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Illawarra Unity: Editorial 1997

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Illawarra Unity: Editorial 1997

Abstract

Our first year was very successful. At the end of 1996 we had 92 members. The First Annual General Meeting, held at the Ironworkers' Building on 7 April elected the following executive: President: Ray Markey Vice President: Shirley Nixon Secretary: Rob Hood Treasurer: Gai Warner Committee: Margaret Bronneburg Bronwyn James Debbie Graham

EDITORIAL

Our first year was very successful. At the end of 1996 we had 92 members. The First Annual General Meeting, held at the Ironworkers' Building on 7 April elected the following executive:

President:	Ray Markey
Vice President:	Shirley Nixon
Secretary:	Rob Hood
Treasurer:	Gai Warner
Committee:	Margaret Bronneburg Bronwyn James Debbie Graham

The 1997 year has also been a rewarding one so far. About 30 people braved the cold and briefly deserted their mothers on 11 May (Mothers' Day) to meet again at the Town Hall and Community Centre. Our forum topic was on Labour Heritage, and we were addressed by Lucy Taksa (University of NSW School of Industrial Relations and Secretary of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History) and Terry Irving (University of Sydney Department of Government and editor of *Labour History*) on the Labour Heritage Register, and by Karen Hunt about the experiences of establishing the People's History Museum in Manchester. The meeting formed a Committee for Illawarra Labour Heritage, chaired by Neville Arrowsmith and with Sally Quilter, Shirley Nixon and Gary Turner, to develop a labour heritage strategy for this region.

Fred Moore was awarded our first *Certificate of Recognition* for his contribution to labour history as participant and recorder at this meeting. The inscription on the certificate reads:

"Fred was active as a representative of fellow-workers at the level of workplace (Nebo pit), Southern District and Central Council of the Miners' Federation for many years. Amongst many other activities, he played a major part in organising support for struggles of miners at South Clifton and Coalcliff in the early 1970s, and in the Federation's

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successful campaign for a 35-hour week in 1970-1. He represented his fellow-workers to the workers of the world during visits to Germany, Britain and the Soviet Union in 1970, and on National Aboriginal Day 1973 his activism in support of Aboriginal rights was recognised at a tribal ceremony in Wollongong, where he was accepted as a brother member of the Jirrinjarra tribe. Since the late 1970s Fred has initiated and led a major oral history project, recording the memories of a wide range of labour activists in the Illawarra. Throughout all these activities, Fred has been renowned for his unerring commitment to workers and all battlers, his integrity, his commitment to solidarity and rejection of narrow factionalism, and his human warmth. He has been an inspiration to a younger generation of activists as well, and the Illawarra Branch is proud that he has played an active role in its deliberations.”

We have also been successful in gaining the right to organize the 1999 Biennial National Labour History Conference, on the Labour Day weekend. Congratulations and thanks to the efforts of the organising committee - Val Dolan, Shirley Nixon, Gary Turner, Bronwyn James, Nicole Williams, Rowan Cahill and Rob the Hood. Promises of support were forthcoming from the Lord Mayor, South Coast Labour Council, Amalgamated Manufacturing Workers Union, Croatian Democratic Union, Kiama and District Arts Council, and the Labour Market and Regional Studies Centre at the University of Wollongong. The national executive congratulated us on the quality of our submission.

This issue of *Unity* has two main articles, one by myself as a general plea for the contemporary relevance of labour history in political debate. The second article, the Ted Roach Papers, is really a collection of shorter pieces, the first instalment of a host of material which Ted sent me over a period before his death. These papers range from accounts of organizing work in Newcastle and Port Kembla, to Ted's achievements as Assistant National Secretary of the WWF, fighting the Industrial Groups in the WWF, and the Bowen Sugar Strike of 1953. They illustrate clearly Ted's great ability to draw broader political and organizational lessons from individual struggles and events, and over the next few issues I will publish more from Ted's papers. They are important historical documents in their own right, and Ted has special significance for this branch of the society because of his

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organizational efforts at Port Kembla, and as our first life member.

Sadly, Ted did not live to be awarded his life membership certificate in person, although he knew of the award, and was genuinely thrilled. Gary Griffith pays fine tribute to Ted towards the end of this issue, and we appreciate the kind permission of *Labour History* to reprint the same obituary that appears in its May 1997 issue. Sadly also, we have a further seven pages of obituaries to Ted Harvey, Rupert Lockwood, and Arthur Osborne. As we go to press I have also learnt of the death of Jack Wright, and Edna Ryan's obituary also appears in the May issue of *Labour History*. All will be sorely missed by family and many friends, as well as by the labour movement, working class and progressive people generally .

We are in the happy position now of having accumulated some material already for the next issue or two. This includes article and poems from Neville Arrowsmith, an article by Bob James (former president of the Hunter Society) on the Hunter labour movement, as well as papers by Ted Roach. Keep the material flowing in, even short 1 or 2 page stories, poems, songs, reminiscences, and photographs.

Finally, only about half of our membership from 1996 have renewed so far. If you haven't already, PLEASE RENEW MEMBERSHIP NOW or we will go broke sending these journals to you.

Ray Markey