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Illawarra Unity: Editorial 2005

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Abstract

Labour movement struggles have a significant cultural dimension. The role of music has been particularly important. IWW songster and activist Joe Hill personified the intimate connection between songs and struggle. When contemporary folk musician John McCutcheon performs, as he invariably does in Australia, 'The Ballad of Joe Hill', he prefaces the song with a wonderful tale about Paul Robeson singing for the workers on the steps of the Sydney Opera House (see John McCutcheon Live at Wolf Trap). Folk music is story-telling and it gives a voice to the oppressed, the marginalised and the working classes. In this issue of Illawarra Unity, we feature three interviews with internationally prominent folk singers, all of whom have supported actively the labour movement.

Editorial

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The portrayal of working class struggle in film and television has been on occasion highly significant. One thinks immediately of the films of Ken Loach and, in particular, his television series *Days of Hope*. There was also the wonderful *When the Boat Comes In*, which Bob Fox brings back to life with his rendition of the show’s title song “Dance to My Daddy”. Even some North American films have dabbled with class struggle—Warren Beatty’s *Reds*, John Sayles’ *Matewan* and, more recently, *Harlan County War*. And one of the first films of the Australian film revival in the 1960s was *Sunday Too Far Away* which dealt with the lives and loves of shearers. Nonetheless, industrial or working issues have rarely been explored thoroughly in Australian films. In this issue, Michael Organ examines a little known film from 1912, *Strike*.

Unity is also pleased to publish Michael's tribute to the late Bill Whiley that he read to the House of Representatives last year.

The new editorial collective of *Unity* would like to acknowledge the important contributions made by the founding editor Ray Markey. Val Dolan's tribute to Ray begins this issue. Finally, *Unity* is grateful to the Faculty of Arts at the University of Wollongong for pledging on-going support.

Anthony Ashbolt