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Abstract
I first commenced activities in connection with trade unions upon my return to Newcastle from three and a half years carrying my swag at the end of 1931 — during which time I played an important part in building unemployed workers’ movements in various places in Queensland, and in 1932 became the District Secretary, Newcastle and Coalfields of the Unemployed Workers Movement; also District Secretary of the militant Minority Movement, and was given the full time responsibility for assisting building Trade Union organisation.
THE TED ROACH PAPERS
HIGHLIGHTS CONNECTED WITH THE TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES OF E.C. ROACH

I first commenced activities in connection with trade unions upon my return to Newcastle from three and a half years carrying my swag at the end of 1931 — during which time I played an important part in building unemployed workers’ movements in various places in Queensland, and in 1932 became the District Secretary, Newcastle and Coalfields of the Unemployed Workers Movement; also District Secretary of the militant Minority Movement, and was given the full time responsibility for assisting building Trade Union organisation.

In 1932, some unions in Newcastle decided it was necessary to alter October 8-Hour Day celebration to May Day demonstrations throughout the Trade Union Movement in Newcastle. The Miner’s Federation was the only organisation that officially celebrated May Day formerly. I was given the task of organising May Day, and was Secretary of the May Day Committee in 1932, 1933 and 1934, flowing from which May Day holiday became incorporated in all Newcastle Awards.

In April 1934, I joined the Newcastle Branch of the Waterside Workers’ Federation. In November 1936, I transferred to the rapidly expanding port of Port Kembla, where the working conditions were almost non-existent; the vicious bull system operation; organisation was extremely weak; unemployed were picked up by stevedores at the end of the pier, at any hour of day or night. Improvements were forced in working conditions. A type of roster was forced (against the personal opposition of the then General Secretary, Arthur Turley).

At the end of February 1938, I was elected to the position of Port Kembla Branch Secretary. The unemployed were then organised; pick up times regularised, and outside labour was selected on a roster by myself for required jobs. These unemployed were gradually absorbed into the Union and the fringe labour disappeared.

In November 1938, the ship “Dalfram” arrived to take the first shipment of pig-iron to Japan. Upon hearing this, I advised members to go to work pending confirmation of the information.
At 11:30 I had proved beyond doubt that the pig-iron was bound for Japan, and at a signal from myself, the four gangs walked off the ship. This commenced a 10-week historical struggle for peace and against shipment of Australian pig-iron to Japan. Tremendous people's support was forthcoming for our stand against the Government, and was responsible for not only the Government’s Policy being altered about the shipment of pig-iron to Japan, but shortly after the Menzies-Lyons Government was forced to the country and the Curtin Government came to office.

Needless to say, the “Dalfram” dispute stopped the port, and was gradually bringing all industrial activity to a standstill. Menzies, who was Attorney General, in the early stages threatened us with the Transport Workers’ Act (dog collar), which had been successfully used for a number of years by the Government to break and/or prevent maritime strikes. Our activity was so intense, organised and well received, that despite the fact that the payment of 1/- for a license would entitle a worker to become a waterside worker, only one “dog collar” was taken out (by my arrangement) and on behalf of the members was publicly burnt as an act of defiance of the Government and in support of peace. The “dog collar” was never used again and was finally repealed. Penalty acts of this character were shown to be impotent against powerful organisation.

During the course of this struggle we pioneered the tactic of worker-farmer mutual relations by activating ourselves as a union fighting bushfires that were raging at the time. We later as a union won the goodwill of all by organising groups of members to dig air-raid shelters in the school grounds when Japanese intentions became obvious.

We quickly perfected the first Union controlled roster system in the Federation, and pioneered trade union discipline as part of union building policy, and along with strong trade union organisation, the winning of good conditions became easier.

In 1942, Federal Council decided there should be a second officer in the Federation, namely, an Assistant General Secretary-Organiser. There were six nominations for the position, including my own. I won the position with an absolute majority. I was not only Assistant General Secretary but Organiser as well. My experience with the Roster in Port Kembla was of considerable value in the extension of rosters throughout the Federation in the years 1942-1945.

As an Organiser I handled the absorption of ten branches of the Permanent and Casual P & C., Innisfail, Lucinda Point, Bundaberg, Brisbane, Lismore, Newcastle, Sydney, Melbourne,
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Adelaide, as well as their National Office. Some branches were absorbed directly, others in two stages by the setting up of no. 2 branches, as an initial stage to their being absorbed into the single branch.

In this period I also organised the Tathra, Kempsey, Smithton, Kangaroo Island, King Island and Whyalla into the Federation.

In 1945, Indonesian seamen walked off their ships in Australia in support of Indonesian independence. I was given the responsibility by Federal Council for the handling of the Dutch Ship Dispute for the Federation. In this role, handling negotiations, I attended all conferences on behalf of the Federation, and was nominated as an observer to proceed with the first ship. The Government had nominated three others. All were rejected by the Unions. The Government then refused to agree to my going to Indonesia in this capacity.

Early in 1947, with Dutch ships still immobilised on the Australian coast, I was sent by the Federal Council to the first SOBSI Conference in Indonesia (counterpart of ACTU). Had to bounce my way from Singapore to Indonesia on a Dutch plane and through the Dutch lines whilst the war was still in progress between the Dutch and Indonesia Republic.

Returning from Indonesia, via Malaysia, I was able to make a survey of the trade union situation in Malaya, and wrote a comprehensive report about it to the Unions in Australia and throughout the world.

In 1951, during the Miners’ strike, when the Fund Freezing legislation was brought down by Dr Evatt, then Attorney General, we raised £6000 with a 5/- levy throughout the Federation to assist strikers in the ports of Launceston, Hobart and Port Kembla. The late General Secretary was not in the state at the time. Rather than take the chance of having this Fund frozen, I withdrew the money from the Bank and deposited it in three separate, readily accessible places to ensure continuity of payment to our members. I was arraigned before the Arbitration Court, along with five officers of the Miners’ Federation, and one officer from the Ironworkers’ Union. The Court demanded that the money be placed in the custody of the Court. This I refused. The trial for Contempt of Court dragged on for three weeks, and not until after the Miners and Ironworkers Officials were gaoled, and the General Secretary had returned, was I, along with the General Secretary then sentenced to 12 months in Long Bay. Of this, we did six weeks and were released all together.

In 1951, when the decision was made by the Arbitration Court to grant £1 a week increase in the basic wage, I, as Acting General Secretary (late General Secretary was overseas at the time)
appeared for the Federation before Kirby J. seeking £1 a week increase for the members. Kirby chose to increase the divisor from 30 to 32, granting, in fact, only 10/- increase. I wrote a circular to the Branches protesting officially at the Judge's actions, and published the circular in the *Maritime Worker* with a cartoon showing the Judge with the thimble and peas paying a wharfie 10/- light, and brushing £750,000 per year to a shipowner in the background.

For this I was arraigned before the Full Bench on three separate charges of Contempt was found guilty on two by Dunphy, Kelly and Wright. I was sentenced to twelve months on each charge to be done concurrently on March 1st, 1951, where, with second offence remissions, I did 9 months and 8 days in isolation in Long Bay, being released on 18th December, 1951.

It is well to note that Judge Wright was a newly appointed Judge, and his agreement to the sentence was his first job as a Judge, and his last job as a Barrister was to appear opposite me for the Shipowners in the Basic Wage Case—out of which I was being sentenced.

Incidently, it is well to note that in 1956 the Boilermakers' Appeal on Arbitration Court structure legality was heard before the Privy Council. The Privy Council ruled that the existing arbitration machinery in Australia was ultra vires the Constitution. Application was made for compensation. We were advised the Statute of Limitation was four years in this respect. The Government refused to accept any responsibility.

In 1959 I took over the responsibility of Federation safety. At the various Safety Conventions, I set out to focus attention on the employers' attitude to hazardous working and his failure to agree to Safety Committees and safety practices. The employer, after two years refusal to take part in safety activities, finally decided to set up the Employers' National Accident Prevention Panel, on which I represented the Federation.

At the Biennial Conference of WWF in 1961, I submitted a Safety Programme as follows:

**Safety**

1. Safety Committees in all ports.
3. Adequate respiratory protection on all dusty cargoes. Where practicable air flow respirators shall be used.
4. Exhaust fans in all hatches coupled with compressed cool air blower in hot climate.
5. Medically prescribed goggles to suit variation in jobs and
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climates to type determined by Waterfront National Accident Panel.
6. Tinted goggles for sunlight work.
7. Adequate head protection for men working below.
8. Prohibit men ascending or descending perpendicular ladder in wet weather clothing.
9. Refusal to handle grain cargoes until all information connected with fumigation is disclosed, and adequate time for aeration and necessary steps have been taken for protection.

Wet Weather Clothing
1. Total prohibition of wet weather clothing from Gladstone North.
2. Prohibit wearing of wet weather clothing elsewhere between September and March.
3. Abolition of overboots: free issue all purpose safety footwear.
4. All wet weather clothing to be fitted and personalised issue.

Industrial Protective Clothing
1. Suitable industrial clothing be provided.
2. All clothing, boots and gloves to be personalised issue.
3. Suitable warm inner glove and waterproof outer gloves be provided on all chilled and frozen cargoes.
4. Suitable waterproof aprons be provided on all carton beef and similar products.

Health
1. National scientific research.
2. Scientific tests be applied to cover extended range of cargoes to ascertain exposure effects.
3. Scientific examination of men doing arduous types of work top stacking.

To date...
1. Safety committees have been set up.
2. New and more extensive regulations have been drafted and distributed by the Panel.
3. Use of air flow respirators have been extended to all grain ports, coal loading in Gladstone and other types of cargoes elsewhere.
4. Aprons are provided on carton beef.
5, 6. Tests have been made and types agreed to for a general issue of goggles. At the moment special tests are being made in an endeavour to find the answer to the sulphur problem. 
7. Head protection is now provided on a considerable range of cargoes.
8. Official prohibition against wearing of wet weather overboots up and down ladders.
9. Full information is provided on fumigation cargoes everywhere.

**Wet Weather Clothing**

1, 2. Have not been achieved.
3. Safety footwear is currently replacing overboots.

**Industrial Protective Clothing**

1. Issue of protective clothing has been considerably extended.
2. Personalised clothes are issued everywhere as will be the case with boots.
3. Freezer gloves with inner glove have been issued in Queensland ports and in Sydney, and will be extended to other ports.
4. Aprons are provided on carton beef.

**Health**

Department of Occupational Health is cooperating with the Panel on the question of scientific ship’s ventilation, and tests are being applied almost daily in relation to hazardous cargoes in all parts. Scientific examination of men in certain categories is now being organised.

ANOTHER AREA OF WORK WAS OUR BATTLE AGAINST THE INDUSTRIAL GROUPS . . .

The industrial groups operated for a number of years with their headquarters in Melbourne. The whole branch executive was made up of members of the industrial group and they set themselves up as a type of alternate leadership in the Federation and in the 50s were able to forge some links with a number of branches in the Federation. On arrival at one Fremantle meeting, I found three members of the Melbourne Branch Executive including the branch secretary, Clark, on the stage and on my
way back from the West I struck the same situation in Adelaide. It was obvious that the groups had some influence in the Adelaide and the Fremantle branches and, although such influence was not organised or decisive, it nevertheless had a nuisance value. It was only because of some right wing tendencies in the leadership in each of the branches at the time allowed this situation to develop where they could be officially put on the stage at a stop work meeting. The influence on Federation policy in the Melbourne branch was very strong. We weren’t able to break through to the rank and file, and were not able to move because of the executive anti-Federation and anti-militant activity. However it reached the stage where we received a message from Charlie Young, a Federal Councillor from Melbourne, who was not a member of the Branch Executive but he believed that some money had been used illegally by the secretary to purchase a sand truck and when we heard of it, the General President, the General Secretary, Tom Nelson and I discussed the matter in the Federal office and it was suggested that we seek some legal opinion about whether we could act in the circumstances or not. I pointed out the opinion that we should seek was the opinion of the majority of the workers on the Melbourne waterfront and to develop this opinion we should first of all on the basis of the report made by a Federal Councillor take the Federal Executive to Melbourne to enquire into the allegation.

In my mind of course there was no doubt that they’d been tampering the fund, however I proposed that during the course of this investigation the important thing was to carry it through for the whole week and to ensure that a bulletin or a leaflet could be got out each day and be circulated on the Melbourne waterfront building up a psychological situation towards the meeting that was to be held on the following Monday. Some blood letting took place on the waterfront, much activity was generated as a result of these leaflets. On the Sunday evening a very large broad meeting was convened to discuss the tactics in the meeting itself. I attended, accompanied by Tom Nelson, and I pointed out that in the circumstances it was necessary for each one of the militants to move away and place themselves throughout the meeting and to ensure loud exclamation when the point was made and the opposite when it was necessary. This would facilitate the psychology of the meeting.

This tactic was very successful and it was obvious during the course of the meeting that the whole direction of the meeting was moving away from the groups. The resolution was moved—no confidence in the Executive of the Melbourne branch and during the course of the debate one of the groups of well known
activists, Bluey McMahon, got up and was shouting out to Jim Cummings, the President: “Jim, close the meeting, close the meeting”. They could feel the meeting was slipping away from them. Psychologically we had complete control of the meeting. As a consequence the resolution was carried and we sacked the Executive then and there. It may have been considered a bit of a back of the axe action, however it was quite successful and the groups never were able to get up again on the Melbourne waterfront and their influence; whatever they had throughout the Federation was completely destroyed because we destroyed their headquarters and then destroyed the groups within the Federation once and for all.

THE BOWEN TROOP DISPUTE AND WORK WITH SUGAR FARMERS IN 1953

At the 1952 Federal Conference I developed a report dealing with the problems associated with the bulk handling of sugar and the problems associated with such bulk handling within the Ports. After the Conference I proceeded to North Queensland to discuss the dangers inherent in bulk sugar handling to our organisations and the effect it would have on our members in Ports that handled sugar. The question of developing closer relationships and better understanding between our branches, sugar growers, other organisations and people became vital because with such a development, unemployment and hardship would be caused to members—thus we would be forced to do battle with the employers and history has taught us that the CSR and their associates could, without great difficulty, recruit farmers to handle cargo in disputes. The most recent example was the Wall Park dispute in Mackay in 1950.

After addressing stop work meetings of the branches I convened a conference of delegates from the seven northern ports, from Mackay to Port Douglas. Besides dealing with the question of working conditions, we developed a new unorthodox form of organisation called Sugar Research Bureau, based on Townsville, with committees in each of the ports. You will note in the resolution that was carried, that the local committees were to be selective rather than elective. Dealing with this we took into consideration the necessity of some form of loose organisation that would provide us with information about farmers’ problems and would allow the branch to take up our problems with the farmers and enable us to learn to understand each others problems. The idea was for the selection of people who had worked
on farms, sugar mills or had spent a good portion of their lives around sugar production and who had ability to carry out this type of research required to allow the Sugar Bureau in Townsville to function.

As a result of this new approach to our problems in the Northern Industry, our branches really got down to the job of making contact in the farming areas and immediately a dispute occurred on the waterfront, with leaflets and speakers they took their problems to the farmers, out to the farming communities and for the first time in history during the earlier part of 1953, we were able to establish very good relationships with a big section of the farmers and their organisations. For example, it was reported from Townsville, as a result of our new worker/farmer policy, the Burdekan sugar producers invited three representatives from our Townsville branch to a discussion at their offices. The result was that mutual problems were discussed and our delegates entertained. An inspection of wharf bottle necks proved in a convincing way that employers were responsible for most of the hold-ups in the past although such was blamed on the CSR and indeed believed by the farmers.

Our delegates were told that the sugar farmers only see the wharfies when there is a dispute and there should be more frequent meetings of sugar producers and our union. For the first time we had been able to break through the lies of the CSR and their associates through newspapers and radio, etc. Formerly waterside workers were always blamed for disputes and because the CSR paid money to growers in stages, the final payment not being paid until the sugar reached the refinery in the south, it was not very difficult for the CSR and its minions to raise the ire of the farmers against the waterside workers. Thus our branches campaigned in such a way that they reached the ear of the sugar growers laying a basis for taking subsequent disputes local and otherwise out to the farmers and thereby developing a relationship that had long been desired but never achieved until then.

The Bowen dispute in 1953, when the Government attempted to put soldiers on the waterfront, highlighted the value of this contact with the farmers. I believe the Bowen dispute was culminating point of a particular phase of a campaign where the Federal Government, the Board and the employers were closely associated in their attack against our Federation to impair our organisation, and arraign public opinion against us, with the Government embarking on a get tough policy to ensure the greatest assistance to the big employers and to curry favour with the farming population—in Queensland in particular as a part of the campaign to win the Federal election. Early in 1953 much
was said about the increased sugar crop and the labour requirements. The Government set out to capitalise on its stated export drive, having full regard for the fact that a considerable portion of our sugar market had been lost and that the meat and steel trades were booming, at the same time working closely with the big monopolies with the export of these three commodities in particular. The employers' secretary, Cockle, circularised their organisation in particular ports misinterpreting a judgement by Kirby J on smokos in Brisbane setting a deadline at the 13th July 1953 for foremen to ensure that all hands were on the ship or at their place of work when the starting whistles were blown. Those who were not in position would be sacked. It transpired at a subsequent case before Wright J. arising out of what had become known as the whistle dispute that the Board had expressed disapproval at the failure of the employers earlier to blow the starting time whistle and then sack the men who were not in their positions. It is apparent that the dispute was inspired by the Board, carried out by the employers, carried on and extended by the Board as they started men stood down after being sacked by the employers. It was therefore no accident that the ports of Adelaide, Kembla, Newcastle, Gladstone and the sugar ports were selected for the whistle dispute. These were the ports on which the quotas were fixed and the meat and sugar season was about to start and these ports were the ones where the wealth of Australia's greatest monopolies flowed.

During a couple of weeks of whistle provocation approx. 200,000 man-hours were lost in these ports. This aggravated considerably the accumulation of backlog of cargo. It appears quite obvious that the stage was set early in 1953 to make a political football of our Federation for the federal elections in 1954.

Although it was admitted that there was some necessity to increase the membership in the sugar ports because of the increase in production, these discussions could have been carried out in the normal way without the tour of ministerial parties to show the flag throughout the north. From this it became quite clear that the Government was out to curry favour with the farmers particularly in Queensland sugar areas as their means of ensuring their return in the 1954 Federal elections.

Ministerial parties visited Queensland early in 1953—first Senator Macleay and his party, then Holt and his party, the latter being accompanied by officers of the Stevedoring Industry Board and during this visit quotas were laid down in the various northern ports.

After the stage had been set for the sugar quota and before
the crushing had commenced, Graham, president of the Overseas Shipping Representative Association, fired the first broadside in a violent press outburst against our Federation. This was quickly taken up and re-echoed by Senator Macleay and other parliamentary representatives who loosely used the time hackneyed phrase of slow turnaround of ships, less per man hours tonnage and the like as compared with the pre-war situation. This was followed up by newspaper statements attacking our Federation. At the same time there was quite a deal of carryover sugar in the Queensland ports as was the case with banking up of steel in Kembla and Newcastle following the whistle dispute provocation.

The Board was exercising great pressure on the Federation regarding the filling of quotas. These in the main were slow coming into line. Then out of the blue came a newspaper statement by Hewitt of the Stevedoring Industry Authority and the Government that if quotas were not all filled by the Federation by the 10th August other labour would be advertised for and registered. At this stage we were unaware of the secret plans of the Government so ably focussed by Les Louis in his document *Operation Alien* where he said on the eve of the cabinet meeting of the 1st March, Bland, permanent head of the Federal Department of Labour, prepared a comprehensive appreciation of the situation and contingency plans for his Minister, Harold Holt. This included tactics of forcing the Federation to extend the area of the dispute and offering targets for prosecution which involved the collusion of the ship owners. According to Bland, the employment of troops on the waterfront all over Australia seemed inevitable.

The General President and I met with the ACTU Emergency Committee at the Trades Hall in Sydney on 14th August. Arising from this the ACTU Emergency Committee, the General President and myself met the Minister, Holt, in Canberra, on 17th August.

At this discussion we were in a positive position to advise that the quotas had been filled in all ports where quotas had been sought with the exception of Bowen and Kembla. The hold-up at Kembla was that they felt that with the influx of transfers from Sydney and elsewhere, the quota figure would be met in a very short time, failing which they undertook to bring their quota up within three weeks if sufficient labour were not forthcoming. The Minister agreed to an arrangement whereby a temporary mobile group would be despatched from Sydney for the interim period to ensure the required number. I volunteered to go to Bowen to survey the position in relation to the possibility of new members and accommodation for a mobile group of transfers. However, before leaving for Bowen on the following evening advice
from Sydney was that insufficient volunteers were available at Sydney for Kembla and immediate agreement was made with the Branch that the new members would be put in to bring the numbers up to the quota figure.

Incidentally, Hewitt of the Board was sent to Bowen at the same time as me. At a conference in Bowen called by Hewitt, which included the meat works manager, managers of the two sugar mills and myself, all favoured my proposition of the mobile group, the exception being Hewitt. He said accommodation was not available. This was quickly disproved. Then Hewitt emphatically ruled out my suggestion of a mobile. However the position I found in Bowen was indeed a difficult one. The two sugar mills that shipped their product through Bowen, Ingerman and Proserpine had almost reached capacity in storage space and our register of members in Bowen were insufficient to meet the daily production of the sugar mills. Having regard for the fact that the meat season was then on I could see the prospect of the mills having to close up unless we increased our strength from 130 to 180. This would obviously have an adverse effect on the Federation because the closing of the mills would not only involve the cane harvest but would involve the ordinary workers and the townspeople in and around the sugar areas. After acquainting myself thoroughly with the position, I discussed the matter with our Branch and the following morning pointed out to them the hazards in failure to fill the quota. At a meeting of members I had a resolution carried by the Branch for the filling of the quota set by the Commission by the admission of sufficient new members to be made available at the commencement of the following week from the applications already in hand.

I took it for granted in the absence of any report to the contrary from either the Bowen Branch, the Board or the employers, as is usual, that the Branch had in fact admitted new members and that the cargo was being shifted in a quiet manner. Then all of a sudden on 1st September 1953 we received a midday letter from the Minister notifying that soldiers were being flown to Bowen that night to speed up the work of loading sugar and meat. From this it was then quite clear that the use of soldiers in Bowen was a part of a premeditated plan, not only to deal a vital blow to our Federation but at the same time impress the people of Queensland and indeed of Australia of the determination of the Government with their get tough policy to put an end to this—to use their favourite phrase—industrial lawlessness and industrial defiance. In addition to this, they hoped to be able to lay the basis for the development of an entirely new approach to the breaking of strikes and workers generally throughout Australia by the use of armed
forces and thus lay down an entirely new principle of strike breaking. The new weapon was to be used against the trade union movement.

Hewitt showed his partisanship to the Government and to the employers by sending O’Neal from Melbourne and Barry from Brisbane to supervise the operation for the soldiers. These two were unable to obtain accommodation in the town. We won the battle all right, but the important thing for us to see in this situation was that the Government was given the opportunity to move in this way against the Federation because our Branch, having made the important decision in my presence and on my recommendation, had not been able to see clearly all the implications and failed to carry out the decision. What has become quite apparent is that the failure on the part of a Branch to carry out their obligation to the Federation, in terms of the resolution carried by the Branch, could have caused damage to the trade union organisations that would be difficult to estimate had Mr Holt won out in Bowen. From this it becomes very obvious that a prime feature of our activities must be that Branch should at all times carry out a policy decision particularly where it relates to an overall question of Federation policy. If this is done it will make us less vulnerable to attacks by their employer.

The formal lessons to be drawn from the dispute arise from the manner in which the workers in and around Bowen in particular, and throughout Queensland in general, greeted the bringing of soldiers to the port, and the action taken by them was unparalleled in working class history of this country. The Authority representatives and the military were really outlawed by the community; they were denied accommodation of any kind; they had to ship their own transport, food and drink as well as bring accommodation. But this magnificent reaction did not just develop spontaneously—it was a product of real working class activity particularly in Queensland over a long period.

You will recall the support our Federation gave to the meatworkers in the dispute of 1948 and to the miners particularly in Scotsville and Collinsville. As a result of this unity in action by our Federation in support of these workers in their various battles, we found that before the Branch had taken any action against the soldiers, before a decision was made at the pickup in the morning, railway workers and meatworkers representatives were in attendance at our pickup shed declaring full support to our Federation, indicating action they were prepared to take even before our Branch had made its decision to take action—the railwaymen refused to shunt cargo to the jetty. Representatives of the Board and the army commandeered an engine and the
railway workers pulled the fires on the remaining seven engines and the railmen issued an ultimatum to the state government that, unless the commandeered engine was handed back, the fires would be drawn on the north and southbound mails. Meatworkers refused to load the meat for the ships.

The Government threatened to put soldiers in to load meat at the meat works. The meatworkers replied that if this was done, they would close the works. In Scotsville and Collinsville mineworkers intimated that there would be no coal for railways or meat works while the Government used soldiers to supply or do any work in connection with the army establishment in Bowen, until they received an approval from the Trades and Labour Council Disputes Committee.

Spontaneous messages of protest poured in from all parts of the country. Within forty-eight hours the Government was placed in a position where a decision had to be made by them to withdraw troops. A sugar committee spoken of earlier went into action taking the Federation’s case to the farming areas. The Townsville branch employed six members to cover the large areas that they were familiar with and the whole of the country-side was covered with Federation leaflets, many street meetings were conducted, and the response by farmers and the people generally was extraordinarily good. We were able to, on the basis of this work, establish close relationships between growers organisations and the unions to the point where we were able to, from our Bowen branch, have representatives of growers’ organisations visit the Bowen wharves to obtain first hand knowledge of the employers’ incompetence and observe the costly bottlenecks that growers were forced to pay for and at the same time lay the blame at the door of the Federation. It was reported that in the Ayre district the CSR who made all the decisions about the amount of cane that would be cut on the various farms sent circulars out to the farmers threatening them with action if they attended meetings convened by our Federation delegates in that area. It is plain to see that the CSR, powerful and all as it is, is scared of worker/farmer unity, and from this we see the real value of the form organisation that we had established, and linked with the lessons drawn from the reciprocal value of our participation in the battles of other workers, made all the difference in winning and losing this enormously important battle at Bowen.

We could not have hoped to win this fight on our own, the battle that was won in a magnificent way. Such a basis of working class defence and action can be built in other areas. It is indeed important that we study the lessons of our Queensland experience and apply these lessons of work in other areas.