, or bartered away' by either party.<sup>514</sup>

The perception that solidarity is constant amongst the working class has largely rested on that other misconception, that contends capitalists are consistently opposed to workers and their interests. Divisive representations of capital and labour in turn consume marxist thinking and are often present in union publications and speeches. For instance, the 1929 preamble to the rule book of the Illawarra branch of the Workers' Industrial Union of Australia, stated that 'a class struggle' existed and that there was 'constant conflict'.<sup>515</sup> British historian Patrick Joyce contends that relations between capital and labour are constantly presented by marxist scholars as 'inherently antagonistic', and, this interpretation acts as 'a kind of intellectual strait-jacket' obscuring an area of co-operation that co-exists with conflict.<sup>516</sup> Exploitative relations between capitalists and workers do not always result in overt conflict; sometimes they are more subtle in their effects with the livelihoods of workers (and their families) depending on the continuation of paid work.<sup>517</sup> To this end, Joyce points to the need to

<sup>510</sup>Hareven, 84.

<sup>511</sup>R. Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action and Contemporary American Workers*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988, 27.

<sup>512</sup>Williams, 95.

<sup>513</sup>Stephen Hill, *Competition and Control at Work*, Heinemann Educational Books, London, 1981, chapters 7 and 8.

<sup>514</sup>Fantasia, 27.

<sup>515</sup>NBAC, E165/12/4, Australian Coal and Shale Employees' Federation, Central Council and Districts, 'Rules of the Illawarra Branch of the Workers' Industrial Union of Australia', 1929.

<sup>516</sup>P. Joyce, (ed) *The Historical Meanings of Work*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, 7.

<sup>517</sup>Dr Mike Donaldson made this point.

understand 'the interrelation of co-operation and conflict'.<sup>518</sup> It is the character of these relations - between workers, unions and management that is the substance of this and the following chapter. This chapter discusses these relations in general terms and includes two case studies before July 1941, first, the 1936 Annabel Dispute, and second, women's waged work and a related strike in May 1941. Chapter six turns to the period after July 1941 and examines the situation during the Second World War, the 1945 steel strike, and the issue of migrants in the labour force.

#### *Workers, Unions and Management*

Collectivity, unity, solidarity and brotherhood pervade working class and labour movement history and propaganda, such as the poem that appeared in *The Ironworker* in July 1942 entitled 'What Kind of a Union Man are You?'

Bricks joined by mortar build us a wall,  
But bricks by themselves are nothing at all,  
Links well forged may preserve any chain,  
But one weak link may destroy any gain.  
The Wall's been built for our protection----  
Are you a firm brick or a loose connection?  
Are you keeping the chain free from rust,  
Or only beginning because you must?  
Are you living and thinking the Union Way,  
Or letting the walls fall into decay?  
Snap into it, Brother, and do your part!

<sup>518</sup>Joyce, 8.

Be a Union man from your skin to your heart!<sup>519</sup>

As Elizabeth Faue noted, labour movement propagandists employ 'the concept of solidarity to foster loyalty, unanimity and oneness of purpose'.<sup>520</sup> These common interests and goals are shaped in a hostile, almost natural, opposition between capital and labour, as is evident from this rhyme published in *The South Coast Bulletin* at the time of the Depression:

Ride a cock horse,  
We've rumbled the boss,  
He's been putting some awful  
Tripe across.  
But now he's cornered  
As everyone knows  
We've just got to shove him  
And over he goes.<sup>521</sup>

Metcalf says that whilst solidarity seems to be 'at the very heart of both socialism and the labour movement', it is poorly theorised and rarely subject to critical exploration. The reason for this 'conceptual naivety', Metcalfe argues, is the 'naturalism' employed by labour historians and class theorists when explaining class.<sup>522</sup> Class is too often regarded as a static category, which leads researchers to assume that where similar interests exist so does solidarity. He cites passages from Marx's *The Communist Manifesto*, *The Poverty of Philosophy* and *Capital* which describe the transition of a class-in-itself to a class-for-itself as examples of 'inadequate'

<sup>519</sup>The Ironworker, vol.3, no.7, July 1942, 5.

<sup>520</sup>E. Faue, 'The Dynamo of Change: Gender and Solidarity in the American Labour Movement of the 1930s', *Gender and History*, vol.1, no.2, Summer 1989, 138.

<sup>521</sup>The South Coast Bulletin, in *Workers' Weekly*, 20/3/1931, 6.

<sup>522</sup>A. Metcalfe, 'Sex and Solidarity Fraternity, Patriarchy and Labour History', in Irving, 88.

class analyses. He argues they are lacking because they deny the complexity of class, but more importantly they do not convey class as a 'process'.<sup>523</sup> It cannot be denied that class solidarity implies a notion of sameness or co-existence within the labour movement; in Faue's words any divisions, disagreements, and differences 'evaporate before the unified narrative'.<sup>524</sup> Yet, it is precisely these moments of discord that are a part of class as a complex process, and therefore need to be incorporated into any discussion of class solidarity.

Gender analysis, in particular, will always pose challenges to a theory of class solidarity. Differences as a result of gender have often been viewed as opposing or undermining class analyses, and rather than as an important part of class processes and their formation. As indicated in Chapter One, this was the problem McKibbin faced when he stressed the idea of class as 'central' to the labour history project.<sup>525</sup> Bob James has suggested an alternative approach arguing that neither class nor gender analysis can provide a solution to the impasse that exists between feminist and labour histories. Gender analysis assumes relations between men and women are always antagonistic; as does a class analysis with its relations between workers and capitalists.<sup>526</sup> James proposes that historians in both camps dispense with such polarised conceptions and acknowledge the 'co-existence of women and men'. This, he remarks, 'is where the ground *potentially* begins to shift'.<sup>527</sup>

However, neither McKibbin's conception of class as primary, nor James' complete abandoning of class and gender in favour of 'co-existence' is helpful for understanding the complexity of gender and class relations in the working class. While James' proposition is a challenge to McKibbin's,

<sup>523</sup>Metcalf, in Irving, 89-90.

<sup>524</sup>Faue, 1989, 139.

<sup>525</sup>McKibbin, in Irving, 38-40.

<sup>526</sup>Bob James, 'Where are all the Women in Labour History?', in G. Whitlam, et.al. *A Century of Social Change*, Pluto Press, Leichhardt, 1992, 39-40.

<sup>527</sup>James, in Whitlam, 41-42.

they both accept too readily that class and gender constitute an either-or choice. They both fail to conceive of gender and class simultaneously shaping the experiences of women and men.<sup>528</sup> While Mary Ann Clawson correctly notes 'class and gender exist as separate bases of oppression', and therefore create 'alternative points of personal and collective interest around which solidarity might be constructed', they nevertheless affect both men and women.<sup>529</sup> Furthermore, both McKibbin and James take solidarity or co-existence as given. Here we might well ask - as P.K. Edwards does - Why do people adopt such views when they clearly 'clash with much of their own daily experience'?<sup>530</sup> While differences amongst workers do not necessarily result in disunity, sometimes, as Faue puts it, 'gender, race, ethnicity, and skill undermine the common ground of solidarity and divide the working class'.<sup>531</sup> This thinking needs to be included in a scholarly understanding of solidarity, and anything less is unacceptable, because the 'struggle' amongst workers could be at least as significant in determining the success of solidarity as any 'struggle' with the employer might be.<sup>532</sup>

Feminists are not free either from criticism on the question of incorporating difference. Some feminist scholars continue to employ gender-only arguments.<sup>533</sup> American philosopher Elizabeth V. Spelman

<sup>528</sup>C. West and S. Fenstermaker, 'Doing Difference', *Gender and Society*, vol.9, no. 1, February 1995, 30, and C. Cockburn, *Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change*, new edition, Pluto Press, London, 1991, 94.

<sup>529</sup>M. Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender and Fraternalism*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1989, 10.

<sup>530</sup>P.K. Edwards, *Conflicts at Work: A Materialist Analysis of Workplace Relations*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986.

<sup>531</sup>Faue, 1989, 139.

<sup>532</sup>Fantasia, 109.

<sup>533</sup>In recent decades there has been substantial debate and discussion about feminism's ability to incorporate differences like class, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. See for example: T. De Lauretis, 'Eccentric Subjects: Feminist Theory and Historical Consciousness', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 16, no.1, Spring 1990, 115-150, who discussed the difference issue and noted the need to understand 'their [class, gender, race and sexual preference] constant intersection and mutual implication or how one may affect the others...'. However, while the will exists to incorporate or acknowledge differences theoretical frameworks often still perpetuate a gender-only approach. My criticisms and claims about gender-only arguments are therefore in this context. For an elaboration of this point see: Brewer, 11-21; S. Stanford Friedman, 'Making History: Reflections on Feminism, Narrative, and Desire', in D. Elam, and R. Wiegman, (eds) *Feminism Beside Itself*, Routledge, New York, 1995, 11-53; V. Wagner, 'In The Name of Feminism', in Elam and Wiegman, 119-130; and C. Johnson-Roullier, 'The

has noted an anxiety felt amongst some feminists over race and class analyses. It seems these concepts have the potential to direct the focus away from gender, which, it is presumed, 'gives feminist inquiry its distinctive cast'.<sup>534</sup> She quotes feminist Audre Lorde's suggestion that there is 'a pretence to a homogeneity of experience covered by the word *sisterhood* that does not in fact exist'.<sup>535</sup> Reflecting on this problem, Spelman has concluded that only through attending to differences can scholars discover the commonalties between people. Women are not only women, but, are people formed through social processes whereby they become 'particular kinds of women'.<sup>536</sup> Understanding these differences is something both class and feminist theorists have often failed to do. It is necessary, however, to integrate an understanding of these processes into considerations of the subject; then scholars will realise commonalties might be formed around differences other than gender.

Of course the problem of how to theorise or conceptualise collective action is not exclusively one for historians. Rick Fantasia has commented on sociology's equally problematic and cursory treatment of collective action. In questionnaires and surveys aiming to assess class attitudes, the independent variables are limited and often only serve to reinforce or accommodate the researcher's pre-existing ideas about class and collective action.<sup>537</sup> In other words, they start from a fixed and uniform conception of class, and conclude that if the answer does not fit that it is not expressing a conception of "class". This methodology relies heavily on stratification theories of class which refers 'to the presence of social groups which are

Singularity of Multiplicity: Feminism and the Pitfalls of Valorization', in Elam and Wiegman, 179-196. Wagner states that there is a 'unifying drive underlying the emphasis on difference' (Wagner, in Elam and Wiegman, 123), and Johnson-Roullier argues that feminisms 'acknowledgment of multiplicity remains just that an acknowledgment - while often its central premises remain the same' (Johnson-Roullier, in Elam and Wiegman, 183).

<sup>534</sup>E. V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*, Beacon Books, Boston, 1988, 113.

<sup>535</sup>Spelman, 1.

<sup>536</sup>Spelman, 113.

<sup>537</sup>Fantasia, 4-6.



ranked one above the other, usually in terms of the amount of power, prestige and wealth their members possess'.<sup>538</sup> Oestreicher suggests that ideas about working-class behaviour and consciousness have been influenced by marxism, which he claims, stresses 'proletarianization as a result of the development of productive forces' and by modernisation theory which emphasises 'the conflicts between tradition and modernity'.<sup>539</sup> Neither explores the limits of collective action and solidarity, questions about which are often excluded from research 'because they do not meet the standard or classical model of what class consciousness ought to look like'.<sup>540</sup> There is a failure to understand and acknowledge that contradictions and inconsistencies are an integral component of class which is a process and a relationship.

In his study of working-class people in two American industrial cities, John T. Cumbler identified three factors which affected the development of solidarity, which were:

- the demands of the workplace (including the scale, conditions, technology, and discipline of the work place),
- the relative geographic dispersion or centrality of social centers, residences, and work places, and
- the dilemma of integrating new members into the workforce and community<sup>541</sup>

Oppositional relations with employers can also be a catalyst.<sup>542</sup> Solidarity also arises through 'mutual association' with fellow workers,<sup>543</sup> although it is important to note that similarity in life experiences or structural location

<sup>538</sup>M. Haralambos and M. Holborm, (eds) *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*, third edition, Unwin Hyman, London, 1990, 24.

<sup>539</sup>R.J. Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation: Working People and Class Consciousness in Detroit, 1875-1900*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1986, xviii.

<sup>540</sup>Fantasia, 23.

<sup>541</sup>J.T. Cumbler, *Working-Class Community in Industrial America*, Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 1979, 5 and 218.

<sup>542</sup>Oestreicher, 223.

<sup>543</sup>Fantasia, 11.

cannot alone explain either the emergence or the success of solidaristic groupings.<sup>544</sup> Oestreicher urges scholars to recognise that 'workers were neither consistently class conscious, nor consistently lacking in class consciousness', but:

approached each concrete situation as individuals with multiple identities and loyalties, choosing the response that seemed appropriate to the occasion.<sup>545</sup>

In consequence, solidarity and its opposite, fragmentation, can be synchronous in any one situation and informs a class analysis understood as a process formed out of the negotiations between structure and agency.<sup>546</sup> It also makes questionable the idea that class is constantly about conflict between capitalists and labour.

Feminist historians and theorists have commented on this divisive discourse used by class analysts, and the significance of gender in constructing this discourse. Lake notes how marxism, which underpins much of labour history, 'focuses on a conflict between men' and stresses the 'violent class struggle between competing capitalist men and propertyless working men'.<sup>547</sup> Damousi analyses various kinds of working-class iconography and suggested that such images 'attempted to valorise working-class masculinity and frequently adopted a 'confrontationalist mode'.<sup>548</sup> In her discussion of the Australian trade union movement as historically 'one of the most powerful and militant in the world', Carmel Shute argues that its 'structures, language, behaviour, [and] imagery' were 'exclusive to men and exclusive of women'. To attract women successfully, she said it was imperative for trade unions to recognise the specific

<sup>544</sup>Clawson, 7.

<sup>545</sup>Oestreicher, 222-223.

<sup>546</sup>Oestreicher, 229.

<sup>547</sup>Lake, in Irving, 77.

<sup>548</sup>Damousi, 172.

subjectivities of women.<sup>549</sup> Yet while feminist historians acutely reveal the inflexibility of some class analyses, they also recreate the dichotomous thinking of class theorists when they position women in opposition to class struggle. In doing so, they, too, assume that class relations are continually hostile. Moreover, they employ a secondary polarisation that aligns antagonism and aggression with masculinity, and harmony and passivity with femininity. While some class-only analyses misconstrue or oversimplify the relations between capitalists and labour by stressing conflict, feminist analyses that polarise relations between men and women in this way are similarly problematic and ahistorical. In portraying women as passive and men as aggressive they risk misunderstanding the relations between women and unions, how class operates, and by implication, women's relations with management.

Some feminist theorists challenge these ways of understanding women and class, and women's relationship to paid work and industrial conflict. Barbara Pocock argues that studies of the reasons for women's limited union activity which focus 'only on the characteristics of women' miss the point, suggesting that the reasons are, instead, a combination of societal, union, personal and job-related factors.<sup>550</sup> Similarly, British sociologist Cynthia Cockburn has noted how studies of women 'in male jobs and industries' showed that women can be equally militant as men.<sup>551</sup> If women and men working in similar situations react in the sameway, there is a challenge to feminists who suggest class struggle and militant action is simply about hyper-masculinity and therefore exclusive of women.

The oral history interviews with Wollongong male workers demonstrated how rarely they spoke only of co-operation, or only of

---

<sup>549</sup>C. Shute, 'Unequal Partners: Women, Power and the Trade Union Movement', in N. Grieve and A. Burns, (eds) *Australian Women: Contemporary Feminist Thought*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994, 166-167.

<sup>550</sup>Pocock, 395-396.

<sup>551</sup>C. Cockburn, *Women, Trade Unions and Political Parties*, Fabian Research Series No. 349, Fabian Society, London, September 1987, 6.

conflict. Jack Shephard was just fourteen when he started at the steelworks in 1929. He recalled how his job as a ring-boy was 'lousy', because it involved feeling your hands along the edge of large iron rings, 'which were very rough and often resulted in torn skin'. He argued that 'boss people...are too tough when they've got the whip', but also 'when...the workers get it, they go mad with it and they get too tough'. Jack said there was never a 'happy medium; not for long anyhow'. He clearly understood that a class system operated, particularly during the Depression period, but saw he could also understand the 'management side of it'. Jack said the company was 'battling too, and if they hadn't been tough they wouldn't have survived for as long...'.<sup>552</sup> He recognised that class is a relation and that workers and capitalists depended on each other for their survival.

For Norman Martin, a steelworker and a unionist with the FIA during this period, the steelworks at Lithgow was 'a terrible place to work'. In 1932, at 24, he came to Port Kembla, where, because of this experience, he was able to obtain work. He held very strong views on workers' rights, unionism and the boss, but suggested the real authority in the workplace was vested in the foreman and not the management. When something went wrong, it was the foreman who would 'get all excited and scream and yell and swear and carry on'. Martin nevertheless sought to justify the foreman's actions and suggested that when the AIS was being established, 'they were all getting pushed from the top and practically everyone below the manager was worried about their job...'. He said the foremen, 'didn't care about their employees', but he argued that neither could they 'afford to show compassion' because a foreman's 'gotta keep driving, he's in the position of a slave driver...'.<sup>553</sup> When introducing the foreman into the capital/labour equation, Norman questions the perception that capital is

---

<sup>552</sup>Interview with Jack Shephard, 1/2/1996.

<sup>553</sup>Interview with Norman Martin, 31/1/1996.



monolithic and stable, and moreover highlights how they are also the servants of capitalism.

Williams points out how the 'world of paid production' is always 'viewed as the cradle of consciousness'.<sup>554</sup> She suggests however, that there are other significant factors affecting relations in the workplace. People commence work, for example, with 'predetermined' ideas and experiences that help shape their subsequent views and opinions. In addition, the work experiences of workers are 'mediated by a number of other institutions' outside the paid workplace - 'the socialisation process and their interactions in marriage and the family' are just two.<sup>555</sup> These create pressures and demands external to but closely intertwined with the paid work experience, and decisions, strategies, and choices at work by workers are never disconnected from these. Norman Martin's negative views of the foremen for example, were shaped by an incident involving a fellow worker, who was told by the foreman that he was unable to be absent from work to take his child to the doctor. When the child later died, Norman saw the foreman as responsible.<sup>556</sup>

Different types of control in the workplace have an influence too. For instance, in smaller workplaces the type of control was often 'simple', and the personal ties between capitalists and workers that were fostered often obscured class differences.<sup>557</sup> The capitalist was more active in the production process and consequently workers 'became enmeshed in a whole network of personal relations'.<sup>558</sup> In bigger companies, some managers, supervisors, or foremen 'recreate' this dynamic because, although profits remained with the capitalist, 'power was unmistakably vested in the person of the supervisor'.<sup>559</sup> This situation was even more

<sup>554</sup>Williams, 25.

<sup>555</sup>Williams, 25.

<sup>556</sup>Interview with Norman Martin, 31/1/1996.

<sup>557</sup>Edwards, 1979, 27.

<sup>558</sup>Edwards, 1979, 26.

<sup>559</sup>Edwards, 1979, 31 and 33.

ambiguous when supervisors and the like were promoted from the working class.<sup>560</sup>

There was a link between the sexual division of labour and the type of control in the workplace. We have seen that Wollongong women worked mainly when young and single, and also in domestic or service jobs. Control in such workplaces was of the 'simple' kind.<sup>561</sup> It was probably not unusual, as Annie Hazelton described, to be 'treated as one of the family'.<sup>562</sup> Inadequate source material exists of these kinds of workplaces, so it is often difficult to gain detailed insights into women's views of their labour relations. Consequently, we can learn little of the experience of the girl who was eventually employed 'for kitchen work' at *Wallerawang* at Thirroul, or the 'refined girl' who applied for the job at the Kookaburra Cafe, also at Thirroul, or the relations between Mrs C.A. Morgan and the 'experienced Girl or capable woman' she employed.<sup>563</sup> We can speculate, however, that the isolated nature of such work, and their direct and daily associations with their employer provided a different experience of class relations from those of the men working in the mines or the steelworks.

Workers are active in the shaping of workplace relations. Joyce has been critical of labour process analyses, which he claims present 'the inexorable unfolding of capitalist rationality' on 'a passive workforce', and he charges such analyses with being insufficient and inaccurate, because workers and unionists are active in the labour process in a variety of ways.<sup>564</sup> Whether quiet and obliging to employers, or resisting them spasmodically, or in an overtly organised fashion, workers presence insures the dynamic endures.<sup>565</sup> The notion of power is sometimes lost or diminished in attempting to counter polarised views of these relations.

<sup>560</sup>Williams, 16.

<sup>561</sup>An examination of the positions vacant shows that many of the jobs on offer for young women were in private homes, guest houses, boarding houses, milk bars, hotels and the like.

<sup>562</sup>Davis, *West of the Water*, 68.

<sup>563</sup>*South Coast Times*, 4/2/1927.

<sup>564</sup>Joyce, 6.

<sup>565</sup>Dr Mike Donaldson made this point.

Thompson suggests, therefore, that when recognising the agency of workers and the possible co-operation between workers and capitalists, it must not be forgotten that the desire for profit is the crucial factor which compels capital to direct the labour process, in turn influencing workers' struggles. Thompson regards this understanding as essential. Without it, any restriction of output, lack of motivation, difficulties in communication, and conflict are labelled as 'pathologies' in the workplace, deviating from the 'norm', - which is incorrectly assumed to be 'harmony'.<sup>566</sup> In his view, to understand agency in association with social structures is the crucial component of the historical dynamic.

This strategy is adopted in analysing the following examples, for whether solidarity is exclusive or inclusive depends on a complex interplay between structure and agency, or social practices and individuals in a particular historical moment. As Scott argues, 'political movements develop tactically and not logically, improvising appeals, incorporating and adapting various ideas to their particular cause'.<sup>567</sup> It is for these reasons that historians cannot simply assume co-existence or contestation, without qualification. Moreover, Metcalfe is right to claim that 'solidarities need to be interrogated, for they can mask (without abolishing) political tensions'.<sup>568</sup>

#### *The Annabel Dispute*

The 1930s, as Fantasia notes, highlighted the 'depth and scope' of solidarity 'in an almost ideal typical way'. It was, as he put it, a 'tumultuous

<sup>566</sup>P. Thompson, *The Nature of Work: An Introduction to Debates in the Labour Process*, Macmillan, London, 1983, 23.

<sup>567</sup>J.W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1988, 61.

<sup>568</sup>Metcalfe, in Irving, 106.

era'.<sup>569</sup> In her study of American labour iconography, Faue suggested that extremely masculine images existed during the Depression. When 'men could no longer be certain that skill, strength, or ability would guarantee them a job, they needed visual reassurance of their identity as workers and as men'.<sup>570</sup> Both these themes emerge when we consider the Annabel Dispute at the AIS steelworks in 1936.

As we saw in Chapter Three, Wollongong workers experienced unemployment, and its consequences for many years before the Depression "officially commenced". The onset of the Depression made the situation much worse. The plight of these unemployed workers and their families was one reason why the establishment of the steelworks in the late 1920s was so favourably received; many thought they offered everything these workers lacked - paid work and economic security. Those eventually securing employment at the steelworks, however, found appalling work conditions. Supposed to be the fortunate ones, they experienced a high accident rate, dangerous machinery and equipment, too many long hours spent in a deplorable work environment, and meagre pay made this an issue of some debate. Eight years after the steelworks opened, workers decided to take a stand.<sup>571</sup>

During January 1936, workers in the 36 inch mill 'were repeatedly required to work overtime' and had complained about it on numerous occasions to management.<sup>572</sup> Company demands for workers to work overtime contravened the Award, which stated employees should work only eight and three quarter hours.<sup>573</sup> Workers claimed that even eight and three quarter hours 'of arduous labour in severe heat constituted a great

<sup>569</sup>Fantasia, 25.

<sup>570</sup>Faue, 1989, 151.

<sup>571</sup>Richardson, 1984, chapter 2 provides a more detailed account of 'Workers and the Depression'. See also Merritt, 1967, 230, who gives an account of workers conditions leading up of the strike.

<sup>572</sup>*South Coast Times*, 7/2/1936.

<sup>573</sup>Richardson, 1984, 176.

strain on their health'.<sup>574</sup> They decided they would no longer work overtime.<sup>575</sup> On 24 January the shop delegate, Norman Annabel was told by the superintendent of the Mill that overtime was available and that men would be required to work a twelve hour shift until 7.30 pm. Annabel responded by making it clear that there would be no men available, and that the workers were finishing at 5pm, the usual knocking-off time. He was dismissed. The Port Kembla branch of the FIA described the dismissal as an act of victimisation, and a stop work meeting was called.<sup>576</sup>

A number of attempts were made to resolve the matter prior to this meeting, but all had, in the words of the *South Coast Times* 'proved abortive'.<sup>577</sup> Wollongong Mayor Alderman Kelly attempted to settle the dispute contacting both the management and the union officials. The Mayor said the union was willing to discuss the issue, but management was ambivalent and 'still considering their reply'.<sup>578</sup> The State Council of the FIA approached AIS asking for the two groups to meet and discuss matters related to the dispute, yet AIS management refused to meet unless the stop work meeting was cancelled.<sup>579</sup> Instead, AIS instructed their solicitor to proceed against T. McDonald, the FIA Port Kembla Branch Secretary for 'the posting of a notice of a stop work meeting'.<sup>580</sup> Mr Denford, the State Secretary of the FIA argued that by declining to meet with FIA representatives the 'company was breaking the basic principles of the Arbitration Act'. According to him, the AIS's failure to at least attempt to settle the dispute implied the company was 'trying to throw dust in the eyes of the industrial tribunals of the country'.<sup>581</sup>

<sup>574</sup>*South Coast Times*, 7/2/1936.

<sup>575</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021 ADD ON 1936, box 4 (79), CPA Records, C.C. Meeting Minutes, First Session, 10th April 1936, Pat McHenry report on Port Kembla Strike.

<sup>576</sup>*South Coast Times*, 7/2/1936.

<sup>577</sup>*South Coast Times*, 7/2/1936.

<sup>578</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 7/2/1936.

<sup>579</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 7/2/1936.

<sup>580</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 7/2/1936.

<sup>581</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 7/2/1936.

The stop work meeting proceeded attended by approximately 3000, where a motion was presented outlining the position of the unionists and workers:

That this meeting is determined to carry on the fight until the dismissed man is reinstated unconditionally and all overtime at the 36inch mill is abolished. And further we re-affirm our confidence in the officials conducting the negotiations in connection with the dispute.

The motion was carried. An amendment suggesting a return to work and a resolution of the matter through 'the proper channel' received only three votes.<sup>582</sup> The FIA's management committee and department delegates from all shifts formed a strike committee to co-ordinate the dispute. Although the workers had little experience in conducting a strike,<sup>583</sup> they were fortified, in the opinion of Pat McHenry, one of the workers and a member of the CPA, by the determination to regain the sense of independence in the workplace they had been forced to relinquish during the early years of the Depression.<sup>584</sup>

A conference between the two parties eventually followed the stop work meeting. AIS management offered to transfer workers unwilling to do overtime from the 36 inch mill to another section of the steelworks. The FIA failed to agree, preferring to follow the decision of the stop work meeting for the abolition of overtime at the 36 inch mill altogether. Mr Justice Cantor of the Industrial Commission presided over the conference and after hearing all sides separately said he was unable to make a judgement.<sup>585</sup> The dispute was at a standstill.

<sup>582</sup>*South Coast Times*, 7/2/1936.

<sup>583</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021 ADD ON 1936, box 4 (79), CPA Records, C.C. Meeting Minutes, First Session, 10th April 1936, Pat McHenry report on Port Kembla Strike.

<sup>584</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021 ADD ON 1936, box 4 (79), CPA Records, C.C. Meeting Minutes, First Session, 10th April 1936, Pat McHenry report on Port Kembla Strike.

<sup>585</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 7/2/1936.

The striking steelworkers received extensive support from other unionists and the community. Wongawilli miners discussed the dispute at their monthly Lodge meeting and decided unanimously to support the steelworkers by also stopping work until the dispute was settled. Miners claimed workers at AIS 'were striking against tyrannical conditions that were being put over by the Steel magnates'.<sup>586</sup> Wollongong Mayor Alderman Kelly said that a black-out might occur 'due to the extension of the strike to those men employed at the Power House'.<sup>587</sup> Workers at the coke works in Wollongong decided to work short time, and the Port Kembla waterside workers supported the steelworkers by not handling cargo that had been handled by members of the FIA.<sup>588</sup> The United Labourers' Union congratulated the FIA on their stance and also wrote a letter to the Premier seeking relief for the wives and children of striking steelworkers.<sup>589</sup> The Bulli-Woonona ALP branch pledged their 'wholehearted support' for Port Kembla workers who were in a 'struggle for reasonable working conditions'.<sup>590</sup> The IT&LC urged all unionists 'to do all in their power to bring about a successful conclusion'.<sup>591</sup> The *South Coast Times* also reported that people in business 'agree that the men have a wonderfully good case, and are only asking for reasonable concessions'.<sup>592</sup> The strike was also discussed in Federal parliament during a debate on iron and steel tariff duties. Mr Curtin, the Leader of the Opposition, said BHP 'had abused the advantages Parliament had given it' in the form of protection. Mr Lazzarini, the Member for Werriwa, also criticised BHP: 'It is known all over Australia as a slaughter house and a butcher's shop'.<sup>593</sup> Words of

<sup>586</sup>*South Coast Times*, 7/2/1936.

<sup>587</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 7/2/1936.

<sup>588</sup>*South Coast Times*, 7/2/1936.

<sup>589</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 14/2/1936.

<sup>590</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 14/2/1936.

<sup>591</sup>*South Coast Times*, 7/2/1936.

<sup>592</sup>*South Coast Times*, 7/2/1936.

<sup>593</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 27/3/1936.

support were reinforced with donations of money from throughout the community.<sup>594</sup>

The local newspapers reported that 'the toilers previously employed at the Steel Works are 100 per cent solid'. They commented further noting how:

This spontaneous action on the part of the workers at Port Kembla has amply demonstrated that not even such huge organisations as the B.H.P. can impose such conditions and low wages for all time, and the constant attacks made by this firm on wages and conditions have at long last culminated in definite industrial action, with a solid determination to fight, until the whole of the demands of the toilers employed there have been granted.

The report went on about the 'large number of young men' who were 'brimming over with enthusiasm and bent on bettering their conditions that they have meekly accepted for so long'. Many workers who were previously not union members were reputedly joining 'the respective organisation covering their calling'.<sup>595</sup> Unionists suspected strike breakers were being paid by the AIS and 'sent into the district to create dissension amongst the steel-workers'. It was therefore essential that the steelworkers were organised. In addition to forming committees, a "Strike Bulletin" was issued to provide information, but more importantly 'combat the false reports of the capitalist press'. A roll call of strikers was also planned to help with issuing relief, organising pickets and fund-raising.<sup>596</sup>

Later, during a Central Committee meeting of the CPA, Miners' Federation Official Bill Orr remarked that 'this spontaneous development in the Pt. Kembla steelworks has brought about one of the finest solidarity demonstrations we have seen for a number of years'. Eleven federal trade unions were involved in the strike, and according to Orr, gave their

<sup>594</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 6/3/1936.

<sup>595</sup>*South Coast Times*, 7/2/1936.

<sup>596</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 21/2/1936.

absolute support. He suggested that the 'essential factor in the whole issue was the solidarity that was developed in the workplace itself'.<sup>597</sup> Steel worker Norman Martin remembers how 'the fellas walked off the job'. Although the Annabel dispute received 100 per cent support, Martin recalled that 'the union was hardly organised, they'd come from Lithgow and there was a few people battling to try and organise the union'.<sup>598</sup> Norman said he 'didn't vote in support of Annabel, in fact he said 'I didn't know Annabel'. He said he struck 'cause I'd had enough. I'd had enough of the working conditions'. He remembers how he 'didn't have two pennies to rub together and I thought we can't go on like this, we've got to do something'. Norman believes steelworkers went on strike, 'because they'd had a gut full of the conditions they were working under'.<sup>599</sup> Jack Shephard said he also went on strike during the Annabel dispute, although he 'was never a very active unionist'. 'I wasn't against the union, I used to pay my dues and put the hand up when they said yes or no', he says but, 'I usually voted what they recommended because you give way to better knowledge...'.<sup>600</sup> Fellow steel worker Alan Dowdell also believed the Annabel strike 'was justified'.<sup>601</sup> Like the majority of their fellow workers, Norman, Jack and Alan endorsed the strike believing their rights and obligations as breadwinners had been undermined.

But not all workers were convinced that strike action was the best method available to resolve the issue. 'Arbitration' from Port Kembla, in a letter to the Editor of the *Illawarra Mercury* seven weeks after the dispute started, argued that workers 'ceased work to vindicate a principle of Unionism'. Their actions was vindicated when AIS offered to reinstate Annabel if strikers returned to work and agreed for the Industrial

<sup>597</sup>ML, ML MSS 5021 ADD ON 1936, box 4 (79), CPA Records, C.C. Meeting Minutes, Second Session, 11/4/1936, Bill Orr.

<sup>598</sup>Interview with Norman Martin, 31/1/1996.

<sup>599</sup>Interview with Norman Martin, 31/1/1996.

<sup>600</sup>Interview with Jack Shephard, 1/2/1996.

<sup>601</sup>Interview with Alan Dowdell, 21/2/1996.

Commission 'to determine the matter in dispute'. But when the strike continued, workers began asking questions about who was responsible for 'preventing a settlement'. 'Arbitration' suggested 'the interests of the men' were being sacrificed to the interests of the CPA, who, were 'a small minority', but able to 'control a meeting of many hundred of men'. He supported arbitration rather than direct action.<sup>602</sup> An even more vocal critic of the CPA's involvement was fellow striker Dan Jones, whose letter to the same paper warned of 'an attack of a microbe known as Communism'. He said that 'toilers are rendered idle because the microbe said "stop", your comrade is down'.<sup>603</sup> (Contrary to the view of 'Arbitration' and Dan Jones, however, the CPA itself lacked organisation at the AIS steelworks. According to CPA member, McWilliams the 'eyes of the whole of the Party were directed on the seamen's dispute [occurring in NSW at the same time], led by the Communists, to the almost total exclusion of this important struggle [Annabel]'.<sup>604</sup> CPA members later criticised their own inadequate leadership in relation to the dispute, and claimed it was the workers that determined its success.<sup>605</sup>).

Despite his disdain for the CPA, Dan Jones said he supported the strike 'in so far as I thought fit and proper', but his position changed when he saw the strike undermining the capacity of breadwinners to care for their families. He was angry at the pitiful strike pay, paid from union contributions, which he claimed 'would not keep one strong man for 24 hours'. He stated:

<sup>602</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 27/3/1936.

<sup>603</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 13/3/1936.

<sup>604</sup>ML MSS 5021 ADD ON 1936, box 4 (79), CPA Records, C.C. Meeting Minutes, Fourth Session, 11/4/1936, McWilliams.

<sup>605</sup>ML MSS 5021 ADD ON 1936, box 4 (79), CPA Records, C.C. Meeting Minutes, Second Session, 11/4/1936, Bill Orr.

I make not boast of intelligence, I am just a plain, blunt man that tries to make progress, for myself and you. I am a trade unionist of 40 years duration but I do not believe in this jungle method of fighting, the survival of the strongest.<sup>606</sup>

A week later Jones organised an meeting at the Wollongong Town Hall, attended by 200 striking workers. In his speech to the meeting, he claimed that at mass meetings paid officials in various unions were listened to, but 'a private in the ranks' such as himself was unable to express his opinions. He described the strike as 'a disaster...except for the officers of the union' and suggested union leaders were interested only in 'personal glory' and being 'acclaimed in the press as a strike leader'. Jones said in his years as a union representative he had 'met mine owners and managers, and not one man has ever objected to meeting me'.<sup>607</sup> This was because he knew 'how to fight'. He urged the meeting: 'Always fight from the shoulders up and you will win all the time. Use your brains'. A real man was one who fought with his brain and it was for this reason he preferred arbitration. But when he questioned the union he was ostracised, and he believed it was only when 'you pay your contributions and ask no questions' that you are considered 'loyal members of the union'. Jones demanded to know 'Who made the strike committee dictators?'.<sup>608</sup>

The meeting became a battleground for men presenting competing interpretations of their responsibilities as the family breadwinner, seen as the cornerstone of masculine identity. An interjector at the meeting said to Jones:

When I strike, I strike hard in case of rebound, so if I hurt you, take it like a man.<sup>609</sup>

---

<sup>606</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 13/3/1936.

<sup>607</sup>It is unclear in what capacity Jones served as a union representative, and although his differences with the FIA might suggest he had links with the AWU, this remark on mining indicates his association was with the Miners' Federation.

<sup>608</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 20/3/1936.

<sup>609</sup>South Coast Times, 20/3/1936.

But Jones continued with an appeal to the strikers' masculinity also.<sup>610</sup> He said the union's 'Strike Bulletin' recently expressed sorrow for the women and children affected by the strike but nevertheless demanded 'the further support of the women'. He criticised the unionists:

What leeches some men are. Shylock sought his pound of flesh from a strong man, but these men ask blood from suckling babes....Those who will get the bitter end will be the women and children.

This was a chivalrous call to the all-male meeting emphasising the workers obligations to their families. Later he remarked on the pink docket strikers received in lieu of payment from the union and claimed they were 'no legal guarantee that they will be paid' and remarked that he had 'heard of pink pills for pale people, but I have never heard of pink dockets for strong men'. Jones criticised those workers who advocated a continuation of the strike, because he believed such actions undermined their capacity to earn a family wage which ultimately determined their commitment to their duty as breadwinners. Jones concluded by countering claims BHP was affected financially by the strike.

Only damn fools would make that statement. The strike only deferred the profits of the company, which could still be earned out of the workers. What the men lost during the strike could not be regained.<sup>611</sup>

But the majority of workers disagreed, recognising that a strong challenge to the question of overtime was the only certain way of securing a family wage

---

<sup>610</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 20/3/1936.

<sup>611</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 20/3/1936.



for all men. As Sydney unionist William Young wrote in a letter to the editor of the *South Coast Times*:

There is no justification for obliging any man (especially when engaged at strenuous and exhausting work) to work overtime while the labor market is glutted with unemployed representing all trades and callings. If it be necessary to "carry on" for the whole 24 hours, let it be done, but with fresh shifts, thus enabling more men to get a living...<sup>612</sup>

The strike was eventually resolved, after a Citizen's Committee was formed at a meeting on 21 March called by the Wollongong Mayor Alderman Kelly.<sup>613</sup> The Citizens Committee said 'they were not taking sides', but were attempting to get management and workers together to discuss the issue.<sup>614</sup> The striking workers were resolute that they would not recommence work until Annabel was reinstated in the 36 inch mill. The company would not agree to this condition. The Citizens' Committee urged unionists and striking workers to settle. The Combined Unions Committee finally agreed to return to work when AIS said they would re-employ Annabel in another department until such times the 36 inch mill was ready for operation again.<sup>615</sup>

In bold face type the *South Coast Times* wrote on 3 April 1936: 'Back to Work: Everybody Pleased'. The short reference indicated the impact the strike had on the community - it was not necessary to elaborate any further. With the return of men to work the newspaper stated that business people and others alike were 'wearing a smile of gratification that has been absent for eight weeks'.<sup>616</sup> Breadwinners were once again equipped with money to spend.

<sup>612</sup>*South Coast Times*, 21/2/1936.

<sup>613</sup>*South Coast Times*, 20/3/1936.

<sup>614</sup>*South Coast Times*, 27/3/1936.

<sup>615</sup>*South Coast Times*, 27/3/1936.

<sup>616</sup>*South Coast Times*, 3/4/1936.

Thus a resumption of work was only possible after the Citizens' Committee had mediated between the company and unions.<sup>617</sup> Concessions were necessary on the part of both the workers and the AIS and in the process the power of both sides was demonstrated. On the one hand, the power of the employers was highlighted. There was widespread agreement about the terrible treatment meted out to workers, the local MP Lazzarini noting that all over the Illawarra 'the company had a reputation for brutality'.<sup>618</sup> Business people were undoubtedly of the same view when they joined with workers, the unemployed and community groups to offer both moral and financial support for the strike.<sup>619</sup> On the other hand, the power of the unions was also made evident. Statements from unionists and workers show that after the strike commenced, labour was stubborn in its determination to continue the dispute, strikers differing only on the method needed to resolve the dispute and the terms of settlement. Most would have endorsed Lazzarini views and believed that AIS were terrible employers. Norman Martin was not alone when he said he went on strike because he had 'had enough'.<sup>620</sup> Even Dan Jones, who disagreed strongly with the FIA and their handling of the dispute, recognised the AIS was an 'octopus' and said he was determined to 'be freed from its clutching tentacles and suckers'.<sup>621</sup> They were united in their quest to beat the boss, but differed on their choice of method.

The manner in which workers chose to defeat the boss was debated because of a dispute over what it meant to be a breadwinner, an ideology that united all male workers. Norman Martin said he and his family had to delay purchasing a home because he used his savings to support his family during the strike. This choice was acceptable to Norman, who 'didn't have

<sup>617</sup>*South Coast Times*, 3/4/1936.

<sup>618</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 27/3/1936.

<sup>619</sup>The Steelworkers Relief Fund published extensive lists of those individuals and organisations that donated funds to the strikers. The *South Coast Times*, 3/4/1936 reported total donations of £538 13s 9d to the fund.

<sup>620</sup>Interview with Norman Martin, 31/1/1996.

<sup>621</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 27/3/1936.

two pennies to rub together', but contrasted with Dan Jones, who regarded strike pay as inadequate and urged a return to work fearing strike action and lack of pay only hurt the women and children that he and his fellow workers were meant to provide for. But the Depression experience, and the deplorable conditions suffered at AIS as a result, guaranteed Jones was in the minority. The breadwinner ideology was the catalyst for tremendous community support with the wider community endorsing completely the right of all men to earn an adequate living for their families.

#### *Women's Work and the Spot Cafe Dispute, 1941*

Women workers in service industries, usually in small businesses and poorly unionised, were subject to fierce exploitation. Late in 1940, for reasons unclear, under the direction of the IT&LC the Shop Assistants Union and the HCRU began a campaign targeting these workplaces. Between December 1940 and mid-1941, there were reportedly over 61 complaints against restaurants, boarding houses and milk bars in the Illawarra for underpaying their workers.<sup>622</sup> Edna Johnston accused Mr Brown, her employer and owner of the 'Black and White' Milk Bar in Wollongong, of paying incorrect wages. Edna had started work at the milk bar in October 1940, where she worked every weekday and on every second Sunday. She left her job at the milk bar on 11 January 1941, because for the three months she was employed, she was not paid the extra wages to which she was entitled for working on Sundays. Ernest O'Dea of the Shop Assistants' Union said there were other breaches of the Award which included failing to pay award rates, not paying overtime, and neglecting to pay penalty rates. During a hearing on the matter at the Industrial Magistrates Court, the Magistrate said 'all employers of labour should make

<sup>622</sup>UWA, D169, series 1, box 1, SCLC Records, 'Some Facts About the Restaurants, Boarding Houses and Milk-Bars - Wollongong', n.d.

themselves conversant with variations of the awards'. Directing his comments to Brown, the owner of the 'Black and White' Milk Bar, the Magistrate stated: 'Ignorance of awards was no excuse'.<sup>623</sup> Although Edna and the unionists were successful in their claims, Brown still had not paid the monies owed a month after the court's ruling.<sup>624</sup> His hesitation in paying, and the numerous other breaches by owners of cafes, hotels and boarding houses in the Illawarra at this time indicated the reasons for underpayment extended beyond ignorance.

The IT&LC said a Wollongong boarding house was apparently 'a classic example of how the young people are being exploited'. The 'young girl' working in the house was paid only 15/- for 52 and a half hours work, and, in addition, 3/- a week was subtracted from her wage to pay for meals. Under the appropriate award the girl was entitled to receive a wage of £2 15 shillings a week, and should have worked only 48 hours.<sup>625</sup> The 'Headlands' Guest House at Austinmer was also found to be breaching the Award. After the union took action on the matter, Mr Prior, the owner of 'Headlands' sacked three employees, including 'one who had been employed over two years'. The union said to pursue the matter through the courts would be 'lengthy and costly' and they indicated that they 'may be forced to abandon the case'. The 'Silver Bell' Cafe was subject to union claims for £100 - the amount they had underpaid their employees.<sup>626</sup> The Flinders Inn, the Commercial Hotel, the Balgownie Hotel, and Guinery's at Port Kembla were also accused of violating Awards, as were 'certain restaurants in Wollongong'.<sup>627</sup> The scale of violation indicated these

<sup>623</sup>South Coast Times, 21/2/1941.

<sup>624</sup>UWA, D169, series 1, box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes 19/3/1941.

<sup>625</sup>UWA, D169, series 1, box 1, SCLC Records, 'Some Facts About the Restaurants, Boarding Houses and Milk-Bars - Wollongong', n.d.

<sup>626</sup>UWA, D169, series 1, box 1, SCLC Records, 'Some Facts About the Restaurants, Boarding Houses and Milk-Bars - Wollongong', n.d.

<sup>627</sup>NBAC, T31/7, Australian Coal and Shale Employees Federation - Southern District (NSW), IT & LC Minutes, 7/5/1941.



employers were not oblivious to Award conditions, but simply disregarded them.

The victimisation of young women workers was not limited to the infringement of Awards either. Miss Burton was employed in the bar at the Wollongong Hotel, and on 13 March 1941 she and fellow workers agreed to share the workload of another employee who was sick for the day, so the sick girl could keep her job. Mr and Mrs George, the licensees of the Hotel, asked Burton to work in the 'house', another area of the Hotel on the same day. According to Mrs George, although Burton agreed, she was dismissed because of 'the look on her face!'. Mr George said Burton was sacked because 'she had refused duty'. The next day, in a conference with unionists Ted Roach (WWF), Pat McHenry (FIA) and John Cranston (IT&LC), Mr George alleged that Burton 'was dishonest on several occasions', though provided no direct proof of this claim, indicating that possibly other, more personal issues were involved.<sup>628</sup> Unionists in the Illawarra rallied to the cause. Members of the WWF agreed to 'not patronise this hotel'.<sup>629</sup> The IT&LC later endorsed 'the boycott of the Hotel' which they said would remain 'until the girl is reinstated'. A financial appeal was also launched to allow Burton to stay in Wollongong, 'and to assist any other members of the staff who may become involved'.<sup>630</sup> It is possible that the silence and confusion of this case concealed a more dire reason for the girl's sacking - but, on this we can only speculate.

The help provided to Burton by Illawarra unionists was also forthcoming when on 14 May 1941 six waitresses employed at 'The Spot Cafe' resolved to strike. The dispute began when Molly Davies, a waitress at

<sup>628</sup>UWA, D169, series 1, box 1, SCLC Records, 'Dispute at Wollongong Hotel', n.d. 1941?. In a later conference George called two other women employees as witnesses to Burton's dishonesty, but they also gave no specific evidence. The unionists concluded there was 'collusion between the girls and George'.

<sup>629</sup>UWA, D169, series 1, box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 19/3/1941.

<sup>630</sup>UWA, D169, series 1, box 1, SCLC Records, 'Dispute at Wollongong Hotel', n.d. 1941?

the cafe, was sacked by the Pascall Brothers, the cafe owners.<sup>631</sup> The Pascall brothers made a public statement saying that during the winter they were always forced to 'deplete' staff 'for purely business reasons', and that Molly Davies was the least 'suitable' to their 'requirements'.<sup>632</sup> The HCRU had undertaken a campaign at the cafe since February 1941 to get the 'girls' unionised as 'the conditions [were] very bad'. According to the IT&LC, pay was below the award, overtime was not paid, meal breaks were not given on long shifts and the 'girls' had to purchase their own uniforms, which was the employer's responsibility. Inadequate dressing rooms, that were used sometimes by the male management, and swearing by management to female employees were also issues of contention.<sup>633</sup> Officials of the union said they approached Theodore Pascall<sup>634</sup> 'time after time', when he said he would 'fix things up'. The girls in Pascall's employ were 'all unionists now' and had been successful on a number of occasions when they 'took a stand...against various matters'.<sup>635</sup> This activity appeared to be a direct result of the HCRC's campaign since February, when the workers joined the union. Illawarra unionists claimed it was the recent success of the girls over some of these matters that prompted Pascall to sack Davies, despite the Pascall brothers' statement that: 'We believe whole-heartedly in the Trade Union Movement and greatly regret this unfortunate affair which involves its officials and ourselves'.<sup>636</sup>

After the sacking of Davies, her fellow workers were eager to strike and 'wanted to walk out immediately'. The union advised them against an immediate walk out and attempted first to talk with Pascall about re-

<sup>631</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, box 1, SCLC Records, The Strike at 'The Spot'. A Survey of the Position to Date, 26/5/1941.

<sup>632</sup>South Coast Times, 16/5/1941.

<sup>633</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, box 1, SCLC Records, The Strike at 'The Spot'. A Survey of the Position to Date, 26/5/1941.

<sup>634</sup>Theodore Pascall was identified as 'part proprietor' of 'The Spot Cafe' and seemed to be the main protagonist for the Pascall Brothers who were involved in the dispute. See South Coast Times, 13/6/1941.

<sup>635</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, box 1, SCLC Records, The Strike at 'The Spot'. A Survey of the Position to Date, 26/5/1941.

<sup>636</sup>South Coast Times, 16/5/1941.

instating Davies. This conference proved unsuccessful and the six workers walked out as a result.<sup>637</sup> A picket started when the women 'stood outside the shop' with the union officials to notify the public 'of the position' at the cafe.<sup>638</sup> Mr John Cranston, the Secretary of the IT&LC, and Mr Vic Workman, the organiser of the HCRU were arrested during the picket.<sup>639</sup> Cranston had a cardboard sign which informed passers-by: 'We are fighting victimisation. Help us by trading elsewhere'.<sup>640</sup> Workman told people, many of whom were women: 'Don't go in there, there is a strike on'. Two women were 'persuaded' not to enter, and another young woman avoided the cafe after hearing of the strike. The unionists' actions soon attracted the attention of the police who told them that the matter should be resolved in the Industrial Courts. Workman claimed that previous court action had still not prevented Pascall from victimising his employees, and he would not see reason.<sup>641</sup> Both Workman and Cranston were subsequently arrested and charged under the Crimes Act for illegally watching and offensive behaviour.<sup>642</sup>

Pat McHenry, communist and member of the Port Kembla branch of the FIA, said the strike 'has attracted the sympathy and support of thousands of South Coast unionists'.<sup>643</sup> The cafe was declared black<sup>644</sup> and the IT&LC urged 'all unions in this district to subscribe to a defence fund which will be used to provide support for the girls on strike...'.<sup>645</sup>

<sup>637</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, box 1, SCLC Records, The Strike at 'The Spot'. A Survey of the Position to Date, 26/5/1941.

<sup>638</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, box 1, SCLC Records, The Strike at 'The Spot'. A Survey of the Position to Date, 26/5/1941.

<sup>639</sup>*The Ironworker*, vol.2, no.6, June 1941, 6.

<sup>640</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, box 1, SCLC Records, The Strike at 'The Spot'. A Survey of the Position to Date, 26/5/1941.

<sup>641</sup>*South Coast Times*, 31/6/1941.

<sup>642</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, box 1, SCLC Records, The Strike at 'The Spot'. A Survey of the Position to Date, 26/5/1941.

<sup>643</sup>*The Ironworker*, vol.2, no.6, June 1941, 6.

<sup>644</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, box 1, SCLC Records, Letter from J.R. Cranston, Secretary of IT&LCI to All unions, sub-branches and Miners Lodges, 28/5/1941.

<sup>645</sup>NBAC, T31, Australian Coal and Shale Employees Federation, Southern District, NSW, Letter to All unions, Miners Lodges and Sub-Branches, from Secretary, IT&LC, 27/5/1941, and

Donations came from a number of sections of the labour movement, including the Old Bulli Miners Lodge<sup>646</sup> and the Scarborough Miners Lodge.<sup>647</sup> The strike lasted for five weeks and was finally won on 30 May, 'after a demonstration outside the shop by 2000 South Coast trade unionists and their womenfolk'. McHenry wrote in *The Ironworker*: 'It was the best demonstration seen in Wollongong since the anti-fascist demonstration against the New Guard in the Lang era'. Protesters fastened slogans to their coats demanding action. Motor cars were used as platforms, where people stood 'to view the demonstration' and McHenry estimated 'Over 20 police were there...'.<sup>648</sup>

Why did this rather small dispute involving six young women receive such overwhelming support? In the first instance, wages and breaches of Awards were significant issues, hence the intensity of trade union action attempting to enforce observance of the Award in hotels, cafes and boarding houses at this time. The youth of these women workers, and certain assumptions in society about femininity, however, made these male unionists anxious about more than wages and breaches of Awards. The girls' femininity, and the male trade unionists' perception of their femininity, was also a cause for united action against the owners of 'The Spot Cafe'. The male unionists continually referred to these female workers as 'girls' believing they required 'protection from ruthless exploitation'.<sup>649</sup> Although all workers might require such protection, these young female workers required it for different reasons. The striking women and male trade unionists were uneasy about the girls' dressing room being used by males, and about bad language being spoken in front of the girls. Before the

UWA, D169, series 1A, box 1, SCLC Records, Letter to All unions, Miners Lodges and Sub-Branches, from Secretary, IT&LC, 27/5/1941.

<sup>646</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, box 1, SCLC Records, The Strike at 'The Spot'. A Survey of the Position to Date, 26/5/1941.

<sup>647</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 25/6/1941.

<sup>648</sup>*The Ironworker*, vol.2, no.6, June 1941, 6.

<sup>649</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, box 1, SCLC Records, The Strike at 'The Spot'. A Survey of the Position to Date, 26/5/1941.

dispute had erupted two female employees had already left the cafe 'owing to the bad language'. The 'bad language' that was 'freely used to the girls' was disturbing for both unionists and female workers alike. The store room, which was used as the women's dressing room, and was also where the boss shaved 'every morning', was of similar concern. This "mixing" was considered inappropriate and raised pertinent issues about sexuality in the workplace.

Paternalism was therefore a deciding factor in the unionists' response to the sacking of Molly Davies and the situation of her fellow workers.<sup>650</sup> The girls participated in the strike with the understanding that the male trade unionists would protect their interests as workers. Furthermore, they did not challenge the breadwinner ideology. Working as waitresses, and not miners or steelworkers was important, as was the workers' ages. As chapter three showed, for Wollongong women paid work was a brief experience confined to the younger years, highly sex-segregated and usually bought to an abrupt end upon marriage. Young single women did not undermine the breadwinner ideology; although their wages often contributed to the family economy they were regarded as children, not wives and mothers, in which case the situation may have been rather different.

For a variety of reasons, the arrests of Cranston and Workmen, offered extra dimensions to the strike, creating a further impetus for solidarity. One issue was the principle of trade unionism itself. Unionists needed to reconfirm the right to picket, trade unionists determined that 'vital trade union principles were at stake' as a result of the arrests. An appeal to the Chief Secretary of the NSW ALP Government to have the charges withdrawn failed.<sup>651</sup> While the turn-out of 2000 protesters on 30 May confirmed support for the waitresses, it also indicated support for

<sup>650</sup>Raelene Frances has written on paternalism and patriarchal authority and how these often shaped relations amongst men and women of different ages in the paid work place as well as the home. Frances, 40.

<sup>651</sup>UWA, D169, series 1A, box 1, SCLC Records, The Strike at 'The Spot'. A Survey of the Position to Date, 26/5/1941.

unionists' authority and masculinity which had been challenged by the arrests. Cranston and Workman's court hearing attracted 'considerable interest...particularly by all industrialists' because it questioned fundamental principles of trade unionism and had the potential to destabilise the union movement.<sup>652</sup> A second issue was the attitude of the unions to the war. Certain sections of the labour movement, particularly those led by the CPA, were employing strike action widely at this time as a weapon to express dissatisfaction with the Second World War.<sup>653</sup> Before June 1941, when the Soviet Union became involved in the war, any action disruptive to industry and productivity in Australia was permissible and encouraged.<sup>654</sup> 'The Spot Cafe' proved to be an opportunity for the CPA, and this was not lost on Cranston and Workman, who were both CPA activists.<sup>655</sup>

Initially, solidarity amongst women workers and trade unionists was forged out of a genuine concern for these women workers, but there were clearly other factors of equal importance that led to sustained support. In a period when the sole breadwinner was a male employed in heavy industry, the paternalism of the male unionists, the womens' ages, and the sex-segregated nature of waitressing were necessary pre-requisites for solidarity. But the militant attitude of the CPA at this time, and the demonstration by 'trade unionists and *their womenfolk* (my emphasis)<sup>656</sup> because of the arrests, illustrates the concerns were also much broader than Molly Davies and her fellow workers. What had started as a small dispute with trade

<sup>652</sup>South Coast Times, 13/6/1941. The question of picketing and the lack of 'rights enabling individuals and groups to assemble and protest peacefully in New South Wales' is discussed in an article dealing with a dispute at Bombo, near Kiama on the South Coast, between 1992 and 1993. See C. Nyland and S. Svensen, 'The Battle of Bombo - Besetting laws and the Right to Picket in New South Wales', Australian Journal of Labour Law, vol.8, 1995, 177-202. Similarly, the issue of being able to assemble, protest and strike have been matters of contention under the Workplace Relations Act (1996), introduced under the Federal Coalition Government. See M. Rimmer, 'The Federal Workplace Relations Act 1996: A New Industrial Relations?' in M. Lee and P. Sheldon, (eds) Workplace Relations, Butterworths, Sydney, 1997, 56.

<sup>653</sup>R.M. Martin, Trade Unions in Australia, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1975, 11.

<sup>654</sup>See chapter 6 where the CPA shift in policy over the war is discussed in greater detail.

<sup>655</sup>Richardson, 1984, 193, and A. Johnson, Bread and Roses, Left Book Club, Sutherland, 1990, chapter 4.

<sup>656</sup>The Ironworker, vol.2, no.6, June 1941, 6.

union officials assisting a few women workers, culminated in a large public protest over the rights of trade unionists. Because of the nature of work in Wollongong at this time, the rights of unionists were seen as linked more with men and masculinity than with women and femininity.

That unity depends on a multitude of factors and issues is clear from the two examples outlined above. The Annabel strike highlighted the resistance and outrage of male workers who endured what were widely agreed to be harsh and unsafe work conditions for meagre wages. Exceptions to this solidarity were minimal because workers and the community generally were firmly committed to the idea that all men should have a job and the right to earn a living. Similarly, solidarity was evident in the case of the strike at 'The Spot Cafe', but the reasons for it were more disparate, changing overtime. Initially, in addition to the issues of wages and conditions, strong support for the strikers was forthcoming because the women were young and single and did not contravene the sexual division of labour in Wollongong. The arrests of key male union/CPA figures, however, was an important catalyst in the escalation of the dispute. The femininity of a few women workers was no longer the only issue of concern, instead the right of trade unionists to strike and protest was central. Like the Annabel Dispute, it attracted wide community support because the majority of trade unionists were men and it was men who were the breadwinners.

## 6

### *Antagonism and Harmony: Workplace Relations*

#### *1941 - 1950s*

Unions and management were often represented as adversaries in Wollongong. As Chapter Five has shown, antagonism was certainly a component of their relationship. Yet, workplaces were also shaped by conciliation and concession, and above all, compromise. Both antagonism and harmony featured in the period from 1941 through to the early 1950s. The type of paid work, trade union coverage, and the gender of the worker, were all important forces influencing the dynamics of these workplace relations. While the Annabel and Spot Cafe disputes served as illustrations of the unfriendly relations between capital and labour, relations during World War Two present a contrast. As Sheridan notes, people 'surrendered' certain things because of patriotism and war, and this was no different for industrial relations.<sup>657</sup> Because unionists and workers made real concessions and sacrifices in wartime, however, they expected much more in the postwar period than was initially delivered. This led to overtly hostile relations in 1945, with little determination on either side for finding a middle ground. Workers and union officials alike were not about to risk a return to the Depression years and felt they had nothing to lose. The memories of the Depression were also what motivated many to reject migrants as fellow workers in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

---

<sup>657</sup>T. Sheridan, *Division of Labour: Industrial Relations in the Chifley Years, 1945-1949*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989, 16-17.

In the midst of the Second World War, in 1943, the Wollongong manager of AIS, Cecil Hoskins, wrote to his Melbourne colleague BHP boss Essington Lewis that, 'I have been far from happy with the trend of affairs in the sphere of Capital and Labour relations'. While Hoskins admitted that 'the working man in Australia has done a magnificent job and with few exceptions deserves to have this more generally acknowledged by employers and citizens', he said that in Australia, more than anywhere else, 'we are divided into two political camps almost on a defined line of cleavage between capital and labour'. Hoskins proposed that greater leniency and compassion be shown to workers and to the union movement. He said 'I was brought up almost to resist Unionism and support the right of a man to remain a non-unionist if he so desired', but he went on: 'Over very many years' contact with Unionists and Non-Unionists, speaking broadly, I have nearly always found the Unionist the better man...'. Hoskins noted a number of issues which he felt deserved the attention of management. These issues included wages, youth training, amenities (like change houses and dining rooms) and Works Councils and Shop Committees, whose 'main object' would be 'welding the men and ourselves (management) together'.

Hoskins agreed that, as a commercial enterprise BHP had 'everyone's respect and admiration'; but he felt 'that over a much wider circle...B.H.P. is not well liked'. He believed BHP had failed to win the 'loyalty and goodwill' of its employees. He suggested:

that it would be an excellent idea if this Organisation (A.I.S. - Port Kembla) had a Personnel Officer who was not only interested in the man's name and clock number, but would be interested in the man as a man, and learn to know the difficulties that were worrying him,

where we could help him, what sport he was interested in, and... many other angles that would bring us closer together.

Hoskins said he felt 'very deeply and conclusively on this matter of industrial relations'. He realised that the changes he proposed might mean a short term decline in profits, but he was adamant that in the long term 'they would be more profitable to the Company and the men'.<sup>658</sup>

Hoskins' appeal for leniency and compassion seemed heartfelt and genuine, his concern for 'the man as a man' compelling him to pen a two page letter. He was, perhaps, influenced by developments in management theory which stressed the productivity benefits of a more "human" approach. Wollongong unionists, had, however, a record of open hostility and contempt for Hoskins; an acrimonious 'Cannister' writing in a CPA journal in 1931 had described the AIS as 'a scab outfit, nay a super-scab outfit' and accused Cecil Hoskins, 'who personally directs the concern' of being 'bourgeois' and 'a member of the aspiring snobbocracy'.<sup>659</sup> Twelve years later, however, perhaps the time was right for a more co-operative approach.

Late in December, 1941, the Port Kembla branch of the FIA held their 'Xmas Smoko'. Reporting on the evening, the *South Coast Times* noted: 'Seldom if ever has such fine harmony been forthcoming at a smoko'. The 'fine spirit of good fellowship' amongst unionists was highlighted. According to the newspapers report, the 'keynote' of the speeches during the evening was 'that the industrial tempo had been quickened and the objective of the men is record production to assist the war effort'. Joe Carrabine received applause when he said it was now unionists' and workers' job to 'step up production to assist those lads on the otherside'. WWF representative Ted Roach reportedly 'dealt at some length with the

<sup>658</sup>BHP Archives, W002/20/1, Australian Iron & Steel Ltd. Port Kembla Steelworks. General Manager. General Correspondence Files. Industrial Policy - 28/5/1943-24/4/1946, Letter from Cecil Hoskins, Esq, to Essington Lewis, Esq, 11/10/1943.

<sup>659</sup>*Workers Weekly*, 6/3/1931, 4.

war' and also argued that 'all should stand solidly behind those who were fighting against Fascism'. Comment on the 'business people who had co-operated with the union in donating refreshments for the Smoko' was also made.<sup>660</sup> The 'Smoko' revealed the unanimity between employers and employees that was possible at a time of war, a point that was emphasised in unionists claims to 'step up production'.

Six months earlier, in June 1941 the WWF had presented a quite different view:

The privilege to strike to defend our rights and liberties has been won in decades of workers' struggles and will likewise be jealously [sic] defended irrespective of whom the violators may be.

In the opinion of the WWF they were fighting employers, but also the Menzies government, which they argued, had 'Fascist-like' policies.<sup>661</sup> The dramatic change between June and December 1941 can be attributed to a change in the nature of the war itself. Craig Johnston noted that strikes were 'no problem' when the war was regarded as imperialist.<sup>662</sup> A shift in policy occurred after the Soviet Union was invaded by Germany on 22 June 1941.<sup>663</sup> Johnston suggests the situation after June 1941 was one of collaboration,<sup>664</sup> while Hagan and Turner described CPA dominated unions as 'super-patriotic' in the period where they prevented strikes.<sup>665</sup> The harmony that existed during the Second World War provides an opportunity to reveal, in a very acute way, the complexities and contradictions of class as a lived relation. It puts paid to the fixed

<sup>660</sup>South Coast Times, 26/12/1941.

<sup>661</sup>South Coast Times, 7/6/1941.

<sup>662</sup>C. Johnson, 'The Communist Party and Labour Unity, 1939-1945', *Labour History*, no.40, May 1981, 81.

<sup>663</sup>B. Symons, 'All-Out for the People's War: Communist Soldiers in the Australian Army in the Second World War', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol.26, no.105, October, 1995, 596.

<sup>664</sup>Johnson, 1981, 78.

<sup>665</sup>Hagan and Turner, 1991, 152. See also Merritt, 1967, 299-303.

antagonistic model of class relations, but also shows the importance of social structures and broader political considerations in discussing class analyses.

The IT&LC was at the forefront in advocating unity to avoid confrontation between workers and management in the Illawarra. In December 1941 it called on 'all affiliated unions to use every channel available to settle disputes before resorting to strikes'. It gave 'wholehearted support' to the Federal Government who was advocating total war. Importantly, the IT&LC promised to use its 'influence to increase production and obtain continuity of work'. It reinforced this rhetoric by calling an 'all-in conference of unions' to discuss the war and its implications for union policy.<sup>666</sup> The ensuing conference was 'largely attended' (at the Wollongong Trades Hall), and 'a frank and enlightening discussion' occurred 'regarding the war effort and the aims of industrialists to increase this'. The IT&LC President and chairman of the meeting, Eric Burgess, said he hoped the conference 'would devise ways and means of speeding up industry'. According to him, instances of inefficiency and sabotage were to be targeted. He believed that 'the present Federal Government was doing a good job, but with the 100 per cent support of the trade union movement could do even more'. His was the first of many rallying cries to advance the war effort through increased production and monitoring of inefficiencies.<sup>667</sup>

Mr J. Cranston, IT&LC Secretary, said industries had to 'produce in ever-increasing quantities' and that this required 'the wholehearted effort of all'. Importantly, Cranston outlined the situation that had prevailed early in the war, when 'certain militant sections opposed the war'. He informed those at the conference that this situation had changed 'with the line up of the three fascist powers'. Cranston advocated that 'all muddling...be thrown aside', and that it was 'machines together with the men which would win

<sup>666</sup>South Coast Times, 26/12/1941.

<sup>667</sup>South Coast Times, 26/12/1941.



the war'.<sup>668</sup> Prior to the conference the executive of the Port Kembla branch of the FIA pleaded to its members, asking them to 'increase the production of steel, to eliminate all stoppages, and to expose and correct all inefficiency, bungling, and waste'.<sup>669</sup> FIA representative Pat McHenry attended the conference and said his members had been told to fight Fascism and 'they were prepared, while not giving away their rights to conciliate and not precipitate stoppages'. Spokesman for the Miners' Federation Mr E.R. Browne said 'miners had never produced more coal than at present and the men realised the situation called for their best efforts'. Ted Roach spoke on behalf of the WWF, who had increased their loading rate by 100 per cent, and said they were 'all out to increase the war effort'. Mr Smith from the ASE said 'Unionists would put in 100 per cent if the companies would do the same'.<sup>670</sup> These men sought to re-define the position of labour. While advocating co-operation and increased production they also attempted to keep their masculinity intact by highlighting the fighting spirit, the mammoth production effort and the alignment of man with machine.

Mr H.P. Lazzarini, who was now Minister for Home Security, also attended the conference. Significantly, Lazzarini, an ALP politician, said 'politics could go to the devil at present'. He noted how he had 'many differences with many of those present at the conference', but said 'all that was gone now'. While 'Germany or Italy was bad enough...now they were threatened with the worst phase - fascist pagan Japan'. Discourses around gender, class and race converged in Lazzarini's efforts to compel workers, union officials and capitalists to unite. He said there was 'no boss or man in this struggle', instead it was about 'all Australians fighting as one to repel any invader'.<sup>671</sup> In Lazzarini's view, as in the opinion of many unionists and workers at this time, the war, for the time being at least, had blurred

<sup>668</sup>South Coast Times, 26/12/1941.

<sup>669</sup>South Coast Times, 26/12/1941.

<sup>670</sup>South Coast Times, 26/12/1941.

<sup>671</sup>South Coast Times, 26/12/1941.

differences between capitalist and labour, and in some quarters, also differences of gender.

In March the following year, Ernie Thornton, the General Secretary of the FIA also emphasised the idea of 'no boss or man' when he addressed a meeting of steelworkers at Port Kembla. During the meeting Thornton stressed 'the need for full production'. He was aware of the contradiction in his current position, when compared to previous positions, and knew how this might appear. But, he said he had not 'somersaulted in his social outlook' because of this emphasis on increased production and unity. Rather, he argued that 'one must shape their policy according to the needs of the times'. To this end he told Port Kembla workers:

we must not take precipitate action if a dispute arises at the works...endeavour to try and have them settled by peaceful methods if at all possible. In nine out of ten major troubles this can be done, also in 99 out of 100 minor ones...

Workers were also advised to 'seize' the chance 'to step up production', and if they 'felt off colour' they should 'use every endeavour to go to work'. Moreover, if 'an act of injustice' was suffered on the job, workers 'should take a deep breath and store the act up, and say: "We will work so that our soldiers can fight the Japs."'.<sup>672</sup>

The claims of increased production, greater efficiency, and of 'all Australian fighting as one' were given impetus in practical ways. Miss Bourke, a representative of the HCRU endorsed proposals to establish canteens on the job, 'so that men could enjoy hot meals, so essential for their health'.<sup>673</sup> A Shop Committee formed in the Machine Shop at AIS reported success in negotiations with management over the question of when weekend shifts were allocated. The Committee said it 'decided to co-

<sup>672</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 27/3/1942.

<sup>673</sup>South Coast Times, 23/4/1943.

operate with the management', so they could reduce time and achieve a 'satisfactory settlement of minor disputes'.<sup>674</sup> This shift in industrial relations had significant consequences in the short term. The production of coal for Australia increased by quarter of a million tons from 1941 to 1942.<sup>675</sup> Mount Kembla miner George Hammond, who had struggled throughout the Depression, said with the war things changed: 'we got our turn on the coal then...and we got more work, and then we was working long hours and doing more, it was war time'.<sup>676</sup> Similarly, Faye O'Donnell, who was only a child during the Second World War remembers 'there was plenty of work and overtime' for her father who worked as a rigger at the steelworks.<sup>677</sup>

The war conditions also prompted some shifts in entrenched attitudes to women and paid work. Mrs Ryan recalled that 'during the war years' women got work at MM 'to put out the material for the war'. She worked from six in the morning to two in the afternoon. She joined the union and said it 'was just the normal thing. You were told by the union delegate to join, so I joined'. Significantly she remembers that '[t]here were no disputes'.<sup>678</sup> Disruption to the gender order in the Illawarra was, however, less than in other centres. In 1943 Wollongong still 'had one of the highest percentages in the State of women not gainfully employed or in unessential occupations' because 'there was no industry' in which they could work.<sup>679</sup> No more than 100 women were employed at MM during the war,<sup>680</sup> and with the exception of the few working in munitions they were virtually excluded from the steelworks until the early 1970s.<sup>681</sup>

<sup>674</sup>*The Ironworker*, vol.3, no.7, July 1942, 8.

<sup>675</sup>Johnson, 1981, 82.

<sup>676</sup>Interview with George Hammond, 30/1/1996 and 26/2/1996.

<sup>677</sup>UWA, B23 Children in Wartime Wollongong Oral History Collection, interview with Faye Elizabeth O'Donnell, tape number D152/7.

<sup>678</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 80.

<sup>679</sup>*South Coast Times*, 7/5/1943.

<sup>680</sup>Lee, in Hagan and Wells, 67.

<sup>681</sup>C. Gorton, 'Jobs for Women: Campaigning for Women's Right to Work in the 1980s', BA Honours, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of Queensland, February 1990, 31. See also Schultz, chapter 9. She discusses the struggle of women to gain work in the steelworks in the 1970s and 1980s and refers to the paucity of work for women before then.

Manpower regulations and protected industries meant a substantial number of men remained in their jobs in the Illawarra and did not free up as many jobs for women.<sup>682</sup> Consequently harmony persisted on the gender front, and in the Illawarra femininity remained largely undisturbed.

The question of workers' obligations to the nation, employers and fellow workers often, therefore, became a contest around masculinity. In March 1943 P. Salmon, a South Bulli Miner, wrote in the newspaper an impassioned letter to his fellow miners, asking them to ask themselves 'honestly': "'Am I doing the right thing to my fellow worker in the front line of battle, when I am idling myself from my work?'" Salmon said the answer was honestly 'no' and argued 'that non-production of coal means non-production of munitions' and this meant 'no supplies transported to the front line of fighting'. He presented a fictional front line fighter asking the question: "'Why did you let us down, mate?'" and concluded his letter:

No honest back-line fighter (for that is what every worker is) in his own heart can say that he does not want his fellow fighter to come back home. Let us, then, be sincere. Keep working, settle our disputes in the proper channels made available...Produce Coal. Keep up supplies! Win the war! Put Fascism down forever.<sup>683</sup>

In addition to highlighting fascism, Salmon invoked the notion of mateship, an essential component of a miner's masculinity, to convince worker's of the need for a united effort. His letter received the support of a miner from Keira. F. E. McDonald said that Salmon should 'be commended on having the courage to tell the miners of this district what their real job is'. Mr McDonald claimed that there was an 'irresponsible element' within

Also 'The Women of Wollongong', in A. Deveson, *Faces of Change*, ABC/Fontana, Sydney, 1984, 151-169.

<sup>682</sup>*South Coast Times*, 21/5/1943.

<sup>683</sup>*South Coast Times*, 12/3/1943.



the 'various miners' lodges however, encouraging disruption to production. He believed it was essential that these people be 'dealt with'.<sup>684</sup>

A union leadership advocating industrial harmony and co-operation could not always carry its members with it. Generally, overall, the Miners' Federation and its officials urged unity and increased production,<sup>685</sup> but contradictions over policy and position existed between various levels of the union and amongst rank and file members.<sup>686</sup> Craig Johnston noted the miners had a poor record in relation to industrial relations during the war.<sup>687</sup> Stoppages and strikes became more frequent from 1942 onwards and the production of coal decreased over this period.<sup>688</sup> Mr Dawson, a miner from Wongawilli said there existed 'an irresponsible element in the Miners' Federation'. Yet, he believed these 'irresponsible acts faded into insignificance when compared with the provocative actions of some mine owners'.<sup>689</sup> Seymour, a representative from the Miners' Federation, noted the difficulties in relation to industrial relations but blamed miners rather than the Federation. He stated that amongst miners, it was 'tradition...whenever a hitch occurred to take the bull by the horns and deal with it at the pit top'. Although they were beginning to deal with these situations 'in a new way' Seymour said 'old traditions die hard'.<sup>690</sup>

While letting go of traditions may have proven difficult for some miners, other people in the labour movement did not hesitate to abandon labour principles, or reconstruct them in new ways. In early 1943, Mr Lazzarini attended a 'Unity for Victory' Conference which was organised by the IT&LC. The IT&LC said the objective of the conference was to stress the 'urgency of unity in the labour ranks'. Lazzarini said he was 'tired of grumblers about small things'. He argued that 'If Trade union officials...tell

<sup>684</sup>South Coast Times, 19/3/1943.

<sup>685</sup>Gollan, 1975, 132

<sup>686</sup>Johnson, 1981, 82.

<sup>687</sup>Johnson, 1981, 81.

<sup>688</sup>Gollan, 1975, 132, and Sheridan, 1989, 249-255.

<sup>689</sup>South Coast Times, 23/4/1943.

<sup>690</sup>South Coast Times, 23/4/1943.

their members to cease work, and some of them do not do so, they are called "scabs". He said this was considered 'an objectionable term to unionists'. Yet, he believed there was 'no difference between such men and those who are ordered back to work...and refuse to do so...'.<sup>691</sup> The scab was now the worker who refused to work diligently for the war effort. An affront to one's class credentials, the term also implied a questioning of one's masculinity. Though re-defining the term to describe relations between capital and labour, scab remained an expression aligned with the weak and effeminate.

Levelling harsh words at workers was only one tool the labour movement employed to achieve unity and cohesion in industrial relations. While sections of the labour movement were keen to 'exhaust conciliatory methods' when negotiating with capitalists, sometimes they did not extend the same 'conciliatory methods' to workers.<sup>692</sup> In some instances, workers became the victims of their own unions. Johnston noted how unions like the FIA subject members to 'disciplinary action', expulsion and even threatened the use of scab labour when disagreements occurred between workers and union officials.<sup>693</sup> This was not a tactic exclusive to men however. Sally Bowen recalled how when she was working at Lysaghts during the war the union was striving for 100 per cent membership. Some resistance to the objective was encountered when one woman refused to join the union. A stop work meeting to address the situation however was out of the question as 'production for the war effort was vital'. Sally, the shop steward, and her fellow female worker's threatened the non-unionist warning her that she would be immersed in the warm oil, that was used to coat the Owen gun before it left the factory, if she did not agree to join the union.<sup>694</sup> Putting paid to the idea that women are passive unionists, this

<sup>691</sup>South Coast Times, 23/4/1943.

<sup>692</sup>Johnson, 1981, 80-81.

<sup>693</sup>Johnson, 1981, 80-81.

<sup>694</sup>Robertson, in Windschuttle, 410.

example also shows the worker as the target of aggression from unionists and fellow workers.

For Wollongong worker Sally Bowen this support for union principles was a process, and she recalled how paid work in this area changed her views. In 1941, at the age of twenty-three, Sally got her first job as a cook at the Corrimal Hotel. Prior to employment at the hotel she had only worked with 'her family'. Her experience of paid work and labour relations was limited. As well as working at the hotel she also lived there, which influenced considerably her relations with the boss. Because of her past experiences she did not have 'first-hand experience of trade unions' and she said she 'saw no evidence of one in the hotel'. A hotel of this kind was most likely informed by 'simple' control methods, which, as Edward noted, obscured class differences and fostered 'personal relations'.<sup>695</sup> Sally's experience of work and labour relations was different at the Lysaghts factory however, where she worked producing the Owen gun during the Second World War. The FIA had a presence in the factory and this influenced her in her decision to 'become a shop steward'. The company made 'large profits' and it was an environment where she learnt 'how the capitalist system works'. In contrast to the isolation of the hotel, she recalled 'the solidarity between the women workers' at the factory, and that the 'commitment to the union and to each other was very strong'. They were united because of 'the problems of work', but also because it was during the war. Difficulties with 'home, children and the heartache of those who had husbands in the war' were also shared.<sup>696</sup>

Despite the common commitment to the war effort, harmony did not reign uninterrupted between capital and labour after 22 June 1941. Like the Depression, the Second World War is inconsistent in its typology. There were instances of conflict between workers, unionists and capitalists, and

<sup>695</sup>Edwards, 1979, 26.

<sup>696</sup>Robertson, in Windschuttle, 409-410.

disputes did continue to arise. The disputes in mining have already been noted. Similar disputes occurred in the steel industry. The FIA initiated an inquiry by the Federal Conciliation Commissioner Blakely, in 1942, arguing it was necessary 'because of the frequency of disputes at the works'. Blakely was requested by the FIA to inquire into the 'attitude of the management, superintendents and foreman to unions and union policy'.<sup>697</sup> The Inquiry indicated the persistence of some antagonism, but at the same time it showed the co-operation of the FIA with the state. This co-operation represented a shift: collaboration along similar lines was resisted by the FIA during the Annabel dispute. Merritt noted the preference of Port Kembla's FIA members for T. McDonald, a man 'highly critical of the Industrial Commission and full of passionate class war' and influential in the Annabel issue as their leader in the 1930s.<sup>698</sup> Firth argued Port Kembla FIA officials endorsed the directions from the national executive on the war policy, but 'were too close to the rank and file and the might of BHP to follow it rigidly'. She cites some local instances that contravene the united-all-in approach to industrial relations.<sup>699</sup> Merritt claimed that overall, it was also difficult to assess the effectiveness of unions efforts at collaboration.<sup>700</sup> So even when co-operation was the overriding theme there were inconsistencies and contradictions with this position.

Undoubtedly, the circumstances surrounding World War Two, and the labour relations that transpired as a result were rather exceptional. In many ways the situation between 1941 and 1945 represents the opposite to the antagonistic thesis. The pertinent point however, is that relations between capital and labour are not pre-determined and fixed but are subject to historical circumstances. Clearly during the war workers and unions did not always agree on their attitudes towards capitalists. Without question

<sup>697</sup>*The Ironworker*, vol.3, no.10, October 1942, 1.

<sup>698</sup>J. A. Merritt, 'The Federated Ironworkers' Association in the Depression', *Labour History*, no.21, November 1971, 57.

<sup>699</sup>Firth, 484.

<sup>700</sup>Merritt, 1967, 305.

there were misgivings on both sides about the position that was adopted. Yet, for a brief period, it was apparent that the quest for peace and the defeat of fascism prompted a majority of men and women in the labour movement to work side by side with capital.

#### *The 1945 Steel Strike*

In complete contrast to the relative industrial harmony during World War Two is the 1945 steel strike, described by contemporaries as 'the biggest industrial upheaval in Australia since 1917'. It was also said that 'the steel strike is the story of the courage and solidarity of 13,000 workers, members of 15 trade unions, who became directly involved in it at Port Kembla and Newcastle'.<sup>701</sup> The central character in the dispute was Don Parker, a shop delegate at AIS. On a number of occasions Parker refused to work as a lidman on the coke oven lids, as the unpleasant job belonged to junior employees who were available to do this work instead.<sup>702</sup> The offer from junior employees to carry out the work was refused by management and Parker was finally dismissed on 22 September. The dismissal prompted a walk-out by coke oven workers which led to management ordering staff to take over operations in the coke ovens. Historian Tom Sheridan notes how this action by management was the primary catalyst for the dispute spreading throughout the Port Kembla steelworks. Blast furnace workers who were expected to handle the coke produced by the staff from the oven refused and joined the walk out.<sup>703</sup> Fuel was added to the situation by the FIA's deregistration, which resulted after a ruling by the Industrial

<sup>701</sup>NBAC, P43/3/47, W. J. H. Harris Deposit, *The Story of the Steel Strike of 1945*, issued by the Illawarra Trades and Labour Council and Newcastle Trades Hall Council, 3.

<sup>702</sup>NBAC, P43/3/47, W. J. H. Harris Deposit, *The Story of the Steel Strike of 1945*, issued by the Illawarra Trades and Labour Council and Newcastle Trades Hall Council, 7. Also see Murray and White, 1982, 151.

<sup>703</sup>Sheridan, 1981, 104-105.

Commission on 4 September. The FIA was the union covering workers like Parker and its deregistration made negotiations with BHP over the dispute which began on 22 September fraught with difficulty.<sup>704</sup> The deregistration arose after an intra-union rangle involving the Chemical Workers' Union, the AWU and the FIA.<sup>705</sup>

The Port Kembla dispute spread in early November when, over similar issues, workers at BHP's Newcastle plant joined the ranks of strikers.<sup>706</sup> Miners and seamen from New South Wales also weighed into the dispute from late November.<sup>707</sup> Miners and seamen eventually returned to work on 17 December, but steel workers and their families endured strike action for approximately three months. In early January 1946 workers finally agreed to return to work after the AIS was ordered by the Industrial Commission to reinstate Parker. Mr J. Cranwell from the Amalgamated Engineering Union argued that this was a successful result for workers and was a consequence of 'their show of solidarity and determination'.<sup>708</sup>

Sheridan has said that the 1945 steel strike represents a 'case study in complexity'.<sup>709</sup> One of his objectives in examining the strike was to show how industrial relations are not as 'black and white' as is often thought.<sup>710</sup> Much of his excellent work has concentrated largely on the dynamics between management and the unions, particularly the FIA. He argued that the strike was neither 'an infernal communist plot' or a 'premeditated,

<sup>704</sup>Sheridan, 1981, 104-105.

<sup>705</sup>Murray and White, 151.

<sup>706</sup>NBAC, P43/3/47, W. J. H. Harris Deposit, *The Story of the Steel Strike of 1945*, issued by the Illawarra Trades and Labour Council and Newcastle Trades Hall Council, 12-13.

<sup>707</sup>NBAC, P43/3/47, W. J. H. Harris Deposit, *The Story of the Steel Strike of 1945*, issued by the Illawarra Trades and Labour Council and Newcastle Trades Hall Council, 24-29.

<sup>708</sup>NBAC, P43/3/47, W. J. H. Harris Deposit, *The Story of the Steel Strike of 1945*, issued by the Illawarra Trades and Labour Council and Newcastle Trades Hall Council, 44.

<sup>709</sup>T. Sheridan, 'Case Study in Complexity: The Origins of the 1945 Steel Strike in New South Wales', *Labour History*, no.41, November 1981, 87-109.

<sup>710</sup>Sheridan, 1981, 88.

single-minded capitalist plot'.<sup>711</sup> He described the strike as resulting from a series of varied events, rather than from management 'coolly setting in train plans based on sophisticated multi-factoral analysis'.<sup>712</sup> He rejected the one-sided analysis of some labour historians, who, he says, 'tend to endow employers with vastly superior powers of foresighted planning'.<sup>713</sup> Following Sheridan's style of analysis, I here focus on the dynamics between workers and unions in this dispute suggesting that they too were more complex than Amalgamated Engineering Unionist Cranwell would have us believe, when he emphasised 'solidarity and determination'.

Cranwell was not alone in seeing the strike as exemplifying solidarity. According to union commentators, who published a pamphlet titled *The Story of the Steel Strike of 1945*, the dispute did much to expose the 'forces supporting or opposing the working class' and it highlighted the 'friends and the enemies of the strikers'.<sup>714</sup> They argued: 'Above all the steel strike is the story of the courage and solidarity of 13,000 workers...' and that workers 'stood solidly together'.<sup>715</sup> The *Labor News*, the union paper for the FIA commented in a similar vein that: 'Union solidarity in the 15-weeks steel dispute won an important victory over the BHP'.<sup>716</sup>

There were indeed important signs of solidarity within the labour movement and within the local community as a whole. A local Grocers' Association Representative said they would not restrict credit to striking workers and rumours of such 'are entirely without foundation'. McGovern, a local dental surgeon offered to provide free 'attention to all acute dental needs of those men in the dispute and their families'.<sup>717</sup> Mr J.

<sup>711</sup>T. Sheridan, 'Aspects of Decision Making in a Monopoly: BHP and the 1945 Steel Strike', *Australian Economic Review*, vol. xxi, no.1, March 1982, 2.

<sup>712</sup>Sheridan, 1981, 107-108.

<sup>713</sup>Sheridan, 1981, 107.

<sup>714</sup>NBAC, P43/3/47, W. J. H. Harris Deposit, *The Story of the Steel Strike of 1945*, issued by the Illawarra Trades and Labour Council and Newcastle Trades Hall Council, 61.

<sup>715</sup>NBAC, P43/3/47, W. J. H. Harris Deposit, *The Story of the Steel Strike of 1945*, issued by the Illawarra Trades and Labour Council and Newcastle Trades Hall Council, 3.

<sup>716</sup>*Labor News*, vol.3, no.5, January 1946, 1.

<sup>717</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 12/10/1945.

Seamer, a striking worker, argued that the 'strength of the worker is determined by the strength of his union'. He believed that 'it was the endeavours of the "big companies" to smash the trade unions' and although during the war 'companies promised employees a new way of life' he felt 'conditions are now worse than ever'. For these reasons he supported the strike action.<sup>718</sup> A Thirroul resident, enraged with BHP and the Industrial Commission, offered support to the striking workers in a more novel way and painted a sign on the Lower South Coast road, saying, in three feet letters: 'Sack Cantor B.H.P. Agent'.<sup>719</sup>

The operative staff system that provided the labour for the coke ovens after Parker's dismissal could, as Firth suggested, have been a 'threat to working class solidarity'.<sup>720</sup> Arthur Blakely, the Conciliation Commissioner who had examined industrial relations at AIS in 1942 considered the scheme provocative and 'not conducive to industrial peace'.<sup>721</sup> Workers were accepted into the staff fold on the condition they resigned from the union. In return they were rewarded with increased wages and a number of other privileges not available to ordinary workers.<sup>722</sup> Management's use of staff after the walk out was, however, regarded as a blatant dismissal of workers' claims and only compelled workers to support the strike. At a mass meeting of striking workers a motion was carried expressing 'concern' at 'the continued employment of the operative staff'. As well as calling for the 'immediate withdrawal' of operative staff, workers resolved to 'assemble outside the A.I.S. works to appeal to the persons concerned to take their rightful place beside their fellow work mates'. Clerks were also targeted in the protest. Despite the 'orderly' demonstration outside AIS gates the newspaper reported that 'not

<sup>718</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 23/11/1945.

<sup>719</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 2/11/1945.

<sup>720</sup>Firth, 375.

<sup>721</sup>Firth, 377-378.

<sup>722</sup>Firth, 376.

one member of the operative staff or of the clerks joined the strikers'.<sup>723</sup> This did not deter the strikers. While waiting for work trains with staff to arrive, they joined in choruses of song and one worker asked Hoskins, who was at the gates, if he wished to contribute to the strike fund.<sup>724</sup>

Perhaps the most public and purposeful display of solidarity amongst striking workers and in the Wollongong community was the fund-raising and relief work conducted to sustain the strikers and their families. The support was wide ranging and enduring. The CPA donated its 'weekly session' on the local radio to the Disputes Committee to report on the strike. The Sydney branch of Actors Equity organised free 'seven top line artists' for two 'big concerts' at the Civic Theatre in Wollongong and the White Way Theatre at Port Kembla. Proceeds from the Wollongong City Band's euchre nights were also offered to assist the strikers.<sup>725</sup> The working-class community of Broken Hill responded to the steelworkers cause with a cheque for £1529/11/0, and the promise of another £1000.<sup>726</sup> The Port Kembla Area Combined Unions Dispute Committee reported in early December that they received £14/5/0 in cash donations 'from various Port Kembla business people' and local retailers donated fruit and vegetables, meat, cigarettes and toys for the children.<sup>727</sup> Area Committees organised 'Fishing parties, rabbiting parties and firewood and vegetable collecting parties' to feed strikers. The *Illawarra Mercury* noted the 'work of these groups will materially assist the campaign in the struggle for justice'.<sup>728</sup> The Disputes Committee organised a social and talent quest in the Wollongong Trades Hall and noted how the 'men involved in the disputes, their wives and friends have been invited', but that 'No charge will be

<sup>723</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 19/10/1945.

<sup>724</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 19/10/1945. By the end of the dispute however some 43 operative staff had joined the Port Kembla strikers. See Sheridan, May 1982, 14.

<sup>725</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 12/10/1945.

<sup>726</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 2/11/1945.

<sup>727</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 7/12/1945.

<sup>728</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 12/10/1945.

made for admission'.<sup>729</sup> Women's efforts were pivotal in the success of much of this fund-raising and relief work and they had committees to assist with 'cases of hardship'.<sup>730</sup> Concessions such as these were made to strikers in an effort to boost morale and keep strikers in good spirits.

Despite these demonstrations of solidarity, there was some evidence of dissension. On 2 November 'Interested' from Wollongong wrote to the Editor of the *Illawarra Mercury* after he heard one member's proposal to return to work had been 'howled down and counted out by those present'. 'Interested' proposed:

In order therefore that the general public may know the full facts of the dispute, and hear reasons why the strike should continue, and reasons why one member considers a resumption of work should take place, I suggest that a public meeting be called...<sup>731</sup>

Questions continued to be raised at subsequent meetings. At a mass meeting on 8 November, 3000 Port Kembla workers supported a resolution containing five demands which called on AIS to re-instate Parker, to recognise seniority rights, to acknowledge FIA officials and delegates, to prohibit victimisation and lastly to commit to a conference on issues related to the 'award demands of the Metal Trades Federation'.<sup>732</sup> On 6 December, at another mass meeting, where support for the five demands was reconfirmed, workers questioned unionists and IT&LC officials from the floor about various matters. One worker was clearly concerned with the conduct of the strike and the reasoning surrounding the dispute. He wanted to know where Parker was and why he was not attending the mass meeting. He followed this question with another query about Parker: 'Is it a

<sup>729</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 23/11/1945.

<sup>730</sup>NBAC, P43/3/47, W. J. H. Harris Deposit, *The Story of the Steel Strike of 1945*, issued by the Illawarra Trades and Labour Council and Newcastle Trades Hall Council, 60.

<sup>731</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 2/11/1945.

<sup>732</sup>*South Coast Times*, 9/11/1945. The demands by the Metal Trade Federation referred to a 40 hour week, an increase in the minimum industry wage (above the basic wage), a 25 per cent increase for shift workers, and a annual wage guarantee.

fact that he has openly announced that he has no intention of going back to B.H.P.?. This worker considered Parker breached one of the central tenets of collective action - he should have at least attended the mass meeting, and re-stated his commitment to the cause.

This same worker was also concerned with the money that had been collected throughout the strike and wanted union officials to tell him where it 'was going to'.<sup>733</sup> Another worker raised the issue of the FIA's re-registration and wanted to know if anything had been done towards this. Mr Burgess, from the IT&LC responded, and stated that it was 'purely a domestic matter for them [the FIA]'. Burgess's claim was greeted with voices from the crowd crying: 'We have heard the same tale before'. Another person questioned 'why were all the registered unions supporting a deregistered union?'. The following speaker suggested they were 'all on strike for one thing - security for life' and questioned why 'one man' was allowed to cause a strike?<sup>734</sup> A motion to resume work was lost, but the public questioning of the IT&LC and union officials indicated that supporters may not have been as united as suggested. Given that paid work was a lifetime pursuit for Wollongong men and it was truly their only 'security for life', those who questioned the union wanted to be sure they were striking for the right reasons.

Indeed there were some obvious contradictions in the unionists' proclamation of 'courage and solidarity'. Some unionists said the steel strike was 'the shameful story of the treachery of a handful of people in the Labor movement'. According to the 'Trades and Labour Councils' in Newcastle and Wollongong, reformist sections of the labour movement used the strike as an opportunity to attack and undermine the CPA.<sup>735</sup> The FIA also made mention of the 'disrupters' in *Labor News*; 'when the NSW

<sup>733</sup> *Illawarra Mercury*, 7/12/1945.

<sup>734</sup> *Illawarra Mercury*, 7/12/1945.

<sup>735</sup> NBAC, P43/3/47, W. J. H. Harris Deposit, *The Story of the Steel Strike of 1945*, issued by the Illawarra Trades and Labour Council and Newcastle Trades Hall Council, 3.

Labor Council, and later the ACTU, took control of the dispute', they said 'there were unfortunately some elements in the Labor and trade union movement whose utterances seemed more likely to be interpreted by the public as support in some respects of the B.H.P.'.<sup>736</sup> On the other hand, Murray and White suggest the FIA was keen to break with the harmonious patterns of the later war years and used the 1945 steel strike as an opportunity for 'militant tactics'.<sup>737</sup>

Inter-union rivalry, and the rift and tension between the ALP and the CPA, were all evident in the 1945 Steel Strike. Sheridan noted the AWU's opposition to the strike,<sup>738</sup> and Chifley's obstructive actions,<sup>739</sup> but argued that despite 'increased wrangling' between the AWU, ALP and the CPA, striking workers 'remained quite solid'.<sup>740</sup> While a majority of miners and seamen in NSW voted to return to work, 77 per cent of Southern District miners voted to continue striking.<sup>741</sup> Despite the many ambiguities and contradictions related to the question of conflict between unions, the ALP and the CPA, Sheridan has maintained that at a local level in the strike-affected communities support continued 'right to the bitter end'.<sup>742</sup> This support does not imply either a complete endorsement of the machinations, or ignorance of the conflicts, but rather that locals were committed to the strike for reasons that they considered were of greater importance.

The commitment of the local community is obvious from what they endured. The *South Coast Times* reported on 7 December that 'practically all industries and entertainment in this district ceased as a result of stringent State-wide electricity and gas restriction'. It was also noted that greyhound meetings at Dapto and Wollongong had to be cancelled and that

<sup>736</sup> *Labor News*, vol.3, no.5, January 1946, 1.

<sup>737</sup> Murray and White, 154.

<sup>738</sup> T. Sheridan, 'The 1945 Steel Strike: Trade Unions, the New Order and Mr. Chifley', *Labour History*, no.42, May 1982, 4.

<sup>739</sup> Sheridan, May 1982, 17-21.

<sup>740</sup> Sheridan, May 1982, 5.

<sup>741</sup> Sheridan, May 1982, 16.

<sup>742</sup> Sheridan, May 1982, 24.



all screenings of picture shows had been banned.<sup>743</sup> Roy Castles, a Thirroul Disputes Committee member addressed a meeting of the Thirroul Progress Association about the strike, which 'is now in its ninth week' and argued that 'something should be done about the matter'. He said that in the Thirroul area 'a number of families are destitute because of the hardships, and even those not so unfortunate are at a great loss'.<sup>744</sup> They argued that 'something should be done' but they remained united. Firth noted how sympathy was 'widespread', claiming that prior to the cold war, workers and the community were 'tolerant towards stoppages and cheerfully bore with restrictions and shortages for the sake of a good cause'.<sup>745</sup>

Sheridan pointed to two main factors that made workers both tolerant of the hardships endured, and supportive of the strike and the union leaders. First workers had a 'collective memory of the Depression', and second, workers had endured the 'restraints imposed in wartime'. As Sheridan stated: 'Life had been hard for most people in the 1930s, if not before, and the war period had involved many dislocations and shortages'.<sup>746</sup> For most they had nothing to lose. That strikers continued, unmoved for so long, indicated this was a remarkable dispute. The majority of workers were not motivated by inter - union rivalries, nor by the divisions between the CPA and ALP. Solidarity existed because both workers and unionists experienced the war and had worked long hours, made compromises, and expected something in return for their efforts. Secretary of the Port Kembla branch of the FIA Bill Frame embodied this determination when he addressed a public meeting and said, 'we are going to get a slice of the New Order, whether Hoskins likes it or not'. Bill Parkinson was on the Disputes Committee and reiterated the same when he noted that since 1942 workers and unions 'had been promised by all and

<sup>743</sup>South Coast Times, 7/12/1945.

<sup>744</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 23/11/1945.

<sup>745</sup>Firth, 487-488.

<sup>746</sup>Sheridan, March 1982, 3.

sundry there would be a New Order at the termination of the war, but as the danger lessened the promises made to the workers diminished'.<sup>747</sup> Steel worker Norman Martin remembered the Depression but said when:

The war came, and it was great for everybody...Funny thing; people who used to be our enemies were now our buddies. They were good friends, we were calling each other by first names...it changed completely.<sup>748</sup>

Martin admitted 'it was very hard to get unity, but of course when a strike came, well...that welds them together'.<sup>749</sup> Similarly, worker and CPA activist Sally Bowen described the 1945 strike as a 'watershed'. She said, 'We thought things would be a bit more equal...it was such a shock to the unions to think that here the war was only over for a short time, and they were going to start putting the boot in...'.<sup>750</sup>

Parker, the man at the centre of the dispute resigned a short period after being reinstated at the steelworks.<sup>751</sup> Perhaps this action confirmed the suspicions of the worker who raised questions during the mass meeting about Parker leaving the steelworks. Notwithstanding this, workers and unionists remained largely united in the strike efforts. True, divergent interests were evident. No doubt some unionists and workers did see the strike as a tactical ploy in the dramas between the ALP, CPA and the labour movement generally, but for others these were less significant. The overall issue that sustained unionists, strikers and their families was the desire for a fair go, in return for the suffering before 1945. Both workers and unionists had offered much during war time, and they suffered greatly during the Depression. Principally, because of this, anything less than victory was simply not acceptable.

<sup>747</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 16/11/1945.

<sup>748</sup>Interview with Norman Martin, 31/1/1996.

<sup>749</sup>Interview with Norman Martin, 31/1/1996.

<sup>750</sup>Interview with Dolly Potter and Sally Bowen, 29/1/1996.

<sup>751</sup>Murray and White, 154.



In the late 1940s and early 1950s, recent immigrant labour raised many issues for class solidarity amongst Wollongong workers. The Depression and war were also factors which influenced workers' and unions' relations with migrant workers. The Australian labour movement's support for discriminatory immigration policies in both the nineteenth and twentieth century is widely acknowledged,<sup>752</sup> although scholarly disputes exist about why the labour movement adopted this position and also on the extent or degree of opposition it exhibited to immigrants.<sup>753</sup>

The Australian Labor Government initiated its post-war immigration program in late 1945., for a combination of economic and security reasons.<sup>754</sup> Assisted and selected migration from the UK commenced in early 1947, and in July that year the government signed an agreement with the International Refugee Organisation to receive displaced persons as part of its immigration policy.<sup>755</sup> In the same year agreements were signed with governments in Germany, Holland, and Italy which directed skilled immigrants to live in camps and work for a duration of two years.<sup>756</sup> AIS commenced the 'organised engagement of immigrant labour' in February 1949.<sup>757</sup>

<sup>752</sup>Many of the chapters in the Markus and Curthoys collection highlight this. For instance see F. Farrell, 'International Solidarity?', in Markus and Curthoys. Also G. Greenwood, Australia: A Social and Political History, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1955, 408 and J. Collins, Migrant Hands in a Distant Land: Australia's Post-war Immigration, second edition, Pluto Press, Leichhardt, 1991.

<sup>753</sup>See, A. Markus, 'Labor and Immigration: Policy Formation 1943-5', Labour History, 21-23; M. Quinlan and C. Lever-Tracy, 'From Labour Market Exclusion to Industrial Solidarity: Australian Trade Union Responses to Asian Workers, 1830-1988', Cambridge Journal of Economics, vol.14, 1990, 161-164; and S. Bertone and G. Griffin, Immigrant Workers and Trade Unions, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1992, 3-13.

<sup>754</sup>Markus, 21.

<sup>755</sup>Greenwood, 406-407.

<sup>756</sup>J. Collins, 'The Political Economy of Post-War Immigration', in E.L. Wheelwright and K. Buckley, (eds) Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism, Volume 1, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1975, 109-110.

<sup>757</sup>BHP Archives, PE032/021, BHP Review, vol.27, no.3, June 1950, 12.

A distinction between British migrants and New Australians was drawn in an article in the *BHP Review* which stated: 'British Migrants and New Australians Strengthen the Steel Industry's Labour Force'. This distinction was important. As noted in Chapter Two, the period from 1921 to 1954 in Wollongong saw relatively little ethnic diversity in the working class. By 1954 a significant change begins to be apparent, when 9 per cent of the total population came from countries of Non English Speaking Background, as compared with only 1 per cent only seven years earlier. Significantly, two thirds of these were men reinforcing Wollongong's existing sexual division of labour.<sup>758</sup> Preferring single men, in 1954 BHP opposed government moves to attract more immigrant families.<sup>759</sup> As late as 1965, the Executive Officer of BHP's Personnel and Training wrote to the recruitment representative in the United Kingdom advising on how 'to recruit the maximum number of workers'. The recruitment officer was told 'to keep family units as small as possible' and that 'married couples without children are not a good prospect' because 'work is not available for the wife and this results in poor retention...'.<sup>760</sup>

BHP was explicit about its use of these migrants as unskilled workers. The *BHP Review* stated:

Employment of New Australians in the steel industry can be seen to be of benefit especially to the industry's older employees as the New Australians fill the unskilled jobs and thus enable Australian steel workers to take advantage of the opportunities available in the skilled trades.<sup>761</sup>

<sup>758</sup>Commonwealth Census of Australia, 1954. See also M.G.A. Wilson, 'Growth and Change in the Population of the Urban Illawarra', in Robinson, 1977, 242-249.

<sup>759</sup>C. Lever-Tracy and M. Quinlan, A Divided Working Class: Ethnic Conflict in Australia, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1988, 190.

<sup>760</sup>BHP Archives, D009/001/0865, Correspondence Department. Files. General Index. Labour - Migrants. 1/2/1965 -31/3/1965., Letter from Executive Officer Personnel and Training, to UK Representative, London, dated 16/3/1965.

<sup>761</sup>BHP Archives, PE032/021, BHP Review, vol.27, no.3, June 1950, 12.

Their use in unskilled jobs was not because the migrant men lacked skills, the *Review* noting that the 'New Australians...come from all walks of life'.<sup>762</sup> Amongst their employees there were 'a doctor, a dentist, an artist, a law student, a journalist, engineers, farmers, waiters, and sailors'. BHP justified this use of skilled men in unskilled jobs by saying its employees understood that they carried out manual labour until their two year contract had expired. Acting as a paternal employer, BHP said 'Our New Australians are happy to be in this country, and they are optimistic about their prospects'.<sup>763</sup>

While both the state and capitalists exploited migrant labour in the process of building an industrial base in Australia, sections of the labour movement appeared equally diligent at exploiting newly arrived migrant workers. Pietro Tedeschi recalled that many Italians like himself, who arrived in the Illawarra were employed as labourers in the steelworks even if they had qualifications, attributing this to the trade unions:

who were prepared to have foreign workers engaged on jobs Australians did not want, but were opposed to their being employed on more skilled assignments.<sup>764</sup>

Further evidence supports Tedeschi's view.

In March 1948 Bill Frame wrote on behalf of the Port Kembla branch of the FIA to the ALP General Secretary, submitting a resolution on immigrant labour for inclusion in the ALP's National Conference agenda. The motion expressed the FIA's opposition 'to foreign migrants being settled in colonies of their own', arguing instead 'that these displaced persons should be dispersed amongst the Australian people'. His members, he wrote, were 'not satisfied that these displaced persons would mix

<sup>762</sup>BHP Archives, PE032/021, *BHP Review*, vol.27, no.3, June 1950, 13.

<sup>763</sup>BHP Archives, PE032/021, *BHP Review*, vol.27, no.3, June 1950, 13.

<sup>764</sup>G. Zampaglione, *Italians in the Illawarra*, Friends of the University of Wollongong Ltd, Wollongong, 1987, 69.

properly with members of the Australian Unions' because 'the majority have been fascist supporters and are enemies of Trade Unionism'. They would work only with those 'displaced persons who have a clean Trade Union and anti-fascist record' and 'are not isolated in exclusive hostels'.<sup>765</sup> This opposition continued. In September of 1949, at a IT&LC meeting, the Vice President Ted Arrowsmith gave a report 'on the influx of displaced persons into the Steel industry'. As a consequence of this report a resolution was carried, stating that the IT&LC:

protests against the immigration policy of the Federal Government which assumes that there is going to be a permanent shortage of labour, whereas there is already signs of depression. We declare that the Federal Government and the employers are responsible for the inclusion of displaced persons in the industry against the wishes of the members of the Unions. This Council protests against the Government's action and calls upon all Unionists to be vigilant in seeing that Union policy and conditions are not broken down by these people.<sup>766</sup>

Stephen Castles notes how the FIA agreed to 'the inclusion of displaced persons in the industry' in 1949 on the condition that these workers would get the least-liked jobs, join the union, and not replace existing workers.<sup>767</sup>

This question of union membership and credentials was a pivotal issue that determined opposition to migrants. In November of 1950, the Builders Workers Industrial Union (BWIU) wrote to the IT&LC complaining about 'non-union Balt labour at the Tin Plate Mill'. In response to the complaint the IT&LC did not hesitate to give its support. It resolved to 'support any action taken by the BWIU in defence of unionism, and that the Builders' Labourers' Union be notified of the position existing'.<sup>768</sup> Similarly, in 1952, the Operative Plasterers' Union complained

<sup>765</sup>UWA, D196 Box 1, FIA Records, Letter from W. Frame, Secretary, Port Kembla FIA, to Mr J. Stewart, General Secretary, ALP, dated 24/3/1948.

<sup>766</sup>UWA, D169 series 1 box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 21/9/1949.

<sup>767</sup>S. Castles, 'The Emergence of Multicultural Wollongong', in Hagan and Wells, 208-209.

<sup>768</sup>UWA, D169 series 1 box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 1/11/1950.

to the IT&LC about a 27 year old migrant apprentice who was sent out to work by his employer Rice & Co as a tradesman without tools. E. McSorley addressed the IT&LC on behalf of the Operative Plasterers' Union and said migrants 'are not in the union and have no clearance from any union. The union is very perturbed at migrants being put in as tradesmen'.<sup>769</sup>

The fear of unemployment was also real for many of the male workers in this period. Workers had had their masculinity compromised during the Depression and unquestionably few wished for the same to happen just twenty years on. Concerns about an 'increase in unemployment' were raised at the IT&LC as late as August 1952. The question of seniority was discussed, and it was noted 'that these migrants are also entitled to their seniority'.<sup>770</sup> Some members of the IT&LC differed. Robinson felt that the promise of two years' work for migrants, regardless of the unemployment situation, could mean 'migrants are being employed and Australians being retrenched'.<sup>771</sup> The meeting was full of contradictions however. During the discussion comments were made on 'the growing ill feeling for migrants', which were subsequently sternly 'deplored' by the meeting. Rather than vilification of migrants, unemployment seemed to be the crucial issue of concern.<sup>772</sup>

Conflict was not always exclusively between local workers and recent arrivals either; rifts also resulted between different migrant groups. British migrants living at the Balgownie Hostel protested 'against the prospect of Italians and Germans being admitted to the hostel'.<sup>773</sup> Workers believed to be German were ostracised by other workers. Ukrainian worker Jacob Rudick was employed as a labourer in the foundry of the steelworks. Numerous reports from Superintendents and Foremen for which he

<sup>769</sup>UWA, D169 series 1, box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 12/3/1952.

<sup>770</sup>UWA, D169 series 1 box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 27/8/1952.

<sup>771</sup>UWA, D169 series 1 box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 27/8/1952.

<sup>772</sup>Lever-Tracy and Quinlan, 172. They cite similar concerns about unemployment in Newcastle, where it was alleged BHP Superintendents threatened workers saying such things as 'wait till the Balts come here, we will fix you'.

<sup>773</sup>UWA, D169 series 1 box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 19/11/1952.

worked suggested he was a troubled employee. In early September 1950 Rudiuk was absent from his job for various periods. A report on Rudiuk's activities stated 'that the real trouble is that Rudiuk does not want to work in the foundry'. He admitted that he was 'not afraid of hard work' and would work in any department except the foundry. Apparently Rudiuk's refusal to work was related to the treatment he received from 'other New Australians' because they said he was German. Mr Henwood, an authority for the steelworks supported Rudiuk's claims: 'all the other New Australian will have nothing to do with him. They will not eat with him at lunch and refer to him as a German storm trooper'.<sup>774</sup> Rudiuk left AIS on 4 January 1951.<sup>775</sup>

The conflicts between migrants, and the local workers' response to migrant workers, generally centred around issues related to the recent war. Frame was clearly alluding to this in 1948 when he argued against migrants because 'the majority have been fascist supporters'.<sup>776</sup> For those apposed to the CPA, migrant anti-communism was welcomed. Jean Martin described the response of the Australian trade union movement to migrants according to a four phase chronology. She labelled the period from 1948 through to 1954 as a time when trade unions were concerned with 'Wooing migrant support', principally to reduce the CPA's influence over the labour movement in Australia.<sup>777</sup> Firth also noted the suspicion of left-wing unionists to disenchanted immigrants from European communist countries.<sup>778</sup> In the period leading up to the 1952 election for the Port Kembla branch of the FIA, it was discovered that the FIA's Assistant

<sup>774</sup>BHP Archives, W002/089/002, Australian Iron and Steel Ltd. Port Kembla Steelworks. Industrial Department. General Correspondence Files. Labour - New Australians, Report intitled New Australian Jacob Rudiuk - 852, 4/9/1950.

<sup>775</sup>BHP Archives, W002/089/002, Australian Iron and Steel Ltd. Port Kembla Steelworks. Industrial Department. General Correspondence Files. Labour - New Australians, Memo to Supt. of Rolling Mills, from Merchant Mills Superintendent, AIS Ltd, Port Kembla, dated 29/12/1950.

<sup>776</sup>UWA, D196 Box 1, FIA Records, Letter from W. Frame, Secretary, Port Kembla FIA, to Mr J. Stewart, General Secretary, ALP, dated 24/3/1948.

<sup>777</sup>Martin, 'Forms of Recognition', in Curthoys and Markus, 190.

<sup>778</sup>Firth, 495.

National Secretary Harry Hurrell attended the Berekley Hostel with an interpreter from the Italian Consulate in Sydney in an effort to convince Italian workers to vote for the Official ALP candidate, Tom Malcolm and against the CPA candidate, Bill Frame. Hurrell later alleged that Frame and CPA members threatened migrants with violent action against their family members overseas in order to obtain the migrant vote.<sup>779</sup> Migrants were clearly pawns for both sides in this game, and when Frame was defeated he claimed the votes of migrants were influential.<sup>780</sup>

In his discussion of migrants and class in Australia, Tierney noted the work of Lucas Nicolaou, who points out a number of reasons why immigrant unionists (or workers) are neglected by the dominant union movement. These include:

unions' lack of resources, bureaucratic inertia, a tendency for union leaders to divorce social problems from immediate industrial issues, the lack of NESB migrant representation in full-time union positions, and the assimilationist views and racial prejudices of many union officials.<sup>781</sup>

While in Wollongong evidence probably exists for all of these reasons, in the earlier period the question of unemployment and maintaining working conditions were central reasons for resistance and opposition to migrant labour.

In contrast to some unionists pessimistic predictions for the future, migrants saw Australia as offering opportunities. In 1997, Bruno Pinzan reflected on his migration to Australia in 1956 and said he 'studied Australia at school and knew it was a rich country with not too many people'. He believed, it was 'full of opportunity for work and to raise a

<sup>779</sup> Firth, 494-495.

<sup>780</sup> Lever-Tracy and Quinlan, 179.

<sup>781</sup> R. Tierney, 'Migrants and Class in Postwar Australia', in R. Kuhn and T. O'Lincoln, (eds) *Class and Class Conflict in Australia*, Longman Australia, Melbourne, 1996, 102.

family'. Like most migrants they came 'in search of a better life'. As Silvana Roso, another Illawarra resident who migrated to Australia with her family in 1951 says, 'Sometimes we didn't know whether it would get any better but through sheer hard work we made a better life'.<sup>782</sup> The attitudes of Australian workers and unionists to these new arrivals was not consistent for they feared the opportunities that they had lost in the past would be lost once again. Some worried at the influx of migrants; some 'deplored' the hostility directed against the migrants; for some the major concern was with union principles and policy; and some workers, including other migrants were opposed to migrants because of their country of origin. Above all, though, it was the newly arrived workers' capacity for hard work that so many local workers and unionists worried about, and which prompted their initial opposition to immigrant workers.

For local workers who had experienced the many years of unemployment and poverty during the Depression and feared a return to the same after the boom years of the Second World War there was, it seemed, no other choice but to oppose them. They dreaded, as unionists conscious of unemployment and about to face the Depression in 1928 did that: 'Every immigrant from overseas is a menace to the workers in this country, intensifying the competition for jobs and adding to the army of unemployed'.<sup>783</sup> The fear of Depression in the late 1940s was however a misapprehension and with this realisation relations slowly began to change and bonds of solidarity were gradually nurtured.<sup>784</sup>

Although for a brief period and under extraordinary circumstances, between late 1941 and 1945 workers and unions attempted to foster an arena

<sup>782</sup> 'The Weekender', *Illawarra Mercury*, 27/9/1997, 4-5.

<sup>783</sup> *Illawarra Mercury*, 18/7/1928.

<sup>784</sup> Lever-Tracy and Quinlan, chapter 4. Here Lever-Tracy and Quinlan discuss immigrant workers in the Australia steel industry and point to the Port Kembla Branch of the FIA as one of a few union branches successfully incorporating immigrant workers in the 1960s and 1970s.

of co-operation with capital. Unionists took the lead in discouraging a divisive attitude or disruptive actions towards capital. Productivity and efficiency became the goals of both capital and labour as the social and economic circumstances determined that any other approach to industrial relations was inappropriate. In contrast, with the war over, the 1945 steel strike saw workers and unionists unite against capital. Despite some vocal opponents, and the conflicts between trade unions and political parties in the upper echelons, it captured the imagination of workers and the community generally. An anxiety about a return to Depression times and the feeling that their efforts during the war went unrecognised prompted workers to oppose employers. Fear of Depression, and the unemployment that characterised it, also compelled suspicious workers to initially oppose migrants and fracture worker solidarity.

Common to all three examples were the experiences of Depression and war. These events influenced the reactions of workers and unionists (and capital) to the relations in the workplace, highlighting the importance of understanding the social structure and how it shaped individual workers' views and actions. In the three instances described, mostly male workers united to strive for a secure future. In the first instance a secure future translated into winning the war, what ever the cost. In the second and third instance it meant securing a good job and wage capable of supporting the family and challenging strongly situations or people that denied workers this right. Here solidarity is shown not to be natural, rather, as Faue argues, it is seen as a 'constructed relationship', which is determined historically and culturally.<sup>785</sup> In all these instances Depression and war were compelling determinates.

---

<sup>785</sup>Faue, 1989, 139.

## 7

### *Family and Domestic Life: 'As my family grew and grew...I had plenty to do'*

Families are pivotal to understanding the lives of working-class people, shaping as well as being shaped by economic and political arrangements.<sup>786</sup> Yet there is substantial disagreement on what and who make up families. In her study of 'ordinary urban families', social anthropologist Elizabeth Bott described a husband, wife and the children as 'the elementary family' who 'formed household units', or the 'nuclear' family.<sup>787</sup> Sociologist Diana Gittins argues that '*the* family' does not exist, except in the plural 'families', which are 'groups of individuals' continually changing according to the life cycle.<sup>788</sup> Recognising class differences in family life is also considered significant by some scholars.<sup>789</sup> Neither conception is incorrect, but all are limiting in their definition of the family. Bott fails to include the extended family, or those outside the immediate biological group, and while Gittins offers a substantial improvement in this regard, she does not conceive of 'the family' as a personal and subjective phenomenon involving individuals in instrumental ways. Also, the consideration of similarities across class is needed along with class differences, thereby confronting the complexities associated with both the concepts class and family.

---

<sup>786</sup>K. Reiger, *Family Economy*, McPhee Gribble, Ringwood, 1991, 4.

<sup>787</sup>E. Bott, *Family and Social Network: Roles, Norms, and External Relationships in Ordinary Urban Families*, second edition, The Free Press, New York, 1971, 2 and Haralambos and Holborn, 454.

<sup>788</sup>D. Gittins, *The Family in Question: Changing Households & Familiar Ideologies*, Macmillan, London, 1985, 8.

<sup>789</sup>German, 47; and L.B. Rubin, *Worlds of Pain*, Basic Books, New York, 1976, 7.

In considering the persistent and wide-ranging debate around the concept "family", the definition offered by Michael Gilding is adopted here. Gilding contends that, as a concept, family 'represents a sociopolitical ordering of kinship and co-residence in order to affix relations of obligation and dependence'.<sup>790</sup> Furthermore, he argues that 'this ordering is reworked by ordinary people to meet the contradictory demands of everyday life'.<sup>791</sup> His description is flexible and capable of describing the changing nature of family over time, or historically. It recognises that a social structure exists and influences the formation of families, simultaneously acknowledging the capacity of individuals to effect change in family formations. Ultimately, Gilding's definition is in keeping with the historical materialist perspective of this thesis, and it is accepted as it is with one minor elaboration: that is, that the 'relations of obligation and dependence' should be recognised as both potentially beneficial and potentially disadvantageous, for all family members, male or female, depending on specific historical circumstances and contexts.

Some scholars within the humanities disregard the family as a research topic regarding it as "natural" and ahistorical, and simply not 'worthy of research'.<sup>792</sup> Juliet Mitchell, in her classic *Woman's Estate* has shown that, while the family appears "natural" it is 'actually a cultural creation'.<sup>793</sup> Even so, assumptions about what counts as history mean that the family is neglected by some labour historians. There are those who, for example, regard collective action as more important, and frequently define family history as apolitical and a poor substitute for political history.<sup>794</sup> A focus on industrial action and political controversy has often excluded the family, which Marcel van der Linden maintains is about the 'daily life' of

<sup>790</sup>M. Gilding, *The Making and Breaking of the Australian Family*, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1991, 5.

<sup>791</sup>Gilding, 8.

<sup>792</sup>Reiger, 4.

<sup>793</sup>J. Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1971, 99.

<sup>794</sup>S. O. Rose, 'Gender and Labor History: The Nineteenth-Century Legacy', *International Review of Social History*, 38, 1993, Supplement, 145 and 147.

workers and is the "real substance" of history.<sup>795</sup> American historian Wally Secombe suggests, however, that interventions from social and feminist history have transformed this situation. He agrees that previously the domestic aspects of ordinary peoples' lives 'were presumed to be lost forever', hidden 'in the black hole of folk myth and unrecorded experience', but he argues that investigations by feminist and social historians have now challenged these ways of thinking.<sup>796</sup>

This chapter forms part of that challenge. Accommodation, the household, and the informal economy and marriage were three aspects of family life that shaped working-class peoples' lives in Wollongong in material, but also highly cultural, personal, and emotive ways. Moreover, together with the strong sexual division of labour, which they helped to create and sustain, these aspects of family life were significant in constructing and reinforcing the class and gender identities of both working-class men and women.

Interviews have been important in uncovering this history of working-class families. In the case of Wollongong, they reveal how accounts about the Depression and the war are interwoven with the experiences of family life. Individuals reconcile opportunities lost due to Depression and war with the fortunes of the postwar period, either realised or missed. Compromise is with the world "out there", but also with the self; so good times are recognised alongside the bad. Those who lived through the 1930s are particularly candid about their experiences. Despite hard times when she 'didn't have it easy', Maud Rodgers remained 'a contented person' regretting little of her life experience. She concluded overall that her life 'wasn't hard' and her only regret was not being able to provide for her son in the ways she wanted.<sup>797</sup> Similarly, Frank Gamble

<sup>795</sup>M. van der Linden, 'Connecting Household History and Labour History', *International Review of Social History*, 38, 1993, Supplement, 163.

<sup>796</sup>W. Secombe, *A Millennium of Family Change: Feudalism to Capitalism in Northwestern Europe*, Verso, London, 1992, 4.

<sup>797</sup>Interview with Maud Rodgers, 30/1/1996.



said he 'had it pretty tough', but he 'just thought that that was the way it was'.<sup>798</sup> Scattered amongst these descriptions are intimate details of daily practices and schedules. Maud discusses her house and the dirty stove, growing tomatoes, the assistance she had from friends, having a baby and working hard to keep the house.<sup>799</sup> Frank also describes the house he lived in, where family members slept, the 'community effort' on washing days, his mother cooking on the fuel stove, working in the garden and shopping.<sup>800</sup> These were regular mundane events in family life, but were as important as the Depression and war in shaping Maud's and Frank's existence, and history remains incomplete if either dimension is neglected.

#### *Accommodation*

Like most people I have moved house on a number of occasions, and recall experiencing conflicting emotions on these occasions. When I was thirteen our family moved from Wollongong to the Far North Queensland town of Malanda for a five year stay. While filled with excitement at the prospect of the new and unknown, I was also sad, leaving what I had known for most of my childhood years. I experienced similar feelings again some twelve years later when I packed the last few belongings I had stored for safe keeping at my parents' house in Dapto, to move into *my own* house in Canberra. This time, as an adult of 25 years, I found the experience more traumatic. Leaving stirred memories, the mixed feelings and emotions with which a home is imbued, for it is part of ourselves and forms an integral part of our identity as people.

Accommodation was an important component in shaping the gender order and identities of working-class men and women in Wollongong

<sup>798</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 22.

<sup>799</sup>Interview with Maud Rodgers, 30/1/1996.

<sup>800</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 15-17.

between 1921 and 1954. In this period the home was the domain for the majority of working-class women, yet it was men's wages alone that determined the kind of accommodation that could be afforded. In the postwar period, then, securing permanent housing for the family became a quest firmly associated with securing permanent employment for men and was about creating and affirming their masculinity, as breadwinners and providers.

For many working-class people in Wollongong, particularly during the Depression and the war, owning a home remained distant, out of reach, or, at the very least delayed. In the 1920s the Illawarra was a 'crippled community' with a shortage of housing and land, and decent accommodation was too expensive for those workers dependent on intermittent work.<sup>801</sup> Sheets of galvanised iron and earthen floors were common in working-class homes, especially during the Depression and in the northern mining villages.<sup>802</sup> (See Plate 7.1) In the late 1920s, or early 1930s, Maud and George Rodgers moved into a 'very old' house at Wombarra that had 'nothing on the floors'. An old stove allowed them to cook and heat water, and they borrowed a tub from a neighbour for bathing.<sup>803</sup> Lilly Critcher described a similar house in Coledale which her father bought in the late 1920s.<sup>804</sup> The majority of Illawarra homes constructed in the 1920s and 1930s were built from weatherboard, as full brick homes were twice as expensive.<sup>805</sup> (See Plate 7.2 and Plate 7.3)

<sup>801</sup>Firth, 27-29. Firth notes from as early as 1909 a housing shortage was obvious and ER&S had to transport existing housing to the Port Kembla area to accommodate their staff.

<sup>802</sup>Richardson, 1984, 13.

<sup>803</sup>Interview with Maud Rodgers, 30/1/1996.

<sup>804</sup>Interview with Bill and Lilly Critcher, 26/2/1996.

<sup>805</sup>Mitchell and Sherington, 70.



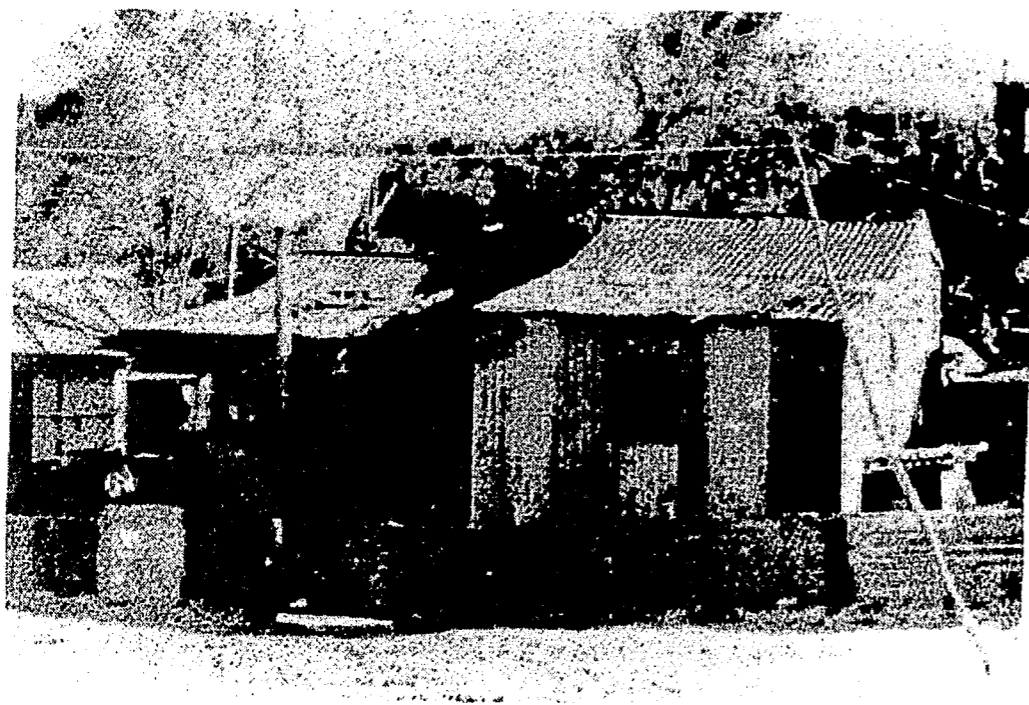


Plate 7.1 - A typical Depression shack. This one on Port Kembla beach was still being used in 1943.

(Source: R. Lockwood, *War on the Waterfront: Menzies, Japan and the Pig-iron Dispute*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1987, 131.)

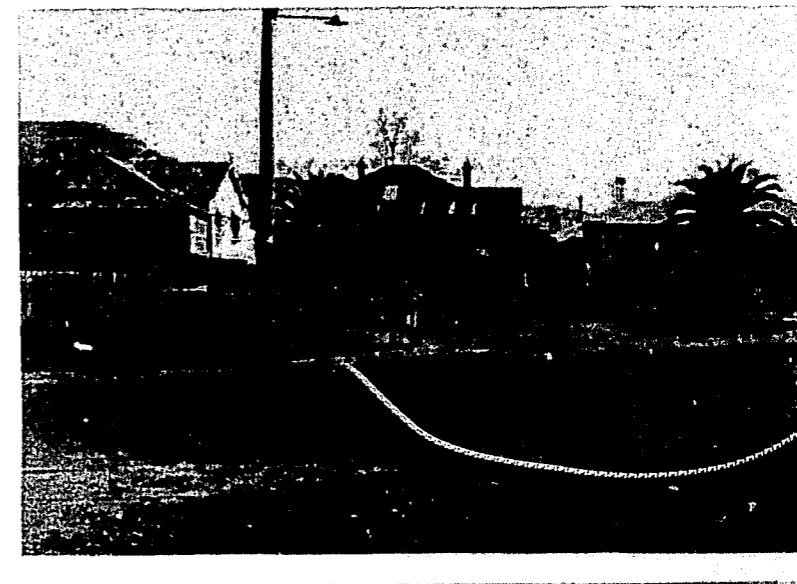


Plate 7.2 - Some weather board housing in Wollongong (Photograph taken c. 1950s)

(Source: Blackley Family Photographs)



Plate 7.3 - Some weather board housing in Wollongong (Photograph taken  
c.1950s)

(Source: Blackley Family Photographs)

It was therefore unlikely that many working-class families could afford the 'Extraordinary' chance to build a home offered in 1927 by the builders Ross and Tucker Limited,<sup>806</sup> (See Plate 7.4 and 7.5) or the 'DAY OF OPPORTUNITY' to purchase land on the Steeltown estate in 1928,<sup>807</sup> nor were the developments in Shellharbour, Oak Flats or Windang aimed at holiday makers attractive to workers and the unemployed needing accommodation close to the steelworks or the mines.<sup>808</sup>

Prolonged unemployment resulted in wretched living conditions, which were only made worse by the region's inability to deal with the many misinformed men who arrived searching for paid work. Richardson noted that, while private housing stock increased between 1921 and 1933, it was insufficient to match the large population increase for the same period.<sup>809</sup> In 1932, the local Returned Soldiers' League estimated that 3000 people were living in temporary housing of a rudimentary kind.<sup>810</sup> The problem continued through the 1930s with many families surviving in camps and other temporary accommodation. In 1932 the Illawarra Mutual Building Society, founded in 1880 especially to assist 'struggling and industrious men', noted how unemployment had restricted its business and 'no loans were granted'.<sup>811</sup> Official sources, which were probably conservative in their estimates, reported that those living in camps increased from 452 in 1936, to 566 in 1937, and to 1,079 in 1938.<sup>812</sup> The accommodation crisis worsened throughout the 1930s as existing residents accrued arrears in

<sup>806</sup>South Coast Times, 1/7/1927.

<sup>807</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 13/1/1928.

<sup>808</sup>Cardew in Robinson, 96-97. Tourism was the focus for much subdivision and development in this earlier period, as investors sought to attract holiday makers from Sydney. Located in areas like Shellharbour, Oak Flats and Windang meant subdivisions of this kind were unsuitable for workers and unemployed requiring accommodation in close proximity to the steel works or mines.

<sup>809</sup>Richardson, 1984, 55.

<sup>810</sup>Mitchell and Sherington, 69.

<sup>811</sup>Illawarra Mutual Building Society Centenary, 1880-1980: A Tribute to Illawarra, Illawarra Mutual Building Society, Wollongong, 1980, 41.

<sup>812</sup>Based on Central Illawarra Municipal Council records, see Richardson, 1984, 134.

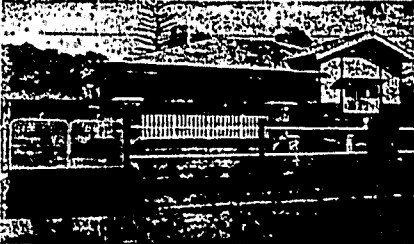
**Offer Extraordinary**

Facts and Figures should convince you. Here they are  
Prices down to Bedrock. This Home-actual photograph of one of our  
modern buildings.  
MODEL 1081

Cost to you to-day under £500

Superior work, under 10%

Includes interest at 4 per cent. to 30th Sept if required. All right to buy all any amount.



This home includes two spacious bedrooms, dining room, kitchen, living room, etc. in addition separate up-to-date bath room, porcelain bath, bath heater, picture, linen press, bed-room dresser, complete table, etc. etc. etc. water, sink, metal tank, all very copper fittings, fresh air and best ventilation, lightning down door, home complete. Everything planned and arranged to make the work of the home easy.

You cannot get a better built home. We assure you that we do not wish any transaction to be considered concluded until we have given satisfaction complete and absolute. Plans, Specifications and all information free of cost. Hundred of designs to select from. Make up your mind to see us at once. This opportunity may never come your way again. Scores and scores of folk have adopted our plan and are now happy and contented in their new home. Ask them, without exception. They won't mind.

**ROSS and TUCKER, LTD.**

Home Builders, Thirroul and Wollongong.  
Open till 9 p.m. Fridays or any evening by appointment.

Plate 7.4 - 1927, Advertisement

(Source: *South Coast Times*, 1/7/1927.)

THE ILLAWARRA MERCURY.

**THE DAY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU!**

**Saturday, 21st January, 1928.**

<p>None of the 400 Lots on STEELTOWN Estate will be sold till then.</p> <p>The early buyers have first choice.</p> <p>Make it your business to attend the Opening Day Sale.</p> <p>REMEMBER, "Steelton" is the only Estate adjoining Hoskin's Great New Steel Works at a Railway Station.</p>	<p>Whatever a Steel Works has been built a City has been built around it.</p> <p>"Steelton" will be the centre of the future City.</p> <p>Thousands of men will be employed in these great Works and the Subsidiary Industries.</p>	<p>But there are only 400 Lots in "Steelton." Not nearly sufficient for the requirements of the next few years.</p> <p>This property will always be in demand, so that buying now at the present Low Prices will give everyone the opportunity for Big Profits in a very few years.</p> <p>The buying terms are very easy.</p>
---	---	--

Full particulars may be had at our Wollongong Office, or direct to

**Giddings & Company,**

3 CASTLEREAGH STREET, SYDNEY

Plans posted on application.

Plate 7.5 - 1928, Advertisement

(Source: *Illawarra Mercury*, 13/1/1928.)

rents and faced eviction, which was commonplace throughout Australia at this time.<sup>813</sup>

Local traders were increasingly concerned as the destitute camp-dwellers became a permanent feature of the district. In the autumn of 1933, P.W. Dwyer, Secretary of the Wollongong Traders' Association, wrote to the Chief Secretary of the New South Wales government about accommodation for working-class families. Dwyer and his association viewed 'with alarm' the 'many families camped in most unsuitable areas'. A typhoid fever outbreak in the state prompted him to urge the Government to establish 'a suitable area where destitute families can be temporarily housed under reasonably hygienic and comfortable conditions'. The situation was pressing with 'the early approach of winter'.<sup>814</sup> Following Dwyer's correspondence, Sergeant Cahill, of the Wollongong Police Station, reported on a camp 'close to the Wollongong Garbage Tip', one and a half miles from town. Its bag tents leaked and the toilets consisted of a bag with a tin or pan 'situated a few feet' from the tents, close to which the 'night soil [was] buried'. Of the twenty-six tents at the camp, five were occupied by married men and their families, including 30 children.<sup>815</sup> In compiling his report, Cahill also interviewed the Mayor, the Health Inspector and Alderman Sr. Lee, from the Wollongong Council. Their 'principal objection' related to the 'unsatisfactory sanitary arrangements and the proximity of the camp to the garbage tip', which the children sometimes searched. The smell from the Lagoon at low tide was also 'offensive'. Cahill proposed that nearby

<sup>813</sup>Louis, and Turner, 109-110, 116-117, and Broomhill, 134.

<sup>814</sup>NSW State Archives, Chief Secretary's Correspondence, (1933), 5/9092, letter number 3421, From P.W. Dwyer, Secretary Wollongong Traders' Association, to Hon. Mr Chaffey, Chief Secretary, 3/4/1933.

<sup>815</sup>NSW State Archives, Chief Secretary's Correspondence, (1933), 5/9092, letter number 3421, From Sergeant Cahill, Wollongong Police Station to Inspector of Police Wollongong, 1/5/1933.

Crown Land with an 'abundance of timber and shelter' was more suitable for an unemployed camp.<sup>816</sup>

While authorities remained disturbed at the poverty of the camps, some of those living in them disagreed. J.D. Campbell, of the Wollongong UWM, said that permanent camps challenged authorities who required the unemployed to travel in search of work. He said those out of work desired permanency and refused 'to tramp the country with their bundles of rags' while 'bootless, and slowly starving to death on the miserable 6/- dole'.<sup>817</sup> Life stories of those who lived in the camps reveal a similar determination. In 1937 Bessie Lockwood and her husband lived in the camps after arriving in Port Kembla from Cessnock:

There were tents all around us...there were people there who just put a few branches together and called it Home...They came here for work and just cut down the gum trees and made a bit of shelter. They just poured in and out.<sup>818</sup>

Bessie chose to emphasise the resourcefulness of people and their ability to mark their accommodation, whatever it was, as their 'Home'.<sup>819</sup> Similarly, Matt Hogan recalled the good aspects of camp life. He purchased an old army tent for £5 which he extended to accommodate himself and his mate Paddy, using flour bags, tree saplings and whitewash lime. He was at the Flinders Street camp for two years, and said there were a few 'no-hopers' who drank "metho" and 'weren't a good element', but overall 'the majority were really good people'.<sup>820</sup> Eviction was sometimes remembered in a similar way. Irene Arrowsmith said her family was evicted regularly because they 'lived hand to mouth', but that her mother, Violet Taylor,

<sup>816</sup>NSW State Archives, Chief Secretary's Correspondence, (1933), 5/9092, letter number 3421, From Sergeant Cahill, Wollongong Police Station to Inspector of Police Wollongong, 1/5/1933.

<sup>817</sup>*Workers' Weekly*, 10/4/1931, 4.

<sup>818</sup>Davies, *Our Memories*, 97.

<sup>819</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 97.

<sup>820</sup>Interview with Matt Hogan, 22/2/1996.

'never thought it was her fault that she was poor'; rather 'she always had a sort of political idea of what was happening'.<sup>821</sup>

But, these positive reminiscences of interviewees contrast often with other documentary evidence related to the Depression experience.<sup>822</sup> In early 1936 the politician Davies told parliament, noting people were 'evicted from their homes in the Wollongong and Port Kembla districts' and were 'living in humpies and shacks'. He reported on a person with consumption living in a one-room shack with three children, with 'no possibility of the children escaping this disease', and on a family of seven housed in a cow shed where 'the rats are so bad that the wife cannot leave her child in its cradle unattended'.<sup>823</sup> Workers, the unemployed, and sections of the labour movement formed organisations to express their anger at the dire circumstances. From March to July 1934 various anti-eviction leagues were formed to combat the eviction of workers from their homes.<sup>824</sup> The South Coast Anti-eviction Rent Allowance and Housing Committee stated that its objective was 'to secure a rent allowance for unemployed and relief workers', but also to 'fight evictions' and 'agitate for an adequate housing scheme'.<sup>825</sup> All South Coast branches of the UWM were committed to 'mass demonstrations in the case of any evictions'.<sup>826</sup> Men from the Wollongong branch of the UWM defended the house of a widow who was 'to be thrown on the streets'.<sup>827</sup>

These men could identify with the plight of the widow, for it was still primarily the male breadwinners who were responsible for providing for

<sup>821</sup>Interview with Irene and Neville Arrowsmith, 22/4/1996.

<sup>822</sup>McCalman, 182. Janet McCalman has noted in her work how oral histories about the depression are 'a mass of contradictions', with working class people for a variety of reasons omitting tales of shame and despair.

<sup>823</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 27/3/1936.

<sup>824</sup>Richardson, 1984, 143.

<sup>825</sup>NBAC, N57/2006, *Courier: Port Kembla Relief Workers*, no.22, 6/7/1934.

<sup>826</sup>*Workers' Weekly*, 20/3/1931, 6.

<sup>827</sup>*Workers' Weekly*, 10/4/1931, 4.

the family and ensuring that they were properly housed.<sup>828</sup> But during the Depression, as Chapter Three has shown, many men were unemployed with no income and those working earned well below the basic wage (see Table 3.5). Men were unable to fulfil their own and their family's expectations. It was men, not women, who were responsible for keeping 'the wolf from the door', who were deprived of their livelihoods and who were 'financially embarrassed'. When families were in 'poor circumstances', it was because the husband was unemployed. Women may have complained, but usually did so on behalf of their men, confirming their significance as the breadwinner.<sup>829</sup> Men overwhelmingly bore the burden of unemployment, but its consequences, which often meant no housing, or accommodation of a basic standard were familial.<sup>830</sup> As Tom Royal said, the dole of 'thirty-nine bob a fortnight' was insufficient with a 'wife and four kids....and the landlord calling for a pound a week rent'.<sup>831</sup> Even when working in 1937, Matt Hogan said he was unable to afford the full brick house he wanted built and had to settle for the cheaper brick veneer.<sup>832</sup>

The housing crisis continued with the Second World War, further crippling housing production, and making aspirations unrealisable.<sup>833</sup> In September 1939, the Illawarra Chamber of Commerce called for a 'united effort' to resolve 'the housing problem' as people were 'living in conditions which are a disgrace to the district and a menace to the health and morality

<sup>828</sup>Income levels shown in Table 3.5 show that even though men's earnings were low, the position of women was much worse.

<sup>829</sup>These references refer to Chapter Three.

<sup>830</sup>An example of basic housing in the Illawarra was Spoonerville. In 1938 the government constructed 'Spoonerville' to redress the shortage, but the wood and canvas buildings accommodated only 600 people and were insufficient. This housing estate reflected the gender order and the marked sexual division of labour in the Illawarra with 320 single men housed in twenty huts, and quarters with three or four rooms for 65 married men and their families. See Mitchell and Sherington, 69.

<sup>831</sup>UWA, Oral History - T7 Bowen- Wollongong in the Depression.

<sup>832</sup>Interview with Matt Hogan, 22/2/1996.

<sup>833</sup>M.A. Jones, *Housing and Poverty in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1972, 4.

of its people'.<sup>834</sup> Families were forced to seek refuge with family or friends. In 1938 Noel Castle and Vera Fox married and then lived with relatives for nine years. The 'long sojourn with relatives' was due to the restrictions on building as a consequence of the war. Not until after the war's end did they build their own house.<sup>835</sup> Evidence given to the Rents Inquiry Commission, at Wollongong in mid-1939, suggests that these living arrangements were not unusual. William McNiece from the Valuer-General's Department stated that there were 'many instances' were 'two families occupied the one house'. One study of accommodation in the Illawarra suggested '90 per cent of the houses had either two families or some paying guests', and one boarding house with 17 rooms had 51 male occupants plus resident staff.<sup>836</sup> During the inquiry, U.J. Holland said that since the start of the steelworks 'there had always been a shortage of homes', and according to him, in 1939 the situation 'remained unchanged' with demand constantly exceeding supply.<sup>837</sup> The inquiry speculated about high rents in the Wollongong area and Holland agreed that 'rentals were too high' when compared with the weekly wage. Local real estate agent Alexander R. Bevan supported him, suggesting 'rents were at present higher than in 1928-29'. He said that, when rents were 35/- or greater, two families shared, and he 'estimated 66 per cent of the houses' managed by his firm 'were sublet or had boarders'.<sup>838</sup>

Landlords cashed in on the housing shortage, many families forced to endure paltry housing and crowded living conditions to reach what meagre work existed. Exploitation continued beyond the Depression years, when workers attempted to catch up financially during the war. Paid workers, who were mostly men, were again singled out for mention as trade

<sup>834</sup>*South Coast Times*, 22/9/1939.

<sup>835</sup>*Voice of the Seniors: The First Seven Years (August 1989 to May 1996)*, Wollongong City Council, Wollongong, 1997, 301.

<sup>836</sup>*South Coast Times*, 16/6/1939.

<sup>837</sup>*South Coast Times*, 16/6/1939.

<sup>838</sup>*South Coast Times*, 16/6/1939.

unionists, women and local authorities demanded a solution to the housing crisis. In 1940, *Red Blast*, the trade union pamphlet wrote that:

The landlords in this area have gone the limit in exploiting the housing shortage. The question of rent is most important to the lower paid workers who find building deposits beyond their means.<sup>839</sup>

Unable to contain her anger at the incessant housing problem, 'the wife of a worker, and the mother of children', drew connections in a letter between the cost of the Second World War and the failure of authorities to provide for the worker in the years preceeding the war:

I want to know what our ruling class are doing for us in the way of gas masks and air raid shelters. While they are busy telling us we must be patriotic and help the empire, where will the empire be if the workers and children are killed?...We must deny ourselves and give, give, give. If our rulers take time off to think, they must realise that if many of us deny ourselves further than the Gov't compels us to do, we will be of no use to them. Most of us are just existing as it is, some not even that.

Unemployed for years, no money could be found to help us live decently, but now millions can be found to help us die.<sup>840</sup>

In 1944, housing was discussed at a Wollongong Council meeting where Alderman Beaton was critical of £99,000 spent in Canberra to house public servants', while 'workers were not permitted to spend more than £400'.<sup>841</sup> In 1945 housing was still identified as Wollongong's 'No.1 Problem'.<sup>842</sup>

<sup>839</sup>BHP Archives, W002/101/001: Australian Iron and Steel Ltd. Port Kembla Steelworks. Industrial Department. General Correspondence Files. Propaganda, 1940, *Red Blast*, vol.1, no.4, 25/10/1940.

<sup>840</sup>BHP Archives, Propaganda, W002/101/001, Australian Iron and Steel Ltd. Port Kembla Steelworks. Industrial Department. General Correspondence Files. *Red Blast*, 28/9/1940.

<sup>841</sup>*South Coast Times*, 16/6/1944.

<sup>842</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 4/1/1946.

The crisis was widespread, with government authorities estimating that there was a 300,000 shortage in housing across Australia.<sup>843</sup>

In early 1946, Mr Roach, a building inspector for the North Illawarra Municipality reported an 'immediate effect' in his area when restrictions on home building were lifted,<sup>844</sup> but despite his high hopes, inadequate housing provision continued. After the war, Colin Warrington and his wife spent almost two years living with his parents while their house was being built,<sup>845</sup> and Alan and Maureen Dowdell had temporary accommodation while their house was built of double brick because of the shortage of timber.<sup>846</sup> Rental accommodation was short too, and Mrs Ryan lived in a flat for almost two years 'because there were no houses to let'<sup>847</sup> and in 1951, Irene and Neville Arrowsmith lived with friends on two occasions.<sup>848</sup> In January 1950, the *South Coast Times* reported 'District home building still lagging' caused by 'shortages of labour and materials'. Although 1000 houses were built in Wollongong during 1949, it was estimated that another 5000 more were needed as the 'rapid influx of population' and the 'recent expansion of industry' were creating further pressures with British migrants 'living in hostels and wanting to bring out fiancées from the United Kingdom,...amongst the home seekers'.<sup>849</sup> This confirmed the expectation that being a breadwinner and establishing a family necessitated adequate housing. By 1950, the IT&LC, the key union body representing mostly male workers, recognised that the housing problem persisted and appointed a committee 'to investigate'.<sup>850</sup>

<sup>843</sup>T. Dingle and S. O'Hanlon, 'Modernism versus Domesticity: The Contest to Shape Melbourne's Homes, 1945 - 1960', in J. Murphy and J. Smart, (eds) *The Forgotten Fifties*, (special issue of *Australian Historical Studies*, vol.28, no.109, October), Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1997, 36.

<sup>844</sup>*South Coast Times*, 1/3/1946.

<sup>845</sup>Davies, *Our Memories*, 37.

<sup>846</sup>Interview with Alan Dowdell, 21/2/1996.

<sup>847</sup>Davies, *Our Memories*, 82.

<sup>848</sup>Interview with Irene and Neville Arrowsmith, 22/4/1996.

<sup>849</sup>*South Coast Times*, 17/1/1950.

<sup>850</sup>*South Coast Times*, 16/3/1950.

Commonwealth Housing was also geared to the male-headed family-household. NSW established a public housing authority in 1942, and in 1943 the Commonwealth Housing Commission was established. A 1945 agreement between the states and the Commonwealth provided funding for housing for families on low incomes, and waiting lists were long from the beginning.<sup>851</sup> In 1941, the chairman of the committee for State Housing visited the Wollongong region describing state housing as 'for the genuine worker who could not finance his own home'.<sup>852</sup> The emphasis was on the male breadwinner. The Commission started building in the Illawarra in 1945.<sup>853</sup> Qualifications for housing applicants were targeted at family and employed men stipulating that he 'should be married and require house for himself and family'.<sup>854</sup> This Commission's criterion confirmed and reinforced the expectation that it was men who provided housing for their families. In 1951, it was a natural progression then for the government to 'bribe' labourers willing to work in the mining industry with commission housing.<sup>855</sup> Forty per cent of the housing issued under the designated industries scheme by June 1954 was built in the Wollongong, Newcastle and Port Kembla areas.<sup>856</sup>

For those who lived throughout the Depression and war years, having your own home was a dream come true. For men it confirmed in a

<sup>851</sup>Jones, 4 and 20.

<sup>852</sup>*South Coast Times*, 17/10/1941.

<sup>853</sup>R. Robinson, *Suburban Residential Expansion in the Illawarra Corridor, 1950-1970*, Research Report to the State Planning Authority of NSW and the Illawarra Regional Development Committee, April 1972, 72. Lack of manpower and material prevented the Commission from starting to build any earlier. See *South Coast Times*, 25/2/1944. Ballots were held for Commission housing, and a late 1945 ballot for 24 homes in the Port Kembla area attracted 104 applications indicating that demand was high. See *South Coast Times*, 21/12/1945.

<sup>854</sup>*South Coast Times*, 31/7/1942.

<sup>855</sup>*South Coast Times*, 23/8/1951. Mr Bill Parkinson, the President of the Southern District Miners' Federation was outraged when he discovered labourers outside the Illawarra were given preference for Housing Commission homes if joining the mining industry and he concluded the scheme was a 'bribe' by Menzies. The scheme was in fact first discussed by Chifley, who advocated housing for people 'prepared to work in designated industries'. A Bill was enacted in 1950, however, under Menzies that provided for the allocation of housing in coal and steel producing areas. See Jones, 95 and Hagan and Turner who note Menzies was in power in 1950.

<sup>856</sup>Jones, 96.



tangible way that they could provide for their family. As the postwar years progressed, the possibility of home ownership, virtually lost through Depression and war, was slowly regained. In 1950 the Miner's Co-operative Building Society embodied the new opportunities in an advertisement to men promoting home ownership (see Plate 7.6). The woman was located firmly in the kitchen and the man became the focus for the advertiser promoting homeownership. Men were told that with no deposit they could have their 'own choice of site', a four week repayment-free period, deferred repayments when sick or unemployed, and most importantly 'own the house...'. This was extremely appealing for a generation of many Wollongong working-class men who had lived in tents, boarded in small rooms, or with relatives and friends after experiencing the hardships of unemployment and uncertainty about their futures.

Having a home of your own is invested with a multitude of meanings, and, as Donaldson has argued 'is more than economic'.<sup>857</sup> Obtaining a home, whether their own or a commission house, was a point male interviewees talked about with a sense of pride and achievement. For Fred Moore, having a house was amongst one of the central and enduring achievements of his life: 'I've got a bit of a old fibro house...and that's all I've got for a whole life of work'.<sup>858</sup> Having a home could be described as one of Sennett and Cobb's 'badges of ability'; a way of standing out from others, a mark of independence and individuality.<sup>859</sup> In Wollongong, particularly in the postwar period, a home was an important achievement in terms of masculinity. It was a public and concrete testament to being a good provider and part of succeeding 'as husbands and fathers' in the 1950s and after.<sup>860</sup> It filled the gap that had existed in the preceding years due to Depression and war.

<sup>857</sup>Donaldson, 1991, 65.

<sup>858</sup>Interview with Fred Moore, 29/2/1996.

<sup>859</sup>Sennett and Cobb, 58-76.

<sup>860</sup>M. Peel, 'A New Kind of Manhood: Remembering the 1950s', in Murphy and Smart, 153.

**A home of his own...**

**...and it only costs  
28/- a week  
through the  
Miners' Co-op.**

Mr. C. G. Burgess, miner at Maitland Main, built this weatherboard and Tile Roof home himself with the assistance of a loan of £1,120 from the Miners' Co-op. Situated at Wollombi Rd., Cessnock, this home has 2 bedrooms, lounge, dining room, kitchen, bathroom and laundry, and is fitted with an electric stove and hot-water service.

If you build your own home through the Miners' Co-operative Building Society, you have your own choice of site, layout and design. You own the house immediately it is built! If you wish to sell your property, sale is made easy. In case of sickness or unemployment payments may be wholly or partly deferred.

The Joint Coal Board sponsors and subsidises this co-operative home building scheme for mine workers. More than 1,200 mine workers have already joined, and over 200 are building or have completed their homes. No deposit is required on advances up to £1,520, 90% loans are available up to £1,520 and 50% loans up to £2,200. Moderate fortnightly repayments are deducted at your pay office. At Xmas there is a 4 weeks "holiday" period free of repayment!

Join your  
**MINERS' CO-OPERATIVE  
BUILDING SOCIETY**  
SPONSORED BY THE JOINT COAL BOARD

Details for Information from your nearest Society, or District Office of the Joint Coal Board, or M.C.B. Ltd., Liaison Office, Cessnock, New South Wales.

Plate 7.6 - 1950, Advertisement

(Source: *South Coast Times*, 4/5/1950.)

The insecurity created through Depression and war had direct consequences for the formal wages economy and meant the informal economy of the family was particularly influential. Keeping animals, growing produce, getting the children to do household chores and making many of the household consumables were all part of the informal economy. Canadian historian Bettina Bradbury says that it is only recently that economists and sociologists have thought about the informal economy, yet it was always 'crucial' to 'working-class survival'.<sup>861</sup> She claimed that by investigating it scholars can understand how working-class people 'survived and reproduced' themselves.<sup>862</sup> Like paid work, the family economy was also a site of contradictions, with individuals competing daily with the interests of the family, and both individuals and the family continually confronting the expectations of society. Van der Linden suggests that managing the family budget was influenced by a range of factors, including the desire for security, dignity, respectability and justice, and by the tensions and conflicts these factors produced.<sup>863</sup> In addition to wages from paid work, Wollongong families attempted to balance their budgets by generating income from 'non-commercial labour', petty commodity production and small scale commerce, such as taking in washing and ironing, boarders and cooking meals.<sup>864</sup>

In the narratives revealing working-class peoples' struggles to negotiate the structures of Wollongong society between 1921 and 1954, the resourcefulness and ingenuity of working-class families was emphasised.<sup>865</sup>

<sup>861</sup>B. Bradbury, 'Women's History and Working-Class History', *Labour/Le Travail*, no.19, Spring 1987, 38.

<sup>862</sup>Bradbury, 41.

<sup>863</sup>M. van der Linden, 'Connecting Household History and Labour History', *International Review of Social History*, 38, 1993, Supplement, 168.

<sup>864</sup>van der Linden, 167-168. He lists numerous types of expenses and forms of creating income that are used by working class people. I have mostly focused on van der Linden's first two areas that influence family income (besides waged labour).

<sup>865</sup>Eklund, 1994 (a), chapter 3, where his oral interviews reveal similar patterns.

Colin Warrington said there were 'many tricks' that he and others used to get by during the Depression. But, he added, 'I think a lot of the time we learned how to live...to look after ourselves and supply our own food'.<sup>866</sup> This was especially true for many unemployed with nowhere to live. After being evicted, Maud and George Rodgers lived 'on the fat of the land', near Lake Illawarra, where they enjoyed 'beautiful fresh fish and prawns'.<sup>867</sup> Joyce Crisp also remembers unemployed people camping in tents on her family farm surviving on 'rabbit meat...'.<sup>868</sup> People living in camps near the steelworks regularly scavenged coal from the rail lines in order to cook and keep warm.<sup>869</sup>

Many of the 'tricks' employed, however, were simply an extension of the ways in which people lived at this time. People were more self-sufficient in this period and employed their resources accordingly. Arthur Parkinson, for example, recalled how his family lived in 'The Lodge', a small sandstone cottage with a slate roof at Kembla Grange, between 1922 and 1935. The house

had a long narrow strip of land with it and we had a horse, a cow or sometimes several, fowls...My mother was a keen gardener and grew most of her vegetables and some fruit. One of our after school jobs was to gather manure for the garden. Dad was allowed to gather wood from the nearby O'Brien's bush for our fuel stove and copper....to supplement the wood one of our weekend jobs was to gather coal along the railway line. My mother was a tireless worker. She made butter from the milk of our own cows, made her own washing soap, made jams and preserved fruits, cooked and sewed....<sup>870</sup>

Frank Gamble remembers that his family 'kept fowls' and he recounted how they 'always had plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables' which were

<sup>866</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 24.

<sup>867</sup>Interview with Maud Rodgers, 30/1/1996.

<sup>868</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 70.

<sup>869</sup>Interview with Matt Hogan, 22/2/1996.

<sup>870</sup>Davis, *West of the Water*, 77.

grown in the family garden.<sup>871</sup> Although a source of pleasure, for most the vegetable patch and the fruit trees were kept out of necessity, because, as Colin Warrington remembers 'we always had to keep [the backyard] full of vegetables, so we could have a feed...'.<sup>872</sup> Because times were tough, working-class families often sought ways to stretch their resources. Vera Clark remembers the eggs from the dozen 'chooks' that they had in their backyard, but how the fowls were also killed for eating when they no longer laid eggs.<sup>873</sup>

Mastering the "bad" times to sustain the family was shared by both working-class men and women, but in different ways. The strong sexual division in the paid workforce permeated the informal economy. Arthur Parkinson said his 'Dad was an outdoors man', doing the fencing, chaff cutting, gathering wood and tending to the animals.<sup>874</sup> William Seath was the third in a family of six, and although still young in the 1930s, he remembers how, out of five boys and one girl, his 'sister helped in the house', and the older boys had to collect 'brambles for the fire, carry and chop wood for the stove, feed the fowls and milk the cow and goat'.<sup>875</sup>

But Wollongong's working-class men depended heavily on paid work between 1921 and 1954, and this meant the 'tireless worker' in the family was often the mother.<sup>876</sup> Broomhill has reasoned similarly in his study of depressed Adelaide, suggesting that the 'skills' of 'a wife, mother, and housekeeper became indispensable in the unemployed family's struggle for survival'.<sup>877</sup> Limited experience in paid work for Wollongong's working-class women was supplemented with intensive unpaid work. Maud Rodgers epitomised this non-commercial culture, and the gender divide that characterised it, when she remarked that you did a 'lot of things

<sup>871</sup>Davis, 16.

<sup>872</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 24.

<sup>873</sup>Davis, *Dapto Oral History*, 40.

<sup>874</sup>Davis, *West of the Water*, 77.

<sup>875</sup>Davis, *West of the Water*, 92.

<sup>876</sup>Eklund, 1994 (a), 149. Eklund makes a similar point in relation to Port Kembla.

<sup>877</sup>Broomhill, 39.

for yourself', and although she was never employed in paid work after marrying, she still 'had plenty to do', keeping the house clean and patching pyjamas and sheets.<sup>878</sup> Similarly, despite failing eyesight Mrs Ethel Lavington sewed for her eight children which meant a substantial saving on clothing<sup>879</sup> and Edna Fitzgerald 'used to wash practically every day' because of the 'kiddies', and that it 'would take a few hours to wash'.<sup>880</sup> Mrs Jones worked hard in the family home baking bread, making jam and preserving fruit picked from their own trees. Her daughter, Lilly, commented on the hardships endured by her mother and the intense domestic work undertaken by her in running the home.<sup>881</sup> Mrs Martin said that as well as looking after her children and her mother, she sometimes 'took in boarders to help'.<sup>882</sup> As Bessie Lockwood said 'As my family grew and grew and grew I had plenty to do'.<sup>883</sup>

Children also made a contribution to the informal economy. Colin Warrington recalls giving the 'two bob' he earned from delivering newspapers to his mother, and part of Lilly Critcher's wage from working at the Co-operative Store as a teenager went towards paying her family's grocery account.<sup>884</sup> As well as giving a proportion of money they might have earned in paid work to the family economy, children were expected to contribute to the daily chores of the household. Charlie Farrell and his brother 'hated wash days because we had to stay home from school' to help their mother with the washing.<sup>885</sup> Mrs Ryan recollects how, as a child, she would go rabbiting with 'a bucket, two ferrets and rabbits nets', 'because I didn't want to help mum with the housework'. Like Lilly Jones and her

<sup>878</sup>Interview with Maud Rodgers, 30/1/1996.

<sup>879</sup>NSW State Archives, Chief Secretary's Correspondence, (1934), 5/9248, letter number 664, Handwritten letter from Mr Davies MLA, to under secretary, Chief Secretary's Dept, 5/3/1934.

<sup>880</sup>Davis, *Dapto Oral History*, 15.

<sup>881</sup>Interview with Bill and Lilly Critcher, 26/2/1996.

<sup>882</sup>UWA, B85, Interview Mr and Mrs Martin, by Shirley Nixon, 19/4/1984.

<sup>883</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 100.

<sup>884</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 27 and interview with Bill and Lilly Critcher, 26/2/1996.

<sup>885</sup>Davis, *Dapto Oral History*, 42.

brother, who sold the fruit that they picked to help out the family, Mrs Ryan sold the rabbits she caught at nine pence a piece.<sup>886</sup>

For a child, unpaid work in the family contributed to the construction of gender identities. Neil Sutherland suggests that the unpaid work of children makes them 'into women or men of their times'.<sup>887</sup> But this can be read in term of class relations as well. Maud Rodgers said she worked hard as an adult maintaining the house, but 'we weren't used to being ladies' because 'we had to work from when we were kids'.<sup>888</sup> The expectation that it was women who conducted the domestic tasks and the caring duties in working-class families was strong. When mothers failed the burden was passed to daughters not sons. Bessie Fackender said:

My mother wasn't very well for many years so the girls of the family took over the housework, washing, ironing, cooking, dressmaking, cleaning, as well as milking and farm chores.<sup>889</sup>

While there were three boys among the seven children, it was the four girls who performed their mother's work. As Bessie remarked: 'By the time we were married we had a sound training in housekeeping'.<sup>890</sup> Edna Duley remembers how in 1933, at the age of fourteen, she left school, staying 'at home to help my mother in the house and with the other children'.<sup>891</sup>

When waged labour was scarce, or its proceeds inadequate people used their skills for petty commodity production or provided resources or services for money. Some commercial undertakings were on a small scale with minimal disruption to the family. Doris Burnett recalls how she and

<sup>886</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 77, and interview with Bill and Lilly Critcher, 26/2/1996.

<sup>887</sup>N. Sutherland, 'We always had things to do: The Paid and Unpaid Work of Anglophone Children Between the 1920s and the 1960s', *Labour/Le Travail*, 25, Spring 1990, 139.

<sup>888</sup>Interview with Maud Rodgers, 30/1/1996.

<sup>889</sup>Davies, *West of the Water*, 109

<sup>890</sup>Davies, *West of the Water*, 109

<sup>891</sup>Davis, *Dapto Oral History*, 12.

her neighbour 'used to make cakes' to sell.<sup>892</sup> Other ventures however necessitated greater compromise and intrusion into family life. On the dole George and Maud Rodgers were battling to pay their house so they decided to rent it to Sydneysiders holidaying on the South Coast. They did not leave but 'stayed in the house and did for them'. The Rodgers home was modest and Maud confesses, 'I didn't have very much'. She dressed up the bedroom using a sheet across one corner of the room as a wardrobe, and two trunks, covered with a sheet dipped in a cream dolly dye, made the dresser. The Sydney family stayed for a month and the Rodgers received 9/6 a week in return for renting their home. 'We saved all of this 'cause they kept us for looking after them'.<sup>893</sup>

Boarding supplemented family incomes, and as the above section on housing has shown was widespread throughout the entire period. In 1934 Alan Dowdell moved to Wollongong from Lithgow and boarded with a family in a house close to the steelworks, where he eventually obtained work.<sup>894</sup> After arriving in Wollongong in June 1932 from Lithgow, with a guarantee of work at the steelworks, Matt Hogan boarded for six months in a private home. He later saved his fortnightly rent of £3, sending it to his family in Lithgow who were struggling to exist on the dole, and moved out to the Flinders Street camp. In 1934, after living in the camps, Matt Hogan boarded again in a private house. Elsie Gilbert remembered how her mother 'took in boarders and washing' after her father died, because there were '[n]o widows pensions then'.<sup>895</sup> Faue has noted how these were 'familiar' ways of producing income, which were often 'abandoned in more prosperous times'.<sup>896</sup> Housing shortages during the war and in the immediate post-war years insured that boarding was an attractive source of income for some years for many in Wollongong.

<sup>892</sup>Davies, *Our Memories*, 105.

<sup>893</sup>Interview with Maud Rodgers, 30/1/1996.

<sup>894</sup>Interview with Alan Dowdell, 21/2/1996.

<sup>895</sup>*Voice of the Seniors*, 1997, 202.

<sup>896</sup>Faue, 1991, 43.

The importance of non-commercial labour to the family economy also continued beyond the Depression years. During 1942, wartime rationing was extended to include necessities like tea, sugar, butter, meat and clothing.<sup>897</sup> Joseph Heininger said that for his family, rationing affected clothing more than food because he and his Dad were good anglers and caught fish.<sup>898</sup> Dulcie Heininger also believes the rationing of clothing was much more limiting, and recalls her mother unravelling old jumpers for wool to make newer garments. Food, however, was not a problem because they had hens and a vegetable garden.<sup>899</sup> Similarly, Gladys Collard believed they ate well despite the rationing because they had a vegetable garden.<sup>900</sup> It would seem the Commonwealth government's campaign to stimulate the growing of vegetables was hardly necessary in the Illawarra.<sup>901</sup> Women's ingenuity and competence at managing the home and keeping the budget in check was imperative. Dulcie Heininger said her mother was a 'good cook' and it was mainly for this reason that rationing had little effect on her family. She was able to serve meals that were still healthy and nutritious when using basic ingredients in limited quantities.<sup>902</sup> Removing buttons from garments 'worn to their limit', so they 'could be used for something else', was also a regular practice women employed to save money.<sup>903</sup> MA Lee noted the usefulness of the sugar bags when material was scarce; 'with a bit of a snip and tuck from Mum', garments were made.<sup>904</sup> Maureen Dowdell said in the late 1940s and 1950s sewing and knitting were essential to clothe her six young children. Budgeting and planning the meals was

---

<sup>897</sup>Bolton in Crowley, 465.

<sup>898</sup>UWA, B23, Children in Wartime Wollongong, Interview with Joseph Heininger, (tape no. D152/5).

<sup>899</sup>UWA, B23, Children in Wartime Wollongong, Interview with Dulcie Heininger, (tape no. D152/14)

<sup>900</sup>UWA, B23, Children in Wartime Wollongong, Interview with Gladys Collard, (tape no. D152/8).

<sup>901</sup>South Coast Times, 5/11/1943.

<sup>902</sup>UWA, B23, Children in Wartime Wollongong, Interview with Dulcie Heininger, (tape no. D152/14).

<sup>903</sup>Voice of the Seniors, 1997, 347.

<sup>904</sup>Voice of the Seniors, 1997, 188.

also necessary. 'You had a pound of sausages, or a pound of mince, or a lambs fry the day before pay day because that was the cheapest'. Maureen said, 'That's the way we lived, you had to...well because we had family to feed'.

Feeding the family to ensure its survival was a responsibility that most of Wollongong's working-class men and women took seriously, and, while it was often arduous, much of their labour was directed to this end, though in very different ways. Those men who experienced real hardships through this period, and battled on regardless, attracted a degree of respect and veneration for their efforts. Alan Dowdell referred to Jack Shephard and Matt Hogan, with whom he had worked at the steelworks:

I had the greatest admiration for blokes like Jack Shephard and Matt Hogan because they did it tough, and they didn't sour a bit, they just did it.<sup>905</sup>

Alan's admiration for his work mates was because of their hard work at difficult times in the steelworks; working hard for their families and being good providers. Likewise, many working-class women in Wollongong between 1921 and 1954 did not 'sour', continuing to work unpaid for their families, coping in the best way they knew how. As Peel makes clear in his study of working-class relations, men 'earned' the money, but it was working-class women who made certain it stretched sufficiently to meet the household budget.<sup>906</sup> Sometimes this meant going without, but more often than not it meant "making do" in novel and enterprising ways.

---

<sup>905</sup>Interview with Alan Dowdell, 21/2/1996.

<sup>906</sup>Peel, 1995, 125, 127. This is also raised in oral interviews by E. Roberts, Women and Families: An Oral History, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1995, 93.

## Marriage

Family life meant marriage for about two-thirds of the men and women in Wollongong between 1921 and 1954, with census figures demonstrating an overall increase in marriage in this period, except for 1933, when there was a slight decrease (see Table 7.1).<sup>907</sup> These figures are indicative of national trends for the period, with a decline in the number of single people and an overall increase in the proportion of people marrying.<sup>908</sup> The lower rate in 1930-33 is explained by the Depression, when some couples reconsidered their romantic commitments in light of financial constraints.<sup>909</sup> Broomhill noted a similar trend for Adelaide in the initial years of the Depression, after which people 'gave up waiting' for the return of better times and continued marrying.<sup>910</sup> Marriages, once made, tended to last. Between 1921 and 1954 Wollongong couples rarely chose to divorce, preferring to stay together, for better or worse. The many wedding reports scattered throughout the local newspapers, describing the ways in which marriages were celebrated, also attest to its popularity throughout this period.<sup>911</sup> In discussing the accuracy of marriage statistics, Peter McDonald noted that since the 1933 census men always recorded greater married rates than women, however, in Wollongong the reverse is

---

<sup>907</sup>I have used census data on conjugal relations to reach this conclusion. The data on conjugal relations relates to the entire population of the Wollongong area and includes children. N.B. - I have excluded from the total population figures those who are under the age of 15 and not married. This exclusion leaves a figure I have named the 'Total Marriageable Population Over 15 Years'. This figure would be slightly inflated because it still includes some young people in the Over 15 and never married category. While not married at the time of the census it is assumed that they would most likely marry sometime in the future. Taking these factors into account means that the percentages of people married given here are slightly less than they probably were. The percentage of people married, between 1921 and 1954, is sufficiently high so as not to affect the final conclusions.

<sup>908</sup>J. Krupinski and A. Stoller, (eds) *The Family in Australia: Social Demographic and Psychological Aspects*, second edition, Pergamon, Rushcutters Bay, 1980, 6.

<sup>909</sup>Krupinski and Stoller, 9.

<sup>910</sup>Broomhill, 41.

<sup>911</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 7/2/1936, 27/3/1936, *South Coast Times*, 7/1/1927, 4/3/1927, 15/4/1927, 12/9/1930, 28/2/1941.

the case.<sup>912</sup> The answer to this difference can be explained by the 'never-married' census figures, which show higher rates for men than women. Higher 'never-married' rates for men mirrors the concentration of young and physically fit men needed in the Illawarra for the heavy industries of coal and steel.<sup>913</sup> Lower percentages for 'never-married' women illustrate the 'scarcity of employment opportunities for women'.<sup>914</sup> The decline in the 'never-married' category during the period 1921 - 1954 is consistent with trends across Australia generally.<sup>915</sup>

(Table appears over leaf)

---

<sup>912</sup>p. F. McDonald, *Marriage in Australia: Age at First Marriage and Proportions Marrying, 1860-1971*, ANU Department of Demography (Institute of Advanced Studies), Canberra, 1975, 271.

<sup>913</sup>McDonald, 210.

<sup>914</sup>McDonald, 211.

<sup>915</sup>McDonald, 203.

Table 7.1: Marital Status of Total Marriageable Population Over 15 Years of Age, 1921-1954<sup>916</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Percentage Married</u>		<u>Percentage Never Married</u>		<u>Percentage Divorced</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
1921	58	64	37	29	0.22	0.19
1933	55	62	40	29	0.49	0.29
1947	64	70	31	21	0.83	0.66
1954	66	72	29	17	1.82	1.51

(Source: Commonwealth Census of Australia, 1921-1954)

<sup>916</sup>Percentages for divorces have been rounded to two places to demonstrate the differences, but I realise that overall they are largely insignificant.

Academic analyses and research have often emphasised the different experiences of married life for men and women. Some studies of marriage reveal that 'companionship' is rated highly significant for both men and women, but especially so for the latter.<sup>917</sup> Feminist scholars have sometimes seen the family as providing men respite from the demands of paid work, and as being particularly oppressive for women.<sup>918</sup> In reality, however, neither explanation offers an adequate understanding of the family as it is lived and experienced, for, as Rubin has reasoned, families are both 'oppressive and protective', and moreover, 'often in some mix of the two'.<sup>919</sup> Marriage is an intimate site for negotiations of a personal nature, which are also heavily influenced by 'legislation and policy' or by the social structure, and relations of such complexity can never be dissected in simple ways.<sup>920</sup>

People certainly had different expectations of women and men upon marriage. Marriage for working-class women in Wollongong meant the end of paid employment. Before Al Hammond married, she ran a small clothing factory at Moss Vale on the Southern Highlands of NSW; but, as her husband George said, 'she left work when she married me'.<sup>921</sup> Similarly, Maud Rodgers said she did not work after marrying, because 'no women worked at those times...you just didn't think about it...'.<sup>922</sup> Violet Taylor also 'never worked in the workforce', according to her daughter, 'she'd only worked in service when she was young'.<sup>923</sup> Lilly Critcher said her mother never had paid work after marrying, because her 'dad wouldn't hear of it'.<sup>924</sup> Those few continuing in paid work after marriage felt the

<sup>917</sup>Williams, 136.

<sup>918</sup>Williams, 173. Feminist arguments about the oppressive nature of families are outlined in Krupinski and Stoller, chapter 3. See the most notable feminist critics of the family, M. Barrett and M. McIntosh, *The Anti-social Family*, Verso, London, 1982.

<sup>919</sup>Rubin, 6.

<sup>920</sup>Peel, 1995, 125.

<sup>921</sup>Interview with George Hammond, 30/1/1996.

<sup>922</sup>Interview with Maud Rodgers, 30/1/1996.

<sup>923</sup>Interview with Irene and Neville Arrowsmith,

<sup>924</sup>Interview with Bill and Lilly Critcher, 26/2/1996.



pressure from others disapproval. Dolly Potter worked for a number of years after she married, and although she 'wanted to keep working', she eventually stopped; 'it was Bill's harping,...and the people around him...he wasn't happy until I left work'. Dolly says women 'were made to feel guilty' if they remained in paid employment.<sup>925</sup>

Men on the other hand were expected to have and maintain paid work upon marriage because they had 'their families to keep'.<sup>926</sup> The views of men like Lilly Critcher's father and Bill Potter on their wives working also indicated that paid work was central in confirming their identity as men. As Maud Rodgers said, 'it was just the men that worked'.<sup>927</sup> In 1927, an editorial in the local newspaper, discussing the vexed question of distributing paid work between single and married men, argued that single men should be permitted to work because, without it, 'none of the single men could possibly contemplate marriage'. Somewhat paradoxically the editorial also confirmed the 'heavy family responsibilities' of married men and argued that if a man 'decides to join the ranks of the Benedicts he must be prepared to shoulder the burdens which married life brings'.<sup>928</sup> Consequently, those who did marry without paid work were judged harshly. In 1940, Joyce Crisp married an unemployed man who had been camping in a tent on her parent's farm; despite her father prohibiting it and saying he 'wasn't keen' on her prospective husband. Joyce's father eventually allowed the couple to live in his house, however, because he 'wouldn't let me live in a tent'.<sup>929</sup>

Married life amongst working-class families in Wollongong during the period from 1921 to 1954 was therefore clearly 'sex-segregated' and lived

<sup>925</sup>Interview with Dolly Potter and Sally Bowen, 29/1/1996.

<sup>926</sup>South Coast Times, 18/2/1927. William Davies, MP made this point in parliament when arguing for award wages for miners instead of rates based on piece work. He stated: 'Take the old Bulli colliery. I guarantee that last year the men employed there did not receive an average of £3 per week. They have their families to keep, just as do men employed in other industries'.

<sup>927</sup>Interview with Maud Rodgers, 30/1/1996.

<sup>928</sup>South Coast Times, 21/1/1927.

<sup>929</sup>Davis, Our Memories, 70.

through men's experience as wage earner and women's experience as wife and mother.<sup>930</sup> This segregation in marriage was important in shaping a multitude of other factors in married life. Where a man's identity was confirmed through paid work, a woman's identity was often determined by her marriage.<sup>931</sup> It was with good reason, that in February 1921, Eva Turner took court proceedings against John Rainfall, an iron moulder for failing to keep his 'promise to marry' on 15 May 1920, because 'owing to their having anticipated the wedding', she had become pregnant.<sup>932</sup> The prospect of being a single mother at this time was not only a devastating one for both moral and economic reasons, but also denied Eva her identity through marriage. Understanding the importance of marriage for women, both Dolly Potter and Sally Bowen confirmed that they never knew the first names of many of their women friends or acquaintances. Dolly said they identified people through their married names:

We weren't Sally and Dolly...you always took the man's surname and we accepted and never thought any different of it...we never had a name really...<sup>933</sup>

Women interviewees describe in more detail than men both courting and wedding experiences, and this probably reflects the centrality of marriage for women, in much the same way as paid work strongly patterned the narratives of men. In contrast, coal miner George Hammond divulged very few details about his married life. The snippets he provided were cursory when compared with the descriptions of his experiences in paid work. He told how he was married twice, first when he was 24 years old. But, he said: 'we was only seven years married'. He related that his first wife died, but that he had a son by her. He described in more detail

<sup>930</sup>Williams, 132.

<sup>931</sup>Williams, 132.

<sup>932</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 25/2/1921.

<sup>933</sup>Interview with Dolly Potter and Sally Bowen, 29/1/1996.

how he met his second wife Al, and when and where they married. The information he supplied was about public events, that is, places, dates and numbers. If historians understood George's life in its social context, where individuals make choices mediated by social structures, his cursory reflection on family life would not be regarded as surprising. George's life (at least as told to a stranger) was largely his paid work.<sup>934</sup> The lack of discussion about family life does not necessarily mean that family as such was not important; on the contrary, the amount of time devoted to discussing work might suggest family was central to his experience. He was a good provider and worked hard 'for the family'.<sup>935</sup>

Working-class women, assumed an important place in maintaining and organising the home, a demanding role that consumed much time and often did not allow for much activity outside the home.<sup>936</sup> Faye O'Donnell said 'my mother and I really depended on each other for company,...my father had his pursuits and hobbies...most of my trips out were with my mother'.<sup>937</sup> In contrast, Maureen Dowdell said social life was circumscribed for both her and her husband Alan: 'there wasn't any for us'. The reasons were different however; miners, steelworkers and waterside workers were shiftworkers, and forty years of shift work meant Alan was unable to enjoy the pursuits other men of the time might have, while caring for six children and the associated domestic tasks that went with it made social life impossible for Maureen.<sup>938</sup>

Men's and women's different commitments led to different relations with children. For some this was evident from the very beginning. With her mother faraway in England, Maud Rodgers relied on a woman friend in Australia to provide her with advice on the birth and upbringing of her

<sup>934</sup>Interview George Hammond, 30/1/1996.

<sup>935</sup>Donaldson, 1991, 20-21.

<sup>936</sup>UWA, B85, Interview Mr and Mrs Martin, by Shirley Nixon, 19/4/1984.

<sup>937</sup>UWA, B23, Children in Wartime Wollongong Oral History Collection, Interview Faye Elizabeth O'Donnell, (tape no. D152/7).

<sup>938</sup>Interview with Alan and Maureen Dowdell, 21/2/1996.

child; her husband seemed to have very little to do with such issues.<sup>939</sup> In more tragic circumstances, Doris Burnett also lamented the absence of her husband when she had a still birth. She remembered 'her first child...a little blue baby', and said '[m]y husband never seen him. It was just sad that my husband had never seen him - a little baby boy'.<sup>940</sup> In this instance Burnett's husband was sick, but, as Roberts explained in her study of working-class families, 'childbirth was regarded as a women's sphere' for many.<sup>941</sup>

The caring for children was women's responsibility. In 1939 Violet Hester soon returned home to her violent husband Michael, when he 'came after her and told her he could not carry on with the children'.<sup>942</sup> Tenuous links with fathers affected the way they are remembered. Melva Merletto recalled how when she was a child her father made her and her siblings a cubby house and a slide, but that 'he didn't actually play with us' for 'he wasn't that kind of a father'. Nevertheless, she says, 'he was very handy and he made sure that we had things that we could use around the place'.<sup>943</sup> The provision of 'things that we could use' here expressed the affection that might have been conveyed in play.

Unlike paid work, family life is less readily acknowledged as important to men's masculinity. Faye O'Donnell did not remember her father as greatly involved in the social activities of the family.<sup>944</sup> Similarly, Lilly expressed some ambivalence about her father and his place amongst the family, although she noted his industry and perseverance in paid work.<sup>945</sup> Some scholars have linked men's lack of involvement in the family with the capitalist system. The sharp division between work and

<sup>939</sup>Interview with Maud Rodgers, 30/1/1996.

<sup>940</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 106.

<sup>941</sup>Roberts, 99.

<sup>942</sup>*South Coast Times*, 13/1/1939.

<sup>943</sup>UWA, E30, Interview with Melva Merletto, n.d.

<sup>944</sup>UWA, B23, Children in Wartime Wollongong Oral History Collection, Interview Faye Elizabeth O'Donnell, (tape no. D152/7).

<sup>945</sup>Interview with Bill and Lilly Critcher, 26/2/1996.

home which has, seemingly so characterised capitalism means 'intimate relationships become less feasible'. The hours worked and the wages brought home come to compensate for this absence of intimacy.<sup>946</sup> It is the 'good-provider' that determines a good family man.<sup>947</sup>

Of course marriage brought obligations and challenges to men as much as it did to women, though in different ways. Men were expected 'to make a home' for their families.<sup>948</sup> Failure to do so often created tensions and brought anguish upon the family, particularly the wife. Michael Hester did not gamble, smoke or drink, but was violent, frequently hitting his wife in arguments apparently centred on 'money matters'. He told Violet, his wife, that she would have to handle the money situation better than she had. But, although Violet was responsible for budgeting the family income, Michael was the sole breadwinner and was expected to provide for his family. As a labourer who 'worked long hours' and had three children and a wife to support, Michael was unable to make ends meet and his wife was the target of his threatened masculinity.<sup>949</sup>

For working-class women, men's paid work was sufficient explanation for their lack of involvement in daily family life. Dolly Potter thought men in the 1990s were more involved with the family and domestic duties, but this was not the case for her husband, and neither did she expect it should have been. She said 'they worked so damn hard at work they were exhausted when they came home'. Bill, her husband, used to work in the mine on the pick and shovel, and 'you could hold his pants up - they'd be stiff - that's with all the sweat, blood, sweat and tears to get a living'. She said 'when they came home they were no good for anything':

<sup>946</sup>J. Bernard, 'The Good-Provider Role', in M.S. Kimmel and M.A. Messner, (eds) *Men's Lives*, second edition, Macmillan Publishing, New York, 1992, 206.

<sup>947</sup>Bernard, in Kimmel and Messner, 204.

<sup>948</sup>*South Coast Times*, 29/5/1950.

<sup>949</sup>*South Coast Times*, 13/1/1939.

You couldn't expect them to be doing things at home, because they were that tired...and the woman did, because that was her role to a certain extent.<sup>950</sup>

Men's relative lack of time for their families was regretted by some men in hindsight. Fred Moore was a coal miner who believed a 'miner was a unique sort of person' and agreed that he 'liked working with those type of men'. However, contrary to the accepted stereotype, he said 'I did like the work up to a point but would sooner be out, at home'. Yet, at this time he was expected to do otherwise, and 'once I was at work I always made the best of my job'.<sup>951</sup> Matt Hogan spoke of the importance to him of 'a good family life', and said family was 'everything - you don't need anything else'. Unlike many of the other working-class men I interviewed, he talked fondly of playing with his son and enjoying sporting activities together, but this was only possible because the son was born later in Matt's life, after twenty years of marriage and when the household was well established.<sup>952</sup>

Despite the marked differences in married life for men and women, the daily schedules and rhythms of family life for both men and women in Wollongong were closely determined by paid work. Alan Dowdell did shift work for most of his years at the steelworks, and Maureen, his wife, regarded shift work as 'terrible'. Looking after six children with her husband's rotation between day shift, afternoon shift and night shift required optimum organisation and skill. Maureen emphasised the need to work to a timetable: 'at one stage I said it was like a merry-go-round; if you stopped you fell off'.<sup>953</sup> Lilly Critcher recalled similar struggles as she attempted to keep her young children quiet and occupied while Bill, her husband, slept during the day in preparation for shift work on the railways.<sup>954</sup> Alan Dowdell remembers how he would see the light on as he

<sup>950</sup>Interview with Dolly Potter and Sally Bowen, 29/1/1996.

<sup>951</sup>Davis, *Dapto Oral History*, 74.

<sup>952</sup>Interview with Matt Hogan, 22/2/1996.

<sup>953</sup>Interview with Alan Dowdell, 21/2/1996.

<sup>954</sup>Interview with Bill and Lilly Critcher, 26/2/1996.

walked up the street to his house after finishing afternoon shift: 'just before I'd be due to walk in the gate you'd see the lights go out'. Maureen, his wife, said that this way 'he'd have his cup of coffee and go straight to bed', otherwise once the couple got talking 'it would be another hour before he got to bed'. Late in the evening was clearly a time when the couple used to sit and talk about their respective days, Alan working in the steelworks and Maureen caring for the children. Important as this time was, however, switching the light off was sometimes considered a necessary strategy which allowed them both to cope with the demands of a working-class life. They both knew they would have to rise early again the next morning to confront the day, and this meant they could not always afford the luxury of intimate conversation.

Married life was not always characterised by such mutual co-operation and effort from both men and women. There is a plethora of examples in the newspapers for this period that show otherwise.<sup>955</sup> Other studies of working-class families also illustrate the prevalence of violence and conflict in marriage.<sup>956</sup> As Claire Williams stresses, however, violence in marriage is not only a working class phenomenon.<sup>957</sup> It is impossible to estimate the extent of conflict and violence in Wollongong amongst working-class families during this period. As Roberts said about her collection of interviews, 'some marriage difficulties were not discussed' and there was a 'reluctance' to discuss on-going problems and conflicts within

---

<sup>955</sup>Mrs Vera Know committed suicide in February 1939 by drinking lysol, and she had a history of depression. Four years previous to the suicide 'she had a breakdown and attempted to take her life with sheepdip'. But whether her illness was related to domestic violence is unclear - South Coast Times, 24/2/1939. John Bartlett was charged with assaulting his wife Elsie in August 1930 in what the magistrate described as a 'peculiar situation' where both husband and wife appeared to be both violent to each other and to their children - South Coast Times, 29/8/1930. Violet Hester continued to live with her violent husband Michael because she had 'no where else to live' - South Coast Times, 13/1/1939. Margaret Brailey said she endured 'repeated assaults' from her husband Sydney since they married in 1928 and in 1950 she finally sought a divorce - South Coast Times, 29/5/1950.

<sup>956</sup>See McCalman, 53-54, 64, and 201-202; Williams, 34 and 170; Peel, 1995, 128-129, Roberts, chapter 6; Donaldson, 1991, 77-79.

<sup>957</sup>Williams, 34.

marriage.<sup>958</sup> It was not an issue that I broached with interviewees, nor they with me.<sup>959</sup>

In many ways the experience of family life for working-class men and women in Wollongong between 1921 and 1954 was similar to that of people in other working-class communities. The Depression and war influenced people deeply. The post-war period provided a refreshing contrast for many, but enduring years of hardship and insecurity meant many of the values and ways of living that they had adopted "to get by" in the past continued. The sexual division of labour was a feature of these other communities, but in Wollongong it was particularly marked. A sharp and enduring cleavage existed in Wollongong between paid work and family life for most of this period, and this guaranteed both men and women distinctive and separate tasks. Paradoxically, the strong divide between paid work and family life also meant that each sphere was heavily dependent on the other. Most working-class men worked hard at paid work for the family, and most working-class women's arduous labour in the home made certain that men could function effectively as breadwinners. This interdependency between paid work and family was clear in men's desire to obtain a home and in women's dominance in the informal economy. Links were forged between men and women because of these different perspectives on family life and these bonds were evident in married life.

---

<sup>958</sup>Roberts, 105.

<sup>959</sup>I discussed this difficulty at times with people in the process of my research and they signalled that conflict between parents was a feature of life as they remembered it, but as people rarely discussed the issue they could only speculate on how widespread conflict was in other families. Often too it was something that occurred in other families, not their own. It is clear through personal untaped communication with me that families encountering violence and conflict rarely revealed it to outsiders.

*Leisure: 'We used to entertain ourselves...you had to make your own fun.'*

Richardson has suggested that leisure and social life in the Illawarra were circumscribed in the Depression, due to the cost of travelling to and from activities; but he concluded that workers sought relief from their 'dismal existence' by drinking, going to the cinema and gambling, all activities which he described as 'escapist pleasures'.<sup>960</sup> Yet, while limitations were placed on leisure activities during this period, and 'escapist pleasures' did have their place, to suggest that this was the extent of working-class leisure is to underestimate the capacity of working-class people to institute, organise and establish leisure activities. Most significantly, it fails to capture the brilliant and vibrant texture of working-class social life by overlooking a wide and varied range of activities that continued or developed in spite of the grim circumstances. A further consequence of Richardson's oversight is that he neglects to evaluate the degree to which gender was important in the social life of working-class people in Wollongong. An elaboration of these points will provide for a richer understanding of social and cultural activity among the men and women of Wollongong's working class between 1921 and 1954, which will in turn furnish a fuller and more complete narrative of the lives of working-class people generally. To this end this chapter focuses on the social and cultural activities that shaped the leisure time of working-class men and women in Wollongong between 1921 and 1954.

---

<sup>960</sup>Richardson, 1984, 156-157.

The activities included in the following discussion of social and leisure activities by no means constituted the full extent of the social and cultural life of Wollongong's working class. Despite the colour and diversity of the activities outlined, they represented only a handful of a vast array of activities. Gambling, drinking, and cinema-going occupied a part of working-class people's leisure time. Pubs and hotels often served as venues for petty gambling and SP bookmakers took up unofficial residence there.<sup>961</sup> Alan Dowdell suggested that the booking of seats or purchase of tickets in advance for the pictures was one reason the steelworkers refused to work overtime, when the Annabel Dispute occurred. Women, waiting at home expecting to go to the pictures, would be unaware that their husband or boyfriend had been asked to work overtime.<sup>962</sup> Newspapers support the view that gambling, drinking, and cinema were significant; but here I highlight some other aspects of working-class leisure in Wollongong that have gone largely unnoticed.

Most of the activities discussed here were organised and to some degree institutionalised. The nature of public events means they are more apparent in the source material the historian uses; thus newspapers were useful in providing coverage of 'the more organized and formal working-class gatherings' like May Day and sporting activities.<sup>963</sup> Source material affects the conclusions historians draw about the types of social and cultural activities many people undertake. Children who amused themselves by throwing stones on the roofs of houses and at doors are ignored, unless

<sup>961</sup>Richardson, 1984, 156-157; and Eklund, 1994 (a), 139.

<sup>962</sup>Interview with Alan Dowdell, 21/2/1996.

<sup>963</sup>A similar point was made by Rosenzweig. See R. Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, 290.

mentioned in the newspaper.<sup>964</sup> Other children's entertainments like hopscotch, skipping rope, rounders, sliding in the mud, matchbox collecting, making and firing catapults, climbing trees and raiding orchards are not reported in the press either.<sup>965</sup> For similar reasons, certain aspects of women's social and cultural activities remain equally elusive and problematic for the historian of leisure.

Oral histories allow some access to the private, informal and individual leisure pursuits enjoyed by many. In her interview, Maud Rodgers remarked: 'We used to entertain ourselves...you had to make your own fun'. This is a refrain that pervades oral accounts of social and cultural activity in this period, and one that must be incorporated into any understanding of leisure activity. While the activities outlined are numerous and varied, there were many more rudimentary activities, perhaps best described as ordinary or commonplace, that deserve mention. Bessie Lockwood said '[t]here wasn't much to do at night...We would play cards with friends and relations. We went to Marshall's on Friday nights and had icecreams. Every Friday night was a night out for shopping'.<sup>966</sup>

Beyond the limitations of sources, there are various other reasons why the leisure, or social and cultural, activities of the working class are not considered important. As a group, labour historians have defined these aspects as marginal to their main object of study.<sup>967</sup> The contemporary bourgeois ideal which regards paid work as central to people's identity and as fulfilling a human 'need' has also directed more attention to the work experience.<sup>968</sup> Certain theoretical conceptions about the working class have

<sup>964</sup>*South Coast Times*, 28/1/1927.

<sup>965</sup>These formed part of the collective memories of Wollongong's Senior Citizens that are collected in the *Voice of the Seniors Newsletter*.

<sup>966</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 98.

<sup>967</sup>McKibbin, in Irving, 34. Ross McKibbin has noted how classic labour history 'tended to be about trade unions (or occupations that could be unionised) and industrial relations, which often meant industrial conflict, and political parties...'

<sup>968</sup>S. Sayers, 'The Need to Work: a Perspective from Philosophy', in Pahl, R.E. (ed) *On Work: Historical, Comparative and Theoretical Approaches*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1988, p.737.

also influenced the way working-class history is imagined. For instance, Strinati has pointed to the Frankfurt School's analyses which view the working class as passive and accepting of capitalism, unable to generate their own cultural life or experience.<sup>969</sup> This has blinded theorists to the many activities closely linked with the working class, and also to the ability of working-class people to shape cultures in their own ways and images.

These factors, combined or alone, have meant that the agency of workers has been circumscribed in theories of leisure and popular culture. This need not be the case. Popular culture was in some instances 'an arena of contest, even of subversion', often displacing class conflict.<sup>970</sup> And, while cultural theorist Stuart Hall has argued against perpetuating the idea of a separate, autonomous, "authentic" layer of working-class culture<sup>971</sup>, it is clear that seeing the working class as 'mediators and creators'<sup>972</sup> challenges the orthodoxy that they are simply 'cultural dopes'.<sup>973</sup> John Docker has also traced continuities in popular culture between the pre- and post-industrial periods, highlighting the inadequacy of polarised theories that claim that capitalism automatically implies cultural passivity, and the pre-industrial period activity.<sup>974</sup>

Studies of leisure activities challenge the idea that working-class people's lives are consumed by toil and drudgery. A much fuller and more complex understanding of how these people negotiated their time and effort between work, family, politics and the social and cultural is possible when we turn the historical lens on such activities. There is much to be gained therefore by Ann Curthoys' recent suggestion to labour historians to be

<sup>969</sup>D. Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*, Routledge, London, 1995, 60-61.

<sup>970</sup>P. Burke, 'The "Discover" of Popular Culture', in R. Samuel, (ed) *People's History and Socialist Theory*, Routledge and Kegan, London, 1981, 222.

<sup>971</sup>S. Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular'', in Samuel, 229.

<sup>972</sup>Burke, in Samuel, 224.

<sup>973</sup>Strinati, 78.

<sup>974</sup>J. Docker, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture: A Cultural History*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1994, 274-275.

more responsive to cultural analysis, and by the prospects it offers for enhancing our historical knowledge of working-class people.<sup>975</sup>

### *May Day - 'Demonstrating - Not Celebrating'?*

May Day had its origins in Europe, where the coming of spring was celebrated with a festival of the same name.<sup>976</sup> The day was later adopted as the 'fixed date' for 'a great international demonstration' at a meeting of the International Labor Congress in July 1889. The demonstrations were to focus on securing the 'reduction of the working day to eight hours'. The resolution was raised at the Congress by the delegates attending from the United States, who had witnessed workers being killed in the mid-1880s as they agitated in the streets for an eight hour day.<sup>977</sup> Like the red flag, the clenched fist, and the strike, May Day is recognised internationally as a symbol of the labour movement.<sup>978</sup> In her analysis of *Workers' Culture in Imperial Germany*, Lynn Abrams suggested that, while the 'ideological' component of festivals like May Day was important, 'activists soon realized that working-class participation on any significant scale could only be achieved if the event was given a popular character'. Entertainment in the form of 'a procession, music, an excursion, a picnic or popular amusement' assured 'mass participation'.<sup>979</sup> Australian workers had days set aside to celebrate Eight Hour Day before 1889, but they followed their international comrades in celebrating May Day. The social component of the day was

<sup>975</sup>Curthoys, 1994, 12-22.

<sup>976</sup>UWA, C23, May Day Pamphlets, Len Fox, *Early Australian May Days*, 2.

<sup>977</sup>UWA, C23, May Day Pamphlets, S. Purdy, *MAY DAYS...Past and Present*, 2.

<sup>978</sup>G. Korff, 'History of Symbols as Social History?: Ten Preliminary notes on the Image and Sign Systems of Social Movements in Germany', *International Review of Social History*, 38, 1993, 111-112.

<sup>979</sup>L. Abrams, *Workers' Culture in Imperial Germany: Leisure and Recreation in the Rhineland and Westphalia*, Routledge, London, 1992, 55.



important from the beginning, with one of Sydney's first May Day celebrations, in 1891, 'entirely a sports meeting without political features'.<sup>980</sup>

But the mention of May Day stirred the passions of many workers. In an 'Essay on May Day' written in 1925, Mr A. Veigel from Woonona, near Wollongong, illustrated his commitment:

May Day! What a world of sentiment those two words awaken in the hearts and breasts of the toiling masses! What visions of freedom and liberty they inspire!...On that day the spirit of the great labor [sic] movements arises supreme and finds expression;...In all the great Capitals of the world the worker's flag will proudly wave over labor citadels - that glorious emblem that symbolises the blood and Brotherhood of man in his ceaseless, pitiless [sic] struggle on land and sea, in field and mine, workshops and factory, towards economic freedom. What a mighty, magnificent struggle it has been!<sup>981</sup>

This endorsement of May Day is a romantic one, providing a glowing depiction of the worker as a legendary hero and calling forth the notion of struggle, denoting a sense of conflict between capital and labour. Viegal conveys an almost militaristic understanding of these relations and May Day is regarded as essential to the workers' crusade. This idea of battle and combat pervades many sources on May Day.

The Secretary of the South Coast May Day Committee wrote a letter to his 'Friends' to encourage their involvement in the May Day of 1936.

As May Day is one on which the workers demonstrate their solidarity, we believe that this can only be achieved by organising a United May Day Celebration of the whole of the workers on the South Coast. Despite the oft repeated statements of the spokesmen of the employers and their Governments that prosperity is returning, the workers are still having

<sup>980</sup>UWA, C23, May Day Pamphlets, S. Purdy, *MAY DAYS...Past and Present*, 1-2.

<sup>981</sup>NBAC, E165/26 Australian Coal and Shale Employees Federation, Central Council and Districts (Southern District) (File marked 'Historical Material'), Essay on May Day, circa 1925.

their wages and conditions reduced, their democratic liberties curtailed and are confronted with the ever present spectre of an Imperialist War and the menace of Fascism. In face of this serious situation and to combat same the workers must build up their forces. May Day affords a wonderful opportunity for showing to the employing class that the workers can create the United Front as a forceful reply to the attacks now being made upon them.<sup>982</sup>

May Day here is essentially a weapon against the imposing capitalist class, and to regard it in any other way for many is to de-politicise the event, and remove any notion of power and struggle. Fred Moore, a retired coal miner and stalwart of the Wollongong labour movement, believes strongly that to:

try and turn it into a picnic day or something, and not even have the significance of May Day is treachery to the class struggle, because people died to have that day set aside.<sup>983</sup>

The image, or public face, which May Day participants present to others, whether they be workers or employers, is important to Fred. He explains:

Even if there is only a handful, the workers are still on the street...[if] they get you off the street once you'll never get back on it...pups for the footpath and old dogs for the road [he says], no way your not gettin' us on the footpath...<sup>984</sup>

Scholars like John Murphy note how the past can be mobilised to meet a particular political end, and that often 'nostalgic, nationalistic and militaristic imagery' is employed to enlist champions of the cause.<sup>985</sup> Clearly, May Day can be interpreted in this way. Yet, May Day is not only

<sup>982</sup>UWA, D22 May Day Committee, D22/3/2 Letter to 'Friends' from Secretary May Day Committee, no date. [but from text of letter, obviously written between December 1935 and 18/1/1936].

<sup>983</sup>Interview with Fred Moore, 29/2/1996.

<sup>984</sup>Interview with Fred Moore, 29/2/1996.

<sup>985</sup>J. Murphy, 'Conscripting the Past: the Bicentenary and Everyday Life', in S. Janson and S. MacIntyre (eds) *Making the Bicentenary*, (special issue of *Australian Historical Studies*, vol.23, no.91, October), Australian Historical Studies, Melbourne, 1988, 51.

about political power and struggle, and to suggest so is to diminish the experience of people like Fred Moore, and the value they place on such events. For, while Moore adheres strongly to the political ideas about May Day, his appreciation of the event is influenced also by its social and cultural aspects.

I want to challenge the dominant images and discourses about May Day which suggest it is only about one kind of political power and class struggle. The experience of my 53 year old mother is one example that cannot be accommodated easily in imagery and representations that stress violent struggle only. She was born and lived most of her childhood in Cessnock, near Newcastle, a region not dissimilar to Wollongong. Her principal memory of May Day is, as a child, dancing around the May pole. Often people I have interviewed also enthusiastically describe the boiled lollies and icecream which were distributed on May Day, and although these are not stories about aggressive struggles, they also deserve to be incorporated into the history of May Day and into a history of working-class leisure.

Wollongong's 1935 May Day celebration was particularly notable because the celebrations were discontinued at the height of the Depression and its 1935 revival indicated things were on the mend. The Organising Secretary for the May Day Committee said that:

As a result of the general depressed conditions of the district the celebrations were discontinued following the very successful display in 1930, but it has now been decided to again conduct them as in the past.<sup>986</sup>

Although it was organised principally by the miners, every attempt was made to make the celebration more inclusive, due to the harsh economic circumstances still suffered by many.

<sup>986</sup>UWA, D22 May Day Committee, D22/3/1, Letter to Secretary, Woonona Industrial Co-operative Society Ltd, from Organising Secretary, May Day Committee, dated 30/3/1935.

Members of the Woonona Co-operative Society had participated in past parades, and 'the Society, its employees, its Educational Committee and Women's Guild' were once again encouraged to participate in 1935.<sup>987</sup> Letters were sent to the various town or shire councils in the district, 'asking that the Councils grant permission to the Relief Workers under their authority to participate in the coming May Day Celebrations'. In his letter, the Organising Secretary noted how 'a considerable number of the men working as relief workers are unemployed members of the Miners' Federation and other kindred unions, and...when things were normal, took their part in the annual display'.<sup>988</sup> The committee wrote to employers requesting donations, as, 'owing to Intermittency & unemployment among our members we are finding it difficult to provide the usual Free Trains for our members, their wives and families...'.<sup>989</sup> Despite these efforts, some workers could not participate in the Day, and Alex Gell, branch Secretary for the United Labourers, wrote to the Organising Secretary on behalf of his members, saying:

every one of them would like to have the May Day off for Demonstrations but the unfortunate position is that we only get £5-18-0 per fortnight on rational time to take home to live on & keep home & they cannot see their way clear to loose[sic] a day out of the meagre pay they receive...<sup>990</sup>

Gell said, 'all the members are with you in the fullest extent for May Day'; yet these workers were forced, out of commitment to their families, to forgo participating in the 1935 event.

<sup>987</sup>UWA, D22 May Day Committee, D22/3/1, Letter to Secretary, Woonona Industrial Co-operative Society Ltd, from Organising Secretary, May Day Committee, dated 30/3/1935.

<sup>988</sup>UWA, D22 May Day Committee, D22/3/1, Letter to the Town or Shire Clerk from the Organising Secretary, May Day committee, dated 30/3/1935.

<sup>989</sup>UWA, D22 May Day Committee, D22/3/1, Letter to Mr Horn, Manager, Queensland Insurance Co Ltd, Sydney, from District President, Southern District Miners, dated 15/4/1935.

<sup>990</sup>UWA, D22 May Day Committee, D22/3/1, Letter to the Secretary, May Day Committee, from Alex Gell, Branch Secretary, United Labourers(sic), dated 1/4/1935.

Mr Jack Kellock, a representative from the Northern Miners' Federation addressed the Wollongong 1935 May Day march and claimed that: 'There was nothing gaudy about the procession - it was a solid working class demonstration'. He went on to say that 'is what is wanted' because 'workers the world over were demonstrating - not celebrating-that day'.<sup>991</sup> But celebration was most certainly an important aspect of the day in the Illawarra. Those participating were treated to 'a wonderful day, the weather being perfect'. Three trains transported the mass of people, along with buses from Dapto, Mt. Kembla and Mt. Keira.<sup>992</sup> The *South Coast Times* reported that 'Wollongong was thronged with miners, their women folk, and children, from early morning' and that 'a feature was the large number of women who joined in the procession'.<sup>993</sup> Estimates of the crowd ranged from ten thousand to twelve thousand people. The day consisted of a variety of amusements. Workers danced in the showground pavilion to music provided by a trio playing piano, violin and drums,<sup>994</sup> who in tendering for the job said they had a 'habit of pleasing the Dancers'.<sup>995</sup> There was also a competition for the best essay on 'Why We Celebrate May Day', with a prize of five shillings.<sup>996</sup> Twenty-four players from the Corrimal Citizens Band were hired to participate in the May Day march.<sup>997</sup> The Bulli Band and the Australian Railways Union Band also played in the procession.<sup>998</sup> 'Children were their first consideration' in organising the sports program; however, there were a score of events for the adults,

<sup>991</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 3/5/1935.

<sup>992</sup>UWA, D22 May Day Committee, D22/3/1, letter to Secretary, Wollongong Show Ground Trust, from Organising Secretary, May Day Committee, dated 30/3/1935.

<sup>993</sup>*South Coast Times*, 3/5/1935.

<sup>994</sup>UWA, D22 May Day Committee, D22/3/1, Copy of Letter to [unknown] from Secretary, May Day Committee, dated 14/4/1935.

<sup>995</sup>UWA, D22 May Day Committee, D22/3/1, letter from H. Beckett, Becketts Dance Band, to Mr T. Silcocks, Secretary Organising Committee, dated 6/4/1935.

<sup>996</sup>UWA, D22 May Day Committee, D22/3/1, piece of paper saying "Please insert the following advertisement in *South Coast Advertiser*" 1935.

<sup>997</sup>UWA, D22 May Day Committee, D22/3/1, Letter from Organising Secretary, May Day Committee to Secretary Corrimal Citizens Band, dated 6/4/1935.

<sup>998</sup>*South Coast Times*, 3/5/1935.

including sack races, three-legged races, a tug-o-war and a quoits match.<sup>999</sup> There were various prizes throughout the day, including the May Day Cup, which was awarded to Helensburgh Lodge for its banner, slogan and marching. The Wollongong Traders Cup was awarded to Wongawilli Lodge for its slogan and marching, and Helensburgh Unemployed were the runners-up. The job of judging the banners and marching was a very serious one, and in 1935 the judges were positioned on the balcony of the Commercial Hotel to determine the marching prowess of participants. The most sought-after prize of the day, however, may have been the dozen Tooheys Pilsener's, which were donated by the Tooheys Brewery and the Crown Hotel in Wollongong for the sporting events.<sup>1000</sup>

These colourful and almost carnival moments were a feature of successive May Days in Wollongong. Photographs from the 1938 celebration offer various images of May Day; it is a political protest, but it is also a view of amusement, an occasion for merry making, and a day of family fun. Plate 8.1 reinforces the political component of the march, with the miners demanding adequate pay and six hour working days. Crowds at the sides reveal the attraction of the event for families. Perhaps the miner at the forefront is gesturing with a wave to his wife and children. The boy behind the banner might be listening to tales from his father about the importance of May Day, but it is clear the festival feel of the day is not lost on this young boy. The Co-operative Society's float seen in Plate 8.2 highlights to the crowd the message of buying 'union' bread. It also illuminates the sense of fun and creativity that has been a part of decorating the float with a giant loaf of bread. The stares from the small children to the left of the truck indicate the float has impressed. The shining brass instruments revealed in Plate 8.3 attest to the importance of music for the day. The women and children featured in Plate 8.4, under the banner of the

<sup>999</sup>*South Coast Times*, 3/5/1935.

<sup>1000</sup>UWA, D22 May Day Committee, D22/3/1, Letter from Secretary, Tooheys Limited, Sydney to Mr. F. Lowden, President, Southern District Miners Federation, dated 18/4/1935.

CPA, demonstrate that the appeal of May Day was wide and varied. The little boy at the forefront was probably unclear as to its political dimension, but his excited expression captures well the carnival spirit of the day.<sup>1001</sup> These social aspects are evident in other years also. The 1939 parade was rated 'a colorful spectacle of pageantry that won all round approval', although the sports programme was interrupted by an untimely downpour of rain.<sup>1002</sup> The 1941 celebration was hailed 'the most successful' yet. Stalls were held, prizes distributed, and competition in the sports was 'keen', particularly in the quoits competition.<sup>1003</sup> The defeat of Fascism was the centrepiece of the 1943 march; but the usual sports programme also featured, despite some rain.<sup>1004</sup> In 1946 the married ladies' race was held, as usual, but there was also an egg and spoon race and a potato race exclusively for 'ladies'. Men participated in the more rigorous cycling, soccer, and relays. The WWF showed their strength winning the tug-o-war.<sup>1005</sup> In 1947, the 'record numbers' of people lining the street for the march indicated its popularity in the community generally.<sup>1006</sup> Although the 1948 march was cancelled due to rain, the sports programme was postponed until 22 May.<sup>1007</sup>

<sup>1001</sup>UWA, D22, May Day Committee, D22/12/4, Photos-May Day March 1938.

<sup>1002</sup>South Coast Times, 5/5/1939.

<sup>1003</sup>South Coast Times, 2/5/1941.

<sup>1004</sup>South Coast Times, 7/5/1943.

<sup>1005</sup>South Coast Times, 10/5/1946.

<sup>1006</sup>South Coast Times, 9/5/1947.

<sup>1007</sup>South Coast Times, 6/5/1948.



Plate 8.1 - 1938, May Day March

(Source: UWA, D22/12/4, May Day Collection)



Plate 8.2 - 1938, May Day March

*(Source: UWA, D22/12/4, May Day Collection)*

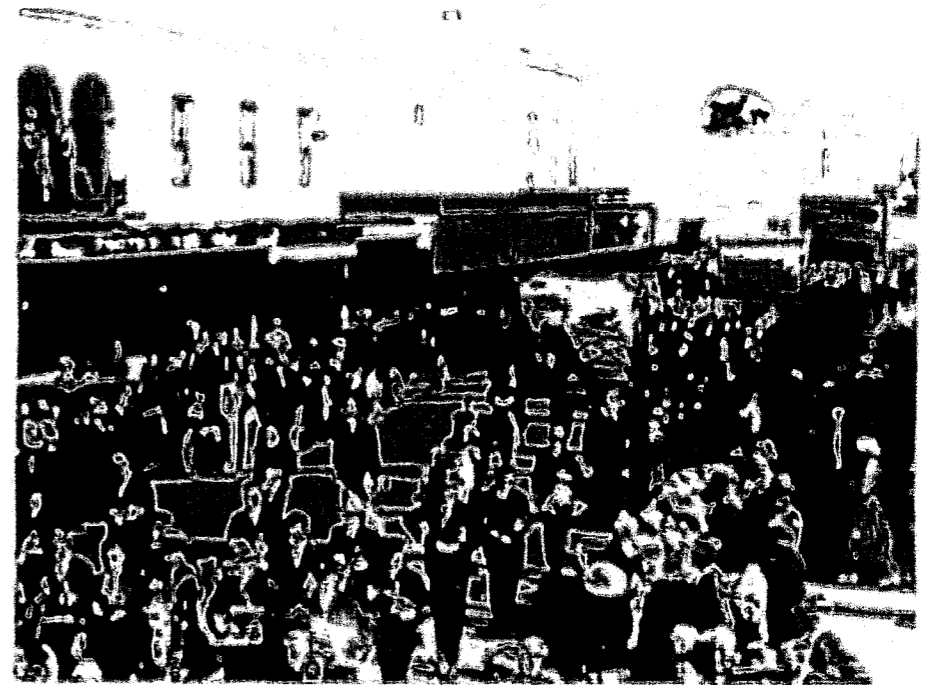


Plate 8.3 - 1938, May Day March

*(Source: UWA, D22/12/2, May Day Collection)*

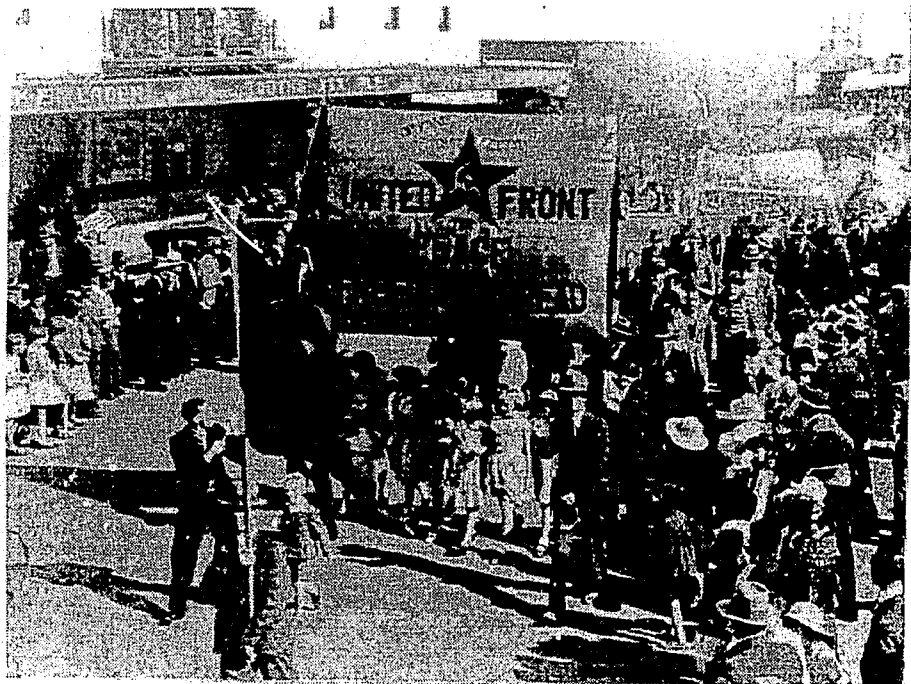


Plate 8.4 - 1938, May Day March

(Source: UWA, D22/12/2, May Day Collection)

The social activities were clearly integral to the success of May Day throughout this period. When May Day organiser Martin Lacey addressed the South Coast Labour Council seeking 'trade union support' for the 1952 May Day, he emphasised the need for 'better financial support' which would 'make the day a greater success' and ultimately, he hoped, 'improve the workers' way of life'.<sup>1008</sup> Without question, Lacey included the social aspects of the event when calculating its success. He acknowledged that improvements to the 'workers' way of life' was through political tactics and strategy, but it was also through fun and leisure. He recognised the way workers' lives were enriched through the social and cultural activities that formed part of the May Day celebrations, and financial support meant that these fun pursuits, that had always been central to this political demonstration, endured.

#### *School of Arts*

The School of Arts provided another source of social and cultural activity for workers in the Wollongong community. Originating in Glasgow in the early nineteenth century, the Schools of Arts, or the Mechanics Institutes', were established by middle class crusaders and directed at skilled tradesmen and craftsmen. Constructing a respectable worker through self improvement and greater knowledge was the main principle in the Schools of Arts which were widely established in Australia by the 1850s.<sup>1009</sup> By 1900, over 1000 Schools existed throughout Australia, but the objective of moral and vocational instruction diminished over time. Whitelock stated: 'Entertainment and amusement finally ousted self-

<sup>1008</sup>UWA, D169 Series 1A box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 13/2/1952.

<sup>1009</sup>D. Whitelock, 'A Brief History of Adult Education in Australia and an Outline of Current Provision', in D. Whitelock, (ed) *Adult Education in Australia*, Pergamon Press, Rushcutters Bay, 1970, 10.



improvement'.<sup>1010</sup> John Laurent has suggested that Schools were a valuable addition to the 'cultural and intellectual life' of the towns and cities where they were established. Moreover, he argued that they were never the 'agencies of control' the middle class founders intended. Rather, the Schools of Arts existed as 'instruments of emancipation' for the working-class people they attracted and this appears to be the case in Wollongong.<sup>1011</sup>

The Wollongong School of Arts began in 1859, and, as with its British counterparts, middle class as well as working class people were involved in its establishment. Candidates for executive and committee positions included property owners, two bank managers, a medical officer, teachers, solicitors, farmers and storekeepers.<sup>1012</sup> The School experienced difficulties and folded a number of times during its lifetime: it was resuscitated in 1890, and re-established again in or before 1905.<sup>1013</sup> In 1927 the Wollongong school had a membership of 504 and the Corrimal School of Arts, 130. School of Arts members had a range of activities to choose from for entertainment: at the Wollongong School cards, draughts, chess and dominoes in the games room, billiards in the popular billiards room, and the ubiquitous euchre party.<sup>1014</sup>

The Schools of Arts and like institutions were truly cultural centres in Wollongong, providing meeting places for working-class people. The entertainments and reading matter suggest they were used more by men than by women, but this is unclear. Laurent estimated that in the nineteenth century, female membership of the Sydney Mechanics' School

<sup>1010</sup>Whitelock, in Whitelock, 12.

<sup>1011</sup>J. Laurent, 'Bourgeois Expectations and Working Class Realities: Science and Politics in Sydney's Schools of Arts', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 75, part. 1, June 1989, 34.

<sup>1012</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 11/4/1924.

<sup>1013</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 25/4/1924 and *South Coast Times*, 1/7/1927. These sources give two different dates. The 1927 article refers to 1902 and the School's 25 years of operation. The 1924 article suggested the School ceased operating in 1902 and commenced again in 1905.

<sup>1014</sup>*South Coast Times*, 1/7/1927.

of Arts was between a quarter and one third of the total membership.<sup>1015</sup> The highly sex-segregated nature of the Wollongong workforce may have militated against such levels of participation by women in the Illawarra schools, but what is apparent is that women played an important role in organising social occasions at, and for, the School of Arts. Women were continually thanked for their catering efforts. In 1921 the Thirroul School of Arts said they were 'pleased at the great help...accorded by the ladies of the town' for a bazaar that was to raise funds for a new School of Arts building.<sup>1016</sup> In another instance, Wollongong School of Arts hoped that a 'ladies committee' would be formed to help with the euchre parties during the 'card season'.<sup>1017</sup> The ingenuity and skills of working-class women developed in and for the family extended to specific organising tasks in the Schools of Arts.

It is unlikely that many women were present in the billiard rooms.<sup>1018</sup> While the billiards room offered 'recreation' it also provided for 'good-fellowship' under conditions not 'found in most other public billiards rooms'. In 1927 the Wollongong School of Arts resisted raising the charges for their use, despite a downturn in revenue, because it believed 'such measures would be destructive of the ideals on which this room is conducted'. The notion of 'good-fellowship' among men was clearly of considerable importance to both the committee and its members and probably partly accounted for the School of Arts' popularity in this period. Corrimal School of Arts expressed disappointment when they could not install a billiard table in 1927, for they were in a poor financial position and knew a billiard table could guarantee an income. Dapto School of Arts was well aware of this too in 1926, when it was reported at the committee

<sup>1015</sup>Laurent, 34.

<sup>1016</sup>*South Coast Times*, 23/9/1921.

<sup>1017</sup>*South Coast Times*, 5/9/1930.

<sup>1018</sup>D. Broom, et.al. 'Off Cue: Women Who Play Pool', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 28, no.2, August 1992, 175-191. This article offers a brief history, though no account of billiards in the School of Arts is provided.



meeting 'that the billiard table is unable to meet all the demands made upon it for games, as many as 6 or 7 players having games booked by 7 o'clock in the evening'. It was decided to buy another billiard table for the school, which 'would be a profitable venture during the winter months' because, for the month of April alone the Billiards table earned more than subscriptions, rent and donations altogether. Norman Dennis et al noted in their study of a Yorkshire mining community that the billiards room 'was a popular rendezvous for unemployed miners' in the 1930s; however, its popularity declined gradually with the improvement in employment.<sup>1019</sup> This reason may account for its popularity in the Illawarra during the 1920s and 1930s.

The Wollongong School of Arts reading room, 'well supplied with magazines and newspapers', was also 'well patronised by members'. The committee concluded that the great 'numbers who use this room are an indication that its facilities are appreciated by our members'.<sup>1020</sup> The Corrimal financially constrained School of Arts had a list of twenty newspapers and periodicals available in its reading room. Besides the local *South Coast Times* and *Illawarra Mercury*, there were *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *Labor Daily*, *The Evening News*, *The Referee*, *The Bulletin*, *Smith's Weekly*, *The Sydney Mail*, *The Auckland Weekly*, *The Australasian*, *The Illustrated London News*, *The World's News*, *Forestry Journal*, *The New Magazine*, *The London Magazine*, *The Stock and Station Journal*, *The Critic*, *The Agricultural Gazette* and *The Federal Hansard*.<sup>1021</sup> Unlike many workers' homes, the Wollongong School of Arts reading room had new matting on the floor, which would have made the room reasonably warm in winter, and pictures on loan from the Trustees of the National Art Gallery. But, comfortable decor aside, the extensive use of the library

<sup>1019</sup>Norman Dennis, et.al. *Coal is Our Life: An Analysis of a Yorkshire Mining Community*, Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1956, 128.

<sup>1020</sup>*South Coast Times*, 29/7/1927.

<sup>1021</sup>*South Coast Times*, 29/7/1927.

facilities in the Schools of Arts indicates that reading was enjoyed and taken seriously. In 1927 25,000 books were issued at the Wollongong School of Arts and in the space of one year the committee added 300 new books to the library shelves. Apparently this was not unusual; in one month during 1930 its library committee purchased 48 new books.<sup>1022</sup> Corrimal School of Arts loaned 5623 books to its 130 members in 1927, representing an average of 43 books per member in that year.<sup>1023</sup> Unsure of how many books were in their library, the Dapto School of Arts committee ordered members to return all books and closed the library for three days in order to conduct a stock take, which was a formidable and time consuming task indicating their collection was substantial.<sup>1024</sup> Further evidence of the popularity of the library was the wear and tear on the books. The Wollongong School of Arts committee complained: 'One of the most difficult problems in this department is the upkeep of books'. A 'lady' member of the School suggested 'that voluntary aid be sought for the purpose of covering all the books in order to give uniformity and longer life to the volumes'. This applied most particularly to the 'latest fiction', which was 'costly', but in demand. Where new books were not purchased, as was the case with Corrimal School of Arts, every effort was still made to tempt readers by exchanging books between the various Schools of Arts.

The Schools of Arts were also the centres for many other activities, providing clubs or organisations with a venue for social events, and in return the Schools of Arts received much needed funds for renting their facilities. The Thirroul Valeta Club conducted a carnival night at their local School of Arts which was 'a gaiety night' with people dressed in fancy dress and prizes awarded for the best costumes.<sup>1025</sup> The Corrimal School of Arts hall was also the venue for many dances. In June 1927 the 'Best Jazz

<sup>1022</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 5/9/1930.

<sup>1023</sup>*South Coast Times*, 29/7/1927.

<sup>1024</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 5/9/1930.

<sup>1025</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 4/6/1926.

Orchestra' entertained dancers from 8 till 12pm, 'Gents' admitted at 1/6 and ladies at the lesser charge of 1/-. In the same month when the Melody Makers entertained tennis players at a dance, the local newspaper reported: 'At an early hour the hall, which was beautifully decorated, was crowded'.<sup>1026</sup> The Mount Keira School of Arts held a dance in July, as part of the Football Benefit Social, that went from 8pm till 2am with supper provided. The advertisement for the dance noted it was on the miners' 'PAY FRIDAY, JULY 1st 1927'.<sup>1027</sup>

Workingmen's clubs were also a feature of the Illawarra and similar to the School of Arts. They have an equally rich history and were started by moralists and religious persons in the nineteenth century.<sup>1028</sup> These clubs offered a place in which workers could talk and discuss issues of interest, and, as their name implied, they were exclusively the domain of men. The Helensburgh & Lillyvale's Workmen's Social and Literary Club contained a billiards room and a library for its members. The club had been in existence since 1896, and 60 members attended the annual general meeting in 1928.<sup>1029</sup> Although such clubs were originally formed for 'social intercourse, amusement, and refreshments', they were to be 'free from intoxicating drinks'.<sup>1030</sup> This policy was dispensed with later, when in 1941 the IT&LC proposed a Worker's Club be established in Wollongong. Similar to its nineteenth century forebears, it aimed 'to provide recreation, reading room', and 'foster sports and social activities among the members'. It differed, however, with its proposal to obtain a liquor licence, which was regarded as central to its success: 'if we are able to obtain a licence we will be able to get sufficient financial backing'.<sup>1031</sup>

<sup>1026</sup>South Coast Times, 3/6/1927.

<sup>1027</sup>South Coast Times 3/6/1927.

<sup>1028</sup>H. Solly, *Working Men's Social Clubs and Educational Institutes*, Garland Publishing, New York, 1980, 25.

<sup>1029</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 27/1/1928.

<sup>1030</sup>Solly, 25 and 29.

<sup>1031</sup>UWA, D169, series 1, box 1, SCLC Records, Letter to Affiliated Unions, from IT & LC, dated 3/9/1941.

The localised nature of the Schools of Arts accounted for a great deal of their success: scattered throughout town centres, they were able to serve the interests of those in their respective communities. While commercial and financial issues concerned School of Arts committees, it was their continual focus on members that was distinctive. As the Committee of the Wollongong School of Arts assured its membership in 1927, on the twenty fifth anniversary of the organisation, 'a serious effort has been made to cater for the needs of our patrons'. It is only when the activities carried out in the Schools of Arts are captured by commercial or State interests that their uniqueness slowly disappears and the decline of these institutions is witnessed.<sup>1032</sup>

### *Sports*

Sport, of various kinds, was popular among the working class of Wollongong. Soccer, rugby league, tennis, boxing, swimming, cricket, golf, and quoits were just some of the many sports reported on at length in the local newspapers during this period. Unlike the Schools of Arts, sporting competitions prospered after this period, with commercial interests guaranteeing a strong culture of sport in the Illawarra. That said, the role of women in both institutions was simultaneously distinct from and more ambiguous than men's.

Boxing captured the interest of working-class men, and, like the Schools of Arts, it occurred in the local centres. Corrimal advertised a programme at its 'local stadium' that included a 15 round contest, a six round contest and two four round contests. The 15 round contest was the

<sup>1032</sup>For instance it appears that the Wollongong School of Arts and the Corrimal School of Arts were handed over to the respective councils in 1945. See *South Coast Times*, 12/10/1945, and 23/11/1945.

main event and it was anticipated that the outcome would be 'a splendid exhibition'.<sup>1033</sup> Thirroul boxing 'fans' were also treated to 'good matches' where 'a splendid night's entertainment of the fistic art' was assured.<sup>1034</sup> Woonona had its boxing venue, plus the local boxing brothers Harry and Rus Critcher, the former known as 'the Woonona boxer with a "punch" who was 'quick in attack and defence'.<sup>1035</sup> Boxing historian Peter Corris has argued that the history of boxing outside the capital cities is obscure due to changes in ownership or management, and 'records were kept only haphazardly'.<sup>1036</sup> But local newspapers are one source that offers at least limited detail of the activity in the Illawarra.

Besides stadiums, boxing was conducted in tents or travelling shows. Corris notes how these kinds of 'travelling boxing shows' were central to the development of boxing in Australia.<sup>1037</sup> They provided a link between city and country for both participants and spectators.<sup>1038</sup> Tents were a recruiting ground for young hopefuls, but also allowed older boxers, 'who had passed their peak', to remain in the game.<sup>1039</sup> 'The White City' was 'a centre of outdoor amusements' and would have received rave reviews when it presented 'Tom O'Malley, the well known middleweight champion of Australia, and his troupe of boxers' for a season in the Illawarra. O'Malley and his team were said to have 'a programme which should appeal to all local followers [sic] of the noble art'. He encouraged locals interested in boxing to visit the White City as he was 'running a series of boxing tournaments, open to local boxers'. O'Malley also made it clear that he was willing 'to discuss any suggestions made to further the interest taken in local boxing'.<sup>1040</sup>

<sup>1033</sup>South Coast Times, 11/3/1927.

<sup>1034</sup>South Coast Times, 11/3/1927.

<sup>1035</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 20/4/1928.

<sup>1036</sup> Peter Corris, *Lords of the Ring*, Cassell Australia, North Ryde, 1980, 96.

<sup>1037</sup>Corris, 75-76.

<sup>1038</sup>Corris, 87.

<sup>1039</sup>Corris, 76.

<sup>1040</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 6/1/1928.

For many, a formal arena or space in which to fight was not a requirement. Harold Jack Laughlin and James Atkinson appeared before the Wollongong Court as a result of fighting in Port Kembla on Christmas Eve in 1928. The fight began after Laughlin called Atkinson a 'mongrel', to which Atkinson enthusiastically responded: 'I wonder how many your mother reared before she reared you'. It was at this juncture that Constable Selwood of Port Kembla police claimed the 'defendants adopted a fighting attitude, and swung at one another...'. Although fighting only in the street, Laughlin and Atkinson ought to have been in the ring when they attracted the interest of approximately 50 passers-by.<sup>1041</sup> This was many more than the twenty people who stopped to view George Butler, William James and William Pepper fighting on Crown Street in Wollongong at 2.30 in the morning. In reporting this incident Constable J.H. Smith said he 'saw the defendant Pepper, and the two other defendants, fighting on the footpath. They were marked about the face, and bleeding as a result of the fighting'.<sup>1042</sup>

Boxing was not the only sport to attract enthusiastic crowds. Rugby League is widely recognised as a working class sport and it had an obvious presence in Wollongong.<sup>1043</sup> Its heritage extends back to 1895, in Huddersfield, England, where Yorkshire coalminers and Lancashire mill workers split in protest from rugby union to form their own 'renegade union'.<sup>1044</sup> A similar split occurred in Australia, in August 1907, which saw the formation of the NSW Rugby League Football Club, and, as Andrew

<sup>1041</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 20/1/1928.

<sup>1042</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 20/1/1928.

<sup>1043</sup>R. Masters, "And I awoke, and found me here on the cold hill side": Rugby League and the Decline of Working Class Culture', *Meanjin*, vol.54, no.3, 1995, 397-409; T.G. Parsons, 'Labour, Rugby League and the Working Class - The St. George District Rugby League Football Club in the 1920s', *Teaching History*, vol.12, Part 2, August 1978, 22-36; and A. Moore, *The Might Bears! A Social History of North Sydney Rugby League*, Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 1996.

<sup>1044</sup>Masters, 399.

Moore has remarked, from then on the 'momentum' was 'unstoppable'.<sup>1045</sup>

When the third series of the Illawarra Rugby League was played in 1927 at the Wollongong Showground it attracted 'the largest crowd this season' and the 'grandstand resembled a show day'. The first grade match between Port Kembla and Glebe also proved 'a great game'. Both teams 'have always furnished the crowd with an over-dose of thrills in previous encounters' and this game was no different, the local newspaper reporting: 'It was admittedly the greatest game staged there for years, crammed chock-full of excitement from the moment referee Bob Campbell put them into action...'. The final score was 12 all, but at least one spectator was not too happy with this result, for at the end of the match 'a woman barracker went perilously close to using her "brolly" on a member of the Glebe team'.<sup>1046</sup>

Sporting competitions were not only between town centres: often workplaces and industries organised their own competitions. The miners on the South Coast organised a soccer competition in which eight teams of mine workers competed. Jimmy Seath, an employee of the Old Bulli Colliery, and 'considered to be one of the best referees on the South Coast' refereed the South Coast Miners' Cup Final Soccer match at Woonona on 10 September 1939. The previous year's premiership winner, Mt Keira Colliery, played Old Bulli Colliery in front of approximately one thousand spectators. A boisterous crowd was guaranteed as it was reported 'strong rivalry exists between' the teams. Both teams contained previous captains of the South Coast team, but the Mt Keira team proved the better on the day, winning by one goal and providing 'one of the best games witnessed this season on the Woonona ground'.<sup>1047</sup> The Steelworks also engaged in sporting matches and in 1944, at the initiation of the AIS Cricket Association, the AIS Sports Association was formed. The interest in a

<sup>1045</sup>Moore, 24.

<sup>1046</sup>South Coast Times, 13/5/1927.

<sup>1047</sup>BHP Archives, PE032/010, BHP Review, vol.16, no.6, October 1939, 26.

sporting association grew out of a very successful AIS inter-departmental cricket competition. Officer bearers of the Association were elected, and the associations aimed 'to promote sporting and recreational activities for the benefit of A.I.S. employees, their wives and their children'.<sup>1048</sup> Even unemployed workers joined in, when in 1931 the UWM opened a tennis court for the Corrimal unemployed. While the use of the court was free, the UWM emphasised: 'There is only one stipulation,...that the court is closed on U.W.M. meeting days and days of demonstrations in connection with the U.W.M. and fraternal organisations'. The UWM hastened to add: 'The players themselves suggested this'.<sup>1049</sup> Fun with sporting activities was permissible if it did not interfere with the direct political tasks of the movement.

Historian Helen King has argued that there is a 'sexual politics' attached to sport. She suggested that 'tennis, riding, and golf' were among the few acceptable sports for women. Moreover, serious competition was discouraged amongst women and very little press coverage was given of women's sports.<sup>1050</sup> Reports on golf in Wollongong list women players.<sup>1051</sup> Doris Burnett played tennis and was able to combine this with the care of her children: I 'used to put the children in the pram and off to tennis we'd go'.<sup>1052</sup> Bessie Lockwood was also a tennis enthusiast.<sup>1053</sup> Hockey was popular throughout this period, and when in October 1941 two women's hockey teams visited Sydney and 'scored decisive victories' it was pointed out that the 'South Coast girls were particularly fast'.<sup>1054</sup> Ivy Pascoe and her

<sup>1048</sup>BHP Archives, PE032/015, BHP Review, vol.21, no.3, June 1944, 17.

<sup>1049</sup>Workers' Weekly, 20/11/1931, 4.

<sup>1050</sup>H. King, 'The Sexual Politics of Sport: an Australian Perspective', in R. Cashman and M. McKernan, (eds) *Sport in History*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1979, 72. See also K. Demsey, 'Women's Leisure, Men's Leisure: A Study in Subordination and Exploitation', *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 25, no. 1, May 1989, 27-45.

<sup>1051</sup>For example *South Coast Times*, 14/5/1926 and *South Coast Times*, 18/2/1927.

<sup>1052</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 107.

<sup>1053</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 9.

<sup>1054</sup>*South Coast Times*, 10/10/1941.

four sisters from Port Kembla all played hockey, some played golf and Ivy especially liked ladies' cricket.<sup>1055</sup>

It seems the sex-segregation and sexual division of labour in the Wollongong work place and home continued on the playing field to some extent. In 1936, when 'a number of fine' table tennis players were discovered 'amongst the ladies' of the Woonona School of Arts, it was suggested a ladies' club be formed. Sports like hockey and tennis were regarded as suitable for women, or women were encouraged to form ladies' teams when men's teams already existed. The practice of mixed teams was highly problematic in an era when the gender order was clearly constructed around dichotomous gender roles. Ladies' teams in some sports were unthinkable, especially when it came to football. In 1921, a number of letters to the editor illuminated the distinct gender divide that operated at the time. Sydney J. Sefco of Coledale wrote suggesting that the establishment of a ladies' football club 'be strongly discouraged'. He argued that it was 'a man's sport' and he expressed regret 'that so many women are willing to sacrifice their femininity [sic]'. In his view these women were seeking 'to obtain vulgar notoriety'. He continued:

Besides being essentially a man's game, football can also be classed as too dangerous for the so-called weaker sex. If they intend taking the same field of sport as the mere male, it behoves them to beware lest they be called upon to share the same field of labor...I appeal to girls to remain girls, as there is nothing more detestable than the man-woman.<sup>1056</sup>

Not all Illawarra men agreed. Fellow Coledale resident G.W. Ridley criticised Sefco: 'Women of to-day are claiming equal rights with men, equal pay for equal work' and on these grounds he supported ladies' football clubs.<sup>1057</sup> Following this criticism, Sefco replied to Ridley:

<sup>1055</sup> Davis, *Our Memories*, 51.

<sup>1056</sup> *South Coast Times*, 1/7/1921.

<sup>1057</sup> *South Coast Times*, 8/7/1921.

Mr Ridley likes the idea of women being equal rights with men...Would Mr. Ridley like to see women four and five deep around the hotel bar? No doubt it also would be congenial to have them as a mate in the mine...These are equal rights with men.

Sefco said he 'would be long sorry to see this equality'.<sup>1058</sup> Dennis et al. commented on sport in their study of Yorkshire miners and noted sporting activities were 'primarily the domain of the male'.<sup>1059</sup> In the Illawarra, some sport was suitable for women, but some clearly was not.

In 1938, the women from the Coledale and Scarborough Miners Women's Auxiliaries competed in a cricket match. This was acceptable because it was a ladies' team, but also, as Ridley had argued in 1921, it was a game women had 'played for many years'.<sup>1060</sup> J. Richards, the Secretary of the Scarborough Auxiliary reported that it 'was a return match, Scarborough having been to Coledale sometime ago'. Although Scarborough was 'outclassed' at the previous match, Richards said: 'We had our revenge on this occasion, when we won by an innings and sixty-three runs...'. She continued:

We have discovered some Bill O'Reillys amongst our womenfolk in Mrs. Harvey, who took six wickets and Nell Richards eight wickets, while Mrs. Lane, Mrs. Lenham and Vera Smith kept the opposition at their creases...

Richards concluded that 'a very enjoyable afternoon was spent'. However the fact that 'there were more "ducks" about than anything else' suggests the cricket matches were more about fun than serious competition. As

<sup>1058</sup> *South Coast Times*, 15/7/1921.

<sup>1059</sup> Dennis, 156.

<sup>1060</sup> *South Coast Times*, 8/7/1921.

Richards said, 'It is all sport and helps to keep us all together in a friendly atmosphere'.<sup>1061</sup>

In an article some years ago on sports history, Bill Mandle argued that while most 'histories are judged to be important, because they relate directly to a real world', sports histories 'have to be legitimized by pointing out their historical significance'.<sup>1062</sup> The investigation of sport in Wollongong illustrates how working-class people enjoyed their time away from paid and unpaid work, but also how sexual divisions were replicated through leisure activities. When Richards said sport was about keeping them together, she really meant keeping "women" together and separate from men, for there were very few sports at this time in Wollongong that facilitated the mixing of the sexes.

### *Feasting*

Like sport, eating and drinking are social activities. The pleasure of eating and drinking was central to many of the social events organised by the working class in Wollongong. Lodges of various kinds had annual dinners and festivities that attracted the interest of members. The 'Port Kembla Lodge of the Royal Antideluvian [sic] Order of Buffaloes' had their 1926 annual dinner at the Memorial Hall with 100 members in attendance, including visitors from other lodges in the district. 'Musical items were contributed' on the evening and catering was supplied by Mrs A Spicer.<sup>1063</sup> In the same year 'the oldest established Friendly Society in the Illawarra district, the Pride of Illawarra branch in Bulli-Woonona of the Grand United Order of Oddfellows' had a dinner at which 'a form of banquet was first indulged in'. As was frequently the case 'a committee of ladies' was

<sup>1061</sup>*Common Cause*, 4/3/1939, 7.

<sup>1062</sup>W.F. Mandle, 'Sports History', in Osborne and Mandle, 91.

<sup>1063</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 28/5/1926.

responsible for decorating of the tables and hall, and for the refreshments which 'had been splendidly arranged and in unlimited quantity'.<sup>1064</sup>

Dinners were colourful occasions that attracted a lot of interest, but it was the picnic that seemed particularly prominent in this period, perhaps because of its low cost and its ability to include all family members. Many working class organisations encouraged picnics. On Anniversary Day 1932 the Fairy Meadow-Fern Hill Branch of the Worker's International Relief (WIR) organised a picnic in Towradgi Park. Three hundred children and their parents were transported by bus to the beach where 'a plentiful supply of food, including cake, fruit, lollies and soft drinks formed the basis for a day's re-1 enjoyment'. Although races were organised for both parents and children, there was also an obligatory speech, this time on 'Lenin and his initiation of the W.I.R.'. The picnic was 'a welcome break in the monotony of the daily grind on the dole', and the importance of such events in 'the cultural progress and education of the masses' was not ignored, with a challenge given to the Wollongong, Keiraville, Corrimal, Bulli and Scarborough branches to organise similar events. 'If this, the youngest branch of the W.I.R. in the district, can put up such a good performance, let us hear from the other branches'.<sup>1065</sup>

Not all picnics required a focus as political as the WIR picnic. In early 1946 the South Coast Branch of the WWF held their annual picnic at Stuart Park, near Wollongong's North Beach. It was described as 'a day of relaxation for watersiders'. The family was given emphasis with 'Mum and Dad, as well as the youngsters, putting aside all cares and worries for the big day'. Wollongong and Port Kembla businesses contributed to the prizes for the many sporting competitions and the day was pronounced a success. Mr J. Hayes, presumably from the WWF, wrote in the local newspaper:

<sup>1064</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 21/5/1926.

<sup>1065</sup>*Workers' Weekly*, 5/2/1932, 4.



if castor oil had to be used in liberal doses that night or the following day by fond mothers whose children did not show that discretion so necessary in avoiding the painful aftermath of an over indulgence in such tempting dainties as ice cream, lollies, ginger beer, fruit, soft drinks and milk, which were all given out in liberal quantities, well, who cares.<sup>1066</sup>

While many other sections of the Wollongong working class organised picnics, it is the Ironworkers Picnic that has endured.<sup>1067</sup> Murray and White noted the importance of the annual ironworkers' picnic to the Lithgow community, where 'publicans donated gallons of beer, while children feasted on ice-creams, cakes and sweets'. Workers received payment for the annual picnic day under the NSW steel award, and it continued in Port Kembla.<sup>1068</sup> In 1939, despite 'inclement weather', approximately '500 picnickers' joined in the Kembla steelworks picnic. Punch and Judy was the chosen entertainment for children of the steel workers and J. Tougher lead the Steelworks Band in a lively fashion. A variety of races were enjoyed by picnickers, including a sack race, a three-legged race and a tug-o-war. Some races were clearly designated for those who were single or married. The Sweethearts Relay was won by Miss D. Lane and T. Ford. In reviewing the day the *B.H.P. Review* noted: 'surplus sweets and ice cream were soon disposed of by the youngsters present'.<sup>1069</sup>

The picnics continued throughout this period and appeared to change very little in character and format. An estimated 2,500 workers participated in the 1952 picnic, which was held at 'the ideal pleasure resort...the lovely Kiama Beach'. Once again the Steelworks band and the Punch and Judy show made an appearance. The day was proclaimed a success with '3,000 ice creams, 100 gallons of cordials, and 100 gallons of milk, in addition to copious supplies of boiling water' served to the crowd.<sup>1070</sup> The photographs

<sup>1066</sup>South Coast Times, 22/3/1946.

<sup>1067</sup>The Steelworkers picnic continues to the present day.

<sup>1068</sup>Murray and White, 39.

<sup>1069</sup>BHP Archives, PE032/1010, *BHP Review*, vol.16, no.1, June 1939, 20.

<sup>1070</sup>BHP Archives, PE032/024, *BHP Review*, vol.30, no.2, March 1953, 24.

of the day reveal clearly that the picnic was an occasion for family. Mothers, fathers, children, and copious extended family are seen seated on picnic rugs or on the sand, with picnic baskets near by (Plates 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, and 8.9).<sup>1071</sup>

<sup>1071</sup>BHP Archives, PE032/024, *BHP Review*, vol.30, no.2, March 1953, 25



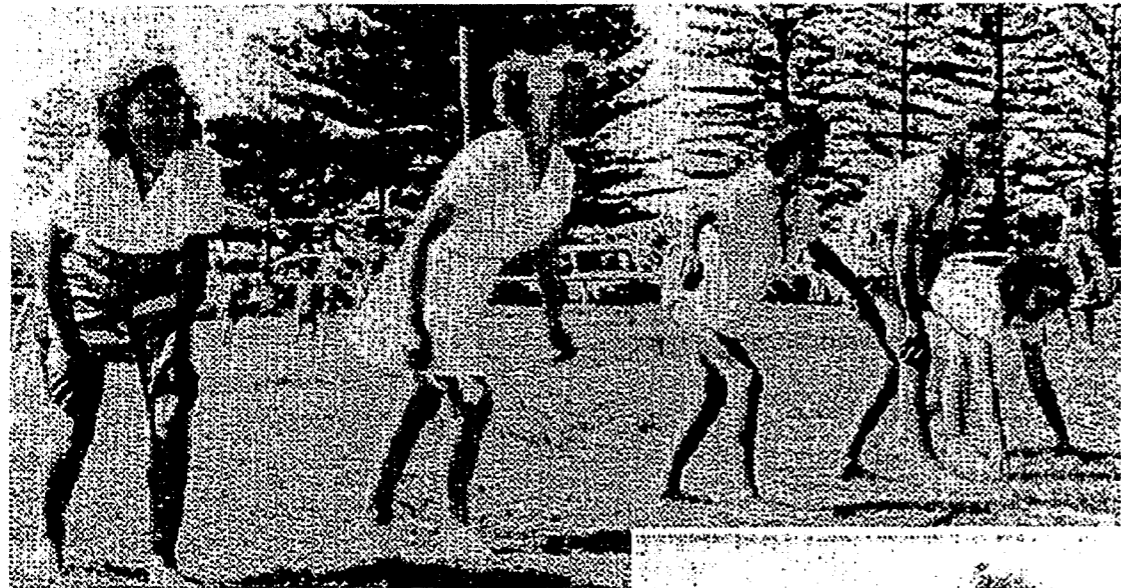


Plate 8.5 - 1952 Workers' Picnic

*(Source: BHP Archives, PK/0034, BHP Review, vol. 30, No.2, March 1953)*



Plate 8.6 - 1952 Workers' Picnic

*(Source: BHP Archives, PK/0032, BHP Review, vol. 30, no. 2, March 1953)*



Plate 8.7 - 1952 Workers' Picnic

*(Source: BHP Archives, PK/0031, BHP Review, vol. 30, no. 2, March 1953)*



Plate 8.8 - 1952 Workers' Picnic

*(Source: BHP Archives, PK/0058, BHP Review, vol. 30, no. 2, March 1953)*



Plate 8.9 - 1952 Workers' Picnic

(Source, BHP Archives, PK/0061, *BHP Review*, vol. 30, no. 2, March 1953)

### *Music and Dance*

Music and dance were almost always a feature of dinners and picnics. Janet McCalman noted the significance of dance and music for the working-class people of Richmond.<sup>1072</sup> While the form and style of musical entertainment in the Illawarra during this period varied, it was an interest that captured the imagination of many. Workers' organisations capitalised on this burgeoning activity. The Workers' Educational Association held a series of lectures for 'lovers of music' in the Parish Hall at Bulli every Friday night. The lectures had 'good attendance' and topics included 'How music got its designs' and 'Climax of Instrumental Music'. On occasions, pianoforte duets were played at the lectures and a concert entitled, 'Great Songs of the Masters' was also scheduled, for 'this undoubted musical treat should attract a very large number of people'.<sup>1073</sup> The Thirroul School of Arts provided the venue for the 60 male and female members of the Illawarra North Harmonic Society to practise at. The society presented concerts and planned to participate in the Wollongong Eisteddfod.<sup>1074</sup>

Many did not need to hear formal lectures on music or attend societies, in order to partake in the joys of music. Mrs Whiddet recalled how they entertained themselves, and that her mother's piano was very important: 'we used to have visitors of a weekend and we'd play the piano and sing'.<sup>1075</sup> Lilly Critcher (nee Jones) also remembers the treks on foot to nearby neighbours and friends where they would have singalongs around the piano.<sup>1076</sup>

The brass band music was a lively centrepiece of working-class entertainment. Described as 'people's music' by George Bernard Shaw, brass bands were associated with British working-class communities, particularly

<sup>1072</sup>McCalman, 146.

<sup>1073</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 21/5/1926.

<sup>1074</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 21/5/1926.

<sup>1075</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 5.

<sup>1076</sup>Interview with Bill and Lilly Critcher, 26/2/1996.

between 1870 and 1930, and the tradition was continued in Australian working-class communities by workers who migrated throughout this period.<sup>1077</sup> According to Duncan Bythell, 'a strong band tradition' developed in Newcastle, as many miners came from the north-east of England where banding had flourished.<sup>1078</sup> He suggests its popularity coincided with the 'mass-production of cheap musical instruments and inexpensive sheet music'.<sup>1079</sup> The Corrimal Citizens Band, originally called the Red Band, was a case in point in Wollongong. Bill Critcher remembers his father participating in the band, which was largely composed of miners.<sup>1080</sup> The band participated in a Sydney Band contest, in which it came second in the C Grade Section. Reporting on this success, the local newspaper stated: 'Corrimal was the only [one] that did not have uniforms', which debarred them in many of the events. A public meeting was planned 'to devise means of raising money to place the band on the same level as other bands of its class'.<sup>1081</sup> Money was required so that 'a full set of instruments'<sup>1082</sup> could be bought, as their existing 'instruments were far below the standard of any other band competing'.<sup>1083</sup> In 1936, the Port Kembla Band played in the streets of Port Kembla 'every pay Friday night' to raise funds for new instruments. The need for diligent practice was emphasised, along with the need for quality instruments. Members of Port Kembla Band were told to 'get behind the bandmaster, to attend every practice' and 'make the band something worthwhile'.<sup>1084</sup> Bands were a regular feature of the May Day celebrations and helped to 'marshal spirit

---

<sup>1077</sup>D. Bythell, 'Class, Community, and Culture - The Case of the Brass Band in Newcastle', *Labour History*, no.67, November 1994, 144-145.

<sup>1078</sup>Bythell, 147.

<sup>1079</sup>Bythell, 145.

<sup>1080</sup>Interview with Bill and Lilly Critcher, 26/2/1996.

<sup>1081</sup>*South Coast Times*, 18/2/1927.

<sup>1082</sup>*South Coast Times*, 22/7/1927.

<sup>1083</sup>*South Coast Times*, 18/2/1927.

<sup>1084</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 31/1/1936.

into the marchers'.<sup>1085</sup> While closely linked to mining, the brass band tradition adapted to the changing industrial base of the Illawarra when the Steelworks band was formed in 1935.<sup>1086</sup>

Of course music also meant dancing. Colin Warrington was never very enthusiastic about dancing, but he had a girlfriend who 'was a very good dancer' and he remembers that there were always dances on.<sup>1087</sup> One page in a local newspaper in 1927 includes numerous advertisements for dances and attests to their popularity.<sup>1088</sup> Dances were also a feature of the May Day celebrations. In 1941, 'hundreds of young folk' were enjoying the dance music supplied by Brady's orchestra and the Scottish Pipers, who reputedly 'discoursed capital music' in the Agricultural Pavilion at Wollongong Showground.<sup>1089</sup>

ALP branches throughout the Illawarra were constantly organising social events for their members, including dancing events. The Wollongong branch's dance committee organised a Jazz Carnival and Fox Trot Competition as well as regular dances.<sup>1090</sup> In June 1926 the committee decided to engage Jolliffe's Orchestra for the season.<sup>1091</sup> An A.L.P. dance held in the Wollongong Town Hall in 1927 was 'a pronounced success'. The attendance 'was the largest seen at any similar function for many a long day'. The drawcard for the evening was a visit and dancing exhibition by champion dancers Mr Jack Keating and Miss Marie Croft. The couple were from Sydney and had danced in the Semi-final of the Dancing Championships of Australia, which was held at the Palais Royal in Sydney. Mr Eli Beaumont's Sylvan Orchestra played the music to which Keating and

---

<sup>1085</sup>*South Coast Times*, 5/5/1939.

<sup>1086</sup>*South Coast Times*, 26/5/1939.

<sup>1087</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 27.

<sup>1088</sup>*South Coast Times*, 3/6/1927.

<sup>1089</sup>*South Coast Times*, 2/5/1941.

<sup>1090</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 21/5/1926.

<sup>1091</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 4/6/1926.

Croft 'gave a marvellous exhibition of the intricacies [sic] of the foxtrot and waltz'.<sup>1092</sup>

Jill Matthews noted in her study of the "dance craze" how 'the dance floor was an important site for the constitution of a specifically modern heterosexuality and heterosociality'.<sup>1093</sup> The many dance halls throughout the Illawarra provided this territory where men and women could mix.<sup>1094</sup> Bill and Lilly Critcher met at a dance at the Thirroul RSL during the Second World War. Their story illustrates the particular codes and rules that determined the distinct gender order operating at dances. The spatial configuration of bodies within the hall reflected in a very elaborate way these relations between men and women. Men and women sat on opposite sides of the room, or, as in the case of the Thirroul dances, the men would all converge at the door near the front entrance. Lilly recalls how from this vantage point the men 'would all have their eyes on who ever they were going to dance with'. She said, 'you'd be thinking "oh, I hope he gets here first...". The dancing got underway with an MC announcing the dances. The MC also performed another function too; anyone who was 'muckin' up' or misbehaving at the dance would be told to leave. Lilly said 'unless you had a very good reason you were expected to dance with the gentleman that asked you'. The MC had the task of arbitrating in instances where a woman refused a dance with one partner and then was seen dancing with another. Bill and Lilly believe this did not occur often in their time as the MCs were too good at controlling the dance.

According to Lilly, a strict hierarchy operated on the dance floor. If a 'chap' asked you to dance before you had danced with others who had asked earlier, a woman would reply politely, "I'm sorry I'm already promised for this dance". Once it became apparent that Bill and Lilly were 'going

<sup>1092</sup>South Coast Times, 18/2/1927.

<sup>1093</sup>J. Matthews, 'Dancing Modernity', in Caine and Pringle, 86.

<sup>1094</sup>There are endless advertisements and notices for dances in this period illustrating it was an important activity many participated in.

together', they would dance in a 'little group' and swap partners among the group ensuring that they didn't have to dance with other unknowns. While the social dances had a fun and fancy-free air about them, they were paradoxically the site of a complex set of rules and conditions constructed on a bedrock of assumptions about heterosexuality. As Norman Dennis et al said of the dances in the Yorkshire mining community, the 'main functions of these weekly dances appears to be that of bringing young people together in a manner which facilitates the approach of the two sexes'.<sup>1095</sup>

Bill Critcher remembers that on hot nights after the dance they and their friends would have a soft drink, and then walk home, dancing and singing. Bill recalls these days as 'good living', despite the Depression and the war, and their own lack of funds. One reason Bill and others like him were able to have an enjoyable time when economic conditions were so strained was that many of the dances were also fund-raisers.<sup>1096</sup> Not strictly running commercial concerns, the organisers of dances and socials of this period were mindful of the hardships which many in the community endured. In 1935 the Anti-Slave Camp Committee held 'very successful dances' on Thursday nights in the Friendly Society's Hall of Woonona. The money from the dances went to aid the unemployed men living in the camps at Slacky Flat and Fairy Meadow. *Unity*, the official organ of the South Coast District Unemployed and Relief Workers, stated: 'The attendance has been good, and is increasing'. Again much was made of the 'efficient M.C.'. The MC, the good floor and the New Palais Orchestra were certain to create 'enjoyable nights'. In advertising the event, the point was made that the 'moderate admission of sixpence all round should not debar every worker and sympathiser from attending and so helping in a good cause'.<sup>1097</sup>

<sup>1095</sup>Dennis, 126.

<sup>1096</sup>Interview with Bill and Lilly Critcher, 26/2/1996.

<sup>1097</sup>NBAC, N57/2031, J. Normington-Rawling's Deposit, *Unity*, 29/8/1935.

Leisure was circumscribed to a large extent by work, paid and unpaid. Caring for children and waged work left many with very little opportunity for leisure. Working-class people of Wollongong endeavoured to overcome this by arranging many activities or social events in conjunction with paid work - work sport teams, May Day and the workers' picnics are examples of such activities. These sometimes militated against women's participation, sometimes not. The strong sexual division, so obvious in the paid work force, was blurred and more ambiguous in respect to social activities. Sport was clearly sex-segregated and the School of Arts offered only a limited role for women. Dancing, picnics and May Day facilitated associations between men and women by bridging the gender divisions obvious in paid work; but they also reinforced those divisions by providing one of the few spaces where men and women could meet, hoping to find companionship and eventually marriage. In Wollongong, where the sexual division in the paid workplace was so sharp, pursuits like dancing and picnics performed important functions, providing social opportunities that simply did not exist in paid work.

## 9

*'You didn't admit you were hard up':  
Working-Class Notions of Moral Community  
in Wollongong*

Colin Warrington lived through the Depression period. He remembers:

If someone was worse off than another family you would go and help them. You'd look after each other....If some family were down and having a bad time there would always be someone around the place to go and help them. This would be for sure - for certain....if someone was in bad circumstances...Everybody looked after each other...<sup>1098</sup>

For many working-class people, like Colin, helping people 'in bad circumstances' is an aspect of working-class life that they celebrate. It forms part of working-class collective memory. Anne O'Brien notes, in her study of the NSW poor, how help from the 'community - whether extended family, friends or neighbours' was a practice endorsed because people recognised 'such a lot could easily be theirs'.<sup>1099</sup> Working-class people were reliant on each other for their survival and in recognising this fostered a culture of mutual help and assistance.

The informal practice of assisting family and friends was incorporated into a number of formal working-class associations and societies. Friendly Societies, Co-operative Societies, and the Women's Auxiliaries all embraced ideas like mutuality, association, community service, fellowship, self-help

<sup>1098</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 29.

<sup>1099</sup>A. O'Brien, *Poverty's Prison: The Poor in New South Wales 1880-1918*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1988, 31.



and improvement, and they represented an extension of the working-class culture of mutual help into the broader community. This chapter considers first the idea of mutual help amongst the working class, and then the above organisations and their operations in Wollongong between 1921 and 1954.

In providing much needed goods and services to the community these organisations occupied a significant position in society. They fulfilled obligations that either the family often failed to accomplish, or the State refused to perform, adequately or not at all. Such organisations demonstrate the capacity of working-class people to deal with their hardships in enterprising ways. Sexual divisions of labour at home and in paid work were generally replicated in the structures and practices of these organisations. Sometimes, though, particularly in organisations intimately concerned with the family economy, it was precisely these divisions that ensured women greater opportunities for initiative and activity. In organisations reliant on links with paid work, these chances were greatly reduced.

#### *Social Morality and the Working Class*

The Friendly Societies, Co-operative Societies, and Women's Auxiliaries were all created by working-class people, or had working-class people as their primary focus. As these organisations evolved they were not always exclusively working class in orientation or membership, yet their pursuits and purposes were based on a vision that was broadly socialist and collectivist. This vision was informed by a heterogeneous but closely related set of discourses dealing with the individual and their moral responsibilities to society or the collective.<sup>1100</sup> The term 'social morality', as

<sup>1100</sup>An indication of some of these discourses can be found in P. Beilharz, *Transforming Labor: Labour Tradition and the Labour Decade*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1994, chapter 2. Here Beilharz discusses notions such as liberalism, collectivism, socialism, romanticism, labourism, modernity and the enlightenment. In some way or other all these

used by social theorist Bill Jordan, is used here to conceptualise these various discourses. Jordan uses the term 'moral relations' to describe those social relations that are 'distinct from economic ones', and which involve 'altruism - a willingness to abandon self-interest for the sake of a duty to someone else'. He identifies the duties of people to 'fellow citizens' as their 'moral responsibilities'.<sup>1101</sup> Others have discussed similar ideas using other labels.<sup>1102</sup> Jordan's term appeals, however, because he states explicitly that social morality is not about 'constant principles and institutions', but rather is subject to change.<sup>1103</sup> This is an important point, which enables researchers to understand the success of particular institutions at certain times, but also allows us to explain their demise or transformation over time.

A framework which provided a sense of social and historical change was essential to understanding the views of Colin Warrington, and of many others like him who expressed similar opinions. Supporting each other was a recurrent theme in the interviews, the published reminiscences, and numerous kinds of contemporary evidence. The frequency with which the issue was raised indicated there was something more happening than simply 'sentimentalising the past'.<sup>1104</sup> An explanation that went beyond the idea that people were yearning for the past and lamenting its loss was necessary. Examining the social conditions in which these working-class people lived not only offers such an explanation but also allows us to avoid notions of working-class people being inherently moral. It is possible to

notions have contributed to discussions of the individual and the collective and their association with ideas about mutual help, progress, self improvement, co-operation etc.

<sup>1101</sup>B. Jordan, *The Common Good: Citizenship, Morality and Self-Interest*, Basil Blackwell Ltd, Oxford, 1989, 13, 67-68.

<sup>1102</sup>K. Tester, *Civil Society*, Routledge, London, 1992, 8; and E. Cox, *A Truly Civil Society*, ABC Books, Sydney, 1995, 15. For instance, Keith Tester discusses the term 'civil society' which refers 'to all those social relationships which involve the voluntary association and participation of individuals acting in their private capacities'. Eva Cox uses the phrase 'social capital' to describe the 'processes between people which establish networks, norms and social trust and facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit'.

<sup>1103</sup>Jordan, 182.

<sup>1104</sup>Cox, 36.



draw connections between the social circumstances and the relations that were formed as a result.

The Depression and the Second World War are the common threads woven through the lives of working-class people in Wollongong between 1921 and 1954. These events were never distant from an individual's experience, often strongly structuring their memories and their story telling. Paradoxically, it is the dislocation of Depression and war that is the point around which memories cohere. Jordan identified 'crisis' as a crucial factor in people's understanding the importance of the common good and co-operation.<sup>1105</sup> It was the crises of Depression and war that led so many people of this period to exhibit a sense of social morality toward their fellow human beings. These crises patterned working-class people's experiences in various ways, depending on the individual. In their memories these events reached beyond the official dates or periods that statisticians provided, engulfing their lives and informing the ways in which they lived. Remembering living in the Flinders Street camp during the Depression, Matt Hogan said he 'appreciated the friendship' that was created among people who had nothing and how they all worked 'together to help one another'.<sup>1106</sup> Sennett and Cobb suggest the Depression 'is remembered as a social disaster that disrupted lives', and its scale was such that the individual was powerless.<sup>1107</sup> Any responsibility that individuals felt for their circumstances was sometimes obliterated, and in the case of Matt Hogan it was replaced with a sense of community and togetherness.

Not all individuals experienced it in this way. Some individuals occasionally felt tensions in confronting a society influenced by Depression and war. Dolly Potter, who worked for many years in the Miners' Women's Auxiliary doing welfare work, asserts: 'You didn't admit you were hard up'. Providing and receiving assistance, whether formal or informal, was subject

<sup>1105</sup>Jordan, 21.

<sup>1106</sup>Interview with Matt Hogan, 22/2/1996.

<sup>1107</sup>Sennett and Cobb, 31-33.

to a complex set of rules, obligations and feelings. In her opinion, to admit being 'hard up' was embarrassing for both those providing the help and those receiving it.<sup>1108</sup> Both the recipient and the provider of assistance needed to ensure that a sense of dignity and self-worth was maintained in the process. Sennett and Cobb argued that, whilst being an individual 'has historic connotations of self-reliance, confidence, self-affirmation', people have constantly to balance this with the knowledge that a dependence on each other is a necessity for satisfying personal needs and desires.<sup>1109</sup>

Balancing individual needs with ideas about interdependency and mutuality was complex and fraught with tensions because of the subjective component. Some people who denied they were hard up, in order to maintain their self worth, were compromising themselves. One working-class man criticised those who, he said, failed to acknowledge that they had once encountered hardships. In his view, some people conveniently forgot in more prosperous times that they had depended on soup kitchens for sustenance or lined up with fellow unemployed for the dole. This man regarded with suspicion people who omitted these memories.<sup>1110</sup> Acknowledging the commonality of such experience reaffirmed his own dignity and self-worth.

Thinking historically about how social morality operates also has implications for understanding gender relations. In Wollongong, between 1921 and 1954, the sexual division of labour in the home and in paid work greatly determined men's and women's capacity for shaping moral relations in the community. As Chapter Four demonstrated, men's permanent relationship with paid work ensured that they dominated the political and industrial scene. Women's lives, on the other hand, as Chapter Seven emphasised, shaped and were shaped by the family and home experience. This stark division meant women gained some authority on issues that

<sup>1108</sup>Interview with Dolly Potter and Sally Bowen, 29/1/1996.

<sup>1109</sup>Sennett and Cobb, 66-67 and 266.

<sup>1110</sup>Personal communication with Author.

related to the home, family, and care of children. Cora Baldock has noted how voluntary activities replaced paid work for women, and that maintaining such activities relied on 'the continuation of women's position in domestic labour'.<sup>1111</sup> They provided also a means whereby women engaged in social life outside the home, and contributed to a broader social morality in community life.

As the following will show, these ways of thinking about social morality, including its execution and division along gendered lines, also shaped the formal organisations which set out to direct moral relations amongst the working class in Wollongong in this period. Such organisations either came to an end soon after the 1950s, or were changed so fundamentally thereafter that they bore little resemblance to the original organisations. They declined for several reasons. Both the wealth generated in the post-war period, and the growth of the welfare state were particularly influential in their demise or transformation. The provision of aid by the state was rapidly augmented after the war.<sup>1112</sup> Welfare was essentially about civilising capitalism, and the 1950s and 60s witnessed its maturation.<sup>1113</sup> In the 1920s, 30s and 40s welfare was of the residual kind, provided by the state only when there was 'a breakdown' in the support provided by 'the family, the market and voluntary charities'. Gradually, when, at the end of World War Two, the Commonwealth government increased expenditure on welfare services, welfare started to become institutionalised.<sup>1114</sup> This meant that the provision of welfare by the state became the norm and organisations like the Friendly Society, the Co-operative, and the women's auxiliaries became less important.<sup>1115</sup>

<sup>1111</sup>C. V. Baldock, 'Volunteer Work as Work: Some Theoretical Considerations', in C. V. Baldock, and B. Cass, (eds) *Women, Social Welfare and the State*, second edition, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1988, 289 and 291.

<sup>1112</sup>L. Bryson, *Welfare and the State*, Macmillan Press, London, 1992, 9.

<sup>1113</sup>Bryson, 21 and 55.

<sup>1114</sup>Bryson, 56 and Kewley, 374-375.

<sup>1115</sup>Bryson, 56.

### *Friendly Societies and Lodges*

"Doing good" by each other was at the heart of the Friendly Societies. Their origins are mixed, but they were linked with similar organisations in Britain. Mary Ann Clawson connects the friendly society tradition with late medieval and early modern Europe, where family and kinship were important elements in defining the notion of fraternity. She also noted how the word 'friend' was used in medieval Europe to describe kinfolk.<sup>1116</sup> P. Gosden suggests friendly societies evoked these links with antiquity in order to establish a feeling of permanence amongst their members and thereby validate their own credentials.<sup>1117</sup> Sick pay and assistance with medical care and funerals formed the key aspects of modern friendly societies, with members expecting an allowance when sick, and a benefit for the widow in the event of death.<sup>1118</sup> David Green and Lawrence Cromwell suggest this allowance was a 'legacy of the whip-round', where kin, neighbours or workers helped friends in time of need.<sup>1119</sup> Friendly societies institutionalised an informal process, with members contributing for a time in return for benefits that were administered subject to elaborate rules and regulations.<sup>1120</sup>

While the friendly society tradition originated in Britain, similar associations were evident in Australia by the early nineteenth century. The NSW Friendly Societies Act of 1843 followed directly the British Act.<sup>1121</sup> Green and Cromwell note that the friendly society phenomenon started in Sydney but 'soon sprang up elsewhere'.<sup>1122</sup> They estimate that in 1930

<sup>1116</sup>Clawson, 22.

<sup>1117</sup>P.H.J.H. Gosden, *Self Help: Voluntary Associations in 19th-century Britain*, Barnes and Noble Books, New York, 1974, 3.

<sup>1118</sup>Gosden, 15.

<sup>1119</sup>D. G. Green and L. G. Cromwell, *Mutual Aid or Welfare State: Australia's Friendly Societies*, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1984, 45.

<sup>1120</sup>Green and Cromwell, 14.

<sup>1121</sup>Green and Cromwell, 7.

<sup>1122</sup>Green and Cromwell, 7.

approximately 44 per cent of Australians were members of such societies, with a slightly higher 47 per cent of New South Welshmen regarding membership of a friendly society as worthwhile.<sup>1123</sup> Membership was high because the Commonwealth government did not administer sickness benefits until 1945 and friendly societies were the only insurance the ordinary person had against sickness and incapacity.<sup>1124</sup>

The perils of long days in the mines, and later, in the steelworks, meant friendly societies were an attractive proposition to Illawarra workers keen to guarantee the support and sustenance of their families. 1878 saw the first friendly society established in the Illawarra district, at Bulli-Woonona. It was called the Pride of the Illawarra branch and belonged to the Grand United Order of Oddfellows (GUOOF). It became a permanent feature of the Illawarra landscape when it built the Oddfellows' Lodge (later called the Masonic Hall), financed from its annual picnics. The Bulli-Woonona branch was also instrumental in establishing other GUOOF branches in areas like Helensburgh and Wollongong. In 1926 the GUOOF was healthy and robust, with 398 members in the Bulli-Woonona branch alone.<sup>1125</sup> In mid-1927 the GUOOF reported steady progress in the Illawarra district, with most lodges receiving new members at every meeting and new lodges being formed in Mount Kembla and Unanderra.<sup>1126</sup>

Green and Cromwell note that it was mostly 'the male breadwinner', the husband or father, who took out membership of the friendly society. Mixed branches of men and women had been permitted since the mid-1890s, but men's benefits usually advantaged the family unit, resulting in many women not bothering to join officially.<sup>1127</sup> Women were not excluded, however, and in some instances were actively encouraged to join. In 1926, in an address to the Bulli-Woonona branch of the GUOOF, Brother

<sup>1123</sup>Green and Cromwell, 14.

<sup>1124</sup>Key, 265.

<sup>1125</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 21/5/1926.

<sup>1126</sup>*South Coast Times*, 10/6/1927.

<sup>1127</sup>Green and Cromwell, 13.

Casley said that 'females are also privileged to join', and moreover, 'would be greatly welcomed'. Brother Babidge joined with Casley in emphasising that 'branches were open to females', noting how 'there was a special scale' for them.<sup>1128</sup> As membership figures do not provide such detail for the Illawarra, it is unclear how many women actually accepted this invitation. According to a 1928 valuation report of the GUOOF for the whole of NSW, there were 35 154 male members and only 4847 female members.<sup>1129</sup> Given the marked sexual division of labour in the Illawarra, it is likely the gender imbalance in membership was even greater there.

Membership types, and the scale of contributions and benefits paid, indicate that invitations to join were informed directly by ideas reflecting the sexual division of labour. In its 1937 'Rules and Regulations', the GUOOF included certain membership categories demonstrating that women were frequently regarded as different. Rule 171 outlined how wives became honorary members of the branches to which their husbands belonged. Under this rule the honorary member could hold office in her immediate branch, but not be a representative at district meetings of the society, or vote on matters 'affecting the benefit funds of the Society'. Widows and mothers of 'juveniles' were able to join as honorary members.<sup>1130</sup> There was also a disparity between the benefits that men and women received. Before 1894, when only men could join, a member would receive £30 for a funeral allowance, and his registered wife only £15. After 1894, a graduated scale existed, with the benefits payable depending on the age of the male or female member, and the range of benefits they chose to receive. Under these provisions the discrimination against women was less explicit. For instance, under scale A, a member received a funeral allowance of £30, and his or her spouse £15; under scale B, a member received £15

<sup>1128</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 21/5/1926.

<sup>1129</sup>UWA, D9/1/2, box 1, GUOOF Miners' friend Lodge, Balgownie, 'GUOOF Valuation Report as at 30th June 1928'.

<sup>1130</sup>UWA, D9/3/7, GUOOF 'Rules and Regulations', 1937, p.76.

funeral allowance and a registered spouse £10.<sup>1131</sup> As most members were probably male, it was most likely that wives were the registered party and therefore in receipt of the lesser allowance.

Sometimes discrimination along gender lines was more explicit when Societies had to account for their revenue and expenses. A 1928 valuation report for the GUOOF reported that the society was in deficit £60,559.<sup>1132</sup> The 'heavy mining sickness experience' and the 'heavy female sickness experience' were the two 'chief reasons' given in accounting for the deficit.<sup>1133</sup> The society suggested remedies to reduce these costs, including not paying sick pay to miners who were 'in receipt of Worker's Compensation', not paying female members for 'diseases or disorders of the generative organs', and preventing married females 'engaged solely in domestic duties' from paying into higher scales.<sup>1134</sup> In this instance, miners experiencing serious injuries from paid work found little relief from their own friendly societies and women became targets because of the burdens they endured as a result of their biology.

Procedures adopted by friendly society lodges also reveal that women's participation was minimal, or, circumscribed in such a way that it conformed with the sexual division of labour. Attempting to encapsulate the fraternal spirit in song, the GUOOF rules said lodge meetings should commence with an 'opening ode' sung to *Auld Lang Syne*:

When Friendship, Love and Truth abound

Among a band of Brothers,

The cup of joy goes gally round,

<sup>1131</sup>UWA, D9/3/7, GUOOF 'Rules and Regulations', 1937, p.77-78.

<sup>1132</sup>It is unclear what branches were included in this report. The document is located in the archival records belonging to the GUOOF Miners' Friend Lodge of Balgownie at the University of Wollongong. This fact, coupled with the reasons given for the deficit (i.e. mining), indicate that the issue was of concern to members of the Balgownie branch however.

<sup>1133</sup>UWA, D9/1/2, Box 1, GUOOF Miners' Friend Lodge, Balgownie, GRAND UNITED ORDER OF ODDFELLOWS valuation Report as at 30/6/1928.

<sup>1134</sup>UWA, D9/1/2, Box 1, GUOOF Miners' Friend Lodge, Balgownie, GRAND UNITED ORDER OF ODDFELLOWS valuation Report as at 30/6/1928.

Each shares the bliss of others.

Sweet roses grace the thorny way

Along the vale of sorrow;

The flowers that shed their leaves to-day

Shall bloom again to-morrow!

How grand in age, how fair in youth

Are holy Friendship, Love and Truth.<sup>1135</sup>

While 'Friendship, Love and Truth' were stressed it was a fraternal spirit that existed only amongst 'a band of brothers'. After the opening song, 'Brethren' were ordered to 'Be seated'. The meeting was conducted in keeping with strict rules and guidelines that became rituals. The seating arrangements were designed according to a special floor plan that facilitated the practice and maintenance of these rituals (See Plate 9.1). The Noble Grand was responsible for chairing the meeting. An 'Outside Guardian', located at the entrance of the meeting room, was:

To guard the door against strangers, to obtain the outer pass-word from each member, or your (the Noble Guard's) consent for admission, and to prevent anyone from listening to what is going on in the Lodge.

The Inside Guardian had a similar role once members were in the meeting room. The opening of the meeting was followed by an elaborate initiation ceremony for new members, a report on members who were sick or in 'distress', then general business and lastly the closing of the lodge. The closing was marked by song, this time to the tune of *God Save the King*:

Brethren, ere we part,

Let us join hand and heart,

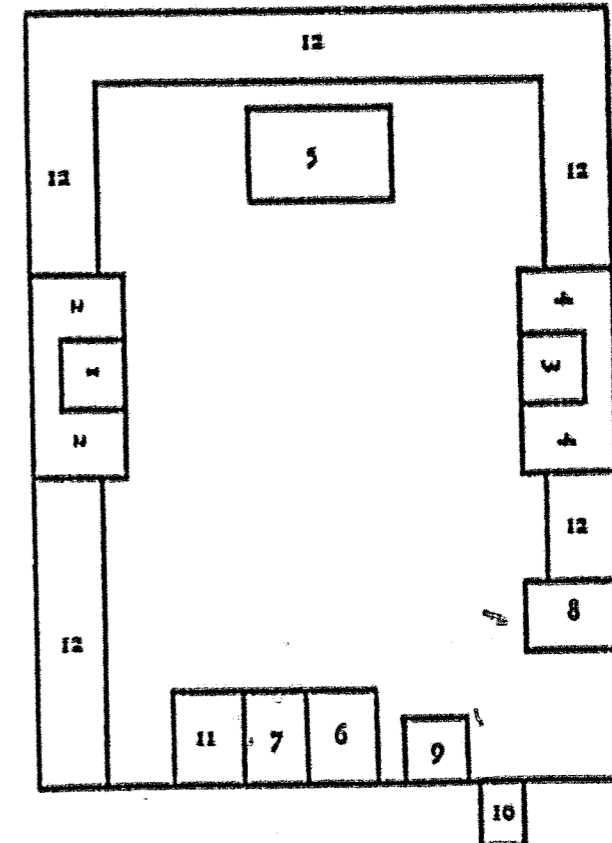
<sup>1135</sup>UWA, D9/3/4b, GUOOF Miners' Friend Lodge Balgownie, *Branch Ritual and Funeral Oration*, published by the Committee of Management, N.S.W., 1935, page 16.

In this our cause!  
 May our next meeting be  
 Blessed with sweet charity,  
 Honour and secrecy,  
 Oddfellows all;  
 United hand in hand,  
 Long may our friendly band Deserve applause;  
 May all Oddfellows be  
 Famed for sincerity,  
 Still may prosperity  
 Attend our cause

The initiation ceremony confirmed the gendered nature of the Societies. The rules stated that the chair of the ceremony should use 'the masculine gender', although it was stated that officers should use their 'discretion to alter suitably if female candidates or both male and female' were being initiated. No change, however, was considered necessary when the word Brethren was used, as it 'may reasonably be considered in the broad sense to apply to both sexes' and therefore it 'needs no correction'. During the ceremony candidates were required to make promises confirming their commitment and obligations to the society and fellow members. New members were told to:

Think well of the promise you have made, and of the wound it would give the principles which bind together the members in this Society, if they were betrayed. Amongst the virtues of social life, that of faithfulness is the greatest. Anyone who betrays a friend, commits the greatest crime, and anyone who intrudes into any Order to disturb its peace and break the bond which renders it social and happy, is a character whom all good men despise.

Arrangement of the Lodge Room  
 (To be carried out where practicable)



- |                            |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Noble Grand.            | 7. Treasurer.            |
| 2. Supporters Noble Grand. | 8. Warden.               |
| 3. Vice-Grand.             | 9. Inside Guardian.      |
| 4. Supporters Vice-Grand.  | 10. Outside Guardian.    |
| 5. Past Noble Grand.       | 11. Recording Secretary. |
| 6. Secretary.              | 12. Seats for Members.   |

Plate 9.1 - Layout for GUOOF Meetings

(Source: UIVA, D9/3/4b, GUOOF Miners' Friend Lodge Balgownie, Branch Ritual and Funeral Orations, 1935, 2.)

Finally members were informed: 'In whatever rank or station a man is placed, from the prince to the peasant, he who fulfils the relative duties of sociability and humanity is truly an Oddfellow'.<sup>1136</sup> Women may have been welcomed as members, but the meeting processes, and the language used conveyed a different impression. Commitment to the Society implied respectability and masculinity, which were intertwined and inseparable. Women had little place in such a domain.

The emphasis on a particular form of masculinity occurred because Friendly Societies had direct links with paid work, particularly men's paid work. Arduous labour and poor occupational health and safety practices made Friendly society membership either a necessity, or at the very least a sensible option for the working man in this period. Injuries and risks to women's health were possible in the home, yet the valorisation of men's paid work and the important role it played in providing for the family unit meant men's health concerns often took precedence over those of other family members. For these reasons, the sexual division of labour that featured strongly in the community generally was replicated in the Friendly Societies' organisational structures and processes.

Social activities, however, were a feature of Friendly Societies, and it appears this was where the few women played a part. Social occasions served to foster a sense of togetherness amongst members, and this was highlighted to new recruits at the time of initiation: 'Attendance at Lodge promotes social feelings; the members become better acquainted with each other and a good understanding is cultivated'.<sup>1137</sup> In January 1921, Brother Power, from the Wollongong lodge of the GUOOF, said that in the year just gone he had been out on 156 evenings, attending functions at the Lodge.<sup>1138</sup> In 1927, the Illawarra District Friendly Societies Association organised a

<sup>1136</sup>UWA, D9/3/4b, GUOOF Miners' Friend Lodge Balgownie, *Branch Ritual and Funeral Oration*, published by the Committee of Management, N.S.W., 1935, page 24.

<sup>1137</sup>UWA, D9/3/4b, GUOOF Miners' Friend Lodge Balgownie, *Branch Ritual and Funeral Oration*, published by the Committee of Management, N.S.W., 1935, page.25.

<sup>1138</sup>*South Coast Times*, 21/1/1921.

games competition of all lodges in the area. The Lodges were paired off for the competition; one Lodge would entertain one month, and the other reciprocated the following month. Games enjoyed during the competition included 'euchre, cribbage, 500's, draughts and dominoes'. At the end of the competition the F.S.A. planned 'another competition as soon as possible', noting the 'mutual fraternal spirit' fostered at such reunions.<sup>1139</sup> Women were frequently thanked for their efforts at such occasions.<sup>1140</sup> In May 1926 Mrs Simpson was acknowledged when she served a 'dainty tea with homemade scones' at a meeting of the Loyal Corrimal branch of the Manchester Unity Oddfellows Lodge. The tea was in honour of Bro. A. Presser 'who recently took unto himself a wife [sic]'.<sup>1141</sup> A ladies' committee from the Bulli-Woonona branch of the GUOOF were accorded thanks after helping with the Lodge's 'public installation', where they trimmed the hall with 'charming decorations' and 'splendidly arranged' a banquet of food in 'unlimited' quantities.<sup>1142</sup> Regular lodge meetings were supplemented by 'Ladies' Nights' with dancing and supper.<sup>1143</sup> Ladies' nights reaffirm the existence of a clear sexual division of labour and underline how masculinised the regular lodge meetings were.

Friendly Societies still exist today as non-profit organisations, but in a substantially modified form. Instead of providing basic needs, they now supply benefits and services in addition to those institutionalised by the state.<sup>1144</sup> Clawson suggests that a change in the social relations of men and women and the advent of new sources of entertainment together contributed to their decline.<sup>1145</sup> Men and women increasingly sought

<sup>1139</sup>*South Coast Times*, 24/6/1927.

<sup>1140</sup>*South Coast Times*, 12/4/1940.

<sup>1141</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 21/5/1926.

<sup>1142</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 21/5/1926.

<sup>1143</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 20/4/1928; and *South Coast Times*, 15/9/1939. The Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes (Mt. Pleasant Lodge, no.119) noted funds were collected from members for social evenings and ladies nights - See UWA, D51, Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, Mt Pleasant Lodge, no.119, Minutes, 6/3/1926.

<sup>1144</sup>See Green and Cromwell, 177-188, for an account of Friendly Societies up to the 1980s.

<sup>1145</sup>Clawson, 262-263.

fraternity or companionship in other arenas, like dance halls, which were seen to be more inclusive in terms of gender.<sup>1146</sup> The advent of the welfare state and the provision of health services by government were also influential. In the late 1920s, when Page attempted to introduce the National Insurance Bill, Friendly Societies fiercely opposed the proposal, arguing that such a scheme would discourage 'the spirit of thrift and independence' fostered by them, and also that they would no longer have a purpose for being.<sup>1147</sup> They were saved, until twenty years later, when Chifley implemented sickness benefit legislation.<sup>1148</sup> The expansion of government welfare removed the need for ordinary people to provide for themselves through mutual aid, and the history of Friendly Societies from then on is one of gradual decline.<sup>1149</sup> The example of the Mt Pleasant Lodge of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes shows how the organisation was always affected by outside influences. It started in November, 1925 with 16 members, and a further 'seven brothers from the Grand Lodge of England'.<sup>1150</sup> In May 1926, it was temporarily closed 'until the present industrial trouble' was declared 'over',<sup>1151</sup> and although meetings resumed in July, the industrial trouble persisted for some time after.<sup>1152</sup> In October 1928 four lodge members formed a committee and proposed 'to interview old members and ask them to try and attend their Lodge a little oftener'.<sup>1153</sup> Many societies suffered as a consequence of the Depression, with many never completely recovering.<sup>1154</sup> It is possible that such was the fate of the

<sup>1146</sup>Clawson, 263.

<sup>1147</sup>Kewley, 147.

<sup>1148</sup>Kewley, 265.

<sup>1149</sup>Green and Cromwell, 178.

<sup>1150</sup>UWA, D51, Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, Minute Book for Mt Pleasant Lodge no. 119, Minutes 11/11/1925.

<sup>1151</sup>UWA, D51, Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, Minute Book for Mt Pleasant Lodge no. 119, Minutes 14/5/1926.

<sup>1152</sup>UWA, D51, Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, Minute Book for Mt Pleasant Lodge no. 119, Minutes, 23/7/1926.

<sup>1153</sup>UWA, D51, Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, Minute Book for Mt Pleasant Lodge no. 119, Minutes, 12/10/1928.

<sup>1154</sup>Green and Cromwell, 14.

Mt Pleasant Lodge.<sup>1155</sup> From 1939 until 1949, interruptions and meetings with 'no quorum' occurred. The lodge was 'declared re-opened' in October 1949 with '76 true & loyal Buffaloes' present.<sup>1156</sup> Throughout 1954, attendance was healthy, ranging anywhere from 29 to 72 members. Yet by February 1961, the last available minutes, and probably the last minutes taken, reveal that only seven members attended.<sup>1157</sup>

### *Co-operatives*

For the May Day essay competition in 1940, fourteen year old Jessie Bell submitted an essay on the Co-operative Movement. In it she said that the aim of co-operation was 'to eliminate the middleman and his profits'. She suggested it was 'a great boon to the working class' and 'a great benefit to the public'. According to her, membership of the co-operative spelt 'a banking account' with 'the dividends shared being an excellent means of encouraging thrift'. Co-operation, she argued, was the 'only hope of financial security and independence' for working-class people.<sup>1158</sup> In Bell's opinion the Co-operative movement was an active and practical way for workers to help themselves, providing additional money or sustenance above and beyond wages. Co-operation was not a form of welfare because it embodied a spirit of agency and action not necessarily associated with charity. It was a positive and purposeful way for working-class people to challenge, or at the very least the demands of capitalism. But it was also much more than this: as N. Barou said of the co-operative movement in

<sup>1155</sup>UWA, D51, Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, Minute Book for Mt Pleasant Lodge no. 119, A break exists in the Minute Book between January 1931 and February 1939.

<sup>1156</sup>UWA, D51, Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, Minute Book for Mt Pleasant Lodge no. 119, Minutes, 14/10/1949.

<sup>1157</sup>UWA, D51, Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, Minute Book for Mt Pleasant Lodge no. 119, See the various dates in the Minute book.

<sup>1158</sup>UWA, D22 May Day Committee Records, D22/7/1, Copy of Essay of 'The Co-operative Movement', written by Jessie Bell, Woonona, 14 years, 1940.



Britain, 'social and moral motives' were as much an inspiration for co-operation 'as economic aims'.<sup>1159</sup>

The Co-operative movement had its origins in Britain, where bakeries and flour mills were formed along co-operative principals in the eighteenth century.<sup>1160</sup> Writings in the early nineteenth century, by socialist Robert Owen and journeyman printer George Mudie, also contributed ideas to the foundation of co-operation.<sup>1161</sup> The 1820s saw the first co-operative stores open in London and Brighton, the latter closely connected with the trade and friendly societies.<sup>1162</sup> In 1844, the Rochdale Pioneers Co-operative Society started and this is regarded by many as the "official" beginning of the co-operative movement.<sup>1163</sup> It was this British tradition that formed the basis for co-operation in Australia.

Ray Markey argues that, although the Co-operative stores never gained wide spread support amongst the Australian working class, they were particularly strong in Australian mining communities.<sup>1164</sup> Broken Hill, Lithgow, Newcastle and Wollongong are indicative of this tradition.<sup>1165</sup> Ray Markey and Andrew Wells explained that the 'penchant for consumer Co-operatives' amongst Illawarra miners was inherited from England, Scotland and Wales, from where many of their forebears had emigrated.<sup>1166</sup> Tom Marshall, a Co-operative representative, linked the British tradition with the Australian movement in his address in 1927, at

<sup>1159</sup>N. Barou, (ed) *The Co-operative Movement in Labour Britain*, Fabian Society, London, 1948, 7.

<sup>1160</sup>A. Durr, 'William King of Brighton: Co-operation's Prophet?', in S. Yeo, (ed) *New Views of Co-operation*, Routledge, London, 1988, 19-20.

<sup>1161</sup>R. Thornes, 'Change and Continuity in the Development of Co-operation, 1827-1844', in Yeo, 29-30.

<sup>1162</sup>Durr, in Yeo, 18-19 and 13; and Thornes, in Yeo, 30.

<sup>1163</sup>J.A. Hough, 'The Co-operative Movement and Retail Distribution', in Barou, 30-31.

<sup>1164</sup>R. Markey, 'New South Wales Trade Unions and the 'Co-operative Principle' in the 1890s', *Labour History*, no.49, november 1985, 51.

<sup>1165</sup>Markey refers to Newcastle. During my research for my thesis, a person from Lithgow wrote to the editor of the *Illawarra Mercury* in search of source material to assist with the writing of the Lithgow Co-operative Society's history. Broken Hill is mentioned in a reference in the *South Coast Times*, 10/5/1946.

<sup>1166</sup>Markey and Wellls, in Hagan and Wells, 92.

the Woonona Co-operative annual picnic. He talked of his recent visit to England, noting the 'rapid strides co-operation had made there'. He described how a movement inaugurated by a 'few enthusiasts' in 1844 was today 'feeding and providing for 15 million people'. Illawarra residents, he argued, 'were now deriving the benefit from that great institution'. Marshall claimed that 'for every three families who arrived here from England, two of them had been connected with the great co-operative movement on the other side...'.<sup>1167</sup>

The Illawarra Society had made steady, but successful progress since it opened in 1896 at Woonona. Although it owed the banks £13,000 in 1922, by 1927 the bank owed the society more than that. In 1927 the Society had 2,710 members in four branches, who had paid anywhere between £10 and £500 to become shareholders.<sup>1168</sup> The total amount of sales for the Society, as reported at the half-yearly meeting in 1927, was £146,307/9/8, an increase of £21,101/19/3 1/2 on the previous term, and indicating that the average purchase per member was approximately £54.<sup>1169</sup> Eight years later the number of branches had doubled and, according to the Society, had become 'The Only Union Store on the South Coast' and also had Australia's largest bakery.<sup>1170</sup> In 1954 it still maintained eight branches and a membership of 6065.<sup>1171</sup> (See Plate 9.2)

<sup>1167</sup>*South Coast Times*, 25/3/1927.

<sup>1168</sup>*South Coast Times*, 8/4/1927. This membership was divided between various branches, with 1039 at the Woonona branch, 965 at the Corrimal branch, 290 at Balgownie, and lastly 490 at Coledale.

<sup>1169</sup>*South Coast Times*, 8/4/1927.

<sup>1170</sup>NBAC, N57/2031, J. Normington-Rawling's Deposit, *Unity*, 29/8/1935.

<sup>1171</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 6/1/1954, 2.



Plate 9.2 - The Co-operative Society Store at Thirroul (n.d)

(Source: From the Collections of the Wollongong City Library and Illawarra Historical Society)

When advertising its goods and services the Woonona Co-operative Society emphasised that it was 'established by the workers for the workers'. Its slogan was 'EACH FOR ALL AND ALL FOR EACH',<sup>1172</sup> and it was this communal idea that endeared the Co-operative to many working people. Frank Gamble remembered his family would 'deal at the Co-op...because it was run on a volunteer basis'.<sup>1173</sup> Colin Warrington recalled how his mother shopped around for 'the best bargains', but that she 'used to first go to The Co-operative Store'. He said 'You could buy all of your groceries there and some clothing, but it was mainly for groceries...'.<sup>1174</sup> Bessie Lockwood says she 'was brought up to always deal with the Co-operative store'. She said she 'only bought the odd item at Fairley's', which was the local privately owned store.<sup>1175</sup> The Potter family also shopped at the Co-operative, using their dividend to purchase shoes for the children or to pay their bill at the Society. Dolly Potter said 'they were working people' at the Co-operative and 'when a strike was on they used to help us, they used to stand by us'. It was this moral conviction and sense of responsibility to the working-class members of the community that defined the Co-operative and all that it stood for.<sup>1176</sup>

Co-operation offered obvious benefits to the individual as well as the collective. Mr P. France would have agreed that co-operation was 'the salvation of the worker', as he bought land and built houses with the dividends he received. Mr Mascord had been married for ten years and managed to save 'one-eighth', or '2/6 in the £' from his dividend and interest. The Co-operative Society's Secretary Mr W. Lindsay said that, while others might argue 'they were invading the citadel of private enterprise', he believed strongly that 'the workers had just as much right as anybody else to run a business for themselves'. Mr T. Silcocks agreed with

<sup>1172</sup>NBAC, N57/2031, J. Normington-Rawling's Deposit, *Unity*, 29/8/1935.

<sup>1173</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 16.

<sup>1174</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 25.

<sup>1175</sup>Davis, *Our Memories*, 98.

<sup>1176</sup>Interview with Dolly Potter and Sally Bowen, 29/1/1996.

Lindsay, adding 'that they held no animosity against private enterprise; they were in business for themselves...'.<sup>1177</sup> A British study of 2000 co-operative members estimated that over 50 per cent joined only to save money.<sup>1178</sup> Co-operation provided families with an 'easy and convenient way of saving', something many working people dependent on wages were unable to do. Savings facilitated the purchase of essential items, and for some, more expensive and elaborate items that were simply beyond the reach of many.<sup>1179</sup>

The Co-operative affirmed its association and practical commitment to the workers in ways other than supplying groceries and dividends to shareholders. It was a regular participant at May Day activities, always entering floats in the march, donating food stuffs for the picnic and prizes for the day's events.<sup>1180</sup> It was also a source of employment, with the Woonona Society employing 103 people throughout its stores in 1927.<sup>1181</sup> When working at the Co-operative Lilly Critcher paid £1 of her weekly wage, which was £1/8/6, back to the Co-operative. The £1 helped her family pay their account at the Co-operative.<sup>1182</sup> Employing 'members who may be out of employment, or whose labour may be badly remunerated' also formed a rule of the Rochdale Pioneers in Britain.<sup>1183</sup> The Woonona Co-operative President, Mr Albert Southern, would have supported this as he professed in front of a May Day crowd that:

they [the Co-op] gave their employees 44 Hours and the best conditions; there was no night work at their bakery, and had paid 3/2 in £1 this half year to members.<sup>1184</sup>

<sup>1177</sup>South Coast Times, 20/5/1927.

<sup>1178</sup>Barou, 10.

<sup>1179</sup>Barou, 10.

<sup>1180</sup>South Coast Times, 9/5/1930 and Common Cause, 19/3/1938, 8.

<sup>1181</sup>South Coast Times, 8/4/1927.

<sup>1182</sup>Interview with Lilly and Bill Critcher, 26/2/1996.

<sup>1183</sup>Barou, 9.

<sup>1184</sup>South Coast Times, 7/5/1926.

The decent treatment of workers was a central plank of the Co-operative's working-class credentials. Looking after its employees was one way the society 'established by the workers for the workers' could differentiate itself from capitalists.

The importance of this ideal to Illawarra co-operative members is indicated by the fierce criticism of Mr. L. H. Browne, a Director of the Society, who came under fire over the question of employment. A rumour circulated that Browne was contemplating sacking workers when they reached the age of twenty-one. Browne denied the charge when publicly questioned, but the issue remained unresolved and he was not re-elected to the board as a result.<sup>1185</sup>

The provision of food and other consumables constituted the core function of the Co-operative society. Women were pivotal to the success of the Co-operative because the responsibilities of buying and budgeting for food lay largely with them. Despite their importance in the daily operations of the Co-operative, few women, if any, held executive positions within the Society. In 1921, at the Co-operative Society's half yearly meeting, it was men who 'were entrusted with the affairs of the society', not women.<sup>1186</sup> While 'many ladies' attended a Co-operation meeting in May 1927, it was men who conducted and controlled the meeting.<sup>1187</sup>

To assess the role of women according to the positions they held in the Co-operative's executive, however, is misleading. The activities of women in the Co-operative were largely confined to the Women's Guilds which operated as separate groups within the Society. Seemingly outside the main arena of decision-making, the Women's Guilds maintained an active and vigorous presence in the life of the Co-operative Society. They attended the May Day celebrations regularly; for example, the Corrimal Women's Guild in 1930 reportedly 'made a brave showing' in the march,

<sup>1185</sup>South Coast Times, 8/4/1927.

<sup>1186</sup>South Coast Times, 14/10/1921.

<sup>1187</sup>South Coast Times, 20/5/1927.

along with the Woonona Women's Guild.<sup>1188</sup> There was apparently 'keen rivalry' between the Guilds in preparation for the 1939 May Day march, where each Guild hoped to win the trophy awarded for the best banner and slogan.<sup>1189</sup>

Women's Guilds were always present and very active at various social and fund-raising occasions for the Society. Such events provided an opportunity for Co-operative members and employees to gather together and further develop the spirit of co-operation. The 1927 Co-operative Society procession and picnic in Bulli Park was one example. The procession prior to the picnic was won by the Woonona bakery, with an impressive float which 'entailed a deal of work' and featured 'a miniature oven in working order'. The float also included a banner emblazoned with the words 'Your daily bread; profits for the year £2, 568' which, with its biblical connotations, stressed the importance of co-operation to the worker.<sup>1190</sup> On this occasion however, it was the efforts of the Guild women that proved far more impressive than any dough or pastry display. The President of the Co-operative's education committee, Mr L.A. Fowler, thanked the women for the 'great help they had rendered' on the picnic day. During his address, Fowler was reported as saying that:

he had done many a hard day's work in the pit, but he was prepared to state that the ladies had worked harder for this picnic than ever he had.

Fowler's sentiments were endorsed with cheers from the crowd.<sup>1191</sup> Of course, women's efforts were not always acknowledged in such striking terms. In 1954, after the Corrimal Co-operative Women's Guild organised a luncheon for the employees of that store, people thanked the women by

<sup>1188</sup>South Coast Times, 9/5/1930.

<sup>1189</sup>South Coast Times, 28/4/1939.

<sup>1190</sup>South Coast Times, 25/3/1927.

<sup>1191</sup>South Coast Times, 25/3/1927.

expressing appreciation for their 'gesture',<sup>1192</sup> However, such slight recognition probably occurred often, though, because these kinds of activities constituted much of the Guild's work and also conformed most closely to the existing sexual division of labour. Women worked tirelessly at organising social function and raising funds, but it was these activities that were acknowledged the least, because they were the most expected by both men and women.

Feminist historians and theorists have regarded the role of women in such bodies, in organising social events and raising funds, as secondary to men's.<sup>1193</sup> In doing so, they impose an ahistorical view of gender relations and fail to understand how the sexual division of labour operated. I have argued elsewhere that assessing women's activities in the past requires a greater recognition of the 'environment in which they lived', and how they 'were bound by their circumstances' or the historical context.<sup>1194</sup> Apparently unimportant activities can be thereby seen to have had greater significance. Moreover, a sexual division of labour that associated women with the family and home did not always mean they were powerless and ineffectual. On the contrary, their special link with home and family allowed them to speak out with a degree of authority on issues related to these areas. In 1930, Illawarra union delegates met to discuss the issue of co-operation 'as a means to the socialisation of industry'. At the meeting, Mrs Fairweather, the Secretary of the State Women's Guild, and the other delegates from various Illawarra Women's Guilds were singled out for mention.<sup>1195</sup> Daily shopping at the Co-operative Store and managing the family budget meant that these women knew in a very practical way the benefits of Co-operation.

<sup>1192</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 22/2/1954, 4.

<sup>1193</sup>I discussed this issue and argued against it in my honours thesis.

<sup>1194</sup>Blackley, 76.

<sup>1195</sup>South Coast Times, 5/9/1930.

The contribution the Co-operative Women's Guilds made in times of distress was particularly noteworthy. In 1942 the various Guilds throughout the region reported at length on their activities for the war effort. The Woonona Guild provided monies to mothers who had sons at war overseas, sent Christmas hampers to the soldiers, and organised a dinner for fifty old age pensioners. Corrimal Guild continued raising funds for the war effort through collections and a stall, despite the fact that their social activities were 'curtailed by lack of transport and black-out conditions'. Balgownie Guild women were active in the guild as well as working in 'other Patriotic organisations'. They had raised money through a euchre party, organised a children's picnic and set up a centre for making camouflage nets to aid the war. Similarly, Wollongong Guild stressed that 'many of our members are active in other war work'. Coledale Guild had a dance to benefit a sick member, plus a picnic for children. They donated money to local soldiers, but also to the Aid Russia League. Scarborough Guild had a carnival night to raise funds, the 'special feature of the night' being 'hot pies and peas'.<sup>1196</sup>

These kinds of efforts extended beyond the bounds of war, although still in keeping with the sexual division of labour. Certain actions and protests by the Guilds were permissible because their members were mothers and wives, and therefore the moral guardians and carers of the society. In 1954 the Wollongong branch of the Women's Co-operative Guild wrote to the IT&LC with a motion 'protesting against the distribution of horror, sex and crime comics'. Guild women called on the Council to give support to the issue by sending circulars to affiliated unions.<sup>1197</sup> They also made visits to the 'Subnormal Children's School', presenting its pupils with gifts.<sup>1198</sup> In the same year, in conjunction with the Co-operative Society's Education Committee, the Women's Guild organised a film night

<sup>1196</sup>South Coast Times, 9/4/1943.

<sup>1197</sup>UWA, D169 Series 1 box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes 9/6/1954.

<sup>1198</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 11/6/1954, 8.

with Rev. Alfred Clint, from the Australian Board of Missions, which dealt 'with the natives of the islands to the north of Australia'. Clint was in the process of organising the Northern Aborigines and New Guinea Co-operative Movement, hence this connection with the Co-operative Society.<sup>1199</sup> A further indication that social and moral issues were not peripheral to the Guild's agenda is evident from their conferences. At the 1954 quarterly conference of the district's Guilds, many motions were put forward 'for the betterment of the co-operative movement and the welfare of the District generally'.<sup>1200</sup> The Guild women were also responsible for urging that additional bus seating be provided in the Illawarra area and that a District Nursing Service be established. The bus seats and the nursing service represented just a couple of initiatives, yet this moral conviction and willingness to bring about change was anything but momentary. As the local newspaper said in its report on the conference, the Co-operative Women's Guilds in the Illawarra were 'carrying on the traditions of the Women's Guild in improving conditions on the South Coast'.<sup>1201</sup> The guilds' commitment to shaping the moral and social order of the Wollongong community is clear from these very practical and public initiatives.

The significance of the Co-operative Society and of the Women's Guilds associated with it faded in the 1960s. The burgeoning consumerist culture from the 1950s onwards, which saw the establishment of the 'supermarket', also helped seal the fate of the co-operatives.<sup>1202</sup> Dolly Potter remembers how 'the big stores came in and was putting the prices down low'. She laments that 'they couldn't compete' and the need for working-class people to monitor their family budgets won out. Dolly says 'naturally people went there [to the supermarkets]'.<sup>1203</sup> The failure of Co-operatives to

<sup>1199</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 22/1/1954, 10 and 12/3/1954, 8.

<sup>1200</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 18/6/1954, 5.

<sup>1201</sup>Illawarra Mercury, 18/6/1954, 5.

<sup>1202</sup>Markey and Wells, in Hagan and Wells, 93-94.

<sup>1203</sup>Interview with Dolly Potter and Sally Bowen, 29/1/1996.

enter into more innovative ventures like restaurants and cinemas also contributed to their decline.<sup>1204</sup>

Markey and Wells suggest that the demise of the Co-operatives is also linked to the 'decline of the close-knit, mutually self-supporting working class communities'.<sup>1205</sup> The co-operative spirit in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s had been based on the idea that working-class people were willing to offer their support, because they were confident the Co-operative would stand by them when times were hard. The affluence of the 1950s meant hard times were fewer and further between for working-class people, and these bonds gradually dissolved. Problems were obvious as early as 1946, when Albert Southern, from the Woonona Co-operative, urged the working class to give more support to the Movement. Referring to the assistance that was given by the Co-operative during the 1945 strike, he said the co-operative had 'backed them in their recent struggles', but he wanted to know what the working class 'would do now when the going was good'.<sup>1206</sup> Southern got his answer in the 1960s as the Co-operative societies closed, unable to withstand the sophisticated marketing and economies of scale of their competitors.

#### *Women's Auxiliaries*

In 1938, a poem signed by Cecil S. Watts appeared in the miners newspaper *Common Cause*:

Along the Illawarra, 'twist [sic] the mountains and the sea,  
There's a new factor growing - it's the Strike Auxiliary.  
It thrives where each pit head mars the pleasant scene,

<sup>1204</sup>Barou, 12.

<sup>1205</sup>Markey and Wells, in Hagan and Wells, 94.

<sup>1206</sup>*South Coast Times*, 10/5/1946.

Like a smutty giant finger-print deep pressed into the green.  
There's singing and dancing and picnics to be planned;  
There's a thousand thoughts to strengthen each fighting demand;  
There's a long struggle shaping, and the final victory  
Is the guiding objective of the Strike Auxiliary.  
In lowly little villages they plant for better things,  
And a surer hope, a greater strength, each new dawning brings;  
For it's no longer Jack and Joan, it is united "WE"..  
Oh, Comrades, toast the Ladies of the Strike Auxiliary!<sup>1207</sup>

As for so many of the working-class organisations already discussed, the bedrock of the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries was the idea of mutual aid and collective effort.<sup>1208</sup> Watts dismissed any divisions between 'Jack and Joan' by emphasising the unity between male miners and the ladies' auxiliary. Yet, the ladies' auxiliary demonstrates both the replication of the sexual division of labour, and at the same time the capacity for women to have a voice on questions of social morality.

The Miners' Women's Auxiliaries originated in the Wonthaggi region, after a strike in 1934.<sup>1209</sup> Activity immediately after this period was sporadic and frequently centred only around single strikes or disputes. The formation of a national body of the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries came when Irene Orr, the wife of the Miners' Federation leader Bill Orr, attended the northern coalfields to promote the idea. Her visit led to the formation of a branch of the Auxiliary at Cessnock in August 1938. The South Coast miners' wives followed in the footsteps of their northern friends in September of the next year, with auxiliaries being formed on the South Coast at Corrimal, Thirroul and Scarborough.<sup>1210</sup> Other Illawarra

<sup>1207</sup>*Common Cause*, 17/12/1938, 1.

<sup>1208</sup>UWA, D20/2/2, Miners' Women's Auxiliaries, Constitution of the Australian Miners Women's Auxiliary, undated.

<sup>1209</sup>Stevens, 58.

<sup>1210</sup>Stevens, 58-59.



auxiliaries developed later: Corrimal-South Bulli Auxiliary in 1949,<sup>1211</sup> and Kembla Miners' Women's Auxiliary in July 1953.<sup>1212</sup> In addition to providing reports to the National Executive of the Auxiliary, local auxiliaries were encouraged to submit reports on their activities to *Common Cause*, for its women's page.<sup>1213</sup> This provided a ready-made means of communication for the auxiliaries.

Activity during strike action was a central feature of the auxiliaries. Cessnock Auxiliary secretary Grace Scanlon noted that when the miners had 'formed their relief committee, instead of having to set about organising women to assist all they had to do was call in the Women's Auxiliary local branch'.<sup>1214</sup> Members of the Women's Auxiliaries on the South Coast said that most of the auxiliaries 'were formed...around a strike...there was usually a struggle'. Auxiliaries assisted by providing 'parcels to aid the families, children's entertainment, welfare work around the strike'.<sup>1215</sup> In October 1939 the Coledale Miners' Women's Auxiliary declared in its annual report, 'among other things, that the Auxiliary raised £94 for the relief of distressed cases during the miners' strike'. Help was not always confined to the miners either. Coledale women pointed out that they had also given aid to the WWF at the time of the pig iron dispute in Port Kembla.<sup>1216</sup>

Disputes and strikes were not the only concerns that impelled the auxiliaries to act. Auxiliary women said that 'what they did after they were formed didn't always relate to the mine'. According to the women, the auxiliaries were concerned with 'community welfare work' and 'social

<sup>1211</sup>Interview with Dolly Potter and Sally Bowen, 29/1/1996.

<sup>1212</sup>UWA, D20/4/1/1, Miners' Women's Auxiliaries, Minutes for Kembla Branch of the Miners' Women's Auxiliary, front cover of note book states that it was 'inaugurated 16th July 1953'.

<sup>1213</sup>*Common Cause*, 7/10/1939.

<sup>1214</sup>*Common Cause*, 30/9/1939, 7.

<sup>1215</sup>UWA, Oral History T3, Miners' Women Auxiliaries: Mesdames Bowen, Kaye, Martin and Wilson, Interviewed by Baiba Irving, 11/2/1974.

<sup>1216</sup>*Common Cause*, 7/10/1939, 5.

questions that affect women and children'.<sup>1217</sup> The Kembla Miners' Women's Auxiliary organised hospital visits to sick miners or their family members, and agreed to give 10/6 to those who had been in hospital for two weeks or more. Similar donations were given to those who were sick and remained at home, and sometimes in place of money, flowers or fruit were given. Yet, distributing funds fairly and equitably had to be considered within the auxiliary's budget. The decision to pay 10/6 sick benefit was rescinded three months later, with only 'needy cases' receiving monetary assistance and the less needy receiving get well cards.<sup>1218</sup> Auxiliaries battled against financial constraints, surviving largely on their own fund-raising efforts. They received support from the Miners' Lodges when they visited the 'stump' (where the union officials collected the dues) and conducted a raffle or had a collection for people 'in bad circumstances'.<sup>1219</sup> Assistance also extended into the community and was not restricted to miners and their families. In 1954, at the Auxiliary's half yearly meeting they protested at 'the state of roads and gutters in the district' and argued against 'meat and food price increases'. They also supported the building of a YWCA hostel in Wollongong for girls and women by approaching the Coal Board for donations and asking 'all lodges...for donations or permission to collect and sell bricks...'.<sup>1220</sup>

Like the Guilds' women, the Miners' Auxiliaries were not content just to pass motions and send off letters; they were frequently compelled into action (See Plate 9.3). The question of price increases was one issue that

<sup>1217</sup>UWA, Oral History T3, Miners' Women Auxiliaries: Mesdames Bowen, Kaye, Martin and Wilson, Interviewed by Baiba Irving, 11/2/1974.

<sup>1218</sup>UWA, D20/4/1/1, Miners' Women's Auxiliaries, Kembla Minutes, 20/1/1954 and 14/3/1954.

<sup>1219</sup>Interview with Dolly Potter and Sally Bowen, 29/1/1996.

<sup>1220</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 24/9/1954, 7.





Plate 9.3 - 1946, Southern District Miners' Women's Auxiliary

(Source: B. Curthoys and A. McDonald, *More Than a Hat and Glove Brigade: The Story of the Union of Australian Women*, Bookpress, Sydney, 1996, 21.)

stirred their passions, as it did in many women's organisations at this time.<sup>1221</sup> In October 1950, auxiliary women 'voiced their indignation at high prices' via a deputation to the Wollongong Local Prices Officer, Mr Gibson. Housewives going about their business in the street joined the auxiliary women after they leafleted the street seeking support. The auxiliary women even attracted the attention of a police sergeant who was sent 'to break up a disturbance'. When he arrived, however, he failed to take any action, wishing the deputation well and going on his way, stating: 'it's time something was done about the rising prices'. Upon gaining entry to Gibson's office, the 25 women issued their demands. After an unsatisfactory result, they resolved to take the matter to their local members of parliament.<sup>1222</sup>

On meeting with the local politicians, the women outlined to them instances where prices were increased above the pegged prices. One woman alleged that butchers sold them mutton instead of lamb: 'The price of lamb is not pegged, so they call all mutton lamb and we are forced to pay the lamb price, which is 4d more'. Another remarked on a case of a woman shopper forced to pay '3/- for a pound of chuck steak yesterday morning'. The miner's wife stated: 'After this meeting I'm going to this shop to buy some steak and if they overcharge me, I'll take it to the Prices Office'. Dolly Potter, the President of the South Bulli-Corrimal Auxiliary, called for firmer action saying: 'A £5 fine is nothing for these people'. Potter proposed that shop keepers be forced to close for a week, arguing that only then would they 'get something done'. The Auxiliary women left the meeting contemplating

<sup>1221</sup>B. Curthoys and A. McDonald, *More Than a Hat and Glove Brigade: The Story of the Union of Australian Women*, Bookpress, Sydney, 1996. Curthoys and McDonald raise this issue throughout their book, which deals mostly with the post war period. Of course Judith Smart has discussed the issue of protests by women over food and prices for an earlier period. See J. Smart, 'Feminists, Food and the Fair Price: The Cost of living Demonstrations in Melbourne, August-September 1917', in J. Damousi and M. Lake, (eds) *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1995, 274-301.

<sup>1222</sup>UWA, D20/2/3, Miners' Women's Auxiliaries, Corrimal-South Bulli Women's Auxiliary-Press Clippings 1960-1973, *Common Cause*, 14/10/1950, 2.

the formation of 'vigilante committees'.<sup>1223</sup> Demands and protests of this kind were permissible because the issue of food prices, the purchasing of food and budgeting for the family economy were regarded primarily as women's concerns.

The idea that women were the carers and responsible for the well being of the family guaranteed that they were given greater scope on these and related issues. Dolly Potter said that in times of sickness or financial need 'there was a great *great* need for the auxiliary women to approach women, whereas the men couldn't'. Social assumptions about both gender and human dignity and pride meant there was an informal, but nevertheless 'proper', process to be followed both by the group or individual providing assistance and by those who were in receipt of such assistance. People would not necessarily approach the auxiliary for assistance directly; rather 'a neighbour or somebody would hear about it' and in turn the auxiliary would provide assistance. Many women found it very difficult to accept assistance. For instance, when the auxiliary helped a woman by providing her with shoes for her children that she could not afford, she became, as Dolly recalled, 'very indignant' and later repaid the auxiliary as she 'insisted' she would.<sup>1224</sup>

Other auxiliaries of women existed amongst sections of the Wollongong labour movement. As previously mentioned in Chapter Four, there was the IT&LC Women's Auxiliary, which was formed in 1942, but whose purpose seemed to be more circumscribed than that of the Miners' Women's Auxiliary.<sup>1225</sup> A women's auxiliary for the FIA was formed in 1947,<sup>1226</sup> which appeared primarily to organise social occasions and to play a

<sup>1223</sup>UWA, D20/2/3, Miners' Women's Auxiliaries, Corrimal-South Bulli Women's Auxiliary-Press Clippings 1960-1973, *Illawarra Mercury*, 28/10/1950.

<sup>1224</sup>Interview with Dolly Potter and Sally Bowen, 29/1/1996.

<sup>1225</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 20/3/1942.

<sup>1226</sup>UWA, D196, box 1, FIA Records, Copy of letter addressed to 'Mrs [...]', from Secretary, Organising Committee, 19/6/1947.

fund-raising role.<sup>1227</sup> The WWF Women's Committee was formed in November 1954, when forty five women attended the inaugural meeting to establish a committee whose main purpose was to 'distribute the food' to needy families of waterside workers on strike. The women also held a film night to assist with fund raising for the purchase of food.<sup>1228</sup>

While not the first women's auxiliary, the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries are amongst the best known of these auxiliaries.<sup>1229</sup> They belonged to a network of groups which offered women a public role within the limits of the existing sexual division of labour and the social assumptions of the period. In the late 1950s, Norman MacKenzie noted in his research how the majority of women participating in community activities belonged to 'sex-segregated bodies' or 'ladies' auxiliaries', which often represented an extension of their familial role.<sup>1230</sup> This kind of women's participation was evident in Wollongong. During the Second World War, for instance, many women's organisations came to the fore offering the familial skills learnt as wives and mothers. In 1942, a Wollongong 'Onlooker' complained during a procession about the number of women's organisations:

I was struck by the many and varied women's organisations. I wondered if so many were necessary and if, in the event of an emergency, there would not be a lot of confusion and probably a lot of duplication of work.<sup>1231</sup>

<sup>1227</sup>UWA, D196, box 1, FIA Records, (i) Letter to the executive of women's auxiliary, from South Coast District and Port Kembla Branch Secretary, 6/11/1947, and (ii) Letter sent to Secretaries of Ironworkers' Social Club and Ironworkers' Women's Auxiliary, from Secretary, FIA, 21/10/1947.

<sup>1228</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 11/11/1954, 3.

<sup>1229</sup>The first women's auxiliaries were associated with the Australian Railways Union. See A. Fulton, 'Kerosene Tins, Cakes, and Communists - The Women's Auxiliary Movement of the Australian Railways Union in New South Wales between 1934 and 1938', BA Honours Thesis, Australian National University, 1988.

<sup>1230</sup>N. MacKenzie, *Women in Australia*, F.W. Cheshire, Canberra, 1962, 292 and 320.

<sup>1231</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 30/1/1942.

But it is unlikely the women concerned regarded the groups as duplicating one another. Dolly Potter said many of the women were in both the Guilds, Auxiliaries and various other groups. The functions of these groups were distinct, yet sometimes for particular causes they joined forces.<sup>1232</sup>

Importantly, working-class women's organisations sought to marry in practical ways their concerns as women and as working-class people. Wollongong's radical Housewives' Association was a case in point. Barbara Curthoys and Audrey McDonald note how the Wollongong branch of the NSW Housewives' Association was expelled from its parent branch in 1940, due to the influence of CPA members. This contradicted the NSW Housewives' Association's eligibility criteria, which stated that members could not belong to 'a Communist, Fascist, Nazi or any other organisation opposed to the British Empire'.<sup>1233</sup> After the expulsion, Wollongong women gathered together to form a Democratic Housewives' Association. Mrs Curnuck said the Association 'was determined to work in the interests of all', but 'particularly the working class'. She said they 'were vitally concerned with the price of goods rather than one's political beliefs'. Although the parent body emphasised the need for patriotism and loyalty, Curnuck argued 'the most patriotic thing we can do is to see that the working man has enough to eat'.<sup>1234</sup> The controlling of prices was pursued continually throughout this period and attracted support from groups like the IT&LC.<sup>1235</sup>

Women's groups prospered throughout this period. In 1954, at the instigation of the Southern District Miners' Federation, a wide range of

<sup>1232</sup>Interview with Dolly Potter and Sally Bowen, 29/1/1996.

<sup>1233</sup>Curthoys and McDonald, 2. See also P. Ranald, 'Women's Organisations and the Issue of Communism', in A. Curthoys, and J. Merritt, (eds) *Better Dead Than Red, Australia's First Cold War: 1945-1952*, Volume 2, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1986, 41. Ranald notes how particularly in the postwar period the issue of communism created tensions within women's organisations.

<sup>1234</sup>*South Coast Times*, 12/4/1940.

<sup>1235</sup>UWA, D169, series 1 box 1, SCLC Records, Minutes, 3/11/1948 and 17/11/1948, where the New Housewives Association raised the issue of price control. See Curthoys and McDonald, chapter 1, for an explanation of the various Housewives Associations of this period.

women's groups accepted an invitation to attend a Coalfields Women's Conference. Among the 30 delegates there were groups like the R.S.L. Auxiliary, the P and C, the Hospital Auxiliary and the Co-operative Women's Guild. The main purpose of the conference was to 'draw up a programme dealing with amenities, education and similar matters'.<sup>1236</sup> Chair Dolly Potter 'ably led' the conference, at which a wide range of issues were discussed. A call was made for the old age, invalid and widows' pensions to be increased, 'to permit a proper living standard for those unable to work'. The high cost of contributions for medical schemes was criticised and the schemes were charged with being 'unsatisfactory'. A request was made for the installation of sewerage in all areas of the Illawarra district, as well as for footpaths, 'public toilets for ladies', and more sporting facilities for young people. The meeting also directed its call for world disarmament to the United Nations Organisation.<sup>1237</sup> These women were not only concerned with issues that affected them in their day to day lives, but also had the foresight and conviction to react to national and international issues.

The voices of women were heard in this period because they raised issues mainly under the umbrella of women, family and children; however, their actions probably had an unexpected consequence. According to Sally Bowen, groups like the auxiliary 'played a role in making the women more politically aware'.<sup>1238</sup> They spoke passionately on issues of genuine concern to women of this period. Certainly, it was a time in which conservative views of women reigned, but it was also a time when challenges were made against these views, even if in keeping with the sexual division of labour that existed at the time. In playing this role, women did see themselves as part of the struggle - for working-class women and men. This was of course

<sup>1236</sup>*Illawarra Mercury*, 3/7/1954, 5.

<sup>1237</sup>UWA, D20/2/3, Miners' Women's Auxiliaries, Corrimal-South Bulli Women's Auxiliary-Press Clippings 1960-1973, *South Coast Times*, 15/7/1954.

<sup>1238</sup>UWA, Oral History T3, Miners' Women Auxiliaries: Mesdames Bowen, Kaye, Martin and Wilson, Interviewed by Baiba Irving, 11/2/1974.

not without tensions. Dolly Potter became enraged during a dispute, when a representative from the Miners' Federation said 'We want the women behind us'. She remembers: 'I stood up and I said "We're not behind you, nor in front, we're going to be beside you."<sup>1239</sup> Her sense of social morality was informed by a working-class feminism that recognised certain divisions between men and women, but at the same time sought unity between the two.

The Miners' Women's Auxiliary is still active in the Illawarra and meets regularly, although its function and purpose have been transformed. By 1952, the National Council of the Auxiliaries had 'ceased to function' and had 'no plan to re-establish'. Existing auxiliaries were noticeably 'small in number', with many of their functions and policies being covered by the UAW, to which the auxiliaries were affiliated. In 1954 four auxiliaries existed in the Northern coalfields and two covered the South Coast.<sup>1240</sup> This decline was just beginning through the 1950s, but it accelerated into the 1960s and after. Curthoys and McDonald comment on how membership of various women's groups diminished in the 1960s and 1970s. Changes in paid work and greater participation by women meant that increasingly fewer women contributed to organisations like the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries to the extent that they had previously.<sup>1241</sup> Married women's efforts in the period between 1921 and 1954 depended on their relative exclusion from paid work, and this was beginning to change.

The fulfilment of one's social morality occurred along gendered lines in formal and institutionalised ways. Working-class women were authorities on managing the family budgets and caring for children, and

<sup>1239</sup>Interview with Dolly Potter and Sally Bowen, 29/1/1996.

<sup>1240</sup>UWA, D20/2/2, South Coast Miners' Women's Auxiliaries, Letter from Noreen Hewett, Miners Federation, Sydney, to 'Joyce', 29/10/1952.

<sup>1241</sup>Curthoys and McDonald, chapter 13.

this authority enabled them to maintain links between family and community in a broad sense. Their active role in both the Co-operative Societies and the Women's Auxiliaries confirmed that the existence of a marked sexual division of labour allowed them to make public statements on issues of which men had little knowledge. In contrast, the Friendly Societies offered little if any scope for women's participation, since their place in the community was forged through paid work, and in Wollongong this meant limited participation by women.

Ironically, in the 1960s and 1970s, the realisation of greater opportunities for married women in paid work undermined organisations like the Women's Co-operative Guilds and the Women's Auxiliaries.<sup>1242</sup> The task of supplementing men's organisations with women's groups offering much needed aid and support was soon scorned by a new wave of feminists. Women's Liberation adopted a different political agenda and attacked the kind of volunteer work that was central to the Guilds and Auxiliaries. They argued that their methods were more sophisticated and more capable of furthering the cause of women.

Rhetoric employing the notions of co-operation, mutuality, community and moral obligation has become common place amongst governments of late twentieth century capitalist societies. The shift to the community has now become a justification for downgrading of public services, state welfare provisions and institutional care.<sup>1243</sup> Although community was central to the working-class people of Wollongong, its present usage is the antithesis of what working-class people strove for in earlier decades.

<sup>1242</sup>The demise or transformation of these women's groups perhaps also indicates some tentative answers to Cora Baldock's speculations about 'what would happen to women's incentive to take up volunteer work as a regular, dependable work activity if truly equal opportunities for women existed in the paid labour market, and if the structural and ideological divisions between 'home-makers' and 'breadwinners' were eradicated.' See Baldock in Baldock and Cass, 291.

<sup>1243</sup>See Jordan, 156. He suggests that it is women who will be the biggest losers with this usurpation of the notion of community.

*Conclusion*

In late 1954, Mr Heffron, the Minister for Education, visited the Illawarra to open the Wollongong Secondary Junior Technical School. A visitor from outside the Wollongong community, he nevertheless spoke with authority about the progress of the Illawarra region, and in particular its industrial might. 'Nowhere else in the Commonwealth', he said had there been 'such fabulous developments as on the South Coast'. He concluded by noting how Wollongong 'is becoming one of the industrial giants of the world'.<sup>1244</sup> By 1954, the Illawarra was clearly a long way removed from its farming heritage of the late nineteenth century, and it had advanced considerably since the 1920s and 1930s, when working-class people struggled under the burdens of unemployment and intermittent work. The 'Positions Vacant' section in local newspapers reflected the progress and prosperity present in the region at this time. The Sydney Water Board advertised: 'Men Wanted Wollongong District'. Underground employees were required also at Nebo, Bulli, Mt Keira and Mt Kembla Collieries, and, underlining the high demand for labour, the advertisement emphasised that no previous experience in the mining industry was required.<sup>1245</sup>

In describing thriving industry and a scarcity of labour, these advertisements reflected a change in Wollongong from 1921 to 1954, by which time unemployment and intermittency had become things of the past. Conversely, they also highlighted continuity. In 1954, in the main,

---

<sup>1244</sup> *Illawarra Mercury*, 12/11/1954, 1.

<sup>1245</sup> *Illawarra Mercury*, 13/3/1954, 11.

paid work still remained the preserve of men, and furthermore, booming economic conditions made certain that they were more secure in their role as breadwinners than ever before. Working-class women maintained their association with the home and family, and their links with it were reaffirmed because of men's more secure relationship with paid work.

This study has sought to capture the lived experience of both working-class men and women, who, despite that enduring division between paid work and the family, were together at the heart of industrial expansion in Wollongong between 1921 and 1954. It has specifically examined how class and gender shaped the experience of these men and women, and in so doing concentrated on the aspects of paid work, family and community. Accounting for social structure and individual agency was essential in this investigation, because as Chapter One argued, analyses without this in mind often conceive the operation of class and gender in simplistic ways.

That the choices and actions of individuals were always influenced by social structures was the key to illuminating the complexity of class and gender relations in Part Two of the thesis. With a focus on paid work, its four chapters confirmed how the organisation of paid work was heavily influenced by gender, but also how paid work simultaneously directed and shaped the social assumptions that people held about gender. Men's relations to trade unions, political parties, strikes, and women workers, were fashioned during a lifetime experience of paid work. This phenomenon contrasted significantly with the female experience in which paid work represented only a brief interlude in the women's lives. The distinctive industries in the Illawarra, and the strong sexual divisions and sex-segregation that characterised them further, cultivated a divide between men and women.

Women's brief experience of paid work meant, throughout this period, that women's domain was the family. Domestic labour, caring for

children, budgeting the family economy and fortifying their men were the central tasks of women. The expertise and ingenuity developed amongst working-class women in this sphere was extended, however, into other areas. Some leisure pursuits, and community activities in organisations like the Co-operative Society and the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries, benefited from women's contributions bridging the gaps between paid work and family, whilst allowing women scope for public participation in ways that were not possible in areas like trade unions and political parties. The nature of industry and paid work determined that these were the exclusive domain of men.

Depression and war were events that had an overwhelming influence not only on working-class men's and women's reactions and views of the society in which they lived, but also on men's and women's relations with each other. Depression and war affected deeply men's expectations of a life-time in paid work. The Depression meant a temporary fracturing of their hopes and desires in this regard, and for most working-class men in Wollongong war meant only further compromises in paid work. In the post-war years, with a fear of the past close at hand and a gradual return of economic prosperity, men set about restoring their links with paid work, eager to ensure that there was no trace of the instability that had dominated previous decades. Depression and war were equally significant experiences for working-class women, but they did not rupture their lives in the same way or to nearly the same extent as those of men. Family often remained the only centre of certainty and security in these years (in both real and imagined ways), and although this was not without its pressures, women did not encounter the dislocation that men experienced with respect to paid work. These events demanded that working-class women employ their resources in the family economy smartly and creatively. Managing the family was a skill that many working-class women developed, and for this reason the problems created through

Depression and war often allowed women a more vocal presence in the community on related issues. Similarly, women were often key protagonists in public debate during the Depression, demanding paid work for their husbands and sons. For working-class women these claims correlated strongly with justice for the family as a whole. The Depression and Second World War coloured the lives of both working-class men and women in Wollongong, just as they themselves coloured the Depression and war.

Between 1921 and 1954, men were the sole breadwinners for the family. While working-class men and women accepted a marked division in family responsibility and wholeheartedly enforced it widely in a variety of ways, the divide suggested by men's and women's very different contributions to life could not, and in most cases did not, persist absolutely in practice. The sheer disparity of their daily experiences necessitated that links of varying degrees were forged between working-class men and women in order to preserve their relationships. Social and leisure activities particularly provided an arena where relations between the different genders were closer. After working long hard days in the mines or steelworks, men were incapable of sustaining the stamina necessary for surviving in the home. Women supplied the support and sustenance essential for men to maintain their capacity for paid work, and in turn men provided a wage for the family. To this end, the working-class men and women in Wollongong between 1921 and 1954 almost always had a common purpose. While this shared purpose often involved tensions and negotiations of the most complex kind, in the majority of cases both working-class men and women persisted, understanding that together they were better able to 'get a living'.<sup>1246</sup>

<sup>1246</sup>Interview with Dolly Potter and Sally Bowen, 29/1/1996.

A history revealing that relations between working-class men and women were as much about working together as about divisions is theoretically significant in a number of ways. It contributes to debates around class and gender, adds to those analyses concerned with social structure and agency, and finally augments the historical materialist project.

Feminists interested in writing gender-only history may question this study's feminist credentials. On the other hand, historians focused exclusively on class may also dismiss it, disputing its commitment to class analysis. When seeking to demonstrate how class and gender shape our experiences simultaneously, one encounters the divide that has traditionally structured the thoughts of theorists strictly focused on either class or gender. Both categories, class and gender, appear displaced with neither emphasised continuously, and this is disturbing, disrupting the neat and fixed theoretical frameworks that both class and gender theorists have at times favoured. Instead, this interpretation allows for an account of men's and women's lives in the working class that is more in keeping with their practical experiences.

Immutable theoretical frameworks are, however, incompatible with an analysis striving to encompass simultaneously an understanding of the social structure and of the individual. I have investigated Depression and war experiences and how these influenced people's life choices, in both economic and personal ways. Similarly, I have explored the ways the sexual division of labour shaped and was shaped by the decisions of both men and women, in paid work and in their families.

By disrupting analyses that view gender and class as operating separately, and by including a perspective that incorporates both social structure and individual agency (and their mutual relationship), this study advances the task of writing materialist history, which in turn urges scholars to ask questions constantly about evidence and about the ways in which people live their lives in particular places and periods. Marking



structure and agency and a sense of historicity as the hallmarks of historical materialism means that I have resisted the many qualifications or specific points that have often been used in furthering the historical materialist project. Such qualifications have only disabled the project unnecessarily, resulting in the erroneous claim that it is inflexible and monolithic. I have reconstructed historical materialism in this way to show that it is capable of the many things its critics accuse it of not being able to achieve (it does incorporate flexibility and heterogeneity). This is a "political" strategy essential to the present moment, not presupposing in ahistorical ways the history of an individual's life unattached to the social and economic circumstances of their time.<sup>1247</sup>

The approach adopted in this study also has wider theoretical implications, applicable to intellectual debates amongst scholars generally. It challenges the idea that the only history that can now be written is a postmodern one, and re-orientes readers to the useful aspects of the historical materialist project, allowing them to assess critically the claim that historical materialism is moribund with nothing of any substance to contribute to historical and sociological scholarship. Historical materialism is invaluable for explaining history and society, having most meaning for those scholars of history and sociology who are interested in the social condition, and in issues of social change. An historical materialist approach does not lead to the validation of one truth over another; on the contrary, a history of this kind reveals the many contradictions, tensions, and challenges that individuals confront and negotiate in their endeavours to seek out an existence and live their lives as best they can. It is in the nexus of the social structure and the individual that life experience can be best understood. Finally it is an approach to reading society that does not stifle debate, but urges scholars to move beyond orthodoxies which have become the *haute couture* of academic discourse.

<sup>1247</sup>Palmer's views have been important in forming my opinions and directions on this point. See Palmer, 133-162.

There are, of course, limitations to this dissertation and areas deserving of further research. My study has examined working-class organisations with a presence in the Illawarra community, such as the Co-operative Society and the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries. Additional insights into the working-class experience, however, might have been provided by examining working-class peoples' involvement in organisations not commonly or exclusively associated with working-class people, such as: churches, the Returned Services League, the Country Women's Association, and even the Scouts and Girls Guides. An exploration of working-class activities in these organisations might add another dimension to understanding the complexity of class relations, and help counter fixed and immutable conceptions of class.

The quality and quantity of evidence in some parts of the study proved another limitation. This was most noticeable when discussing women's experience of paid work. Although that experience was brief for working-class women in Wollongong, this seemed to be closely connected with the dynamics of the working-class family, and therefore deserving of closer examination. The brevity of their paid work experience helped strengthen and reinforce the view that men were the providers for the family, and this had important consequences when men were on strike, married men's jobs were under threat from single men, and in determining men's contribution in the home and in family life generally. Interviews with women specifically addressing this issue may provide more insights into working-class women's views on labour relations and how these experiences might have shaped their family life.

Similarly, evidence on family life was not as plentiful or as rich in detail as was the evidence about paid work. Written documents used to discuss the history and sociology of working-class families were often inadequate, not offering the intimate details of the daily experiences of working-class people in families. The research for this study nevertheless

revealed clearly the interconnectedness of family and paid work, and further studies could explore this. The thesis illuminated the way men's preoccupation with paid work was intrinsic to family life in a way that has often been overlooked or considerably undervalued, and a further research direction might be a more concentrated focus on men in respect to family life.

There are a number of benefits or implications of a practical nature arising from this study. History is very much about politics and power, and while it entails observing and explaining social change in the past, it also involves driving social change in the present based on observations and explanations of the past. It is possible to do this on a number of levels with this study.

First, with respect to Wollongong and its people. By portraying the struggles of ordinary people, this study provides working-class people with insights into their own history. It demonstrates that the toil of working-class people is instrumental to Wollongong as a place, and to the industries it has attracted in the twentieth century. Analysing the history of Wollongong's large working-class population with a focus on class and gender can also assist local government and welfare agencies and the Wollongong community to understand the problems associated with unemployment and family life. Evolution in technology over recent decades has seen the bond between men and paid work (in the steelworks and mining) once again fractured as it was during the Depression. This dramatic decline in job opportunities for men further destabilises the notion that men are the family's breadwinners, and as a result creates social tensions in the family and community. In this context an understanding of the past can help us to perceive how a crisis in masculinity has a structural component. Similarly, an understanding of working-class history in Wollongong, and of the strong sexual division of labour that has persisted in the paid workforce, family and community, provides some explanation

of women's limited positions in trade unions and the Labour Council, and their failure to win pre-selection in labour strongholds.

Beyond Wollongong, this study also has implications for governments and policy makers interested in exploring the relationship between families and paid work, and in incorporating such knowledge into constructive policy initiatives. Comprehending these links is crucial and allows policy makers to shape paid work in ways that are more in harmony with family life. It is even more important to acknowledge that shaping policy on either paid work or family in isolation from the other is detrimental to both men and women and to both spheres. Between 1921 and 1954 such policy approaches were possible only because of a strong sexual division of labour, where men spent a life-time in paid work and women spent a life-time in the home, caring for the family. The changes of recent decades, with many more women now embarking on paid work for a life-time, guarantee that this approach is no longer feasible.

Expansion of industry in Wollongong was a unifying theme of the period between 1921 and 1954. Writing the story of the men and women responsible for such development is one small way to pay tribute to the ordinary people in this extraordinary tale. It also challenges those feminist and labour historians who continue to insist on polarising the concepts of class and gender in destructive ways. Finally, it highlights the need always to attend to questions of class and gender simultaneously, and most importantly to include both the individual and the social structure in our analysis. As Pat Brewer so rightly says when questioning those who reduce gender differences to biology:

if women's subordinate status in society is a result of men's and women's basic nature, why struggle to change it?<sup>1248</sup>

The working-class men and women of Wollongong between 1921 and 1954 always thought change was possible, and, although hampered by differences and sharp divisions, this aim was constantly evident in their struggles together.

---

<sup>1248</sup>Brewer, 8.

## *Bibliography*

### PRIMARY SOURCES

#### *Government Publications*

Commonwealth Census of Australia, 1921, 1933, 1947, 1954  
Commonwealth Census of Australia - Statisticians Report

#### *Archive Records*

##### (i) BHP Archives

Australian Iron and Steel Ltd, Port Kembla, W002  
Correspondence Department, D009  
Press Clippings, M092

##### (ii) Mitchell Library

Communist Party of Australia, ML MSS 5021  
Communist Party of Australia, ML MSS 5021 ADD ON 1936

##### (iii) New South Wales State Archives

Chief Secretary's Correspondence, various  
Attorney General's, File 7/809

(iv) Noel Butlin Archives of Business and Labour

Australian Coal and Shale Employees Federation  
(Central Council and Districts), E165  
Australian Coal and Shale Employees Federation  
(Southern District, NSW), T31  
Harris, W.J.H., P43  
Normington-Rawling, J., N57

(v) University of Wollongong Archives

Federated Ironworkers' Association, D196  
Grand United Order of Oddfellows Miners' Friend Lodge, D9  
May Day Committee, D22  
May Day Pamphlets, C23  
Miners' Women's Auxiliaries, D20  
Mount Kembla ALP Branch, D126  
Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, D51  
South Coast Labour Council, D169

*Newspapers, Journals and Serials*

BHP Review  
The Bulletin  
Common Cause  
Illawarra Mercury  
The Ironworker  
Labor News  
South Coast Times  
Workers' Weekly

*Oral Sources*

(i) Taped Interviews Conducted By Author

Arrowsmith, Irene 22/4/1996  
Arrowsmith, Neville 22/4/1996  
Bowen, Sally 29/1/1996  
Critchler, Bill 26/2/1996  
Critchler, Lilly 26/2/1996  
Dowdell, Allan 21/2/1996  
Dowdell, Maureen 21/2/1996  
Hammond, George, 30/1/1996  
Hogan, Matt 22/2/1996  
Martin, Norman, 31/1/1996  
Moore, Fred 29/2/1996  
Potter, Dolly 29/1/1996  
Rodgers, Maud 30/1/1996  
Shephard, Jack 1/2/1996  
Steinke, Carmalita 25/8/1994

(ii) Other Taped Interviews

Bowen, Sally and others- Wollongong in the Depression (UWA), T7  
Children in Wartime Wollongong Collection, (UWA), B23  
-Collard, Gladys (tape number D152/8)  
-Heininger, Dulcie (tape number D152/14)  
-Heininger, Joseph (tape number D152/5)  
-O'Donnell, Fay Elizabeth (tape number D152/7)  
Frame, Bill and Arrowsmith, Ted by Dr Tom Sheridan, (UWA), B17  
Martin, (Mr and Mrs) by Shirley Nixon, 19/4/1984, (UWA), B85

Merletto, Melva (UWA), B30

Miners Women's Auxiliaries: Mesdames Bowen, Kaye, Martin and  
Wilson, (UWA), T3

(iii) Other Published Interviews/Reminiscences

Davis, W. (ed.) Dapto Oral History: The Third Volume, n.d.

Davis, W. (ed.) Our Memories- Your History: An Oral History of Port  
Kembla, NSW Department of TAFE Outreach Class, n.d

Davis, W. (ed.) West of the Water East of the Line: Dapto, An Oral  
History, NSW Department of Technical and Further Education,  
n.d.

Voice of the Seniors: The First Seven Years. (August 1989 to May 1996).  
Wollongong City Council, Wollongong, 1997.

*Visual Sources*

Blackley Family

Wollongong City Library and Illawarra Historical Society

## SECONDARY SOURCES

### *Computer Sources*

H-Net New Zealand and Australian Discussion List

### *Journal Articles*

Alexander, S. 'Women, Class and Sexual Differences in the 1830s and 1840s:  
Some Reflections on the Writing of a Feminist History', History  
Workshop Journal, issue 17, Spring, 1984, 125-149.

Bock, G. 'Women's History and Gender History: Aspects of an International  
Debate', Gender and History, vol. 1, no. 1, Spring 1989, 7-30.

Bradbury, B. 'Women's History and Working-Class History', Labour/Le  
Travail, no.19, Spring 1987, 23-43.

Brewer, P. 'The Rise of Right-Wing Feminism', Links, no.7, July-October  
1996, 5-24.

Broom, D. et.al. 'Off Cue: Women Who Play Pool', Australian and New  
Zealand Journal of Sociology, vol. 28, no. 2, August 1992, 175-191.

Bythell, D. 'Class, Community, and Culture - The Case of the Brass Band in  
Newcastle', Labour History, no. 67, November 1994, 145-155.

Chipman, L. 'Wollongong - "Fair city of the South": The Town that  
Norman Gunston Can't Close Down', Quadrant, no. 122, vol. xxi, no. 9,  
September 1977, 33-35.

Curthoys, A. 'Feminism and the Classes: A Reply to Alison Ravencroft',  
Arena, no.64, 1983, 150-257.

Curthoys, A. 'Gender, Ethnicity and Australian History', Museum National,  
vol. 4, no. 1, August 1995, 14-16.

Curthoys, A. 'Identity Crisis: Colonialism, Nation, and Gender in Australian History', Gender and History, vol. 5, no. 2, Summer, 1993, 165-173.

Curthoys, A. 'Labour History and Cultural Studies', Labour History, no. 67, November 1994, 12-22.

Curthoys, A. 'The Three Body Problem: Feminism and Chaos Theory', Hecate, vol. 17, no. 1, 1991, 14-21.

Curthoys, B. 'The Communist Party and the Communist International (1927-1929)', Labour History, no. 64, May 1993, 54-69.

de Lauretis, T. 'Eccentric Subjects: Feminist Theory and Historical Consciousness', Feminist Studies, vol. 16, no. 1, Spring 1990, 115-150.

Dempsey, K. 'Women's Leisure, Men's Leisure: A Study in Subordination and Exploitation', Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology, vol. 25, no. 1, May 1989, 27-45.

Editorial Collective, 'Why Gender and History?', Gender and History, vol. 1, no. 1, Spring 1989, 1-6.

Eklund, E. 'We are of Age': Class, Locality and Region at Port Kembla, 1900-1940, Labour History, no.66, May 1994 (b), 72-89.

Faue, E. 'The Dynamo of Change': Gender and Solidarity in the American Labour Movement of the 1930s', Gender and History, vol.1, no.2, Summer 1989, 138-158.

Flax, J. 'Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory', Signs, vol.12, no.4, Summer 1987, 621-643.

Frader, L.L. 'Dissent Over Discourse: Labor History, Gender and the Linguistic Turn', History and Theory, vol. 34, no. 3, 1995, 213-230.

Frances, R. and Scates, B. 'Review Article: Is Labour History Dead?', Australian Historical Studies, vol. 25, no. 100, April 1993, 470-481.

Glickman, L. 'Books Reviewed', Labor History, vol. 34, no. 2-3, Spring-Summer, 1993, 387-389.

Gollan, R. 'Labour History', Labour History, no. 1, January 1962, 3-5.

Hagan, J. and Fisher, C. 'Piece Work and Some of its Consequences in the Printing and Coal Mining Industries in Australia 1850-1930', Labour History, no. 25, November 1963, 19-39.

Hearn, J. 'Research on Men and Masculinities: Some Sociological Issues and Possibilities', Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology, vol. 30, no. 1, April 1994, 47-70.

Hoff, J. 'Gender as a Postmodern Category of Paralysis', Women's History Review, vol. 3, no. 2, 1994, 149-168.

Johnson, C. 'The Communist Party and Labour Unity, 1939-1945', Labour History, no.40, May 1981, 77-92.

Johnson, P. 'More on the Socialism in Socialist Feminism: A Response to Pringle', Australian Feminist Studies, no. 7 & 8, Summer, 1988, 179-191.

Kessler-Harris, A. 'Treating the Male as "Other": Redefining the Parameters of Labor History', Labor History, vol. 34, no. 2-3, Spring-Summer, 1993, 190-204.

Korff, G. 'History of Symbols as Social History?: Ten Preliminary Notes on the Image and Sign Systems of Social Movements in Germany', International Review of Social History, 38, Supplement, 1993, 105-125.

Lake, M. 'Women, Gender and History', Australian Feminist Studies, no. 7 and 8, Summer 1988. 1-9.

Laurent, J. 'Bourgeois Expectations and Working Class Realities: Science and Politics in Sydney's School of Arts', Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, vol. 75, part 1, June 1989, 33-50.

Legault, L. 'Review Essay - Gender in History: The New History of Masculinity', Histoire Sociale/Social History, vol. XXVII, no. 54, November 1994, 457-469.

Markey, R. 'New South Wales Trade Unions and the 'Co-operative Principle' in the 1890s', Labour History, no. 49, November 1985, 51-60.

Markus, A. 'Labor and Immigration: Policy Formation 1943-5', Labour History, no.46, May 1984, 21-33.

Masters, R. "'And I woke, and found me here on the cold hill side": Rugby League and the Decline of Working Class Culture', Meanjin, vol. 54, no. 3, 1995, 397-409.

Matthews, J.J. 'Doing Theory or Using Theory: Australian Feminist/Women's History in the 1990s', Australian Historical Studies, vol. 27, no. 106, April 1996, 49-58.

Merritt, J.A. 'The Federated Ironworkers' Association in the Depression', Labour History, no. 21, November 1971, 48-61.

Mitchell, W. 'John Barnes Nicholson: New South Wales Miners' Labour Member 1891-1917', Labour History, no. 10, 1966, 13-19.

Nyland, C. and Svensen, S. 'The Battle of Bombo - Besetting Laws and the Right to Picket in New South Wales', Australian Journal of Labour Law, vol.8, 1995, 177-202.

Ola`barri, I. "'New" New History: A *Longue Duree`* Structure', History and Theory, vol. 34, no. 1, 1995, 1-29.

Palmer, B.D. 'Critical Theory, Historical Materialism, and the Ostensible End of Marxism: The Poverty of Theory Revisited', International Review of Social History, 38, 1993, 133-162.

Parsons, T.G. 'Labour, Rugby League and the Working Class - The St. George District Rugby League Football Club in the 1920s', Teaching History, vol. 12, Part 2, August 1978, 22-36.

Peel, M. 'Making a Place: Women in the 'Workers' City'', Australian Historical Studies, vol. 26, no. 102, April 1994, 19-38.

Pocock, B. 'Gender and Activism in Australian Unions', Journal of Industrial Relations, vol. 37, no. 3, September 1995, 377-400.

Price, R. 'The Future of British Labour History', International Review of Social History, XXXVI, 1991, 249-260.

Purvis, J. 'Women's History and Postructuralism', Women's History Review, vol. 5, no. 1, 1996, 5-7.

Quinlan, M. and Lever-Tracy, C. 'From Labour Market Exclusion to Industrial Solidarity: Australian Trade Union Responses to Asian Workers, 1830-1988', Cambridge Journal of Economics, vol. 14, 1990, 159-181.

Rose, S.O. 'Gender and Labor History: The Nineteenth Century Legacy', International Review of Social History, 38, Supplement, 1993, 145-162.

Saunders, K. and Evans, R. 'Visibility Problems: Concepts of Gender in Australian Historical Discourse', Australian Historical Studies, vol. 27, no. 106, April 1996, 142-153.

Segal, L. 'Reviews', Signs, vol.22, no. 4, Summer 1997, 1057-1061.

Sheridan, T. 'Aspects of Decision Making in a Monopoly: BHP and the 1945 Steel Strike', Australian Economic Review, vol. xxii, no.1, March 1982, 1-27.

Sheridan, T. 'Case Study in Complexity: The Origins of the 1945 Steel Strike in New South Wales', Labour History, no.41, November 1981, 87-109.

Sheridan, T. 'The 1945 Steel Strike: Trade Unions, the New Order and Mr Chifley', Labour History, no.42, May 1982, 1-26.

Sutherland, N. "'We always had things to do": The Paid and Unpaid Work of Anglophone Children Between the 1920s and the 1960s', Labour/Le Travail, 25, Spring 1990, 105-141.

Symons, B. 'All-Out for the People's War: Communist Soldiers in the Australian Army in the Second World War', Australian Historical Studies, vol. 26, no.105, October 1995, 596-614.

Tosh, J. 'What Should Historians do with Masculinity?: Reflections on Nineteenth-century Britain', History Workshop Journal, issue 38, Autumn 1994, 179-202.

Valverde, M. 'Postructuralist Gender Historians: Are We Those Names?', Labour/Le Travail, 25, Spring, 1990, 227-236.



- van Der Linden, M. 'Connecting Household History and Labour History', International Review of Social History, 38, Supplement, 1993, 163-173.
- Watson, I. 'Class Memory: An Alternative Approach to Class Identity', Labour History, no.67, November 1994, 23-41.
- West, C. and Fenstermaker, S. 'Doing Difference', Gender and Society, vol. 9, no.1, February 1995, 8-37.

#### Books

- Abrams, L. Workers' Culture in Imperial Germany: Leisure and Recreation in the Rhineland and Westphalia, Routledge, London, 1992.
- Albert, M. and Hahnel, R. Unorthodox Marxism, South End Press, Boston, 1978.
- Anderson, K. and Gale, F. (eds.) Inventing Places: Studies in Cultural Geography, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1992.
- Anderson, P. Considerations on Western Marxism, NLB, London, 1976.
- Anderson, P. In the Tracks of Historical Materialism, Verso, London, 1983.
- Australian Labor Party, (ed.) Traditions for Reform in New South Wales: Labor History Essays, Pluto Press, Leichhardt, 1987.
- Baldock, C.V. and Cass, B. (eds.) Women, Social Welfare and the State, second edition, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1988.
- Barbalet, M. Steel Beach, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1983.
- Baron, A. (ed.) Work Engendered: Towards a New History of American Labor, Cornwell University Press, New York, 1991.
- Barou, N. (ed.) The Co-operative Movement in Labour Britain, Fabian Society, London, 1948.
- Barrett, M. and McIntosh, M. The Anti-social Family, Verso, London, 1982.
- Beilharz, P. Transforming Labor: Labour Tradition and the Labour Decade, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1994.
- Bertone, S. and Griifin, G. Immigrant Workers and Trade Unions, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1992.
- Bevege, M. et.al. (eds.) Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1982.
- Blewett, M. Men, Women and Work: Class, Gender and Protest in the New England Shoe Industry, 1830-1920, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1988.
- Boehm, E.A. Twentieth Century Economic Development in Australia, third edition, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1993.
- Bott, E. Family and Social Network: Roles, Norms and External Relationships in Ordinary Urban Families, second edition, The Free Press, New York, 1971.
- Broomhill, R. Unemployed Workers: A Social History of the Great Depression in Adelaide, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1978.
- Brown, W.J. The Communist Movement and Australia, Australian Labor Movement History Publications, Haymarket, 1986.
- Bryson, L. Welfare and the State, Macmillan Press, London, 1992.
- Caine, B and Pringle, R. (eds.) Transitions: New Australian Feminisms, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1995.
- Carr, B. et.al. Bede Nairn and Labor History, Pluto Press in Association with the NSW ALP, Leichhardt, 1991.
- Carr, E.H. What is History?, second edition, Penguin, Ringwood, 1987.
- Cashman, R. and McKernan, M. (eds.) Sport in History, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1979.
- Clawson, M.A. Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1989.
- Cockburn, C. Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change, new edition, Pluto Press, London, 1991.

Cockburn, C. Women, Trade Unions and Political Parties, Fabian Research Series No. 349, Fabian Society, London, September 1987.

Collins, J. Migrant Hands in a Distant Land: Australia's Post-war Immigration, second edition, Pluto Press, Leichhardt, 1991.

Connell, R.W. Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1987.

Connell, R.W. Masculinities, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1995.

Cooksey, R. (ed.) The Great Depression in Australia, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Canberra, 1970.

Corris, P. Lords of the Rings, Cassell Australia, North Sydney, 1980.

Cousins, A. The Garden of New South Wales: A History of the Illawarra & Shoalhaven Districts 1770-1900, second edition, Illawarra Historical Society, Wollongong, 1994.

Cox, E. A Truly Civil Society, ABC Books, Sydney, 1995.

Crowley, F. (ed.) A New History of Australia, Heinemann Educational Australia, Melbourne, 1974.

Cumbler, J.T. Working-Class Community in Industrial America, Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 1979.

Curthoys, A. and Markus, A. (eds.) Who Are Our Enemies?: Racism and the Working Class in Australia, Hale and Iremonger in Association with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Neutral Bay, 1978.

Curthoys, A. and Merritt, J. (eds.) Better Dead Than Red. Australia's First Cold War: 1945-1959, Volume 2, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1986.

Curthoys, A. et.al., (eds.) Women at Work, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Canberra, 1975.

Curthoys, A. For and Against Feminism, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1988.

Curthoys, B. and McDonald, A. Mere Than a Hat and Glove Brigade: The Story of the Union of Australian Women, Bookpress, Sydney, 1996.

Damousi, J. and Lake, M. (eds.) Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1995.

Damousi, Women Come Rally, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1993.

Daniels, K. et.al. (eds.) Women in Australia: An Annotated Guide to Records, Volume 1, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1977.

Darian-Smith, K. and Hamilton, P. (eds.) Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994.

Davidson, A. The Communist Party of Australia: A Short History, Hoover University Press, Stanford, 1969.

Davis, M. City of Quartz, Vintage, London, 1992.

Deacon, D. Managing Gender: the State, the New Middle Class and Women Workers 1830-1930, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989.

Dennis, N. et.al. Coal is Our Life: An Analysis of a Yorkshire Mining Community, Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1956.

Deveson, A. Faces of Change, ABC/Fontana, Sydney, 1984.

Docker, J. Postmodernism and Popular Culture: A Cultural History, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1994.

Donaldson, M. Times of Our Lives, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1991.

Douglas, L. et.al. Oral History: A Handbook, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1988.

Dovers, S. (ed.) Illawarra Heritage, Environmental Heritage Committee, Wollongong, 1983.

Edwards, P.K. Conflicts at Work: A Materialist Analysis of Workplace Relations, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986.

Edwards, R. Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century, Basic Books, New York, 1979.

Elam, D. and Wiegman, R. (eds.) Feminism Beside Itself, Routledge, New York, 1995.

Fantasia, R. Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action and Contemporary American Workers, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988.

Faue, E. Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915 - 1945, The University of North Carolina, North Carolina, 1991.

Fink, L. In Search of the Working Class: Essays in American Labor History and Political Culture, University of Illinois, Urbana, 1994.

Frances, R. and Seates, B. Women, Work and the Labour Movement in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, (special issue of Labour History, no.61), Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Sydney, 1991.

Frances, R. The Politics of Work: Gender and Labour in Victoria, 1880-1939, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1993.

Freudenberg, G. Cause for Power: the Official History of the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Labor Party, Pluto Press, Leichhardt, 1991.

Game, A. and Pringle, R. Gender at Work, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1983.

German, L. Sex, Class and Socialism, Bookmarks, London, 1989.

Gibbs, A. and Warne, C. A Pictorial History: Wollongong, Kingsclear Books, Alexandria, 1995.

Gilding, M. The Making and Breaking of the Australian Family, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1991.

Gittins, D. The Family in Question: Changing Households & Familiar Ideologies, Macmillan, London, 1985.

Gollan, R. Revolutionaries and Reformists, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1975.

Gosden, P.H.J.H. Self Help: Voluntary Associations in 19th-Century Britain, Barnes and Noble Books, New York, 1974.

Green, D.G. and Cromwell, L.G. Mutual Aid or Welfare State: Australia's Friendly Societies, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1984.

Greenwood, G. Australia: A Social and Political History, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1955.

Grieve, N. and Burns, A. (eds.) Australian Women: Contemporary Feminist Thought, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994.

Grint, K. and Gill, R. (eds.) The Gender-Technology Relation: Contemporary Theory and Research, Taylor and Francis Ltd, London, 1995.

Hagan, J. and Turner, K. A History of the Labor Party in New South Wales, 1891-1991, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1991.

Hagan, J. and Wells, A. (eds.) A History of Wollongong, The University of Wollongong Press, University of Wollongong, 1997.

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. Sociology: Themes and Perspectives, third edition, Unwin Hyman, London, 1990.

Hareven, T. Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship Between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982.

Hill, S. Competition and Control at Work, Heinemann Educational Books, London, 1981.

Horne, D. The Lucky Country, second edition, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1965.

Hoskins, D.G. The Ironmaster: The Life of Charles Hoskins, University of Wollongong Press, North Wollongong, 1995.

Hughes, C.A. and Graham, B.D. Voting for the New South Wales Assembly, 1890-1964, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1975.

Hunt, L. (ed.) The New Cultural History, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989.

Illawarra Mutual Building Society Centenary, 1880-1980: A Tribute to Illawarra, Illawarra Mutual Building Society, Wollongong, 1980.

Irving, T. (ed.) Challenges to Labour History, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, Sydney, 1994.

Janson, S. and MacIntyre, S. (eds.) Making the Bicentenary, (special issue of Australian Historical Studies, vol. 23, no. 91, October), Australian Historical Studies, Melbourne 1988.

John, A. By the Sweat of their Brows: Women Workers in Victorian Coalmines, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1984.

John, A. Coalmining Women: Victorian Lives and Campaigns, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984.

Johnson, A. Bread and Roses, Left Book Club, Sutherland, 1990.

Jones, M. A. Housing and Poverty in Australia, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1972.

Jordan, B. The Common Good: Citizenship, Morality and Self-Interest, Basil Blackwell Ltd, Oxford, 1989.

Joyce, P. (ed.) The Historical Meanings of Work, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987.

Kewley, T.H. Social Security in Australia, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1965.

Kimmel, M.S. and Messner, (eds.) Men's Lives, second edition, Macmillan Publishing, New York, 1992.

Kingston, B. My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia, Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1975.

Krupinski, J. and Stoller, A. (eds.) The Family in Australia, second edition, Pergamon Press, Ruscutters Bay, 1978.

Kuhn, A. and Wolpe, A. (eds.) Feminism and Materialism, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1978.

Kuhn, R. and O'Lincoln, T. (eds.) Class and Class Conflict in Australia, Longman Australia, Melbourne, 1996.

Larrain, J. A Reconstruction of Historical materialism, Allen and Unwin, London, 1986.

Lee, M. and Sheldon, P. (eds.) Workplace Relations, Butterworths, Sydney, 1997.

Lever-Tracy, C. and Quinlan, M. A Divided Working Class: Ethnic Conflict in Australia, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1988.

Lloyd, A. Guide to Records of the South Coast Labour Council 1928-1987, University of Wollongong Archives, Wollongong, 1988.

Lockwood, R. War on the Waterfront: Menzies, Japan and the Pig-iron Dispute, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1987.

Louis, L.J. and Turner, I. (eds.) The Depression of the 1930s, Cassell Australia Ltd, Melbourne, 1968.

MacIntyre, S. Winners and Losers, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1985.

MacKenzie, N. Women in Australia, F.W. Cheshire, Canberra, 1962.

Martin, R.M. Trade Unions in Australia, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1975.

Matthews, J. Good and Mad Women Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1984.

McCalman, J. Struggletown: Public and Private Life in Richmond 1900-1965, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1984.

McMullin, R. The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991.

Meiksins Wood, E. Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995.

Mitchell, J. Women's Estate, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1971.

Mitchell, W. and Sherington, G. Growing Up in the Illawarra: A Social History 1843-1984, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, 1984.

Moore, A. The Mighty Bears!: A Social History of North Sydney Rugby League, Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 1996.

Morgan, D.H.J. Discovering Men, Routledge, London, 1992.

Morrissey, M. et al. Immigration and Industry Restructuring in the Illawarra, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1992.

- Murphy, J. and Smart, J. (eds.) The Forgotten Fifties, (special issue of Australian Historical Studies, vol.28, no. 109, October), Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1997.
- Murray, R. and White, K. The Ironworkers: A History of the Federated Ironworkers' Association of Australia, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1982.
- Nicholson, L. (ed.) Feminism and Postmodernism, Routledge, New York, 1990.
- Nielsen, J.M. (ed.) Feminist Research Methods: Exemplary Readings in the Social Sciences, Westview Press, Boulder, 1990.
- O'Brien, A. Poverty's Prison: The Poor in New South Wales 1880-1918, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1988.
- Oestreicher, R.J. Solidarity and Fragmentation: Working People and Class Consciousness in Detroit, 1875 -1900, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1986.
- Offen, K., Roach Pierson, R. and Rendall, J. (eds.) Writing Women's History: International Perspectives, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1991.
- Osbourne, G. and Mandle, W.F. (eds.) New History, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1982.
- Pahl, R.E. (ed.) On Work: Historical, Comparative and Theoretical Approaches, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1988.
- Parr, J. The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1990.
- Pateman, C. and Gross, E. (eds.) Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1986.
- Patmore, G. Australian Labour History, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1991.

- Peel, M. Good Times, Hard Times: the Past and the Future in Elizabeth, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1995.
- Piggin, S. and Lee, H. The Mt Kembla Disaster, Sydney University Press in Association with Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992.
- Reiger, K. Family Economy, McPhee Gribble, Ringwood, 1991.
- Richardson, L. The Bitter Years, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1984.
- Roberts, E. Women and Families: An Oral History, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1995.
- Robertson, B.M. Oral History Handbook, third edition, Oral History Association of Australia (South Australian Branch), Adelaide, 1994.
- Robinson, R. (ed.) Urban Illawarra, Sorrett Publishing, Melbourne, 1977.
- Robinson, R. Suburban Residential Expansion in the Illawarra Corridor, 1950-1970, Research Report to the State Planning Authority of NSW and the Illawarra Regional Development Committee, April 1972.
- Roper, M. and Tosh, J. (eds.) Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800, Routledge, London, 1991.
- Rose, S.O. Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England, University of California, Berkeley, 1992.
- Rosenzweig, R. Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983.
- Ross, E. A History of the Miners' Federation, Halstead, Sydney, 1970.
- Rubin, L.B. Worlds of Pain, Basic Books, New York, 1976.
- Ryan, E. and Conlon, A. Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1989.
- Samuel, R. (ed.) People's History and Socialist Theory, Routledge and Kegan, London, 1981.
- Samuel, R. Theatres of Memory, Volume 1: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture, Verso, London, 1994.

Saunders, K. and Evans, R. (eds.) Gender Relations in Australia, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sydney, 1992.

Schedvin, C.B. Australia and the Great Depression: A Study of Economic Development and Policy in the 1920s and 1930s, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1970.

Schultz, J. Steel City Blues, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1985.

Scott, J.W. Gender and the Politics of History, Columbia University Press, New York, 1988.

Secombe, W. A Millennium of Family Change: Feudalism to Capitalism in Northwestern Europe, Verso, London, 1992.

Segal, L. Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities. Changing Men, Virago Press, London, 1990.

Seidler, V. (ed.) The Achilles Heel Reader: Men, Sexual Politics and Socialism, Routledge, London, 1991.

Sennett, R. and Cobb, J. The Hidden Injuries of Class, Cambridge University Press, London, 1972.

Shapiro, A. (ed.) Feminist Revision History, Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 1994.

Sheridan, T. Division of Labour: Industrial Relations in the Chifley Years, 1945-1949, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989.

Shostak, A.B. and Gomberd, W. (eds.) Blue-Collar World: Studies of the American Worker, Prentice-Hall, London, 1965.

Solly, H. Working Men's Social Clubs and Educational Institutes, Garland Publishing, New York, 1980.

Spelman, E.V. Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought, Beacon Books, Boston, 1988.

Stevens, J. Talking the Revolution Home: Work Amongst Women in the Communist Party of Australia: 1820-1945, Sybylla Co-operative Press, Melbourne, 1987.

Strinati, D. An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture, Routledge, London, 1995.

Tester, K. Civil Society, Routledge, London, 1992.

Thompson, P. The Nature of Work: An Introduction to Debates in the Labour Process, Macmillan, London, 1983.

Thompson, P. The Voice of the Past, Oxford University Press, London, 1978.

Turbin, C. Working Women of Collar City: Gender, Class and Community in Troy, 1864-86, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1992.

Vogel, L. Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Towards a Unitary Theory, Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 1983.

Wheelwright, E.L. and Buckley, K. (eds.) Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism, Volume 1, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1975.

Whitelock, D. (ed.) Adult Education in Australia, Pergamon Press, Rushcutters Bay, 1970.

Williams, C. Open Cut, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1981.

Windschuttle, E. (ed.) Women, Class and History, Fontana Books, Melbourne, 1980.

Yeo, S. (ed.) New Views of Co-operation, Routledge, London, 1988.

Zampaglione, G. Italians in the Illawarra, Friends of the University of Wollongong Ltd, Wollongong, 1987.

Zinsser, J.P. History and Feminism: A Glass Half Full, Twayne Publishers, New York, 1993.

*Theses and Unpublished Papers*

- Blackley, L.L. 'Performing Poodles and Packhorses?': Women in the ALP, 1940s-1990s', BA Honours, University of Wollongong, 1994.
- Dingsdag, D.P. 'Responses to the Bulli Colliery Disaster of 1887, with Special Reference to the New South Wales Government and the Bulli Mining Company', BA Honours, University of Wollongong, 1980.
- Dingsdag, D.P. 'The Restructuring of the NSW Coalmining Industry, 1903-1982', PhD, University of Wollongong, 1988.
- Eklund, E. 'Putting into Port': Society, Identity and Politics at Port Kembla, 1900 to 1940', PhD, Sydney University, 1994 (a).
- Firth, B. 'The Industrialization of Wollongong with Special Reference to Australian Iron and Steel Proprietary, 1926-1976', PhD, Macquarie University, 1986.
- Fraser, D.S. 'An Investigation of the Response of the Coal-Mining Community of the Southern New South Wales to Adversity During a Period of Economic Depression Between 1893 and 1897, in an Endeavour to Ascertain How Unified that Community was and the Degree to which it Provided an Effective Industrial Force in Support of the Fledgling Political Labour Movement', BA Honours, University of Wollongong, 1994.
- Fulton, A. 'Kerosene Tins, Cakes, and Communists - The Women's Auxiliary Movement of the Australian Railways Union in New South Wales between 1934 and 1938', BA Honours, Australian National University, 1988.
- Gorton, C. 'Jobs for Women: Campaigning for Women's Rights to Work in the 1980s', BA Honours, University of Queensland, 1990.
- Lee, H.P. 'The Development of a Coal Trade in the Wollongong District of New South Wales, with Particular Reference to Government and Business, 1849-1889', PhD, University of Wollongong, 1993.
- Merritt, J. A. 'A History of the Federated Ironworkers' Association of Australia 1909-1952', PhD, Australian National University, 1967.
- Merritt, J. A. Address on labour history with Robin Gollan and Eric Fry for the ACT Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 7/12/1995.
- Mitchell, W. 'The Miners of Southern New South Wales: A History of the Union to 1896', MA, University of New England, 1964.
- Nixon, S. 'The Illawarra Trades and Labour Council in Depression, Recovery, and War. 1926-1945', BA Honours, University of Wollongong, 1984.
- Pender, B. 'The Illawarra Colliery Employees' Association and the Arbitration Court, 1900-1906: An Examination of Compulsory Arbitration', BA Honours, University of Wollongong, 1993.
- Richardson, L. 'The Labour Movement in Wollongong, New South Wales: 1928-39', PhD, Australian National University, 1974.