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Federation and Labour 1880-1914: National, State and Local Dimensions

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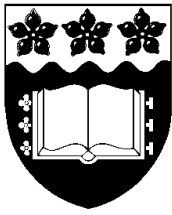**University of Wollongong**
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Introduction

We are accustomed to thinking of the labour movement in Australia as 'Australian' soon after the turn of the century, in the sense of having a national institutional base and political program. It has been argued traditionally that Australian nationalism was distinctive because of its working class base and radical democratic nature. As Stuart Macintyre argues elsewhere in this volume, the Australian Labor Party is the 'only party to have participated continuously in national politics since its inception'. Partly as a result, the Labor Party exerted a significant political influence upon the national political program after federation. It took the major initiative in the development of a political consensus based upon the 'three pillars' of white Australia, New Protection and compulsory state arbitration; a consensus which lasted until the 1980s.

However, there were important limitations to these generalisations concerning the relationship between federation, nationalism and the labour movement. In the first instance, the labour movement was unable to translate nationalist sentiment into a major influence on the terms of federation. As Macintyre notes, the labour movement was not represented at the Constitutional Conventions and actually campaigned against the undemocratic terms for federation until the final stages of the process. The labour movement also had to accept distinctively undemocratic features of the Commonwealth Constitution, notably the Governor-General's role and equal State representation in the Senate regardless of population.

Any perspective of labour nationalism must be qualified by the sub-national basis of much labour organisation and ideology. In 1901 trade unions and the ALP remained State-based organisations in which the main locus of activity was locality, based on working class communities which were often quite isolated from each other, and in which local loyalties were as important as, and largely constructed, those of nation, class, or party. The traditional accounts of federation, including those concerned with the role of labour, themselves have been largely a product of the nation state, by focusing upon the national institutional level in an almost Whiggish account of the unfolding of nationhood. However, politically and ideologically federation created a three-way interaction between locality, state and nation which was considerably more complex than recognised in traditional accounts of the creation of 'the nation'. Federation as a process inevitably involved a redefinition of space and place in Australia. This article, therefore, attempts to provide a greater spatial insight into federation by examining the importance of locality in labour thinking and organisation and how this related to labour nationalism. In so doing it relates to a

growing trend in labour history, which finds expression in this volume in the contributions of Patmore, Strachan and Taksa.[1]

This article begins with an examination of the nature of labour nationalism, and its limitations as a working class program or ideology. It then outlines the localised basis of the industrial and political organisation of the working class, and indicates the implications of a federated nation state apparatus for working life.

Labour Nationalism

The traditional interpretation of late nineteenth century Australian nationalism, which was particularly influenced by the 'old left' historians Bob Gollan and Russell Ward, has been unusual in its emphasis upon the radical political content of the colonial version of nationalism.[2] By way of international comparison at the time, the nearest equivalent in this regard, appears to be the 'liberal nationalism' of early nineteenth century Europe, characterised by Mazzini. However, according to the conventional view amongst European historians, this liberal nationalism was displaced by a more conservative and reactionary variant after the unification of Germany and Italy as nation states, and the European powers entered an era of competition as nationally-defined states from the 1880s.[3] Hobsbawm argues that there then occurred 'a sharp shift to the political right of nation and flag, for which the term "nationalism" was actually invented'.[4] Imperialist adventurism was one outcome from the major powers, and more generally, from that time nationalism has been associated with ethno-politics and the intrusion of the irrational into political discourse, with fascism as an extreme expression of this phenomenon. The mid to late twentieth century national liberation movements in former colonies (such as Vietnam) represent a significant but probably temporary exception under special circumstances.

What made Australian nationalism unique at the time according to Gollan and Ward was its working class base, and the class content of its ideology. This contrasts with the conventional European interpretation of nationalism as a rival of working class movements.[5] The close links between colonial and British ruling classes and the colonial role of British capital provided a strong basis for the link between Australian nationalism and the working class. In large part it also was based on the idealisation of Australia's New World status, where democratic institutions had taken firm hold, the rigid class distinctions of the Old (European) World had not taken root, and the opportunities for independence from wage labour appeared greater through small landholding, mining, or social mobility generally.[6] Idealisation of the national character, and of labour's contribution to it was common in radical literature. For example, John Norton wrote in the *History of Capital and Labour* that:

> Labour from the first marked Australia for its own. It is the country upon which the old European systems have had the least influence; as it is the country where the new institutions of modern democracy have taken the firmest hold in the national character and life of the people. It is moreover, a country the foundations and structures of whose constitutions were laid and built by labour, and it is the country where the whole fabric of society is being perfected by the same agency.[7]

There were two main political expressions of this labour nationalism. The first consisted of republican and anti-imperialist sentiments. The second main political expression of nationalism was racism, which achieved its fruition in the adoption of the white Australia policy through the Commonwealth Immigration Restriction Act (White Australia) of 1901.

Labour's republican nationalism emerged from the late 1880s. Prior to then, there were indications of working class support for republicanism in organisations such as the radical Democratic Alliance in Sydney, which attracted middle class and working class support and adopted a republican plank in its platform in 1884.[8] At the 1888 Intercolonial Trades Union Congress the 'Federated Republic of Australia' replaced the loyal toast as the object of three cheers.[9] In Victoria the *Commonweal*, organ of the Progressive Political League (forerunner of the Labor Party) declared in 1891 that federation was 'the first grand step towards the inevitable destiny of this great country, the establishment of an Australian Republic'. Two years later one Victorian Labor delegate to the Corowa federation conference also proclaimed that 'Australia was marching towards a republic'.[10] From 1891 the NSW Labour Electoral League Platform included 'federation upon a national as opposed to an imperialistic basis'. The strength of the AWU within the NSW Labor Party in the 1890s was a major contributor to this policy.[11] The republican form of nationalism was most stridently adhered to by the Amalgamated Shearers' Union (ASU), which became the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) in 1894. Its Wagga Wagga branch promoted 'the complete political independence of the united Australian Commonwealth on a basis of pure democratic Republicanism' throughout 1891-2. Its newspaper, *The Hummer*, adopted language very similar to the nationalist *Bulletin* in railing against the young Australian nation being 'chained to a corrupt and decaying corpse'.[12] In 1892 Arthur Rae, the secretary of the Wagga branch, and Labor member of parliament for the Riverina, distinguished himself as the only MP to oppose parliament's condolences to Queen Victoria on the death of her son, the Duke of Clarence.[13]

The perspective of class conflict was clearly intertwined with this manifestation of republican nationalism, particularly in the case of the AWU. Throughout the 1890s the AWU press condemned 'British bondholders', and 'English merchants and paupers who worship trade and money bags'.[14] British capital was especially prominent in the pastoral industry, which experienced bank foreclosures and direct management of pastoral properties in the depression of the 1890s, when industrial strife also reached record levels with the industry–wide strikes of 1891 and 1894. In this context the *Australian Workman* claimed that British capital lay behind the 1894 pastoral strike.[15]

Nevertheless, the class basis of support for this republican nationalism was ambiguous because the AWU provided the major support base for this policy strand within the labour movement. The nature of the AWU's membership was peculiar for a union, in that the largest single group of shearers and rouseabouts who formed the backbone of the AWU were small landholders and their sons. They accounted for 35% of the shearing workforce, concentrated in the more densely settled regions of the NSW Central and Eastern Divisions and Victoria. Itinerant landless bushworkers predominated in the west and in Queensland, where less fertile land meant larger more highly capitalised holdings. However, smallholders dominated the AWU

through the majority of its branches which were in the east, and because they were more likely than the itinerants to be present for branch meetings. Through the AWU's delivery of a significant proportion of rural seats, where a residency requirement limited the electoral impact of itinerants, this small landholding class also exerted considerable impact on Labor Party policy.[16]

There also were distinct limitations to working class republicanism in the late nineteenth century. At the foundation meeting of the Democratic Alliance in 1884 one speaker 'refused to cheer the Queen, and avowed himself a republican, earning for his pains a volley of groans and hisses and … barely escaping physical injury'.[17] Many unions, including the AWU, persisted in toasting the Queen at dinners in the 1880s and 1890s. Even in Wagga Wagga, Rae's action over the Duke of Clarence earned condemnation from a rowdy public meeting.[18] Although many workers may have harboured little sympathy for the monarchy, republicanism became largely a 'symbol of a progressive and enlightened society',[19] especially for socialists and single taxers, without being central to a political program for its achievement. This was indicated in the growth of socialist and labour political organisations in the 1890s as specifically republican organisations declined. No republican plank entered the Australian Labor Party's federal platform.

On the other hand, the racist expression of labour nationalism had deep roots in the working class and the organised labour movement since at least the 1850s. It figured prominently in the ALP's federal policy. The first plank of the federal ALP's Fighting Platform was also 'Maintenance of a White Australia'. Its first federal objective became

> The cultivation of an Australian sentiment based upon the maintenance of racial purity, and the development in Australia of an enlightened and self-reliant community.

In the importance of racism to it, labour nationalism in Australia was much more akin to the reactionary variant referred to by Hobsbawm. However, this racism was shared by European society within Australia generally, and it has been argued that by adopting this policy so prominently, the ALP broadened its electoral appeal.[20] It was also contradictory, in that by defining Australia in terms of a 'great nation of the white race',[21] nationalism assumed explicit links with Britain, and to an extent the USA. In fact, nationalists of this kind looked to Britain for assistance in defence of racial purity, and anti-imperialism often arose when Britain put strategic considerations ahead of racial brotherhood in its colonial and foreign policies.[22]

In this sense, the racist political expression of nationalism did not necessarily define one's political beliefs at the turn of the nineteenth century. Racial nationalism was a 'framing' device, 'a discourse which could make one's claim or asserted identity more comprehensible to other people. National identity did not dictate the content of the "frame of reference". People still could define themselves as opposed to other members of the same national state on the basis of political ideology, religion, or, most powerfully, class.'[23]

The Structure of Labour Organisation

Institutionally, the greatest impact of federation upon the labour movement was the creation of national union structures. Many unions sought registration as interstate organisations in the early 1900s in order to gain access to the perceived benefits of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court under the presidency of Justice Higgins. National unions developed quickly to total 95 in 1919, accounting for over 80% of all unionists.[24]

In 1895, William Guthrie Spence, the founding president of the ASU/AWU, claimed that 'in spirit' Labour was already federating as early as 1890, and

> socially such organisations as the AWU and AMA [Amalgamated Miners' Association] were doing even more than the politicians to extend the federal feeling and to help on the great movement that will eventually make Australia one great nation.[25]

However, the national level of organisation of the AWU reflected the special circumstances of an itinerant intercolonial workforce in the shearing industry. It is noteworthy also that the branch structure developed by the AWU initially did not follow strictly the colonial boundaries of the time, with up to six branches in NSW alone. Yet, these branches operated with a high degree of regional autonomy, handling recruitment, employing their own organisers, and sometimes negotiating local variations from the national standards in wage rates and conditions.[26]

Few other unions could claim a genuinely national basis of organisation in 1901. The main exception to this was the seagoing unions which quickly became intercolonial (national) bodies because of the nature of shipping. The Federated Seamen's Union became the first national union in 1876, although even then the colonial bodies remained the basis of organisation and retained a high degree of independence for long afterwards. The Federated Stewards and Cooks Union was organised on a similar basis to the Seamen. The Marine Engineers was perhaps the most centralised national union of the seagoing organisations, although even it operated through a strong colonial-based branch structure allowing considerable leeway to the branches which were also slow to surrender funds to head office.

The typical unions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were colony or state-based organisations, or even locality or workplace–based. The craft unions were a major case in point. Most had been formed as independent colonial organisations. Many skilled unions also had branches in major towns within the colony, virtually functioning as independent unions. This frequently occurred informally as a function of the state of transport and communications technology which did not yet facilitate regular meetings of representative union bodies, nor even regular contact between local and central officers. The NSW Typographical Association specifically gave country branches the option of operating independently and even of retaining their own funds. Some skilled unions had even more localised structures within a capital city; for example the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE) and Operative Stonemasons' Society in NSW had separate Sydney and Balmain branches. In the Stonemasons' case these functioned with a high degree of independence from the union Central Committee. The central control over finances which had characterised

British 'New Model Unionism' did not become widespread amongst Australian craft unions. Even in the ASE, which consisted of branches of the British ASE, a classical new model union, a high level of branch independence existed because the central leadership was so far away in Britain. The establishment of an Australasian Council in 1885 had only partially altered this situation. Although, as with the Stonemasons', major decisions affecting the entire union's welfare – for example, strikes – required ratification by all branches, district committees were primarily responsible for working standards. Printers' unionism was even further decentralised because of the importance of 'chapels' as strong centres of workplace organisation, which pre-dated the union and operated with a high degree of autonomy.

The strength of this localised basis for organisation was not confined to craft unions. Wharf labourers' organisation was decentralised even within colonies. For example, even within Sydney two unions of wharf labourers had operated as recently as the 1870s, before the consolidation of a Sydney Wharf Labourers' Union. Immediately prior to federation of the colonies the Newcastle Wharf labourers' Union functioned autonomously of that in Sydney, and a degree of organisational specialisation persisted on the wharves throughout Australia, with separate unions of Coal Lumpers'; in Sydney there was also the Balmain Labourers' Union (ship maintenance), and outside Sydney the Newcastle Crane Employees' Union.

The coalfields workforces also displayed centrifugal organisational tendencies. Surface workers organised separately from the coal miners in a number of smaller unions, including the NSW Protective Society of Colliery Engine-drivers, the Hunter River District Smelters' and Employees' Union, the Western District Smelters' and Surface Employees' Union, and the Colliery Surfacemen's Mutual Protective Association of NSW, as well as branches of tradesmen's unions. Coal miners' three district unions in NSW, in the Hunter River, Illawarra and Lithgow districts, were really federations of the pit lodges, which pre-dated them and maintained a high degree of autonomy at the turn of the century. Much of the history of coal mining unionism in the nineteenth century consisted of a struggle between lodge and district union hegemony.

Given these hindrances to centralised organisation at the district level, it is hardly surprising that inter-district links between coal miners remained weak at the end of the nineteenth century, and a national federation of miners did not emerge until 1915. Hunter miners' unionists did play a role in southern and western miners' union organisation. During strikes the districts often assisted each other financially, and there were even periodic discussions over unification of the district unions. But in the short-term miners in each district benefited from market losses suffered by another, and southern miners particularly benefited from their employers' undercutting of northern prices. On at least one occasion in the 1880s southern miners even scabbed in a northern strike. Immediately after federation miners from one district still referred to those from another within the same State as 'strangers' or 'foreigners'.

Nor did the 'new unions' of the 1880s exhibit a lesser degree of localism than their older counterparts at the time of federation. The Amalgamated Miners' Association expanded from Victoria to develop a national structure, with a large central benefit fund and central monitoring of strikes, at least theoretically. But this was

superimposed upon a number of local metal mining communities (and later, coal communities) which operated with a relatively high degree of autonomy, particularly in NSW because of the greater distance from the Victorian head office. The Broken Hill branch of the AMA, because of size and isolation, functioned effectively as an independent union.

In the railway unions the size and hierarchical organisation of the workforce, the location of senior officers in capital cities, and the fact that colonial (then State) parliaments were the men's ultimate masters, fostered relatively centralised structures of governance. However, the high degree of sectionalism in the workforce, nurtured by separate career grades, produced countervailing tendencies. Engine-drivers and other grades organised separately, and sectional unions divided the non-engine-driving employees in the 1880s and 1890s. Railway and tramway engine-drivers organised separately until 1902. The other factor operating against centralisation in railway unions was the geographical dispersal of the large railway workforce, with many employed in the numerous rail maintenance and refuelling centres in country towns. In NSW in the 1890s the all-grades railway union alone had almost thirty regional branches, and many of these were parallelled by Engine-drivers' union branches. Regional branches of this kind were often slow to part with members' fees and could become embroiled in conflict with head office over interpretation of union policies. Separately organised again were the Navvies' Unions which were also geographically dispersed. Within the NSW Navvies' Union even the five urban Sydney branches operated with virtual autonomy.

This survey of unions at the turn of the century shows how important locality was to the structure, identification and operations of the labour movement at an industrial level. Lucy Taksa has amplified this theme with her studies of the Eveleigh railway workshops and the community generated in and around them, extending well beyond the workplace itself.[27] We also may see the same factors operating with the other organisations of labour in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Mutual benefit societies were originally organised on an entirely local basis in Australia, as they had been in Britain. These societies operated on the principle of self-help, providing their largely working class members with financial assistance in times of need mainly associated with sickness and death, on payment of small weekly or fortnightly fees. In the 1830s and 1840s most friendly societies amalgamated into larger bodies known as the 'affiliated orders', such as the Australian Grand Lodge of the Independent Order of Oddfellows and the Ancient Order of Foresters. Nevertheless, the local societies or lodges which were effectively branches of these affiliated orders operated with a high degree of autonomy, establishing and interpreting their own rules for membership and rates of contributions and benefits, and conducting their own business through fortnightly general meetings of their members. By 1900 there were over 300,000 benefit society members. Counting members' families, who also were covered usually by benefits society provisions, the total number of beneficiaries was estimated to represent about a third of the population, although this proportion varied greatly between colonies. By 1913 the total number of beneficiaries was estimated to represent 47% of the population. [28]

In the second half of the nineteenth century when friendly societies prospered, they were only one of a number of forms of organisation to which the working class subscribed for the purposes of self-help and improvement. Mechanics' Institutes and Freemasons' Lodges also flourished amongst a working class imbued with strong traditions of egalitarianism and mutuality. In colonies where the level of home ownership was relatively high amongst the working class, building societies thrived with a high degree of working class membership. As with consumer cooperatives, this form of organisation was particularly strong in areas where friendly society and union membership was high, such as the capital cities and mining towns.[29]

Although formal contact between these organisations was limited, their membership and leadership overlapped considerably in a complex interconnected web of mutuality and local community. We also must include local sporting clubs, such as football clubs, and churches to this network. At this point in time work and home existed in the same locality for many workers, and the local pub was the meeting place of union, friendly society and football club. Workers' knowledge of the world about them was as likely to come from the thriving plethora of local newspapers or the community grapevine than from a major capital city newspaper.[30] The only newspaper which even pretended to be national was *The Bulletin*.

For all of these reasons, a major theme in early socialist thought in the 1880s and 1890s had been the municipal level of organisation.[31] The Australian Socialist League's 1890 platform included 'municipal control of gas and similar works and municipal construction of dwellings'.[32] Socialist influence at the NSW Labor conferences of 1895 and 1896 also led to a plank for councils to 'establish and directly conduct any industry or institution they may deem advisable', including railways.[33]

The importance of locality and sub-national levels in working class organisation persisted long after federation. At the level of industrial leadership, no national peak union body emerged until 1926. In the meantime, industrial leadership was vested in State-based peak bodies. Indeed, even this level of centralised leadership emerged slowly; for example the regional Sydney Labor Council did not become the Labor Council of NSW until 1908, and other State peak bodies emerged more slowly. Most 'national' unions were really federations of State-based bodies which remained the primary locus of power and activity for another century. This was encouraged by the existence of a dual arbitration system whereby it was advantageous to maintain State union registration to enable access to State arbitration systems.[34] Even then, union organisation remained locally-based to a great extent well into the twentieth century. The social, economic and technological circumstances which produced unions of this kind did not alter rapidly in many cases, much industry remained locally-based and many unions formed in the early twentieth century were autonomous local organisations whose existence was encouraged by the ease of registration under State arbitration legislation.[35] Amalgamation of these bodies occurred only slowly through the course of the twentieth century.

The story with other forms of working class organisation was similar. Some forms, notably the cooperatives, remained entirely locally-based until their demise in most cases by the 1960s. On the other hand, by 1914 a process of 'consolidation', or centralisation, of friendly society funds was well-advanced. Rising medical costs, the expansion of membership and commitments, together with the major reliance on the

funds at the same time as ability to maintain payments diminished during the depression of the 1890s, forced many local bodies towards pooling funds, and it was believed that they would be more efficiently managed in this way. Nevertheless, the process of centralisation occurred gradually and unevenly, and some friendly societies maintained local control of their affairs within a centralised fund for many years.[36]

As it attempted to exert an impact upon the politics of the new Commonwealth, the Labor Party was shaped by these elements of labour community organisation, to some extent reproduced them, but also sought to transcend them. The initial excitement of the formation of the Labor Parties in the 1890s was characterised by the mushroom-like appearance of local Labour Leagues, particularly in NSW, based upon inner-city, mining or country town communities. Local issues, alliances and personalities were critical in the success or failure of Labor candidates in the early years.[37] This is indicated by some of the rural electorates where Labor won seats despite the limited working class presence in these areas, and by the many inner-city and even mining electorates where Labor failed to secure seats. The early Labor Leagues themselves enjoyed a large degree of independence and rushed to organise politically at the municipal level, often producing municipal platforms of their own including various degrees of municipal socialism. As with the other working class organisations with which they overlapped, the early Labor Leagues also allowed a high degree of participation. The history of the 1890s in the NSW Labor Party was one of the exertion of control by a central party apparatus over the local level of organisation, and the standardisation of policy (including municipal platforms), and subsequently this model was replicated throughout the country.[38]

This theme was also repeated for many of the other organisations of the working class. Trade unions and friendly societies gradually centralised, but mainly at a State, rather than national level. Ironically, the circumstances of federation seem to have promoted this process, particularly in the case of unions.

Federation and Working Life

In 1914 federation probably had made little difference to the living and working conditions of the average member of a working class community, although it presaged changes for the future. The old age pension gained in 1908 anticipated the later growth of a welfare state. It also has been argued traditionally that the establishment of compulsory state arbitration aided in the rapid growth of trade unionism at the beginning of the century, but it is likely that this growth would have occurred anyway.[39] The federal arbitration system was severely hindered in its operations by a concerted series of employer appeals to the High Court, which not only delayed its proceedings to 1913, but in the long term also restricted its jurisdiction substantially (see Eklund's article in this volume). The Commonwealth Arbitration Court did produce the basic wage in 1907, but this did not affect the majority of workers until the 1920s, and even then much of the impact of this concept was delivered through State arbitration systems.[40] Indeed, the early activities of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court were very limited, especially in comparison to its major State rival in NSW; in 1914 there were only sixteen federal awards, compared with 242 in NSW. In other States, Wages Boards or Arbitration Courts covered many

more workers than the federal arbitration system. Even after 1914 the federal system grew in importance quite gradually.[41]

In other spheres of industrial regulation the national level of governance was even less influential. Apart from restricted powers for conciliating and arbitrating interstate industrial disputes (S.51xxxv), the Commonwealth Constitution denied a role for the national government in industrial relations. The gradual improvement in working conditions attained by industrial legislation after federation, therefore, was attained principally at the State level. In a number of cases, notably Victoria and NSW, this process of expanding industrial regulation had begun as colonies prior to federation, particularly as a result of the political influence of the Labor Party at that level. It was also in the State sphere predominantly that state enterprises began to be established during the early 1900s. For these reasons, the gaining of government by the Labor Party in NSW in 1910 was at least as significant for the improvement of living and working conditions in that State as the assumption of national office by the ALP in the same year.

The Constitutional constraints upon wider social and economic change at a national level, together with the difficulty of changing the Constitution by referendum were already lessons learnt the hard way for the ALP by 1914. In addition to restricting the provenance of the federal arbitration system, the High Court declared much of the Deakin government's protectionist legislation invalid, notably the Excise Tariff Act of 1906, which Labor strongly supported. Furthermore, implementation of Labor's federal plank for nationalisation of monopolies was hindered by the existing Constitution. However, a national referendum in 1911 to expand Commonwealth powers in these areas failed dismally. Worse, the support of the NSW State ALP government for these measures in the referendum was at best lukewarm.[42]

Conclusions

Labour's association with federation was contradictory in a number of ways. On the one hand, the ALP became the first truly national political organisation in an institutional sense. In terms of policy the ALP also became a nationalistic party in its commitment to extending national state institutions, infrastructure, and defence forces. However, nationalism in itself was not a binding sentiment for the labour movement. Its two main ideological expressions failed to provide that. Republicanism was not a major commitment for the labour movement as a whole, although some key individuals had been or were republicans. Nor was it exclusively a working class political doctrine. Similarly, Labor's commitment to white Australia was a policy which appealed to all classes of Europeans in the colonies, and ultimately embraced a pan-Europeanism rather than distinctively Australian nationalism. Since labour nationalism was based principally upon these manifestations, its class content was also diluted socially and ideologically.

In 1914 that most nationally-oriented of Australian parties, the ALP, also remained an alliance of State-based organisations. There was no federal membership, nor a federal executive until 1915. Ironically, the federal Labor conferences of the time reproduced the basis of representation to which the labour movement had objected with the Senate – equal numbers of delegates from each State regardless of

membership. The unions and other social and economic organisations of the working class, likewise, remained State or even locally-based institutions in the main.

Organisationally the ALP and the unions continued to rely heavily upon local issues, structures and loyalties for long after federation. To a large extent, the employment and broader social experience of the working class remained locally determined. The creation of national institutions such as the Commonwealth Arbitration Court certainly could not produce a national labour market by 1914, if such a thing ever existed. What federation may have done, however, is strengthen the degree of working class organisational centralisation at the State level which was already occurring in many instances at the time of federation. Furthermore, in terms of political ideology, for those socialists who wished to expand the role of the state in employment and economic intervention, federation focused attention to the level of the national or provincial state apparatus.

The type of local community organisation described here had three important consequences for the development of the labour movement in relation to the new Commonwealth. First, the structure of the institutions of the working class had generated a high degree of participatory democracy because of their immediate local presence and expectations of active citizenship through these institutions. As organisations of the working class became more centralised this changed, but gradually and mainly at the State level. Secondly, the definition of these local communities was gendered. The institutions upon which community was based built principally, although not completely, upon male participation in the workplace, unions, friendly societies and pub life.[43] The gendered nature of local organisation was reproduced in the Labor Party, but also challenged to some extent. Labor allowed female membership of the local Leagues at an early stage, and supported the female suffrage from the mid-1890s in NSW, Victoria and South Australia. Once female suffrage was achieved the State parties established structures for female representation, but to the extent that the party remained reliant on male-dominated local organisational networks in the electorate its practice was bound to remain gendered to a large extent.

Finally, in 1901 workers' community loyalty was far more likely to be to Balmain, Carlton, or Woonona than to a concept of nation in 1901, let alone to the various states. By 1914 it is doubtful that this had dramatically altered as a result of federation.

ENDNOTES

[1] Note theme of 'Labour History and Local History' in *Labour History*, no. 78, May 2000.
[2] R. Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics. A Study of Eastern Australia, 1850-1910*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1970 reprint, ch. 7; R. Ward, *The Australian Legend*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1970 reprint, pp. 196-97, 224-28, 244-45. But also earlier in W. Hancock, *Australia*, Benn, London, 1930, p. 62.
[3] C. Strikwerda, 'Nationalism, Ethnicity and Social Movements', *Brood & Rozen*, (AMSAB Gent) 1997/1, p. 12.
[4] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, p. 102.
[5] Strikwerda, 'Nationalism, Ethnicity and Social Movements', p. 11.

[6] See R. Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party in NSW, 1880-1900,* UNSW Press, Kensington, 1988, p. 209.

[7] J. Norton (ed.), *The History of Capital and Labour*, Oceanic Press, Sydney, 1888, p. ix, 'Introduction'.

[8] *Sydney Morning Herald* (hereafter *SMH*) 30 January and 6 February 1884.

[9] Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*, p. 112.

[10] F. Bongiorno, *The People's Party. Victorian Labor and the Radical Tradition, 1875-1914*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1996, p. 99.

[11] Markey, *Making of the Labor Party of NSW*, pp. 208-10.

[12] *The Hummer*, 'For the Honor of the Flag', 13 February 1892. The republican plank became the 'Confederation of the Australian Colonies as Independent Social Democratic Republics' in plank 15 of the *Australasian Federation of Labor Rules and Platform of Riverina District Council*, January 1894, Mitchell Library (hereafter ML).

[13] K. Swan, *A History of Wagga Wagga*, Council of the City of Wagga Wagga, Wagga Wagga, 1970, pp. 161, 163.

[14] For example, *Hummer*, 5 December 1891, 13 February 1892; *Worker*, 22 February 1898.

[15] *Australian Workman* (journal of the Sydney Trades and Labour Council and the NSW Labour Electoral League), 5 and 12 June 1897. See Markey, *Making of the Labor Party in NSW*, pp.; 58-59, 208; B. Fitzpatrick, *The British Empire in Australia*, Macmillan, Melbourne, (1941) 1969 edn., pp. 71-101, 123-24, 132-38; M. McKenna, *The Captive Republic. A History of Republicanism in Australia, 1788-1996*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1996, pp. 174-75.

[16] See Markey, *Making of the Labor Party in NSW*, pp. 61, 189-90.

[17] *SMH*, 30 January 1884.

[18] Swan, *History of Wagga*, p. 163.

[19] McKenna, *The Captive Republic*, pp. 170-71,176-87; B. Scates, *A New Australia. Citizenship, Radicalism and the First Republic*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1997, pp. 2, 9, 150-01.

[20] Markey, *Making of the Labor Party in NSW*, p. 296.

[21] W. Spence, *Australia's Awakening. Thirty Years in the Life of an Australian Agitator*, Worker, Sydney, 1909, p. 243.

[22] Bongiorno, *The People's Party*, p. 98.

[23] Strikwerda, 'Nationalism, Ethnicity and Social Movements', p. 19.

[24] *Commonwealth Labour Reports*, nos. 9, 13; Adams and Markey, 'How the State Influences Trade Union Growth', p. 297.

[25] *AWU 9th Annual Report*, February 1895, p. 32 (ML).

[26] See R. Markey, 'Trade union democracy and the Labor Party in NSW, 1880-1914', *Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no. 86, April 1986, pp. 82-87. The following account of the structure of unions is based on this study. See also G. Patmore, 'Localism and Labour: Lithgow 1869-1932', *Labour History*, no. 78, May 2000, pp. 55, 62-63.

[27] L. Taksa, 'Rethinking Community: Social Capital and Citizenship at the Eveleigh Railway Workshops', in R. Hood and R. Markey (eds*.), Labour and Community. Proceedings of the 6th National Conference of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History*, Illawarra Branch ASSLH, Wollongong, 1999, pp. 183-90.

[28] *Commonwealth Year Book*, no.1, p. 716; D. Green and L. Cromwell, *Mutual Aid or Welfare State. Australia's Friendly Societies*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1984,; and R. Markey, 'The History of Mutual Benefit Societies in Australia, 1830-1991', in M. van der Linden (ed.), *Social Security Mutualism. The Comparative History of Mutual Benefit Societies*, Peter Lang, Bern, 1996, pp. 147-76

[29] Markey, 'History of Mutual Benefit Societies in Australia', pp. 163-64; R. Connell and T. Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History. Documents, Narrative and Argument*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1980, pp. 127, 189; Patmore, 'Localism and Labour', p. 61.

[30] Connell and Irving*, Class Structure in Australian History*, p. 189; V. Burgmann and S. Macintyre, 'Divided We Fell', in V. Burgmann and J. Lee (eds.), *Staining the Wattle. A People's History of Australia since 1788*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1988, p. 114. For the persistence of these interconnections in one working class community in the first half of the twentieth century, see L. Blackley, '"You Didn't Admit You Were Hard-up": Working-Class Notions of Moral Community', in Hood and Markey, *Labour and Community*, pp. 19-25. And for a manifestation of the vast wealth of local radical newspapers from 1850 to 1939, see H. Gibbney (comp.), *Labor in Print*, RSSS ANU, Canberra, 1975.

[31] V. Burgmann, *'In Our Time'. Socialism and the Rise of Labor, 1885-1905*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1985, pp. 123, 177-80, 181-82; R. Markey, 'The Emergence of the Labour Party at the Municipal Level in NSW, 1891-1900', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 31, no. 3, 1985, p. 409.

[32] *Australian Workman*, 18 October 1890.

[33] *SMH*, 29 January 1895; *Australian Workman*, 1 February 1896.

[34] R. Adams and R. Markey, 'How the State Influences Trade Union Growth: A Comparative Analysis of Developments in Europe, North America and Australasia', *International Journal of Comparative Labour Law and Industrial Relations*, vol. 13, no. 4, Winter 1997, pp. 296-98.

[35] The 1901 NSW Industrial Arbitration Act allowed registration of unions with a minimum of 50 members.

[36] .See sources in note 30 above.

[37] This is a major theme in J. Hagan and K. Turner, *A History of the Labor Party in NSW, 1891-1991*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1991, Parts 1-2. See also E. Eklund, 'The "Place" of Politics; Class and Localist Politics at Port Kembla, 1900-1930', *Labour History*, no. 78, May 2000, pp. 99-115.

[38] Markey, *Making of the Labor Party in NSW*, ch.6; Markey, 'Emergence of the Labour Party at the Municipal Level'.

[39] Adams and Markey, 'How the State Influences Trade Union Growth', pp. 293-303.

[40] See P. Macarthy, 'Justice Higgins and the Harvester Judgment', in J. Roe (ed.), *Social Policy in Australia*, Cassell, Sydney, 1976, pp. 41-59.

[41] Commonwealth Labour Report, no. 14; Adams and Markey, 'How the State Influences Trade Union Growth', pp. 297-99.

[42] R. Markey*, In Case of Oppression. The Life and Times of the Labor Council of NSW*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1994, pp. 157-59.

[43] See Scates, *A New Australia*, p. 9.