

1-1-2009

## Illawarra Unity: Editorial 2009-10

Anthony Ashbolt  
*University of Wollongong, aashbolt@uow.edu.au*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/unity>

### Recommended Citation

Ashbolt, Anthony, Illawarra Unity: Editorial 2009-10, *Illawarra Unity - Journal of the Illawarra Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History*, 9(1), 2009, 3-5.

Available at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/unity/vol9/iss1/1>

---

## Illawarra Unity: Editorial 2009-10

### **Abstract**

As brand Labor, otherwise known as Rudd Labor, begins to look more and more like an extension of the Howard administration, things get stranger and stranger. In one week we had the appointment of Peter Costello to the board overseeing the Future Fund. This so enraged Paul Keating he almost sounded like a class warrior. We had Martin Ferguson telling Sharon Burrow that the ACTU only represented a sectional interest whereas the Government had to act for everyone. We had an unholy squabble between the soft left and the hard left about the future of Martin's brother Laurie Ferguson. It is most amusing to see factions operating under ideological labels that now have absolutely no meaning – brand Labor has removed ideology and along with it most ideas – battling about a politician whose contribution to Australian political life has been entirely forgettable (and that is putting it mildly). And what is it about family dynasties in the Labor Party? They serve as another useful reminder of Robert Michels' observation over 100 years ago that the tendency towards aristocracy can be found in all political parties. And then in a truly nauseating moment, we had Defence Minister John Faulkner awarding General David Petraeus an honorary Order of Australia for his brilliant contribution to Iraq. This not only legitimized the invasion of Iraq and its continuing occupation but also confirmed Australia's role as the cheer squad for American imperialism. A lot of mythology surrounds Petraeus because his surge policy happened to coincide with dramatic changes internally in Iraqi politics. It was those changes more than the surge that produced a marginally less murderous Iraq but only correspondents like Patrick Cockburn of *The Independent* have pointed that out consistently – much of the media simply replicates the mythology. It must be stressed that this mythology is also meant to obscure the absolute devastation and destruction that the United States has brought to Iraq.

## Editorial

As brand Labor, otherwise known as Rudd Labor, begins to look more and more like an extension of the Howard administration, things get stranger and stranger. In one week we had the appointment of Peter Costello to the board overseeing the Future Fund. This so enraged Paul Keating he almost sounded like a class warrior. We had Martin Ferguson telling Sharon Burrow that the ACTU only represented a sectional interest whereas the Government had to act for everyone. We had an unholy squabble between the soft left and the hard left about the future of Martin's brother Laurie Ferguson. It is most amusing to see factions operating under ideological labels that now have absolutely no meaning – brand Labor has removed ideology and along with it most ideas – battling about a politician whose contribution to Australian political life has been entirely forgettable (and that is putting it mildly). And what is it about family dynasties in the Labor Party? They serve as another useful reminder of Robert Michels' observation over 100 years ago that the tendency towards aristocracy can be found in all political parties. And then in a truly nauseating moment, we had Defence Minister John Faulkner awarding General David Petraeus an honorary Order of Australia for his brilliant contribution to Iraq. This not only legitimized the invasion of Iraq and its continuing occupation but also confirmed Australia's role as the cheer squad for American imperialism. A lot of mythology surrounds Petraeus because his surge policy happened to coincide with dramatic changes internally in Iraqi politics. It was those changes more than the surge that produced a marginally less murderous Iraq but only correspondents like Patrick Cockburn of *The Independent* have pointed that out consistently – much of the media simply replicates the mythology. It must be stressed that this mythology is also meant to obscure the absolute devastation and destruction that the United States has brought to Iraq.

Think back to the days when the leadership of Labor's left was also the leadership in the streets protesting the American

war in Vietnam. Move forward to the present moment and you can see quickly that the Labor left has ditched vision, morality and principle. Look at Julia Gillard's defence of Israel during the brutal invasion of Gaza earlier this year. This was another shameful moment in Australian international affairs. Giving an award to Petraeus takes the breath away even more. How about one for Lieutenant Calley for his contribution to Vietnamese happiness?

On an even sadder note we have lost four comrades in the past year who deserve special mention – Steve Quinn, Anne Meehan, Marlene McAlear and Jim Hagan. Steve was on the executive of the Illawarra Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History for many years and was a man for whom the term “salt of the earth” could have been coined. Anne was a tireless campaigner for the trade union movement and women's rights. Marlene was a dedicated activist in the labour and feminist movements. Jim was a fine teacher and scholar who contributed much over the years to this Society and to the Illawarra labour movement. Moreover, as co-author of a high school history text Jim helped shape the way an entire generation (my generation) thought about history. This issue has obituaries for Steve and a brief item in remembrance of Jim. A fuller tribute, along with those for Anne and Marlene, will be included in future editions.

On a brighter note, two stalwarts of the labour movement were honoured in 2009 for their long and worthy contributions. Locally, Fred Moore's life was celebrated with a lunch at Port Kembla Leagues Club. And Jack Munday was acknowledged in a stirring function at Leichhardt Town Hall. Jack's contribution to politics and the environment has been critical. Yet he was part of a wider movement and without that movement, beginning with the Builders Labourers Federation and including community groups, the green bans would not have been such a success. So, too, Fred has been a remarkable leader but sees himself as part of a wider movement, a movement for genuine social change.

This issue of *Illawarra Unity* features a symposium on the 1960s that arose initially out of the workshop on 1968 held at the University of Wollongong last year. In addition, there is an article on community choirs by Tom Bridges who for many

years was director of the Sydney and then Blue Mountains trade union choirs. We have been given kind permission to reprint this as it was published just this year in a book that is a festschrift for Tom's mother Doreen Bridges (composer of the wonderful "Ballad of 1891", amongst other things).

**Anthony Ashbolt**

*November, 2009*