Industrial relations in the Australian engineering industry, 1920-1945: the Amalgamated Engineering Union and craft unionism

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Chapter Nine

Union Activities

The AEU's activities during the Second World War need to be examined against the background of mixed conditions. On the one hand, the Union had to make compromises to its time-honoured principles, for the sake of the War effort. In fact, the AEU made the most significant compromise in its history by allowing dilutees and women into skilled trades. Thus, the rigidity of the apprentice-tradesman system was put under serious strain. On the other hand, the Union was placed in an advantageous bargaining position, because the goodwill of skilled engineers was crucial to the successful War effort. Competent tradesmen were in very short supply and that was the very reason why the introduction of dilutees was inevitable. Thus, it was the Union that held the upper hand in its relationship with the employers and the Government.

Although the AEU was ready for necessary compromises, it was never ready for the complete relinquishing of craft regulation, the preservation of which had been its very raison d'être as a craft union. Thus, the guiding principle of its activities remained basically unaltered during this period, despite unavoidable anomalies resulting from the emergency situation. The Union insisted that there should be a clear demarcation between skilled and non-skilled operations and skilled ones should be performed exclusively by those qualified as skilled, even if the temporary addition of dilutees to the skilled workforce from outside the apprenticeship system was inevitable for a successful War effort. The employers, on the other hand, were keen on making whatever inroads into the craft sanctum they could by taking advantage of the situation. From the Union's point of view, compromises were only temporary and things should return to normal once the War was over. Hence, Union activities during wartime focused on minimising the departure from conventional work practices.
When the dilution agreement was finally reached between the Government and the AEU in May 1940, it naturally aroused concern among Union members that it might lead to the wholesale crumbling of craft regulation and working conditions they had hitherto preserved and improved. An AEU Organiser expressed his apprehension and alerted the rank-and-file members as follows:

I anticipate all kinds of propositions being put forward to meet the position, such as the seven-day week and an attempt to declassify many jobs and a wholesale urge to process work..."Organisation", therefore, is the only answer to any such moves and the closest co-operation of all sections of the Union to protect our standards and our rights.¹

In fact, dilutees flooded into the industry to a much greater extent than initially expected. When the dilution scheme was being negotiated between the parties in early 1940, the number of 'added' tradesmen planned to be produced through the scheme was less than three thousand.² Eventually, however, about 37,000 dilutees were poured into the engineering trades as the War effort intensified. Under the circumstances, the first and foremost task of the Union was to hold control over these dilutees.

The spirit of the dilutee agreement was that no 'added' tradesmen should be employed until the supply of legitimate tradesmen, i.e. AEU members, were exhausted, and this was made sure by the setting-up of the Dilutee Committees on which the employment of dilutees was sanctioned. As the Committees included union representatives, the AEU was able to check the deployment of dilutees. That dilutees were gathered and trained at technical colleges eased the Organisers' task of recruiting them. Moreover, although the dilutee agreement allowed the employers to train dilutees at their own premises, in practice, the Union staunchly opposed such attempts and succeeded as a whole in confining the training to technical colleges.³

¹ MJR, October 1940, p. 20.
² Ibid., April 1940, p. 7.
³ See, for instance, ibid., September 1940, p. 23.
Legitimate tradesmen did not regard dilutees as equal. Indeed, officials repeatedly made it clear that 'anyone who is made an "added" tradesman under the Dilution Scheme cannot be continued in employment in the post-war period in the event of there being any recognised tradesmen available and competent to do the work'. Nevertheless, the AEU made reasonable efforts to recruit these dilutees. Thus, due largely to their influx, the AEU membership exploded during wartime. Table 9.1 shows the changes in the AEU membership in this period. As can be seen, the increase accelerated after 1941. It should be remembered that dilutees started to be engaged from late 1940. At the beginning of the War, the AEU membership was about 27,000. It culminated in 1944, exceeding 70,000, an increase of about 2.6 times since 1939.

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>27447</td>
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<td>29536</td>
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Note: The figures are those of June of each year.

In terms of the level of their skill, dilutees were no match for legitimate tradesmen as shown in the previous chapter. Far from being threatened by them, AEU Organisers deplored the poor ability of dilutees and even expressed concern about the efficacy of the training scheme:

Many [dilutees] have been placed in industry...and some have been returned to the college as not quite up to the standard

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4 See, for instance, *ibid.*, June 1941, p. 11.
6 See, for instance, *ibid.*, August 1940, p. 20, September 1940, p. 21 and May 1941, p. 10.
required; but what does the employer expect in six months' training?\(^7\) 

The class of man applying for training has had very little experience, and it is quite apparent that with a man who has little engineering background it is impossible to train him in the time allotted...I am of the opinion that the time has arrived for a review.\(^8\)

Because of their obvious technical inferiority and the AEU's ability to hold control over their deployment, dilutees eventually posed no serious threat to legitimate tradesmen, in spite of the Union's initial concern.

In practice, elevatees were more vexing to the Union. An AEU Organiser remarked, 'Another aspect of this dilution business is far less satisfactory. The elevation of labourers to positions as fitters and machinists without registration...tends to become a menace.'\(^9\)

As shown in previous chapters, the employers, insisting on their managerial right of deployment, had always sought to assign, wherever possible, the non-skilled to skilled operations, while the Union firmly opposed such attempts, in most cases successfully. The problems with elevatees were the continuation of this battle in the controlled wartime economy. From the Union's point of view, elevatees were no different from dilutees. The Court supported this view and made it clear that elevatees should be, like dilutees, registered at the Dilution Committees. In practice, however, it was almost impossible to force the reluctant employers to follow this procedure without the Union's diligent surveillance on the shopfloor.

In fact, AEU Organisers were always complaining of the illicit upgrading of non-skilled workers and repeatedly called for members' vigilance. The Sydney Organiser reported, 'In many shops visited, unregistered dilutees are prevalent and invariably managements pleaded ignorance. Disputes have been numerous'.\(^10\)

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\(^7\) Ibid., p. 9.

\(^8\) Ibid., January 1941, p. 26.

\(^9\) Ibid., September 1940, p. 21.

\(^10\) Ibid., January 1943, pp. 10-11.
Since the AEU was determined not to tolerate any such attempts, a dispute over elevatees even developed into strike action, although the Union itself fully recognised the harm of disrupting the War effort.\textsuperscript{11} The strike itself ended with a comprehensive victory for the Union; the elevatees concerned were demoted from the skilled position.

The Union's frustration was directed not only towards unscrupulous employers but often towards these 'added tradesmen' (both elevatees and trainees included). An AEU Organiser was irritated by their ignorance of trade (craft) unionism:

During the month the greater part of my time has been taken up with organising in the aircraft industry, which is rapidly expanding and which is composed mostly of added tradesmen and dilutees from the Technical Schools. Most of the shops have no idea of Unionism and what it implies, and during the month I endeavored [sic] to enlighten these people in regard to Unionism...\textsuperscript{12}

The Union's rather pejorative attitude towards the non-skilled remained the same as previous periods, although it recruited them on condition that they would vacate their positions for legitimate tradesmen when the economy went back to normal. The following comment by an AEU Organiser indicates the Union's fundamental reluctance to accept non-tradesmen as its members:

The number of requests recently made by individuals desirous of joining the organisation, but who have not the necessary qualifications for membership, is, to say the least, surprising. Many of these applicants come under the conditions of the Dilution Scheme, and the firms employing them are instructed to apply for upgrading. In view of this I would appeal to members to be particularly watchful of new hands starting in their shops, as it is quite obvious, knowing of the shortage of skilled men that these people cannot be anything but those to whom the Dilution Regulations apply.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Ibid.}, February 1943, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid.}, August 1942, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, March 1942, p. 13.
The AEU was still strongly craft-conscious and not open to everybody.

In any event, as the result of the strike mentioned above exemplifies, the Union was able as a whole to hold the traditional line and succeeded in preventing elevatees from seriously undermining the industrial position of legitimate tradesmen, even if it could not completely uproot such attempts. Whenever a dispute over illicit upgrading took place, the Union had the upper hand. Cases were reported where the Union succeeded in putting off the elevation until the non-skilled employees concerned were officially registered at the Dilution Committees.\textsuperscript{14} At some railway shops, the Union reached an agreement with the management that elevatees should always be placed under the supervision of leading hands.\textsuperscript{15} In every district, AEU Organisers exerted great efforts to have those secretly upgraded registered.\textsuperscript{16}

The efforts to register illicit elevatees derived from the AEU's fundamental policy to maintain its traditional craft terrain. For the Union, it was its credo that skilled work had to be entrusted only to those qualified as skilled. Therefore, it was a matter of course that the Union also continued its vigilance on work practices on the shopfloor during wartime as closely as in the previous periods in order to make sure that the tools of trade remained the sole possession of tradesmen.\textsuperscript{17} The Union maintained that the introduction of 'added' tradesmen should in no way blur the demarcation line between skilled and non-skilled operations. Thus, the Union kept opposing, in most cases successfully, the employers' attempts, for instance, to have second class machinists perform first class machinists' jobs and to let second and third class machinists and process workers use micrometers, which was still regarded as tradesmen's tool.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{14} See, for instance, \textit{ibid.}, October 1940, p. 21 and January 1941, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}, December 1942, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{17} See, for instance, \textit{ibid.}, March 1942, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{18} See, for instance, \textit{ibid.}, June 1941, p. 10, May 1943, p. 11 and June 1943, p. 12.
All these efforts by the Union and their generally successful results meant that the Union maintained its power to qualify the management's right of deployment during wartime. It also should be noted that the Union sometimes interfered with the rights of the management for other purposes than simply defending the demarcation line. For instance, at the Australian Iron and Steel, the Union prevented the management's attempt to transfer an AEU Shop Steward to an other department, replacing him with an elevatee. The Organiser who handled the matter remarked, 'while we could not oppose the elevation of a non-tradesmen if same was carried out in accordance with the Dilution Agreement, we take a strong exception to the removal of the Shop Steward'.

The Union also kept its eye on junior workers as well as dilutees. This too was the continuation of the same effort from the pre-war periods, especially after the 1930 Beeby Award allowed the introduction of unindentured juniors into the trades where apprenticeships were not provided. As shown in previous chapters, the employers had always tried to avoid indenturing juniors to shirk legal responsibilities, and the same tendency persisted in wartime too. In fact, when the dilutee training scheme commenced, the employers hoped that it would lead in the future to the replacement of the apprenticeship system by a trainee one, although, as shown in the previous chapter, the employers became disillusioned by dilutees by the end of the War. In any case, the employers tended to let unindentured juniors perform apprentices' work, where the Union was not watchful. Thus, AWU Organisers continued to take great pains to find out and get indentured those unapprenticed juniors who were actually 'learning the trade'.

Of course, apprentices themselves were among the major concerns of the AEU. The Union had always done its best to prevent apprentices from being abused as cheap (skilled) labour. During wartime, the Union's concern intensified, because the proportion of apprentices to tradesmen was loosened from 1:3 to 1:1 to provide

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more skilled workers needed for the War effort. Again, in the absolute dearth of the skilled workforce, the Union had no choice but to accept this measure to train more apprentices.21 Because of the wartime anomalies, it became more difficult for the Union to see to it that apprentices were trained properly under the prescribed conditions.

At the same time, however, the Union was able to improve the working conditions of apprentices in some respects, taking advantage of the enhanced industrial position of skilled labour. For instance, the Union succeeded in forcing employers to pay tradesmen's rate for the final (fifth) year on the grounds that the extremely long hours of overtime prevailing trained them enough to be paid at full tradesmen's rate.22 It is also worth noting that apprentices themselves started to make a move on their own initiative. There was a case, for instance, where apprentices took strike action in defiance of the shop steward's advice, protesting the foreman's mistreatment of a fellow apprentice and the management's neglect of their right to attend technical college.23 As a whole, the industrial position of apprentices was not lowered and the significance of the apprenticeship system itself was not undermined in this period.

As the War economy continued to expand, labour shortage became more and more serious, compelling the Union to make a further compromise. Because of the absolute lack of manpower, the Union finally had to accept the last thing they wanted: the introduction of female labour. As had been the case with the dilutee scheme, the AEU's attitude on this issue was, in an Organiser' words, 'to, as far as possible, protect the members' trade rights without...holding up the necessary all-in War effort'.24

Before the War, the employment of women in the metal industries was limited to trades like coremaking and assembling of radio,

22 See, for instance, ibid., July 1940, p. 6 and April 1941, p. 12.
23 Ibid., March 1943, p. 13.
24 Ibid., August 1942, p. 15.
telephone and electrical appliances. With the intensification of the War effort, the pressure for a large scale mobilisation of female labour mounted, especially at munition and aircraft factories. No longer indifferent to this matter, the AEU decided that if the introduction of women was inevitable, it was more practical to admit and control them through an official body with strict regulations. Thus, the Union reached an agreement with the Government and the Women's Employment Board was set up in March 1942. It should be noted that the same type of principle was applied to the establishment of the Women's Employment Board for the purpose of protecting male workers, as that applied to the establishment of the Dilution Committee for the purpose of protecting skilled tradesmen. That is, first, no women should be employed until and unless male workers were no longer available. Second, once the emergency situation was over, women should vacate their positions to accommodate men. The Women's Employment Board, like the Dilution Committee, comprised representatives of both the employers and the unions and a neutral chairman. The employers intending to employ women for jobs which had previously been performed by men or were newly created in Australia, had to refer to the Board for permission, so that the unions concerned were informed of the number of women each employer was planning to employ and the content of the work they would be assigned to.

In order to maintain the preference of men over women in employment, trade unions forced Prime Minister Curtin to guarantee that female labour introduced for the War economy would not cause any disadvantage for male workers when circumstances returned to normal. Still unsatisfied by this pledge, the AEU demanded, unsuccessfully, that the Government should enact a law to oblige women to leave the industry on the termination of the War. Moreover, the Union requested all the more emphatically the adoption of the equal pay principle for both sexes to ensure men's preference in employment. The Union assumed that, given the same wages, the employers would prefer to hire male workers.

The real state of affairs was, however, far behind the Unions' claim. The Basic Wage for females at the time was limited to 55 per cent of the males'. At Government's munition factories, an agreement was made in 1939 that female employees were to be paid two thirds of the male rate for the same work. Under these circumstances, it can be regarded as a significant gain, if not a complete triumph, that the metal unions finally had the Women's Employment Board decide that 90 per cent of the male rate had to be paid for females who had completed four week probation, during which 60 per cent of the corresponding male rate was prescribed.

However, the AEU, which was the driving force of the equal pay campaign, was not at all content with the decision, adamantly adhering to the 100 per cent principle. At the shopfloor level, therefore, the Union continued its efforts, including strike action, to force individual employers to pay the same rates for women, while obliging unscrupulous employers to pay at least 90 per cent of the male wages as determined by the Women's Employment Board.

The AEU also made efforts to prevent women from entering into skilled trades, trying to make it a rule that female workers should be assigned to no more skilled operation than process work. In reality, however, as a rapidly increasing number of women entered into skilled trades with the intensification of the War effort, it became impossible for the Union to cling to this policy. In searching for measures to control the situation, the AEU negotiated with the Government and eventually succeeded in having it make a regulation which ensured 100 per cent of the male rate for female employees engaged on first and second class machinists' work. In addition, it was made obligatory that 'added female tradesmen', like their male counterparts, should be referred to the Dilution Committees, which admitted and allocated them with the Union's consent.

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26 Ibid., February 1943, p. 6.
28 Ibid., December 1943, p. 12.
Before the commencement of the War, the AEU had found no practical necessity to recruit women. As the War went on, however, AEU officials felt a growing need to organise them, although the AEU rules still prohibited females from joining. In fact, it was not until January 1943 that the reluctant London Executive gave the Australian branch of the AEU official permission of recruiting female members. Following the permission, the C.C. urged the recruitment of female workers in the hope that it would help the Union present better cases at the Women's Employment Board and the Arbitration Court.29

The real aim of organising female workers was not so much to protect them as to protect male tradesmen. On some issues, therefore, the AEU took an overtly discriminatory stance against women. For instance, the Union held that women should be excluded from the toolroom, the tradesmen's sanctum, and sometimes forced the employers to do so.30 When women were actually employed in the toolroom, the Union demanded, in most cases successfully, that such women should be paid full tradesmen's rate.31 Moreover, the Union, in an attempt to confine women to process workers' job, sometimes ordered its female members to refuse to use the tools of trade including micrometers.32

Incidentally, however, female workers themselves were not necessarily docile and inactive. Sometimes they took industrial action on their own initiative. Cases were reported where female employees struck, demanding to the management that they should be paid properly according to the rates determined by the Women's Employment Board.33

Initially, the large scale introduction of female labour into the industry, and even into skilled trades raised grave concern among unionists. In the end, however, the Union was able to control the

29 Ibid., February 1943, p. 6.
31 Ibid., September 1943, p. 13.
32 Ibid., March 1944, p. 10.
33 See, for instance, Ibid., November 1943, p. 14 and January 1944, p. 4.
situation, with the help of the Women's Employment Board and, fundamentally, because of its industrial power at the shopfloor level. As was the case with male dilutees, female workers were mobilised mainly for war-related production, and the level of their skill was no comparison to experienced tradesmen. Thus, although women were in fact used as assemblers, welders and turret lathe operators to the irritation of skilled male workers, so far as the core members of the AEU, that is, fitters, turners and toolmakers, were concerned, women posed no serious threat to their industrial status.

Although the AEU did make some significant compromises in support for the War effort, it was only with regard to the supply of the skilled workforce that the Union was ready to compromise. So far as work practices were concerned, however, the Union was determined not to retreat from the traditional line. As shown earlier, even in this period, the Union clung adamantly to the principle that skilled operations should be performed exclusively by those qualified as skilled. In addition, the Union also maintained its staunch opposition to any kind of speed-up tactics. The C.C. argued that production could be increased by fully utilising all the plants and machines with the proper planning 'without asking anyone to work harder or faster'. Therefore, although the Union was ready to cooperate, if necessary, with the 24-hour operation of the plants with three shifts, it made clear that 'there is no idea of asking for speed up methods to be introduced, or, if introduced, tolerated'.

The employers, on the other hand, intensified their efforts to introduce the time study method. Technically, its adoption was made easier by the standardisation of production which was accelerated during wartime. The Union, especially sensitive to the introduction of stop watches, resisted such attempts in various measures. At one time, it protested directly to the management and, at another, it refused at the Dilution Committees to send dilutees to shops where stop watches were introduced. Although the Union

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34 Ibid., July 1942, p. 6.
35 Ibid.
36 See, for instance, Ibid., April 1941, p. 11 and July 1941, p. 10.
was unable to draw from the Arbitration Court a decision to prohibit time study, it kept its opposition at the shopfloor level, as a result of which, the confrontation sometimes developed into strike action.\(^{37}\)

In addition to time study, the employers also pressed hard, as they had in previous periods, for such contentious strategies as having one employee operate two machines and appointing union members to staff positions to avoid the application of the Award. With regard to these matters, the Arbitration Court provided the Union with no protective measures. In fact, it officially declined the AEU's plea to ban the operation of two machines by one worker.\(^{38}\) Nevertheless, the Union, no more tolerant than before to such practices, continued its shopfloor resistance, mostly successfully.\(^{39}\)

Although the Union could not uproot such employers' attempts that contravened craft regulation, it was only in rather isolated incidents that the employers succeeded in such attempts. For instance, piecework was prevalent in some sections of the metal industries, especially in machine moulding and tinsmithing where mechanisation and simplification of the production process developed to a much greater extent than other trades.\(^{40}\) However, so far as the core members of the AEU, namely fitters and turners, were concerned, the heterogeneity of their work and the strong industrial power of their Union still prevented the wartime anomalies from providing the employers with an opportunity to break traditional work practices.

Not only did the AEU succeed in defending traditional work practices from the employers' aggression; the Union also took the offensive, making the most of its enhanced bargaining position because of the strategic importance its members assumed in the War program. Among the major achievements of the AEU during

\(^{37}\) See, for instance, ibid., March 1944, pp. 11-12, March 1945, p. 25 and August 1945, p. 5.

\(^{38}\) 55 CAR 354 at p354.

\(^{39}\) See, for instance, MJR, February 1941, p. 16, April 1941, p. 11, November 1941, p. 12 and August 1943, p. 11.

\(^{40}\) 54 CAR 759 and 55 CAR 160.
this period was a week of annual leave, which was finally given by the Court in 1941. Annual leave was one of the major objectives the Union had been pursuing since the late 1930s. Despite the Court's initial rejection in 1939, the Union continued its campaign, insisting that 'annual leave with pay' was 'a right not a privilege'. On the shopfloor, the Union kept putting pressure on individual employers, without hesitating to resort to direct action. As a matter of fact, the Union gained annual leave from such leading manufactures as John Heins & Sons and the Clyde Engineering Co. as a result of successful strike tactics. The 1941 Court decision was, in fact, a ratification of these determined actions by the Union, although the actual use of the leave intended for the Christmas period had to be postponed for the sake of continual production.

Moreover, the Union did not slacken its 'closed shop' campaign, despite the extended mobilisation of labour into the industry from various sources. With the all-time slogan of '100 per cent union shop' held firmly, AEU members often refused to work with non-unionists. In most cases, the threat of strike was enough to force the employers to have their non-unionist employees join the Union and to refer their new employees to Shop Stewards.

It should be noted that the role of shop stewards added to its importance in this period. First, this was because the large scale introduction of non-skilled workers, including dilutees and women, necessitated tighter vigilance by the Union on the shopfloor, in order that relevant regulations were policed. Second, as labour intensified for War purposes, frustration and discontent of rank and file members accumulated, causing numerous problems to be solved at each shop: problems with the tea and crib time, washing, clothing

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41 *MJR*, January 1940, p. 19.
42 Ibid., March 1941, p. 2. As to other examples of strike action, see, for instance, *ibid.*, June 1941, p. 4.
43 Ibid., August 1942, p. 15.
and lighting facilities, the making of the proper roster for shift work and so forth.46

Among such problems was the wage issue, which became more a matter of shopfloor contention than of Arbitration in this period. With the Government seeking wage restriction, the Arbitration Court rejected unions' demand for a Basic Wage increase in 1940, the demand which was never to be met for the duration of the War.47 In terms of margins, the Court increased the tradesmen's margin by 6s in 1941, so that it was levelled to the rate the Government's munition works had been offering, together with a week's annual leave, to attract skilled workers. This was the only margin increase the Court made during wartime, and although tradesman engineers recovered by this decision the Harvester wage ratio between the skilled and the unskilled, the real value of this increase was weakened by inflation.

What became the more important part of engineers' remuneration in this period was that which was earned through excessively long hours of overtime.48 As mentioned, even a 60-hour week was not unusual at the peak time of production, when 44 hours was standard. As a result, the real income of tradesmen rose rapidly and considerably beyond the minimum rate prescribed in the Award.

However, this in turn caused serious problems for Union activities. As shown in previous chapters, the AEU had always been the leading advocate for shorter hours and staunchly opposed systematic overtime, this policy having been firmly supported by the rank and file members. As the War effort intensified, however, the Union was compelled to compromise on overtime, as well as other issues mentioned earlier. If the Union placed a ban on overtime, AEU officials assumed, more dilutees would be introduced. For the same reason, they preferred overtime to shift

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46 See, for instance, March 1942, p. 13.
47 44 CAR 41
48 See, for instance, MJR, August 1941, p. 13.
Thus, AEU officials connived at overtime, but only to the minimum necessary.

To these officials' anger, however, the rank and file members became willing to work longer hours, because their income increased on account of the enormous overtime they worked. Then, according to an Organiser, when the excessive overtime started to diminish, some members 'asked [Union officials] to make an effort to have the hours increased to at least 54 to 56 per week', which the Organiser 'hardly think[s] is keeping with the policy of our Organisation'. This change of members' attitude to overtime was a great disappointment to Union officials. The Melbourne Organiser admonished the members in harsh words:

Almost without exception members are concentrating on working overtime. Absolute freedom is given to the acquisitive side of members' natures...[A]ll thought of Trade Union principle is being deserted, the interest of their fellows being set aside in the mad race to secure as much overtime as possible...[T]he real reason that prompts men to this action, that will undoubtedly militate against the solidarity of our movement, is "greed".

Union discipline was generally deteriorating under these circumstances. While AEU officials deplored the members' apathy reflected in poor attendance at branch and shop meetings, they were also vexed by volatile wild cat strikes which they could not control. They were especially concerned that there was 'a tendency [for Shop Stewards and the Shop Committees] to assume the functions of the administrative and policy-making bodies', albeit 'their main concern [should be] to carry out Union policy'. Shop stewards were repeatedly criticised for inducing direct action without first referring the matter to the District Committee.

49 Ibid., August 1942, p. 4.
50 Ibid., October 1942, p. 12.
51 Ibid., March 1941, p. 24.
52 See, for instance, ibid., August 1942, p. 7, June 1944, p. 6 and November-December 1944, p. 9.
53 Ibid.
54 See, for instance, ibid., March 1941, p. 24.
were some incidents which indicated the increased power of the Shop Committees. For instance, at McDonalds' in Melbourne where the management had always taken an aggressive stance against craft regulation, the management was finally forced to promise that it would confer with the Shop Committee when it planned any changes to conventional workshop practices.55

Although activities of Shop Stewards and the Shop Committees were invigorated in this period, they had no political or ideological intentions. Basically, they were volatile and desperate attempts to ventilate frustration mounted on the shopfloor. As an Organiser reported, such undiscipline was found mainly 'in the big money, long hours, and heavy industries, where men are tired and tempers frayed and easily aroused, and where there is...sufficient cash for a day or two off'.56

In any event, in the face of an increased number of unauthorised strikes, the C.C. again clarified its view on direct action, reiterating the Union's policy established in the earlier period:

If present happenings are to continue—that is, workers leaving their employment without first advising the Union...and allowing plans to be devised, which very often secure the desires of the workers without the resort to direct action--then the [Labour] Movement leaves itself exposed to attack. Direct action is a valuable weapon, it must not be destroyed by the careless use of same.57

From the Union officials' point of view, direct action should be avoided as much as possible and used only as the last resort.

Their attitude to the Arbitration Court also remained unchanged. The C.C. proposed some reform to the system, like the 'greater use of conciliation' and the appointment of judges who had 'a good knowledge of industry'. However, it was sure of the efficacy of the system itself: 'It is not necessary to destroy the whole of the

55 Ibid., January 1945, p. 11.
56 Ibid., November-December, p. 9.
57 Ibid., June 1944, p. 6.
present structure to make the present system satisfactory'.

Thus, the Union's basic policy in handling industrial disputes remained what had been established in the earlier period as labourism.

The AEU's love-hate relationships with other unions also remained the same. They fought together for the common cause. However, their relationships were not necessarily smooth, when their interests differed.

The AEU continued its co-operation with other unions for various objectives. Of particular importance among such objectives in this period was the campaign for a closed union shop. All metal unions at the time felt the need for intensifying their organising effort under the circumstances where an enormous number of workers were entering into the metal industries. Many cases were reported where metal unions including the AEU, the ASE, the FIA and the Moulders' Union orchestrated such joint actions as checking union cards at the company gate and even strike action in order to recruit new members and eliminate non-unionists.

The metal unions also established inter-union shop committees to counteract the management's aggression more effectively at such anti-union firms as Waygood-Otis in Melbourne where, as mentioned, time study was adopted against workers' protest.

These efforts by the metal unions for closer co-operation led to the establishment of the Metal Trades Federation in June 1943, which comprised the AEU, the ASE, the Blacksmiths' Society, the Boilermakers' Society, the Federated Moulders' Union, the Sheetmetal Workers' Union and the FIA. The purpose of this body was, 'to deal with war and post-war problems', 'to secure uniform action...in connection with proceedings before the Commonwealth Arbitration Court' and 'to settle disputes between members [of the Federation]'.

58 Ibid., February 1945, p. 12.
59 See, for instance, ibid., July 1943, p. 3 and May 1945, p. 16.
60 Ibid., June 1944, p. 23.
61 Ibid., September 1943, pp. p3-4.
While unions acted in solidarity for common objectives, they still could not overcome their different interests. Inter-union disputes during wartime arose from the same problems as in the previous periods.

There was no end for demarcation disputes, because technological developments blurred further the conventional trade boundaries. The AEU's disputes with the Boilermakers' and the Plumbers' over pipe fitting, welding and simple drilling remained chronic. The ETU, which always claimed the right to organise lathe operators in electrical shops, continued to irritate the AEU. Moreover, the large increase in the number of process workers added to the seriousness of the challenge from the non-skilled FIA which insisted on its right to accommodate them.

Moreover, the introduction of dilutees and elevatees complicated the problem. The AEU demanded that when members of other unions were assigned to skilled occupations as dilutees and elevatees, the membership of these 'added' tradesmen should be shifted to the AEU for the duration of their service as such. This demand sometimes caused friction with relevant unions.

In most cases, the AEU resolved these inter-union disputes to its satisfaction. Nonetheless, mutual mistrust between unions was exposed on these occasions. It should be emphasised again that the AEU's self-confidence and pride as the leader of not only the metal unions but the labour movement as a whole were themselves often the cause of discord within the labour ranks. As had always been the case, the AEU often acted independently of the rest of the movement, detesting being dragged down by other unions which were inclined to compromise on terms that the AEU could not tolerate. During the War, this self-seeking attitude of the AEU was

63 See, for instance, ibid., September 1941, p. 12.
64 Ibid., November 1941, p. 14.
65 For instance, the AEU had a dispute with the Coachmakers' over this issue. See ibid., October 1941, p. 10.
typically displayed in its separate negotiation with the Government over the dilution scheme without consultation with the ACTU to which the AEU was affiliated. The ACTU criticised the AEU for its individualistic behaviour, with leftist unions, which supported the Soviet Union, accusing the Union of its collaboration with the War effort itself. The AEU remained defiant despite these criticisms, insisting on its right to take care of its trade in its own best interest. The C.C. stated as follows on this matter:

[T]he A.E.U. was not prepared to allow organisations who do not cater for the classifications concerned [i.e. skilled engineers like fitters and turners] to give any say in determining matters affecting them...Those who have been our critics...are after all only advertising their own apathy and indicating...that the A.E.U. is alive to all situations and does not bother about conferences [with other unions] to have its mind made up...[T]he A.C.T.U. did not feel hurt by its being absent from the conferences between the Government and the A.E.U. If so, it has only itself to blame...  

In spite of their criticism of the AEU, other unions, i.e., the ASE, the Boilermakers, the Moulders, the Sheetmetal Workers and the ETU, eventually made a deal on the dilution scheme with the Government, following the same format pioneered by the AEU.

The AEU continued to evaluate the merit of its affiliation with the ACTU in terms of practical advantages. For the AEU, the ACTU was worthwhile, so long as it helped achieve such general objectives as shorter hours, the Basic Wage increase and the prevention of piecework. However, the AEU did not think that the ACTU should have any binding power which would qualify the Union's sovereignty.

It is instructive to look into the AEU's relationships with particular unions more closely. Relations with two unions are examined: the ASE, the most similar union to the AEU which catered for the same classes of workers, and the FIA, a leftist unskilled union.

As shown in previous chapters, the AEU and the ASE usually acted together in their shopfloor activities, when they protested against and negotiated with the management. However, the rivalry and mistrust between these two unions also persisted. During wartime, the AEU continued to criticise the ASE for accepting poorer working conditions than the AEU targeted and for free-riding on the results the AEU had achieved.67

Problems with dilutees made the matter worse. The ASE rapidly increased its membership during wartime by eagerly recruiting dilutees, to the irritation of the AEU.68 That the ASE first criticised the AEU for its acceptance of the dilution scheme and then made the same agreement with the Government angered the AEU.69 More serious than this about-face of the ASE was, however, what the AEU called the 'gate-crashing' of the ASE in the recruitment of dilutees. The AEU alleged that the ASE, in order to attract dilutees, lowered its membership fee and implied, against the spirit of the dilution agreement, that they would be able to remain in the industry after the War.70

From the ASE's point of view, the AEU's attitude was, as it had always been, individualistic and high-handed. For instance, the Victorian State Secretary of the ASE said: 'The attitude of the A.E.U. in this State [of Victoria] is that of trying to ignore our existence'.71 Apart from the AEU's secret deal with the Government on the dilution scheme, there were various occasions where the AEU's attempts were opposed by the ASE and other metal unions. For instance, when in early 1940 the AEU decided to impose an overtime ban in Sydney to obtain annual leave and told the ASE and other metal unions to follow it, the ASE criticised the AEU for 'deciding on a policy which would affect other Metal Trades Unions

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67 See, for instance, *ibid.*, September 1943, p. 13 and October 1940, p. 20.
68 In NSW, the ASE had the net gain of more than 12 thousand new members, while the AEU had less than 11 thousand. See T. Sheridan, *op. cit.*, p. 158.
69 *MJR*, July 1940, p. 17 and October 1940, p. 20.
without giving them an opportunity to discuss the policy' and, thus, opposed the overtime embargo. The AEU eventually carried it out irrespective of other unions' attitude.\textsuperscript{72} It should be noted that the ASE was, compared to the AEU, more dependent on the Arbitration system than on direct industrial action. In fact, the Federal Secretary of the ASE was of opinion that because the Court was expected to grant annual leave, overtime embargo was not necessary.\textsuperscript{73}

The ASE was also irritated by the AEU's overt attempts to undermine the ASE's industrial ground. For instance, the ASE submitted complaints to the Labour Council, alleging that the AEU forced ASE members to convert to the AEU.\textsuperscript{74} At the Government's Small Arms Factory in Lithgow, the AEU demanded of the management, with a threat of a strike, that the ASE members should be excluded from the toolroom. The ASE brought this matter to the Court. Eventually, however, the ASE accepted the AEU's demand and withdrew its members from the toolroom, ostensibly 'to save any further disputes and interference in the production of munitions'.\textsuperscript{75}

This incident indicates that, despite the ASE officials' resentment of the AEU's behaviour, the AEU's hegemony on the shopfloor was irresistible. In fact, there were some occasions where, in spite of the ASE officials' instruction to oppose AEU policies, the rank-and-file members of the ASE followed AEU action on the shopfloor.\textsuperscript{76} Thus, despite the AEU's concern about the ASE's massive recruitment of dilutees, the ASE did not undermine the AEU's industrial status to any serious extent. Eventually, as dilutees left the industry towards the end of the War, the ASE's membership contracted as abruptly as it had expanded.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 4/2/1940, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., p. 60.
\textsuperscript{74} See, for instance, ibid., 1/9/1941, p. 126 and 1/2/1942, p. 142.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 1/6/1941, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{76} See, for instance, ibid., 1/6/1940, p. 66.
Amalgamation talks were held again in this period between these two unions sharing the same coverage.\textsuperscript{77} Despite the ACTU's efforts as a mediator, however, the talks ended abortively as always, because both unions were not ready to compromise on their autonomy.

As mentioned, the Metal Trades Federation was established in this period for the purpose of solving inter-union conflicts like demarcation disputes and body snatching.\textsuperscript{78} Reflecting other metal unions' complaints about the AEU's self-seeking behaviour, the following clause was inserted in the constitution of the Federation: 'No Union, a member of the Federation, shall take any action likely to involve or affect any other Union without first submitting the matter to and obtaining a decision from the Federation, or the Union or Unions affected'.

Unions did understand the seriousness of problems arising from their rivalry, and that was the very reason why the Metal Trades Federation was established. However, metal unions, especially such craft unions as the AEU and the ASE, did not want to go beyond a loose federation and amalgamate into one big metal union at the expense of their own independence. Thus, the Metal Trades Federation, like the ACTU, did not assume any binding authority. In other words, there existed no imminent political, economic and industrial imperatives for craft engineering unions to sacrifice their autonomy and merge into a united big union. The traditional way in which they had dealt with industrial matters was, if not flawless, still workable.

Because of the rapid development of the War economy and the corresponding labour shortage which concerned not only skilled labour but the whole workforce, the FIA, an unskilled union which had been slowly recovering from the damage caused by the Great Depression, regained and increased its industrial strength remarkably during this period. With the intensified organising campaign, its membership rose from about 20,000 in August 1939

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 1/2/1942, p. 142. See also, \textit{MJR}, March 1942, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., February 1944, p. 10.
to about 49,000 in June 1942.\textsuperscript{79} The FIA's influence on the shopfloor grew so considerably that now it could wage major strikes, with previously unthinkable successes.\textsuperscript{80} Thus, by early 1941 the FIA had grown confident enough of itself to allow its Executive to state: 'In the past it has been extremely difficult to wage any campaign rapidly enough to be effective, due mainly to organisational weakness. These...now have been overcome and speak well for the future'.\textsuperscript{81}

As the FIA revitalised, the AEU was sometimes irritated by its lack of consultation.\textsuperscript{82} It was not unusual that these two unions could not agree on the strategies to be adopted. For instance, when the FIA imposed overtime bans in protest against the Federal wage tax, the AEU, arguing that overtime bans might provoke the introduction of the three shift system which would bring more dilutees into the industry, continued to work overtime without the help of tradesman's assistants.\textsuperscript{83} Moreover, the relationship between the AEU and the FIA was strained further during wartime, because the FIA was keen on recruiting process workers who were being introduced into the industry in growing numbers mainly for munition production, while the AEU was trying to block the FIA's attempt.\textsuperscript{84}

More significant was the ideological difference between these two unions. Its Federal Secretary, Thornton, being an active self-proclaimed communist, the FIA was a vocal protagonist of leftist causes. The official union view held: 'We live under capitalism. Production and distribution is for profit first and consumption


\textsuperscript{80} For examples of FIA's successful strikes, see \textit{ibid.}, February 1940, p. 2, August 1940, p. 1 and December 1940, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Ibid.}, February 1941, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{82} MJR, January 1941, p. 26.

\textsuperscript{83} \textit{The Ironworker}, February 1941, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Ibid.}. 
second...[T]he only solution is Socialism - ownership of the factories, lands and distributing machinery by the people'.85

Following the traditional leftist argument, the FIA denounced the Arbitration Court as 'an instrument of capitalism' and praised direct action.86 According to the FIA, 'employers' power to "hire and fire" was the secret of their power - the very core of the capitalist system'.87 Trade unions should maintain the right to strike, it argued, because even under the Arbitration system, employers retained this power of employment.88 Thus, the FIA criticised the Menzies Government's attempt to ban strikes for the sake of national security: 'To abandon the right to strike is in effect, to abandon industrial action, and to pin all our faith to parliamentary action'.89

The FIA's attitude towards the War also reflected its communist ideology. At the 1940 ACTU conference which passed the resolution that the labour movement would make its full commitment to the War effort of Australia 'as an integral part of the British Commonwealth', the FIA counter-proposed the following amendment, which was narrowly defeated:

[T]he war involving Britain, France and Germany is an imperialist war, continuing the struggle of 1914-18 for the control of colonies, markets and sources of raw materials...We have no confidence whatever in the intentions or methods of the Menzies and Chamberlain Governments. Whatever may be their stated war aims, they are concerned with attacking the working class, strengthening imperialism, and settling the contradictions of capitalism by diverting the war against the Soviet Union. In such a situation Labor must concern itself with emphasising working-class liberties, opposing the use of Australian troops against the Soviet, and resisting lowered standard of living. [T]he working class has nothing to gain and much to lose from a continuation of the war...[W]e support the opposition of the Labor Party to an increase in the Australian
Expeditionary Force and desire that those at present abroad return to their Australian homeland.\textsuperscript{90}

Considering the FIA's affinity with the Soviet Union, it is not surprising that the FIA became one of the most vehement supporters of the War effort after the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. In its view, the War was no longer a power struggle between imperialists after Germany's attack on the USSR, but a battle against fascism in defence of socialism.\textsuperscript{91}

As a means to increase its industrial strength, the FIA was keen on amalgamating with other unions (mostly communist-led unskilled unions), although only one of many amalgamation talks the FIA had during this period was successful.\textsuperscript{92} In 1943, the FIA merged with the Arms, Explosives and Munition Workers Union, temporarily becoming a very large union with almost 100,000 members, although the membership dropped as munition production declined. The unskilled FIA's strategic inclination to amalgamation was in sharp contrast to the aloofness of the craft AEU.

Despite the FIA's aggressive leftist propaganda and its much improved industrial performance, its real industrial power should not be overestimated. The FIA's fierce criticism of the Arbitration Court and its praise of direct action cannot be taken at face value. It promulgated statements like 'everything we got from arbitration we would have got without arbitration...and we would have got it more quickly'.\textsuperscript{93} In practice, however, the FIA depended on and benefited from the Arbitration system to such a large extent that leaving the Arbitration system was out of question. The Court's decisions were still crucial for the protection and the advancement of its members' working conditions during wartime, as had always been in previous periods. In fact, the FIA eagerly sought favourable judgements by the Court on such vital issues as the restriction of junior and female workers, the right of entry and protection for

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{90} \textit{Ibid.}, April 1940, p. 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{91} J. Merritt, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 301.
  \item \textsuperscript{92} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 273-275.
  \item \textsuperscript{93} \textit{The Ironworker}, February 1940, p. 4.
\end{itemize}
Moreover, although the FIA was powerful enough to wage and win strikes by itself in on some occasions, it was still vital, in most cases, for the success of the FIA's strikes to gain support from other unions, including those ones which the FIA criticised for their conservatism.

After all, the FIA never became a serious threat to the AEU, even though it did irritate the AEU on occasions. The FIA's main rivals were such unskilled unions as the AWU and not craft unions like the AEU. Despite the FIA's public propaganda against craft unionism, the FIA, in its practical activities, could not help deferring to the AEU, the leader of the metal unions. For instance, when the FIA was accused by the AEU of body-snatching, the former had to give a pledge to the latter that it had 'no desire to cover the legitimate field covered by engineering unions' and guaranteed that if FIA members were elevated to tradesmen, their membership would be transferred to the AEU. Thus, General Secretary Thornton himself took a rather humble attitude to tradesmen in the Court, when he claimed a wage increase for unskilled FIA members: 'We say, without minimising the claims of the tradesmen, that our people are important units in this industry'. This comment indicates the actual industrial status of the FIA at the time.

Ideologically, the AEU clearly distinguished itself from the leftist section of the labour movement. The antagonism between the AEU and left wing unions was made manifest when the AEU struck a secret deal with the Government on the dilution scheme. In the leftist view, the AEU was collaborating with capitalists in support of the imperial War. After the German invasion of the USSR, however, it was these very left wing unions, including the FIA, that became the strongest advocates of the War effort, the nature of which was now re-defined by them as the defence of socialism. From this point of view, leftist unions proposed the setting-up of production

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94 Ibid., October 1940, p. 2.
95 Ibid., February 1940, p. 2.
96 See, for instance, ibid., May 1940, p. 1.
97 Ibid., February 1941, p. 2.
98 Ibid., October 1940, p. 2.
committees' in order to increase production. On the other hand, the C.C. of the AEU sternly opposed this proposal:

[A]t the A.C.T.U. Congress...our organisation was the subject of attack and a resolution was carried condemning the Union for its acceptance of the [dilution] scheme, and...the resolution instructed other organisations not to have anything to do with any dilution scheme. The sponsors and supporters of the resolution are the people who to-day are loudly proclaiming that no matter the sacrifice it must be paid to increase production and so further the war effort. What a remarkable change of front!...Now we find these people who decried this Union...without which the manufacture of munitions upon such a large scale would have been entirely impossible, crying aloud for the setting up of production committees...The claim is made that the output of munition could be considerably increased by the establishment of these so-called production committees. The real name should be "speed up" committees.99

As expressed, the AEU's opposition to the establishment of 'production committees' derived from the practical reason that it would lead to labour intensification. It should be noted, however, that there was a more fundamental reason why the AEU opposed 'production committees'. According to the proposition, 'production committees' would consist of one representative from each constituent union. This rule was favourable to non-skilled (leftist) unions like the FIA whose members were engaged in less significant occupations but increasing their numerical importance and unfavourable to craft unions like the AEU whose members were engaged in the integral part of production but diminishing relatively in numerical influence. As expressed in the following comment by the C.C., the AEU could not accept the idea that its industrial status was on a par with other unions:

[W]ho has relaxed most of its trade rights? The answer is the Amalgamated Engineering Union...[W]hat organisation is the biggest factor in munition production?...[T]he members of the Amalgamated Engineering Union play the pre-eminent part. It must then follow that representation on these...must...be given to the Union that is the greatest factor in the workshop. However...the scheme of the critics of our Union do not propose

99 MJR, November 1942, p. 6.
to give more than one representative to our Union on each Committee, with the result that in all factories and workshops due to the number of Unions with members employed therein we would be outnumbered...If it is necessary to establish these committees to deal with production in engineering shops, then let us establish A.E.U. Committees.100

The AEU's craft pride never diminished throughout the whole period dealt with in this thesis.

In any event, the AEU had little interest in ideological propaganda. Instead, what the Union valued most was concrete achievement. Therefore, the C.C. rather willingly accepted the title, the 'right wing' union, dubbed on the AEU by its opponents:

It is rather interesting to hear our critics referring to the organisation [i.e. the AEU] as one belonging to the Right Wing. We do not complain about being placed in this category as a brief review of the activities of a few years will suffice to show that our industrial achievements have been of such a character that material benefits have been gained...[I]t is rather remarkable on the one hand to hear the term of right wing being attached to this organisation, and the self-styled left wingers following so closely the methods adopted by the subject of their criticism. We accept the title with pleasure, and point back over the years with pride to a long list of achievements, and express the determination to continue the lead [in the labour movement]...101

This pragmatic attitude of securing 'material benefits' was always the basic characteristic of AEU activities. It should be remembered that the gist of craft unionism resided in defending vested privileges while adding advancement to what had been achieved. It was following this pragmatism that the AEU utilised the Arbitration system as a convenient apparatus for its industrial strategy. As a corollary, the Union took a reformist stance on political issues.

Although the AEU took the pragmatic, reformist attitude, it by no means meant that it was satisfied with the existing capitalist system. The Union was critical of capitalism and its ultimate goal

100 Ibid.
101 Ibid., December 1940, p. 5.
was, as it had always been, the realisation of socialism. However, the notion of socialism as understood by the AEU was basically that of State socialism, as had been the case in previous periods. Under wartime circumstances where strong and direct state intervention was needed, the realisation of state socialism did not look like a distant ideal but a practical program which was likely to be carried out. Thus, the C.C. demanded that the Government should take measures to control prices, rents, wages and working conditions and also to 'eliminate all profit from the production of armaments...by taking control of all plants and factories engaged upon the production of articles...used in war'.

In any event, the understanding of socialism by skilled engineers was different from that by the left-wing of the labour movement. To help grasp what socialism implied to tradesman engineers, the following criticism of communism by an AEU member is worth noting:

[T]heir [i.e. communists'] theory of Socialism was too doctrinaire, too Marxian and too materialistic...Socialism is not a cut and dried system. Neither is it some so called scientific theory, that engenders a fatalistic outlook upon life. I define Socialism as the next possible step in human society—a state of civilisation built upon the economic and political facts of co-operation in industry and culture in politics. As capitalism is based upon competition and exploitation in industry and ignorance and opportunism in politics, so in time the pendulum must swing to Socialism and culture...[T]he humblest...worker in industry can by himself and in himself begin...to build for Socialism by consciously acquiring culture and raising his own degree of intelligence...Culture combines all men and classes...Culture and Socialism are for all men and women...The great mistake that the Labor [sic] Movement has made is in thinking that there is some mass industrial or political scheme by which Socialism might be introduced.

Although this opinion cannot be regarded as common to all AEU members, it does reflect skilled engineers' high industrial status within the working class and their reformist slant.

102 Ibid., July 1941, p. 5.
Because of their relatively high social position, skilled engineers did not share the communist view that the working class was an outcast, structurally alienated from the capitalist society. Skilled engineers, too, found problems with the present capitalist society of Australia. However, they had a strong sense of belonging to that society. As reflected in the nationalistic tone adopted in the following argument by the C.C. against Menzies' policies, the AEU's loyalty to Australia as a member of the British Empire was out of question:

[T]he worker by bitter experience...realises that the majority of the employing class are only too ready to use the war position to whittle away the living standards of the people in the hope that bank balances and dividends may be swelled...The Australian worker is second to none in his loyalty to the Empire and to Australia, but he is not prepared to allow anyone to trade upon his loyalty. The Australian workmen desires a total war effort and is prepared to give his best. In return he expects every other person in the community to make equal sacrifice with him...[S]ome companies are at present paying dividends out of profits...[T]t is clear to the worker that there still remains a lot to be done before equal sacrifice becomes an accomplished fact...To introduce repressive legislation will not bring about a total war effort, but will have the reverse effect...Labor [sic] stands solidly behind the Empire in her struggle. Let no one introduce any measure that will interfere with that unity...Let us rather go on united for the common objective...We can do this if the sacrifice is to be equal, and it can only be equal when the Government has sufficient courage to determine that if this war is to be waged in the interests of humanity and not big business, then the time has arrived when profit-making must cease...104

As can be seen, skilled engineers were indignant at the inequity in the capitalist society, and this indignation constituted the core of their class consciousness. However, the inequity was grasped as the difference in the extent of 'sacrifice' made by the employers and the employed respectively. Thus, tradesman engineers did not look to revolutionary means to solve social problems, because so long as 'equal sacrifice' was the target, it was attainable through gradual reform.

104 Ibid., July 1941, p. 5.