Labour and politics in New South Wales, 1880-1900

Raymond A. Markey
University of Wollongong
NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
LABOUR AND POLITICS
IN NEW SOUTH WALES
1880-1900

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
from
THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG
by
RAYMOND A. MARKEY, B.A.(Hons.), Dip.Ed.

Department of History,
1983
This thesis is my own work.

R.A. Markey.
for my mother and father.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations in Text</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference Abbreviations</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Note on the term 'Labo(u)r'</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synopsis</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Part I. Social and Industrial Structure

**Introduction**

1. Urban Industry
   - Industrial Structure
   - Workforce Structure
   - Wages
   - Unemployment and Underemployment
   - Working Conditions
   - Living Conditions
   - The Aristocracy of Labour, Social Mobility, and Productive Re-organization

2. The Primary Sector
   - Smallholders and the Pastoral Industry
   - Metal Mining and Broken Hill
   - Coal Mining

3. Transport
   - Maritime Transport
   - The Railways

4. The Role of the State
   - Public Works and Public Employment
   - State Welfare
   - The State As A Repressive Apparatus

## Part II. Labo(u)r Organization

**Introduction**

5. Trade Unions
   - Membership
   - New Unionism and Industrial Strategy and Tactics
   - Join Organization and the Development of a Class Leadership
   - The Holocaust of the 1890s
The Emergence of the Labor Party 264

Collectivist Organization From Below 319
Trade Unions and Democratic Experience 319
Co-operation 342
Municipal Labor Organization 353

Part III. Ideology and Policy: The Emergence of Laborism

Introduction 368

The Decline of Social Democracy 374
Political Reform 374
Industrial Legislation 392

Labor and Socialism 424
Socialism in Labor's Platform 426
A National Bank 430
Socialists and Labor 438

Labor and the State 467
State Welfare 467
Working Class Distrust of the State 472
Arbitration 480

The Populist Paradigm: Racism and the Land 505
Labour and Immigration 505
Labour Racism 510
Land and Labour 529
The Populist Paradigm 544

Epilogue 546

Conclusion 554

Appendices

Appendix 1. Workforce Statistics 564

A1.1 Percentage Grades of Occupation by Industrial Classification, 1891-1901. 568-9

A1.2 Percentage Proportion of Male, Female, and Total Breadwinners in Industrial Classifications, NSW Census, 1871-1901. 570

A1.3 Number of Manufacturing Establishments and Hands Employed, NSW and Metropolitan District, 1881-1901. 571-2

A1.4 Employment According to Censuses in Industrial Class, NSW, 1891-1901. 573-5

A1.5 Number of Hands Employed in Principal Industries, NSW, 1881-1901. 576-7
A1.6 Comparison of NSW and Victorian Factory Employment and Size of Establishments Classed According to Number of Hands Employed. 578

A1.7 Percentage of Grades of Occupation within Industrial Class, NSW, 1891-1901. 579-80

A1.8 Membership of Principal Crafts, NSW, 1901. 581

A1.9 Juveniles in Employment in Industrial Class, 1891-1901. 582-3

Appendix 2. Trade Union Formation, Membership, and Affiliation to Trades and Labour Council 583

A2.1 Trade Union Formation, TLC Affiliation and Membership. 584-96

A2.2 NSW Total Union Membership, 1891. 597

A2.3 TLC Affiliation, 1871-99. 598

Bibliography. 599
# LIST OF TABLES

## Part 1 Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Percentage of Census Grades of Occupation of Total Breadwinners, NSW, 1891-1901.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Percentage Proportion of Breadwinners in Census Industrial Classes, NSW, 1871-1901.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Metropolitan Proportion of Manufacturing Employment and Establishments, Selected Years, 1881-1901.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Number and Size of Factories in the Sydney and Newcastle Areas, 1900.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Percentage of Grades of Occupation of Total Breadwinners in Census Industrial Class, New South Wales, 1891-1901.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Number of Manufacturing Establishments and Hands Employed, NSW and Metropolitan District, 1881-1901.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Average Hands per Factory, Sydney and NSW, 1881-1901.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Employment and Factory Size in Metals and Machinery Industrial Sector, NSW, Selected Years, 1890-1901.</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Employment and Factory Size in Principal Factories, NSW, Selected Years, 1885-1901.</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Female Employment, 1881-1901.</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Percentage Proportion of Males and Females in the Workforce by Census Industrial Classification, NSW, 1871-1901.</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Percentage of Female Employment in Metropolitan Manufacturing, 1881-1901.</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Female Employment in Manufacturing and Works, 1882-1901, NSW.</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Females as Percentage Proportion of Workforce in Principal Industries of Female Employment, Selected Years, 1883-1901.</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Wrecks and Disasters to Shipping in NSW Jurisdiction, 1881-1901.

Table 5: NSW Railway Employment, 1881-1901.

Table 6: NSW Railway Employment in 1901.

Table 7: Accidents on Railways, 1884-1901.

Chapter 4

Table 1: Employees on NSW Railway Construction, 1883-1891.

Table 2: NSW Government Expenditure on Public Works, 1881-1901.

Table 3: Most Frequently Gaolied Persons in NSW in the 1890s Grouped by Occupation and in Order of Frequency.

Table 4: Number Charged under the Master and Servants' Act, Selected Years, 1887-1901.

Table 5: Seamen's Convictions for Work-Related Offences For Selected Years, 1887-1901.

Table 6: Some Charges for Offences Against Property With Violence, Selected Years, 1887-1901.

Chapter 6

Table 1: Geographical Distribution of Labor Seats.

Chapter 7

Table 1: Municipal Background of 1891 Labor Members.

Chapter 9

Table 1: Socialist Delegates to the TLC, 1890-1892.

CHAPTER 10

Table 1: Number of New Registrations Under the 1881 Trade Union Act by Year.
Table 2: Unionists as Militia Members. 477

Table 3: Union/Employer Attitudes on Conciliation/Arbitration at 1891 Strikes Commission. 484-7
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thesis-writing involves fairly individualistic, often isolated, work. Nevertheless, I am grateful to a number of people who have made this task easier than it might otherwise have been. I have been fortunate in having Associate Professor Jim Hagan as a perceptive, knowledgeable, and patient supervisor, as well as a supportive friend and colleague. Dr. John Merritt, of the History Department, Australian National University, first opened my eyes to the nature of the AWU, and has been a constant source of advice and moral support, particularly in the early stages of my work. Dr. K. Macnab, of the History Department, Sydney University, offered advice at an early stage of the project, when it was conceived as an M.A. thesis at Sydney. Michael Saclier and the staff of the ANU Archives of Business and Labour were extremely helpful in the research stage. I also wish to thank the unions, particularly the AWU, whose records I consulted so extensively.

In the early stages of writing my dear friend Sandy Halley offered extensive moral support. The final stages of thesis madness could not have been endured without Maureen Dibden's unselfish support and companionship. Ann Webb was a long-suffering technical counsellor, as well as typist extraordinaire. Muriel Inglis, Anne-Maree Stewart, Marjorie Dibden, and Maggie Bronneberg gave generously of their time and patience in the final typing stages. Finally, Rob and Josie Castle, of the Economics and History Departments, Wollongong University, and Malcolm Cook, of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, offered advice and assistance beyond the normal call of duty for proof-readers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA Co.</td>
<td>Australian Agricultural Company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALF</td>
<td>Australasian Labour Federation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMA</td>
<td>Amalgamated Miners' Association of Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASB</td>
<td>Active Service Brigade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASE</td>
<td>Amalgamated Society of Engineers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASL</td>
<td>Australian Socialist League.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASU</td>
<td>Amalgamated Shearers' Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATU</td>
<td>Australasian Typographical Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWU</td>
<td>Australian Workers' Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BHP</td>
<td>Broken Hill Proprietary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSN Co.</td>
<td>Clarence and Richmond Steam Navigation Company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSA</td>
<td>Farmers' and Settlers' Association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLU</td>
<td>General Labourers' Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISN Co.</td>
<td>Illawarra Steam Navigation Company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEL</td>
<td>Labour Electoral League.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLL</td>
<td>Political Labor League.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLP</td>
<td>Parliamentary Labor Party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QSS Co.</td>
<td>Queensland Steam Shipping Company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDC</td>
<td>Sydney District Council of ALP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDF</td>
<td>Social Democratic Federation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STL</td>
<td>Single Tax League.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLC</td>
<td>Trades and Labour Council.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCE ABBREVIATIONS

ANU - Australian National University.
AR - Annual Report.
cf. - compare with.
CPD - Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates.
HRDDMM - Hunter River Miners' District Delegate Meeting Minutes.
ML - Mitchell Library.
n. - footnote.
NSWPDPD - New South Wales Parliamentary Debates.
NSWTA - New South Wales Typographical Association.
RCIRA - Reports under the Census and Industrial Returns Act, 1890.
RRCS - Report of the Royal Commission on Strikes, 1891.
SOA - Steamship Owners' Association of Australia.
SR - New South Wales Statistical Register.
SMH - Sydney Morning Herald.
VPLANSW - Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales.
A NOTE ON THE TERM 'LABO(U)R'

Contemporary spellings can be confusing. In general, I have used 'Labor' solely to refer to the Labor Party; and 'Labour' to refer to the labour movement as a whole, i.e. the Labor Party and the trade unions. However, the political organization established by the unions was usually referred to as the 'Labour Party' in its earliest years, 1890-4, and when referring specifically to that period I have remained faithful to contemporary usage.

The dropping of the 'u' from Labor's title reflects the urban unions' loss of control of the Party. ASU publications dropped the 'u' from all words normally ending '-our'. As it became the dominant force in the Party, its spelling, 'Labor', was adopted generally.
This thesis studies the motivation and nature of working class mobilization from which the New South Wales Labor Party emerged in the 1890s, and the nature of that Party. It concentrates, in particular, upon the relationship between trade unions and the Labor Party, and the relationship between the Party leadership and its rank and file. The thesis is divided into three parts.

Part I 'Social and Industrial Structure' considers the material basis of working class mobilization. It examines the working and living conditions of the basic groups within the working class: urban workers, rural workers, coal and metal miners, and transport workers (marine and railway). For all of these groups, working and living conditions commonly fell short of colonial expectations of prosperity during the great economic boom from the 1860s to 1890. In many cases, working and living conditions actually declined in the 1880s. Furthermore, the opportunities for social advancement to independence from wage earning, which had been a powerful aspect of colonial expectations, were declining for most of these groups by the end of the 1880s. These trends were the result of economic problems in major industries, of economic restructuring from primary industry and building towards more large-scale manufacturing industry, and of related changes in productive organisation and workforce structure.

Part II, 'Labour Organization', analyzes the organizational response of the working class. Trade unionism spread rapidly amongst semi and unskilled workers in the 1880s. It was also characterized
by a heightened degree of class consciousness and joint organization which saw the Trades and Labour Council develop class leadership.

Closer, and more militant, organization also occurred amongst important employers' groups. On the union side, these changes have been associated with the 'new unionism' of the shearsers and miners. But it is argued here that the urban unions, especially the crafts, led in these developments, largely because of the changes in their work experience.

The decimation of the unions in the depression and great strikes of the 1890's, together with the hostile role of the state, hastened the unions' organization of the Labor Party. However, during 1892-5 the urban unions lost control of the Party to a coalition of utopian socialist intelligentsia and the Shearers'Union (AWU), which delivered a large number of country Parliamentary seats to the Party. This new leadership marked a change in the participatory democratic and collectivist nature of working class organization, which had been evident in the nature of union government, the growth of co-operatives, and the spontaneous outgrowth of municipal political organization.

The Labor Party moved towards a more centralized form of organization, which emphasized a moderate Parliamentary strategy.

This change was reflected in Labor policy and ideology, the subject of Part III. As the new leadership consolidated itself, the emphasis on a class-based Party, with a social democratic policy of political reform and industrial legislation, shifted towards a populist Party, despite a short-lived challenge by socialists. Labor's populism derived from an electoral strategy aimed at 'intermediate social strata' as well as the working class, and from the dominant role of the AWU in the Party. The significance of the AWU in this regard
was that it was dominated by small landholders. Populism, therefore, was mainly responsible for the 'Laborist' policy which emerged at the end of the 1890s, and which concentrated on arbitration, White Australia, land reform, and a limited state welfare apparatus. As an ideology, 'Laborism' assumed the neutrality of the state apparatus. With this ideological basis and policy, the Labor Party became the vehicle for the deliverance of the working class to a National Settlement between the classes in the new Commonwealth, after the most intensive class conflict Australia had ever experienced.