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Illawarra Unity: Editorial July 1998

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Illawarra Unity: Editorial July 1998

Abstract

1998 has been an active year for the branch. Planning for the 1999 National Labour History Conference in Wollongong on the Labour Day long weekend of 1-4 October is now well-advanced, and brochures concerning it are enclosed with this issue. Three forums of the Branch have been held throughout the year, the Labour Heritage subcommittee under Neville Arrowsmith's enthusiastic leadership continues to collect material and display it at our gatherings, and this is the second issue of our journal for the year. The Annual General Meeting on 29 March was attended by about 30 at the Cedar Room of the Town Hall and Community Centre. The 1999 executive which was elected consisted of: President: Ray Markey Vice president: Shirley Nixon Secretary: Robert Hood Treasurer: Neville Arrowsmith Committee members: Margaret Bronneberg, Val Dolan, Bronwyn James, and Gary Turner.

EDITORIAL

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President: Ray Markey
Vice president: Shirley Nixon
Secretary: Robert Hood
Treasurer: Neville Arrowsmith
Committee members: Margaret Bronneberg, Val Dolan,
Bronwyn James, and Gary Turner.

A larger group has assisted with organising the conference, including Rowan Cahill, Gregor Cullen and Nicole Williams.

The 1999 National Labour History Conference

The theme of the conference is ***Labour and Community***. It will be held in the Wollongong Town Hall and Community Centre, and the conference dinner will be at Barney's on Crown Function Centre. As the enclosed brochure indicates we are hoping for a broad-ranging community input to the conference, with cultural activities and performances (such as trade union choirs), a heritage display, oral history workshops, displays of posters, photographs and artwork, as well as short talks or reminiscences and academic papers. The costing of the conference is also structured to encourage broad community participation, with particularly favourable rates for those with low incomes.

The conference theme celebrates the past, but also

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contemplates the role of **Labour and Community** into the 21st Century. It emphasises the importance of community as a basis for labour and its reproduction, labour organization, working class culture and labour history. We mean community in its broadest sense: workplace community, geographical/regional and civic community, business community, the community within organisations such as unions and auxiliary bodies, party branches, cooperatives, friendly societies, church groups, and others, racial and ethnic community, republicanism and a national community, and international community of labour - from 'workers of the world unite!' to 'globalisation'.

The organisers seek proposals for papers, exhibits and performances which address these broad themes in relation to the role of labour in our society, as commodity, class and the basis of institutions such as parties, unions, cooperatives, tribunals, etc. We welcome contributions based on the role of gender relations in working class community, comparative studies, oral history, biography, the importance of labour heritage, and cultural practices, as well as institutions, the workplace, management and business history and industrial relations. We also encourage contributions which seek to draw lessons from the past for the future organization of labour and capital in the environment of globalisation and economic rationalism.

Note the dates for submission of papers:

17 July 1999 for the refereed stream

28 August 1999 for the general stream

For further details on submission of papers see the brochure. Papers from the conference will be published in two volumes of proceedings available at the conference for participants.

For information regarding conference in general please contact the Labour History Conference Organiser at:

Department of Economics,

University of Wollongong, NSW 2522.

Phone: (02) 4221 4156

Fax: (02)4221 3725

email: robert_hood@uow.edu.au

**website: [http://www.uow.edu.au/commerce/econ/
labcon99.html](http://www.uow.edu.au/commerce/econ/labcon99.html)**

Support for the conference is strong. The University of Wollongong has contributed \$10,000, and the Croatian Democratic Union contributed \$200. Other financial contributions have been promised from the Australian Education Union (\$250) and the South Coast Labour Council (\$200), as

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well as a performance by traditional dancers from the Illawarra Arab Sports Association. The Wollongong City Gallery has agreed to mount a special exhibition to coincide with the conference, and the Wollongong City Library is providing its theatrette as well as mounting a display of labour heritage and relevant holdings in the library. Finally, we have had support from the Lord Mayor, Illawarra Historical Society, Kiama and District Arts Council, the Illawarra Business Chamber, Australia's Industry World, and the Scarborough/Wombarra/Coledale Branch of the ALP for a Federation Community Project grant application for the Cunningham and Throsby electorates.

The proposed Federation Community Project extends the activities of the 1999 Conference in the following ways:

- selection of papers from the conference, plus some specially commissioned ones for publication by University of Wollongong Press as a book, to be launched at ACTU Congress in September 2000 in Wollongong;
- launch of labour heritage and oral history project at ACTU Congress in September 2000 in Wollongong, which will collect a pictorial history of the evolution of work and industry, together with reminiscences relating to community and conflict of working people, labour activists, managers and small business people in the Illawarra region. This will be published as a second book by the University of Wollongong Press in 2001;
- researching and identifying of a small series of major sites relevant to the labour history of the city and its nearby region, with the intention of mounting memorial plaques and a sculpture. These monuments would become the basis of a labour history tour to be launched with the oral and pictorial history book, and has the potential to become a major contribution to the tourist attractions of the region.

If successful, this application would celebrate the history of the region and provide some employment for local artworkers and researchers.

Branch Forums 1998

These were all well-attended by about 25–30 people, and generated a vigorous discussion in each case. We were fortunate to attract speakers of such a high calibre from outside as well as locally, and the standard of discussion matched that of the speakers.

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The first forum, following our AGM on 29 March 1998 was *Back to the Future? Lessons of History for the Current Struggles in the Maritime Industry*, held at the Cedar Room of the Wollongong Town Hall and Community Centre. The speakers were:

Gary Griffiths (NSW Teachers' Federation delegate to South Coast Labour Council), on 'The Historical Struggles of the Wharfies',

and Margo Beasley (author of *Wharfies: the History of the WWF*), 'The Domestic Economy of Wharf Labourers'.

In addition Rowan Cahill's booklet on *Sea Change — An Essay on Maritime Labour History* was launched by Mark Armstrong, the Port Kembla branch secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia.

The second forum was *Women in Labour History. The Part Played by Women in the Building of the Nation, with Emphasis on the Illawarra District*, on 18 October 1998, at the Piano Bar of the Illawarra Master Builders' Club. The speakers were:

Meredith Bergman, MLC, on 'Women in the ALP',

Cathy Bloch (trainer for TUTA), 'Women in the Union Movement', and

Irene Arrowsmith (life member South Coast Labour Council) on 'Women in Leadership and Support Roles in the Labour Movement'.

The final forum, on 19 November 1998, was at the Monte Carlo Room at the Fraternity Club. It was addressed by Eileen Yeo (University of Sussex) on 'Motherhood, Race and Ethnicity in the Working Class: Surviving and Resisting'. It was followed by a Christmas dinner in the Club Bistro.

This issue of *Unity* reproduces the papers given by Cathy Bloch and Irene Arrowsmith at the second forum. It also reproduces the Sydney Hiroshima Day address given by Ray Markey for 1998, entitled 'In Praise of Protest', and includes a collection of documents and commentary by Neville Arrowsmith on 'May Day In The Illawarra'. Finally, there is a poem from the Cooperative Women's Guild from about the turn of the century.

Ray Markey

**We welcome contributions of any kind for Unity
We welcome contributions of any kind for the 1999
conference.**

**DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP
FOR 1999. FORMS ARE ENCLOSED.**