A history of the relationship between the Queensland branch of the Australian Workers’ Union (AWU) and the labour movement in Queensland from 1913-1957

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NOTE

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Chapter 3

The Giant Awakens: The Queensland

AWU to 1920

'One union has a strong hold here now, and it is gradually pulling in the slack'.

Wilson, AWU organiser, Northern District, 1914. ¹

The AWU-AWA amalgamation officially approved by referendum in January 1913 had in an instant made the AWU the largest trade union in Australia with a total membership of over 62 000. Likewise it was the largest trade union in that state with a membership in excess of 22 000². The virtual collapse of the ALF following the General Strike in 1912 had presented the new AWU with an opportunity to assume the

¹ Worker, 17 September 1914.
² Hearn, M. and Knowles, H., The One Big Union, Melbourne, 1996, p. 114
industrial and political leadership of the Queensland labour movement and resume the struggle against the social and economic elites of Queensland. But what methods would need to be employed in order to achieve these ambitions? Were there any potential rivals from within or from outside the labour movement who could challenge the AWU's domination? What policies would need to be pursued in order to convince the broader Queensland community of the efficacy of the industrial and political goals of the Queensland labour movement and was the AWU the organisation most capable of providing that support?

The structure of the new Queensland AWU would prove essential to the success of any foundation for the domination of the AWU in Queensland. The membership figures also revealed that the new branch with approximately one third of the national membership had the potential to dominate the national body. However, the executive had to perfect its own branch before they could entertain such ambitions. Both Theodore and McCormack had laid a cunning trap with their pre-prepared drafts thrust before the other delegates at the amalgamation conference. By presenting a carefully prepared draft to the delegates that ensured a centralised administration in Queensland which replicated the AWA structure, McCormack and Theodore had attained a significant degree of autonomy for the day-to-day operations of the new branch. Such autonomy was significant not only for the ambitious duo from the North but also in the practical sense that the new union did not need unnecessary influence from its southern counterparts that had little experience or understanding of a numerically and

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geographically large branch covering a broad range of industries. Whilst very aware of
the benefits the amalgamation had brought their members in the North, the two big men
of the Queensland labour movement were not about to subordinate themselves totally to
the wishes of their inter-state brethren. Ironically, strict centralisation in the Queensland
Branch was thought to be the best possible means of securing autonomy from the
national body. Such autonomy however was not to be conferred upon the individual
districts of the Queensland branch.

The other branches of the AWU had always maintained a fair degree of local
autonomy in the day-to-day operations of their union as had the three Queensland
branches prior to 1913. Such a devolution of control was anathema to McCormack,
Theodore and the AWA and appeared to have much in common with the organisational
policies of the now discredited and almost defunct ALF. The Queensland AWU was
like no other branch in the country at that time. The AWU had been, up until this time,
overwhelmingly a union of shearers and shedhands yet in Queensland the coverage had
grown to include metalliferous miners, construction workers, sugar workers and
basically all rural labourers including carriers, rabbiters, fencers and a myriad of other
job descriptions. Geographically, too, the Union's responsibilities had expanded
beyond the central and south west of the state to incorporate the whole northern state.
The Union, then, would need to be able to reconcile the unique occupational, regional
and political conditions and tensions of all these workers. The only solution, as far as
Theodore and McCormack were concerned, was for the Queensland branch to adopt the
AWA's highly centralised organisational structure and they insisted that this happened.

With a branch executive centralised in Brisbane the administration of such a huge
state was facilitated through the establishment of five sub-districts: Northern, Far Northern, Southern, Western and South Western⁴. The details as discussed at the second amalgamation conference in January 1913 (which confirmed the amalgamation) were to be finalised at the branches' first annual meeting later in the year. The more immediate concern was how the realignment within the organised labour movement would manifest itself at the Labor-in-Politics Convention at Rockhampton in February. This would be the first convention for Ryan and Theodore as the political leaders of the Queensland labour movement, the first following the disastrous General Strike and subsequent electoral defeat of the previous year and the first where the ALF would play no significant role.

Indicative of the changes that were about to engulf the movement was the fact that both Ryan and Theodore were both members of the new AWU. More significantly, the two ex officio positions on the CPE formally held by the ALF were now ceded to the AWU by the CPE. These two were combined with the three positions held by the old Queensland AWU branches to give the newer organisation a total of five of the nine ex officio positions on the CPE. However, this state of affairs cannot be totally attributed to the ambitions of the AWU leadership. With twenty-four affiliated unions with a total membership of 25 373 in 1913⁵, the remaining twenty-three unions were divided between approximately 3 000 members as opposed to the AWU's 22 000. Quite simply, with the demise of the ALF no other centrally organised body of affiliated trade unionists existed to demand an ex officio position on the CPE let alone challenge the

⁵ Official Record of the Seventh Labour-in-Politics Convention, 1913.
right of the AWU to assume those positions. Thus, via this bloodless and at the time almost unrealised coup the AWU had instantly captured a quarter of the movement’s peak decision-making body before the inclusion of the other fifteen members of the CPE who were either elected by the convention or drawn from the ranks of the Federal and State parliamentarians who had four *ex officio* positions distributed equally among them. With the growing dominance that the old AWU and AWA were already enjoying before the amalgamation in the local electorates a very real possibility existed that other AWU members or sympathisers could be elected or appointed to the CPE and indeed were.

The convention was an expression of a renewed optimism within the labour movement despite their recent setbacks. The new leadership group that was emerging was young, enthusiastic, efficient and politically astute. They were sufficiently distanced from the divisions of the Kidston split and further still from the bitterness of the legendary strikes of the 1890s. This renewal coupled with the emerging impotence and failings of the Liberal Denham government directed the delegates’ attentions more than ever to the tasks of winning government. In an unprecedented display of electoral determination the convention devoted the first four days to policy making with only one to the more mundane decisions regarding administration.

The Convention produced a thirteen point fighting platform and an eleven section general programme to be presented to the electors of Queensland in 1915. The fighting platform was largely reminiscent of that which had gone before it featuring the abolition of the Legislative Council, state owned enterprises, compulsory conciliation

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6 See Chapter 2

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and arbitration and a prevention of the further alienation of Crown Lands. Within the general programme a new section was included called ‘Encouragement of Agriculture’. This policy direction provided for the resumption of Crown Lands for the purpose of closer settlement; rent remission in return for continuous residence and cultivation; a series of State-owned enterprises such as freezing works, granaries, cold stores, mills and refineries, an exporting department, a line of steamers and the manufacture of agricultural implements; State distribution of seed; encouragement to dairy cooperatives; State assistance for water conservation and irrigation and the establishment of centralised price-fixing agencies for primary produce. Whilst a number of these reforms had been consistent objectives of the labour movement in Queensland in varying forms never before had they been so clearly organised, concisely stated and assertively presented to the electorate.

The new policy initiative was clearly directed towards small to middle scale farmers and sugar growers. The enemy of these petit-bourgeois primary producers was neither the trade union movement nor the very modest socialist objectives of the Labor Party. The enemy as identified by this policy and labour movement propaganda was the middlemen who skimmed the profits of their labours, absentee lessees who selected large tracts of the best land whilst employing others to work their property and answering only to distant share-holders, the monopolistic local companies such as the CSR and foreign owned companies like Swifts and the American Meat Trust who

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7 Official Record of the Seventh Labour-in-Politics Convention
dictated prices to producers. The Labor Party, then, was to be the facilitator of a more equitable system of land tenure, resource and infrastructure allocation and price determination. They would ensure the social and economic stability inherent in the Yeoman ideal.

Enthusiastic and determined, the Queensland Branch of the Australian Workers’ Union held its inaugural Annual Delegates Meeting in Brisbane in July 1913. The meeting enabled the confirmation of the centralised Branch structure and broadly outlined the goals of the Union including its adherence to arbitration and the continual pursuit of amalgamations culminating in the formation of One Big Union (OBU). The ‘OBUism’ expressed by the AWU had no relation to that expressed by anarcho-syndicalists such as the Chicago-based Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), which had arrived in Australia around 1906. Historian V. G. Childe claimed that the proposals presented by Theodore for the administration of the Queensland Branch, ‘clearly betrayed IWW influence’. Theodore’s OBU was to work within the system of parliamentary democracy which had evolved in Australia with industrial relations under the auspices of a court of arbitration and conciliation. The authors of Direct Action or the songs sung by the ‘Wobblies’ conceived no such moderation.

The meeting also formally elected the senior leadership team that would direct the
new union. Theodore was elected President with both McCormack and Bowman as the Vice-Presidents and William Dunstan had been invited to accept the all-important position of Branch Secretary. This last appointment in particular deserves closer scrutiny. Bill Dunstan's appointment was a part of the amalgamation negotiations and was meant to provide a bulwark to a complete AWA domination of the new union and to appease some of the petty jealousies that existed between the AWA and its older Queensland branches. Dunstan, an ex-shearer, had been the President of the South Australian branch and as such was very familiar with the southern AWU's semi-autonomy. He now had to work within a highly centralised body among men well versed in this style of administration.

Indicative of the strengthening alliance between the AWU and the PLP was the fact that of the other three senior executives of this new and powerful organisation all were state MLAs with Bowman only recently retiring as Leader of the Opposition in favour of Ryan due to poor health and Theodore the current Deputy Leader. Hearn and Knowles have claimed that, 'In terms of the internal union politics, the AWA-AWU amalgamation was undoubtedly eased by both Theodore and McCormack transferring much of their considerable ambitions from the AWA to the Queensland Parliament...' 12 Whilst in some respects this judgement is true, it would be naïve to suggest that Dunstan could have survived in the Queensland AWU without the support of the three MLAs, and McCormack and Theodore in particular. Indeed, it must be remembered that it was Theodore who nominated Dunstan for the position in the first instance! Thus far from being a bulwark against the AWA, Dunstan quickly adapted to the centralised

structure of the Queensland AWU and became the perfect facilitator of the system established by Theodore and McCormack.

With the demise of the ALF, the only thing left for the Delegates Meeting to do was to formally takeover the operations of the *Worker* and its infrastructure. Theodore had secured for the AWU not only the *Worker* press but also the recently acquired *Worker* Building in Elizabeth Street, Brisbane. This building would become not only the head office of the AWU but with that union now dominating the CPE it was decided that this body too should move from its former offices in the Trades Hall into the *Worker* Building. The relocation provided the labour movement with powerful physical symbols of the division of power within their movement. From this perspective, too, the decision of the CPE to move into the Elizabeth Street premises gave a clear indication as to where the power in the labour movement had shifted. The close proximity between the AWU and the CPE would lay the foundations for a strong relationship between these two bodies and the PLP.

Murphy has written that the *Worker* had ‘...ceased to be a fully independent labor paper and became the mouthpiece for the AWU and its members in the PLP.’ Whether or not the previously ALF directed *Worker* had ever been ‘fully independent’ is not relevant to this work, however it is a reasonably uncontentious claim to make that whatever pretensions the *Worker* had had to ‘independence’ was lost following the

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13 The AWU was not the only trade union to exert control over the *Worker* following the demise of the ALF. The AMIEU, as one of the only unions to maintain its strength following the ALF collapse was accorded two positions on the Worker Board, however, they were in a small minority and as such claims of AWU domination of the paper are appropriate.


AWU usurpation. From an AWU perspective the takeover was a masterstroke of industrial and political astuteness. The Italian communist Antonio Gramsci wrote of the theory and practice of politics that ‘...the struggle can and must be carried on by developing the concept of hegemony...’. In an era before the electronic mass media the written word (particularly via newspapers and journals) was the most effective way to disseminate information to a large audience. The Worker commented upon all aspects of a workers life from politics and sport to ‘women’s issues’ and the AWU executive could be sure that members had access to its pages because the Worker subscription was incorporated within the membership fee. Thus, in a Gramscian sense, the Worker could provide the AWU with an effective means of establishing hegemony, if not over the entire Queensland community, then at least the labour movement. Furthermore, the Worker printery ensured that the AWU and the PLP could produce cheap bulk propaganda material.

Politically, events indicated the mood of the electorate swinging towards the Labor Party. In 1913 the Federal election returned six Labor candidates for the nine seats as well as three Labor senators and an overall majority of 66 000. Furthermore Queensland returned a ‘Yes’ majority on the three Labor-initiated referendum questions. These figures indicate significant support for Labor in Queensland when it is considered that neither the Labor Party won the election nor was the referendum supported nationally. Throughout the Queensland campaign both Theodore and Ryan were the most conspicuous Labor speakers, dividing the state in two in accordance with

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their support bases - North and South: Theodore using his rough-hewn union and Labor rhetoric among the workers of the North; and Ryan using his union affiliations and empathy with the bush workers of the west and south-west and his urbane intelligence and good humour among the workers and liberal bourgeoisie of the southern metropolitan and provincial centres\(^18\).

Coupled with these results was the emerging dissension within the Denham Government and from that a potential threat to the PLP’s rural ambitions - the Queensland Farmers’ Union. The Farmers’ Union had its genesis in organisations such as the Farmers’ Parliamentary Union founded in the mid-1890s\(^19\) and pledging its support to the Liberals and more immediately the Queensland Grazing Farmers’ and Settlers’ Association founded in 1909 and the Darling Downs Farmers’ Union which formed in July 1911. At its inaugural meeting this organisation pledged itself to the promotion of a state-wide organisation and adopted objectives:

...which included affiliation with kindred associations; action to ‘secure representation of farmers, dairymen and land owners by practical men in the legislatures of the State and Commonwealth’; the promotion and the protection of the interests of primary producers; opposition to unjust demands made on farmers by any union or body of men; and maintenance of freehold tenure.\(^20\)

\(^{18}\) Ibid.


These last two points were particularly significant to the farmers on the Downs. They resented the claims of outside organisations to dictate the working conditions of those they were employing. Perhaps even more significant were the land reforms presented by the Labor Party. Policies that advocated the resumption of land for closer settlement, the prevention of further Crown Land alienation and residential and cultivation requirements as a component of lease renewal procedures were, to the Darling Downs Farmers', the first steps towards the nationalisation of arable land. These 'socialist' policies then presented a direct threat to the maintenance and expansion of the economic and political status enjoyed by these landed gentlemen and their families. The Darling Downs Farmers' then helped to establish the Farmers' Union in the December of that year. At the 1912 state elections W. Bebbington was returned for the seat of Drayton on the Downs and shortly after his election the Liberal member for Aubigny, A.J. Luke also declared himself as a representative of the Farmers' Union\(^1\). By 1913, branches of the Farmers Union numbered over fifty and although they had supported the Denham Government in the Assembly the Farmers' president, Cecil Roberts, could now lay down the conditions for Farmers' support to the Liberals.

With a perceived increase in electoral support and a very real threat from the Labor Party with its concentrated push for rural votes and a renewed rural trade union, the Parliamentary Union under the leadership of the powerful sugar lobbyist, Colonel C. Rankin organised a conference with the Farmers' in February 1913. Whilst very cordial and fraternal the conference produced very little. The Farmers' however were becoming disillusioned with the Denham Ministry and sought greater independence.

\(^1\) Murphy, D.J., *op. cit.*, 1975, p. 108.
Rankin admonished the Farmers' for their attacks suggesting that 'any show of rash animosity would only play into the hands of the socialists'. Bebbington responded that on the contrary, a strong rural party could only strengthen the fight against socialism and in September the announcement was made of the formation of the Queensland Country Party. Its primary policy objective was 'to develop primary production on which the prosperity of the whole people depended; to encourage commerce and secondary industry; to establish better relations between employer and employee and to maintain the White Australia policy'. Included in its platform was the extension of water conservation and irrigation, land reform (ie. extension of freehold title), improved transportation and electoral reform by way of compulsory preferential voting and an elected Legislative Council.22

The new organisation urged those in the Parliamentary Union to join them, however as they had been elected as Liberal candidates they refused to do so. A compromise was reached when those of the Parliamentary Union agreed to call themselves the 'Country-Liberal Party'. For Denham the situation became almost untenable with an organised voice of rural dissent now present and clearly identified within his own government. For the Conservatives within Queensland society, in the face of an increasingly inept Denham Ministry, an element that had always been present in Queensland politics was emerging to confront the growing strength of the Labor Party.

What then, was emerging for the 1915 election campaign was the concerted appeal by political parties of differing ideologies and policies to broadly the same

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22 Brisbane Courier, 30 August 1913.
section of the electorate - the small- to medium- scale primary producer and their families. In parliament, Ryan took the challenge to the Liberals, openly appealing to the rural electorate on the grounds of responsibility, fraternity and prosperity:

I have confidence that the primary producers realise the justice of our cause and that ... they will express their opinion in favour of the Labour party as being a party which is a national party, a constitutional party and a party that specifically has the care of those who are unable to help themselves ... Until in Queensland we have such a party in power, backed by the primary producer - because I think it is necessary to have his support - and backed up by all sections of the community ... I do not think we will ever have real prosperity in this state.  

For the conservative press the need to appeal to the rural electorates via the Country Party was obvious according to an editorial in the *Daily Mail* entitled 'The Need for a Country Party' which explained, 'One of the chief objects in forming a Country Party in Queensland was to prevent the Labour Party coming to power in the next election'.

By mid-1914 the Labor election campaign was in full swing and on McCormack's suggestion the CPE appointed the labour stalwart Joseph Silver Collings as political organiser. The real thrust of the campaign was provided through Ryan's political acumen and the prolific publications of the propaganda committee directed by Theodore and the fiery Irishman John Fihelly from the inner-Brisbane electorate of Paddington who had firmly aligned himself with the AWU. In addition to the 5,000 extra copies of the Labor-in-Politics Convention of 1913 specifically to be distributed

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23 QPD, CXIV, 18 June 1913, pp. 32-33.
24 *Daily Mail*, 9 December 1913.
throughout rural electorates, Theodore and Fihelly produced a series of twenty-seven pamphlets on defence, farmers, railways, food prices and middlemen which were distributed according to the type of electorate. Three in particular were widely sought in the rural areas - *The Defence of Australia, Farmers and Men on the Land*, and *Farmers and Agricultural Machinery*.\(^{25}\) Added to this were the articles and columns being specifically aimed at the rural reader in the *Daily Standard* and the *Worker*. A regular series of articles that appeared in the *Worker* was entitled ‘Meditations of a Working Farmer’ under the pseudonym Hezekiah Hodge.

The Hezekiah Hodge series provides an interesting example of how the AWU and PLP sought not only to gain the support of farmers but also how it sought to define who were the workers of Queensland and their characteristics. The series was written in a conversational style where Hodge considers the benefits of the Labor Party over the Conservatives. Hodge reinforces cultural stereotypes with farmers being described as honest, hard-working men, they were distrustful of the ‘city-dwellers’ and believed fiercely in the preservation of a White Australia. They were loving yet undemonstrative men with the interests of their families at heart, who considered political and economic questions with a cool pragmatism that encompassed not only what was good for his family but what was beneficial for the whole community. The rhetorical style of the Hodge series attempted to ask and answer the questions the Labor Party believed were significant to the rural electorate. Importantly the Hodge series also confronted and challenged the traditionally conservative beliefs and political convictions of that rural electorate. The following is typical of the Hodge style:

... Of course you know we are not talking of the farmers who farm sitting in a turn-round easy chair behind a roll-top desk. Only of the common ones who like, milk cows and hold on hard behind a plough. ... Some say the Labour party will make things better, but we can’t see why we should belong to that, we are not labouring men. That is, farmers are not. I mean the leading farmers. Let’s see, what do I mean? The hired hands of course. But there are none on this farm. Let’s see again. Farmers don’t belong to the Labour crowd; they are capitalists, that is small ones. Hang it all, that’s the other fellow, him in the easy chair, we have to pay interest. Let’s see again. He farms and I farm, therefore we are both - But that’s not right either; he dosen’t farm at all, his men do the farming. My word it gets more mixed up every time it is turned around. Anyhow we are both called farmers. So we must be the same somehow. That is, I mean the other big fellow calls himself a farmer. ... Hang it all, I had better go to bed now, and try not to think just how many shillings that cream cheque will come to.26

Predictably, as the series proceeds, Hezekiah discovers there is a great deal of difference between himself and the ‘big fellow’, that a farmer is most definitely a worker and that perhaps the Labor Party and its supporters have more in common with the interests of the ‘working farmer’ than the party that represents the ‘big fellow’. The Labor Party is declared the farmers’ champion.

Whilst not only assisting in the state and federal electoral campaigns the AWU went about the business of establishing its dominance over the labour movement by embarking upon a program that would not only consolidate but expand its position.

26 Worker, 19 March 1914.
within the Queensland movement. The key to successful industrial organisation, according to the AWU, was the formation of a single body to represent the workers. The most efficient way to achieve this organisation was to simply amalgamate with an organisation that had the infrastructure to handle such a body - the AWU. By the time Dunstan presented his first annual report in September 1914, he could claim with pride that the Union had not only increased its membership among its normal range of industries but that it could now boast of including amongst its membership the Timber Workers' and the Brisbane municipal workers and was increasing its efforts amongst female hospitality workers. Furthermore, the Union, nationally, could look forward to a seemingly inevitable amalgamation with the militant Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union (AMIEU).

To achieve an amalgamation with the AMIEU would be particularly beneficial to the Queensland Branch. In Queensland the AMIEU had approximately 3,000 members mostly centred in the North with a number of meatworks in the Townsville region. In its brief history in the North the AMIEU had attained a reputation for successful militant industrial action comparable to that of the AWA. In 1907 when then AMIEU organiser Jack Crampton first arrived at the northern meatworks the managers refused to admit him. Crampton, undeterred, waded across the tidal flats and scurried through the thick jungle to enter the meatworks. He found appalling conditions, he rallied the men who then followed him back across the flats to begin signing on for the union. By 1912 the AMIEU had abolished the contract system in the meatworks, attained a closed

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27 There were numerous articles and notices in the *Worker* referring to these amalgamations. See for example 2 April 1914, 20 August 1914 and 2 July 1914.
workshop and had begun to establish their own labour bureau for the meat industry.\textsuperscript{28}

Now as branch secretary, Crampton urged his members to amalgamate with the AWU, claiming that,

\ldots\text{ He would be a very proud man if he thought that the divisions in the ranks of the workers were going to close. Of course they would lose a certain amount of individuality and prestige by amalgamating, but they would lose that and a great deal more if they did not amalgamate and march stride for stride with the Meat Trust.}\textsuperscript{29}

For the AWU in Queensland, and particularly in the north of that state, an amalgamation with the AMIEU would not only increase membership and further the process of OBU\textsuperscript{ism} but also negate the influence of one of the only industrial unions capable of challenging the industrial and political ambitions of the AWU in Queensland.

Furthermore, at the Annual Convention of the AWU held in Sydney in 1914 the Queensland branch survived a challenge to its centralised structure. Significantly, the challenge came from within. R.Bow, who succeeded Bill Kewley as secretary of the Longreach Branch upon his death in 1906 and subsequently became Western District secretary following the amalgamation, moved a motion in favour of having the Queensland branch decentralised and divided into separate regional branches. Bow claimed that the new structure was inefficient in such a large state with district secretaries having to obtain permission from Brisbane before undertaking many of the

\textsuperscript{28} Childe, G.V., \textit{op.cit.}, 1923, p. 117.
\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Worker}, 9 February 1914
roles previously handled at a district level such as engaging legal services before the expenses were sanctioned by the head office. Others countered that the size of the state and projected growth in membership was exactly why Queensland needed a centralised system and that financial accountability was essential to the good management of the union. The motion was defeated but revealed that some AWU officials were not convinced of the necessity of the Queensland 'district system', especially those Queenslanders and others who could see their power being eroded by centralised executives with broad ranging powers.

With war clouds in Europe gathering the Worker counseled its readership, 'The proper definition for war is legalised murder; ... War arouses the basest passions in the human breast ...'. Within a month of this warning the British Empire had declared war upon Germany and her allies and Australia rallied to the call with both sides of politics pledging their support with Labor's Andrew Fisher guaranteeing 'the last man and last shilling' to the cause of Empire. In Queensland, Ryan, too, offered the Labor Party's support for the Empire in its time of need claiming that, 'all parties are now welded into one with a common purpose'. However, the support of the PLP and others within the labour movement was not as unreserved as that of their political opponents and the conservative press. It was obvious to many within the labour movement that the war would cause great hardship and that it would be they who would probably bare the brunt of this. It was only those of the extreme left of the movement such as the IWW

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30 Ibid, 26 February 1914. Not surprisingly, the most strident defence of the district system was provided by the former AWA men, Theodore, McCormack and Mick Martyn from the Northern District.
31 Ibid, 9 July 1914.
and other socialists who raised their voices against the war. They were joined by pacifist organisations such as the Women’s Political Association (who included in its ranks Australia’s most outspoken feminists and pacifists, Vida Goldstein, Adela Pankhurst and Cecilia John) and the Society of Friends’ (Quakers). These groups, however, comprised of only a small minority of Queenslanders with even the significant Irish-Catholic population, enthused by the promise of Home Rule, offering its loyalty to the Empire. Most accepted the war with a resigned sense of loyalty and purpose.

Through the pages of its journals such as the *Australian Worker* the AWU expressed the sense of confusion, support and pessimism that many felt with new editor (and former *Worker* editor), Henry Boote, claiming prophetically,

This is not a war for which a single extenuating reason can be given on either side. There is no great principle at the back of it ...

... Thousands of unemployed will be created; unscrupulous greed will seize the opportunity to raise the necessaries of life to famine prices ...

We must protect our country. We must keep sacred from the mailed fist this splendid heritage. For that our Army of Defence was formed, and our Navy built.

But we hope no wave of jingo madness will sweep over the land, unbalancing the judgment of its leaders, and inciting its population to wild measures, spurred on by the vile press, to which war is only an increase of circulation, and every corpse a copper.
God help Australia! God help England! God help Germany! God help us!  

In Queensland, leaders of the AWU were quick to deride such 'jingo madness'. When Treasurer and Acting Premier William Barnes closed an address on the *The Meat Supply for Imperial Uses Bill* reaffirming his devotion to 'one flag, one land, one heart, one hand, one nation', Ted Theodore, a man noted for his intolerance for ostentatious displays of sentimentality, snapped, 'What has that got to do with the Bill?' In a precursor to the venom which would come to characterise the political and social divisions the war would engender in Queensland, Barnes retorted accusingly, 'I hope there are no disloyalists on the other side'.

Trade unionists, quickly felt the economic uncertainties of war. With Germany and her allies no longer providing the lucrative markets in primary products and metals Queensland relied upon, British markets contracting to support the war effort and traditional trade routes becoming unsafe, producers and manufacturers became hesitant and began closing down their operations. This was especially so in the North where a number of meatworks and the tin, copper and wolfram mines were the hardest hit by this uncertainty. The trade unions responded to the crisis by forming the Combined Unions Committee in mid-August. By 20 August, Theodore reported to the Committee that already four thousand members of his union had become unemployed since the outbreak of war with half of these from the Northern District. The organiser for the Far Northern District reported that, 'The war has caused great excitement here. Foodstuffs jumped in prices as soon as the war was declared. While the worker has

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33 *Australian Worker*, 6 August 1914.
34 *QPD*, CXVII, pp. 571 ff.
35 *Worker*, 20 August 1914.
been thrown idle the middle-man has made up his mind to fleece him all he can'.

Such reports, whilst revealing the hardships the war would cause, also lent force to the long held view points of the Labor Party regarding 'middlemen' as opportunistic profiteers. With prices continuing to rise and wages remaining at pre-war levels, Denham was torn between his duty to the electorate and his duty to the forces of capitalism such as the CSR and American Meat Trust that sustained his political position. Publicly, he supported the Meat Trust whilst privately he confessed to the Agent-General, Sir Thomas Robinson, 'there was no disposition to help in the least degree, on the contrary ... they were all out to make money'. When in October Rankin introduced a private members bill to establish price control boards for the sugar industry as recommended by the Royal Commission, Denham and his Liberal supporters prevented its progress. Early the following year Rankin unsuccessfully challenged Denham for the leadership of the party. In the meantime the AWU organiser in Mackay could report,

I am sorry to say there are many unemployed ... The farmers and millers have been at war over cane prices ... I am pleased to say there was a splendid spirit shown to the farmers by the workers of our union. They would rather carry their swags than cut or crush cane unless they were satisfied the farmers were getting fair prices. *I think this has taught farmers a lesson which they will not forget.*

(emphasis added)

In the area of industrial relations too, the Denham government was failing to

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37 Denham to Robinson, 22 August 1914, QSA PRE/55.
38 *Worker*, 27 August 1914.
respond to the economic realities of war. Reporting upon Judge MacNaughton of the Industrial Court, who refused wage claims in accordance with price rises for brick and pottery workers in Brisbane, Dunstan bitterly remarked, 'It was quite evident that the Industrial Court was no place for the toilers'\(^{39}\). With Denham and his ministry seemingly either unable or unwilling to respond to the demands of the war or the pleas from a large cross-section of the Queensland population for respite from its effects, the 'lessons' for the electorate were becoming increasingly more apparent as they headed to the polls in May 1915.

The election proved an overwhelming victory for the Labor Party winning forty-five of the seventy-two seats in the Legislative Assembly and fifty-two per cent of votes. The Liberals could only manage twenty one seats (with Denham losing the seat of Oxley to Labor's T.L. Jones), the Farmers' Union five and one Independant in the cattle country to the north west in the Burke electorate.\(^{40}\) The PLP had for the first time captured a majority of the metropolitan seats, regained all but one of the Kidsonite seats and had captured seven sugar seats from the Conservatives. The wheat and dairying electorates of the south-east corner and the Darling Downs, however, proved elusive. The *Worker* claimed the victory on behalf of all Queensland workers and those who had toiled for many years in the service of the labour movement claiming.

The result of Saturday's polling may be regarded as a magnificent consummation of twenty five year's strenuous self-sacrificing work on the part of those disinterested men and women who in some cases have devoted much of their lives

\(^{39}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{40}\) All electoral information in this work was obtained from Hughes, C.A. and Graham, B.D., *Voting for the Queensland Legislative Assembly*, Canberra, 1974.
to help in achieving this result.\textsuperscript{41}

Whilst in many respects such sentiments were true, a closer consideration of the electoral results show that the Labor Party owed much of its success to the political, industrial and organisational skills of the AWU and its infrastructure. Under the direction of prominent AWU men, most notably, Theodore, McCormack, Dunstan, Fihelly and Ryan, the PLP had devised and executed a brilliant campaign. The appointment of Collings as political organiser, the propaganda committee under the direct control of Theodore and Fihelly with the accompanying prolific pamphleteering made possible by the AWU's \textit{Worker} printery and £400 donation and the CPE's decision to have all PLP candidates endorsed before the election instead of after winning their seat and by ensuring this occurred by mid-1914 to allow almost twelve months of campaigning all proved successful innovations for the Party.

Furthermore, the policy initiatives towards the rural constituencies and in particular the sugar electorates, also proved successful. Only those seats held by powerful sugar men such as Rankin in the seat of Burrum were able to withstand Labor's assault, orchestrated by the AWU, in the sugar districts. However, it should be noted that the Burrum electorate was in itself a difficult proposition for Labor and proved an example of Labor's vulnerability in an electorate where industrial organisation had been actively resisted by a powerful local capitalist. Burrum was predominantly a mining electorate with sugar farming gaining a foothold in the north of

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Worker}, 27 May 1915.
the electorate. As such it should have provided fertile ground for a resurgent labour movement. However, William Rankin who headed Queensland Colleries Limited's Burrum Colliery steadfastly refused to allow any form of trade unionism in his colliery. Rankin and his four sons had become the largest employers in the district by the first years of the twentieth century and were prominent in local affairs instituting what Whitmore described as a "rule of paternal despotism". The people of Howard (the town closest to the colliery) knew that the Rankins' provided, employment, housing and were instrumental in securing the district adequate schooling and hospitals and were significant figures in the local community and in local politics. Thus when one of the Rankins' – Colonel Colin Rankin – stood for the seat of Burrum in 1903 there was little doubt that the electors of Burrum knew where their best interests lay; and it was not with the Labor candidate. Rankin brought to the election not only the support of the sugar growers – an industry in which he was both a significant producer and advocate – but also that of coal producers and more significantly those employed in the local coal industry who at the very least understood the power of the Rankin family as opposed to that of the Labor candidate.

In the North, with the exception of some remote cattle electorates with a more itinerant work force than most, the Labor Party was dominant. In this significant region alone it can be seen that the new AWU, which covered all major primary industries apart from the meat works and railway workers, could organise the pastoral workers, miners and sugar workers to return a Labor vote. Likewise, in the old AWU's heartland

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43 Ibid., pp. 287-295
of the central west, Labor candidates swept all before them. Other areas of success where the AWU helped to deliver Labor candidates were in the mining centres of Charters Towers and Gympie where Liberal incumbents suffered major swings against them.

Despite the undoubted contributions by the local WPO's, other unions such as the (Queensland Railways Union) QRU and the AMIEU and the newly formed Brisbane Industrial Council (BIC) which represented the more militant sections of the metropolitan unions (much to the dismay of the AWU leadership who wished to absorb them), it was undoubtedly the AWU that played the most significant role in providing a guaranteed support base for the Labor Party. The AWU quite simply was the only political or industrial body (within or without the labour movement) who could offer a coordinated infrastructure in electorates outside of the metropolitan and provincial centres.

The significant role and power exercised by the AWU was plainly represented by the fact that many of the PLP members returned were AWU nominees and this dominance was also reflected in the first Ryan Ministry. Of the eight ministers elected by caucus, three - Theodore, Bowman and Ryan - were AWU men. Of the remaining five ministers it would be reasonable to assume that due to the rural nature of their electorates neither John Hunter (Maranoa), Herbert Hardacre (Leichhardt) or the old QSU stalwart from the 1891 strike, Bill Hamilton (Gregory) would have gained pre-selection let alone won the seat without at least the tacit support of the AWU. Only John Adamson and Bill Lennon could claim independence from the AWU clique within caucus. Added to this was the appointment of two honorary ministers to assist Ryan and
the ailing Bowman - John Huxham and Fihelly, with the latter most definitely in the
AWU camp.\(^{44}\) The final appointment of prominence was that of the Speaker, with the
honour going to yet another AWU power-broker - Bill McCormack.

This particular decision was an intriguing piece of internal politics on Ryan's part.
Although an AWU member, Ryan had never been an official of the union and
furthermore owed his allegiance to the old AWU branch at Longreach and not the
AWA sector of the new organisation represented most notably by Theodore and
McCormack. The latter possessed no lack of ambition yet had not developed the
political subtlety of his old AWA comrade. The two together with their ally, Fihelly
could provide a powerful triumvirate and potentially difficult opponent in Cabinet.
Another consideration for Ryan was the poor health of Bowman who, it became
quickly apparent, would probably need to be relieved of his responsibilities before his
term was over. Whomever Caucus decided to be his assistant would more than likely
succeed him upon his departure. Thus when the election for the Speakership was drawn
at twenty two votes for both McCormack and Huxham, Ryan used his deciding vote in
favour of McCormack. Huxham was then duly elected as Bowman's assistant whilst
McCormack would prove a valuable asset in debates in the House yet was outside of
Cabinet. For Ryan, who was trying to present himself as leader of the labour movement
and not just of sectional interests the result was a victory for moderation and stability.
McCormack would have to wait until Ryan's resignation from state politics before he
would enter the Cabinet.\(^{45}\)

\(^{44}\) Murphy, D.J., "Queensland", in Murphy, D.J. (ed.), Labor in Politics, St.Lucia, 1975, pp. 186-187.
\(^{45}\) Murphy, D.J., T.J. Ryan. A Biography, 1990, pp. 103-104
Ryan had cautioned those optimists in the labour movement who expected the moon that they may have to be content with 'a few moonbeams'. This was a reforming government not a revolutionary one. However, unlike Holman, his Labor counterpart in New South Wales, Ryan refused Opposition requests not to introduce 'contentious legislation' for the duration of the war. The Opposition claimed that such legislation would divide Queensland society, 'at a time when the attention of the people should be given to the possibilities of the war, and the steps necessary to assist the Empire'. For Ryan and the Labor Party, the war was a matter for the Federal Government. Ryan had made no mention of such a course of action throughout the campaign, concentrating solely on state issues, and as such he believed the decisive mandate delivered by the electorate obligated the Labor Party to initiate its platform war or no war. Furthermore, Ryan and the PLP were well aware of the significance of the opportunities available to and expectations of the first Labor Party elected to office in their own right in Queensland. To equivocate now, with victory achieved would be to risk a schism between the parliamentarians and the rest of the labour movement which could prove irreconcilable.

Thus the Labor Party with the full support of the AWU set about confronting the entire edifice of Queensland capitalism with some of the most dynamic legislative reforms introduced into any Australian parliament. Ryan moved quickly to secure the passing of the Sugar Aquisition Bill, and arrangements with Labor Attorney-General, William Morris Hughes and the Commonwealth by which the Queensland Government

46 Ibid., p. 102.
47 QPD, CXX, 1915, p. 36.
would purchase the entire sugar crop at a fixed price and then sell it to the Commonwealth, thus ensuring security for cane farmers and helping to regulate food prices whilst effectively smashing the near monopoly the CSR had exercised over the establishment of sugar prices in Queensland. Ryan explained to the House in July,

What this Government has done is to secure the sugar growers in Queensland a fair price for the whole of the season of 1915, and they have also secured stability for the industry and have inspired confidence in the Southern States that Queensland will supply the whole of Australia when the imported sugar is exhausted.

... the man who has got hit is the middleman and not the consumer.

... when this Government undertook to make for the stability of the sugar industry, the CSR was making no agreement with the growers, the growers did not know where they were, but by the action of this Government were placed in a sounder position than ever, and, no one was more surprised at what was done than the CSR Company.

Stung by the audacity and possible ramifications of the Bill the new Leader of the Opposition, E.H. Macartney resorted to the raising of familiar bogeys claiming, 'that the Bill may be a very good commencement of applying socialism in our time'.

Undaunted, Labor pushed ahead initiating electoral reforms that lowered the residential qualification to one month (clearly AWU-inspired) and allowed the election

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49 Ibid., pp. 196-197.
50 Ibid., p.190.
of women to the Legislative Assembly. Other reforms included a Workmen’s Compensation Act, labour exchanges, tax reforms, the much awaited increase in the wages of public servants, a State-owned insurance agency, land reforms that prevented freehold tenure on Crown Lands and encouraged closer settlement, and following the Legislative Council’s rejection of a Meatworks Bill, using clauses under the *Sugar Acquisition Bill*, the Government created state-owned butcher shops and cattle stations to provide cheaper meat and confront the American Meat Trust. The Government further signaled a desire for state-owned iron works, canneries, fisheries and brick works. As well in late 1916, following much interference from that body, Ted Theodore, introduced a bill to abolish the Legislative Council.

For the AWU, however, perhaps the greatest achievement of this legislative flurry was the repealing of the notorious *Industrial Peace Act* and its replacement with the *Industrial Arbitration Act*. The new Act established the Court of Industrial Arbitration giving it the power and jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, with the president being made a judge of the Supreme Court in recognition of this status. The first president appointed was T.W. McCawley. McCawley, a Roman Catholic and admirer of Justice Henry Bourne Higgins, would prove to be the perfect choice for the role of the independent arbitor. For the AWU here at last was the opportunity to confront employers over industrial issues on an even basis under legislation introduced by the Labor Party (and drafted mainly by AWU men such as Theodore, McCormack and

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51 Murphy, D.J., in Murphy, D.J. (ed), *op. cit.*, 1975, p. 188.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
Ryan at that!). Such an opportunity such as this could only benefit a union that now contained nearly a third of the unionised workforce of Queensland with a membership in excess of 26,000. The AWU's power could not only be felt in the sheds, mines and cane fields of Queensland. With electoral and legislative success the AWU could now exercise its power and therefore foster and promote its beliefs and ideology in the Houses of Parliament and the courts of the state. This in a very real sense established the base from which the AWU was to assert a hegemonic influence upon not only the Queensland labour movement but the whole of Queensland society. With this increased power came prestige and social and economic benefits for those loyal and diligent servants of the AWU that they would not surrender easily to either those inside of the labour movement or those opposed to it.

The BIC presented itself as the most obvious source of opposition to the AWU’s dominance of the labour movement. Formed in July 1914, it collected the remnants of the ALF in Brisbane not absorbed by the AWU, mostly craft unions, some with a decidedly more militant agenda than the AWU. Indeed, by August of that year Dunstan was appealing to those unions within the building industry to join with construction workers who had already amalgamated with the AWU. They resisted, claiming that the larger union was too closely allied to the parliamentary wing of the movement, too autocratic with little rank-and-file involvement in policy-making, and that the smaller unions would lose their identities within the monolithic union. These reasons would become familiar accusations leveled at the AWU, and accounted in part

56 Ibid.
for the rejection of AWU advances by the QRU and even worse the AMIEU who had reversed its earlier decisions to amalgamate by the end of 1915. These organisations were the second and third largest unions behind the AWU (although even their combined memberships barely totalled half of the AWU's). Both the QRU and the AWU aligned themselves with the BIC. Worse still was the desire of the Brisbane branch of the AWU to affiliate with the BIC. The Central Executive of the union, swiftly moved to cut off the rebel branches funding and suspend meetings of the branches committee. However, despite their potential threat to AWU activities in the Capital, the reality was that the loose federation of unions represented by the BIC could not seriously hope to challenge the AWU's power outside of Brisbane and a few provincial cities along the coast such as Townsville with its strong AMIEU presence. Nevertheless, even potential threats were not to be taken lightly by the AWU executive and they prepared for the day when they may have to curtail the militant aspirations of this industrial upstart.

Within the AWU there were still those unconvinced by the 'district system' or the strict adherence to the verdicts of the Industrial Court or those of the AWU executive regarding strike action. At the AWU annual delegates meeting in 1915, Bow again led the push from both the Longreach and Charleville branches for greater local autonomy\(^57\). Both Theodore and Dunstan quickly denounced the motion claiming such a motion could severely erode the power of the union and the gains it had made for its members\(^58\). There were other concerns for the Labor Party and the AWU. With the

\(^57\) *Annual Delegates Meeting, 1915*, NBAC, Canberra, AWU Deposit, M50.
\(^58\) *Ibid*. 

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War dragging on into 1916 and no evident prospect of victory, casualties mounting, wages and conditions stagnant and the Court of Industrial Arbitration still to be fully organised and the spectre of military conscription looming, the labour movement and Queensland society in general were becoming increasingly restless.

Many workers had become impatient of Labor and AWU assurances in its new arbitration system. Further still, with large scale labour unrest the workers became more susceptible to militant doctrines such as those espoused by the IWW. In 1916, industrial disputes rose from seventeen in 1915 to sixty-four and involved over 20 000 employees. Some of these strikes involved industries in which the AWU had sole coverage and were undertaken without the approval of the Union’s executive in Brisbane. Those construction unions of the BIC that had refused Dunstan’s offer had formed themselves into the Australian Building Industry Employees Union (ABIEU). One of the leaders of the ABIEU was Claude Anlezark, who at the beginning of 1915 established the Brisbane ‘local’ of the IWW, occupying the positions of secretary and treasurer. Anlezark, a self-confessed anarchist had been a prominent member of the ‘physical force’ group within the Sydney local of the Wobblies in 1913. Although small in number the Wobblies began to exert a disruptive influence within the labour movement with their doctrines of direct action and industrial sabotage. With war-weariness setting in and industrial, economic and social conditions either stagnating or even worsening many workers in Queensland were prepared to listen.

In May, Mick Kelly, a former AWU organiser now an IWW man, encouraged the men of the central west to strike for increased rates of pay. Strike camps formed at

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59 Evans, R. op.cit., 1987, p. 68.
Hughenden, Prairie, Richmond, Winton and Barcaldine, with the men at this last camp refusing AWU representation. The AWU heartland was ignoring the covenant of conciliation and arbitration established by its politicians within the Labor Party and turning to the militants of the labour movement hoping for a quick success. Under the cry of ‘Give the warm weather and blow flies a chance’, the shearers and shed-hands of the central west pushed for increased rates and wages. The strikers were assisted by a benign government under the Acting-Premier John Hunter. Unlike his predecessors, Hunter refused pastoralists’ requests to use the police and enlist ‘specials’ to break up the strike camp. Instead, Hunter admonished Police Commissioner Cahill for sending extra police to the area without his permission. With the entire wool clip under threat, the pastoralists relented to the strikers’ demands.

The pastoral industry was changing. No longer were the sheds dominated by those locally based small landholders of the Yeoman Ideal. Most sheds were now the domain of contract workers whose employer was the contractor not the shed manager. The wages and conditions in these sheds were negotiated between the contractors and the owners or managers with the shearing award negotiated by the AWU merely a minimum. As regards to contracting, the writing was on the wall for the AWU even before the Labor Party assumed office, with shearing fixtures for the 1914 season revealing that of the 163 stations offering stands, 131 were under contract.

The contract shearers worked hard and fast to fulfill contractual obligations and make sure they reached the next shed on time. Other than shearing, the contractor was

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60 Ibid., pp. 68-70.
61 Ibid. pp. 68-70.
62 Worker, 2 July 1914.
very often able to provide a worker with other employment following the shearing season in other rural occupations such as fencing and bore-sinking. What was emerging was a new type of pastoral labour force that consisted of men who were basically full-time professional rural workers. They worked hard to make as much money as they could in the shortest possible time. Their goals of course were varied, but many would have been saving enough to settle down with a family on their own piece of land or even start a business (perhaps contracting). As such they were quite sensitive to their position in the labour market and aware of the advantages and disadvantages markets and seasons could make to their earning potential. Whilst the AWU officially denounced contract shearing as opposed to award rates \(^{63}\), they were forced to accept the reality of the industry and simply ensured that they were at least all members of the union. However, organisers were often loathe to interfere in disputes between contractors and their workers and were content to deal with the more general conditions of the industry in their districts.

With this dispute resolved another emerged by the end of May at the Ross River and Alligator River meatworks in the North with the AMIEU taking its members out over wages. Again Hunter’s moderate approach and insistence upon negotiation saw the meatworkers triumph and the unity of the labour movement maintained. The pages of the IWW’s journal *Direct Action*, overflowed with triumphal rhetoric announcing the dawning of a new working class consciousness with the IWW as its vanguard\(^{64}\). Indeed, the hand of the IWW was noticeable in both disputes through both strike leaders such

\(^{63}\) See for example *Worker*, 6 August 1914
as Mick Kelly and certain local officials of the AMIEU and much of the strikers' propaganda. However, the Wobblies were adept at what probably amounted to no more than the natural self-deception and egocentricity of the zealot.

What occurred in the central west and to the North was a traditional and calculated response to favourable conditions combined with a real desperation in the face of worsening war time conditions and the natural militancy of both groups of workers. With the entire wool clip under threat in the central west and 2000 head of cattle in the yards at Townsville the workers had their employees in a highly vulnerable position with war material contracts for both Australia and Britain to be fulfilled. This position was made even more precarious by the unwillingness of a sympathetic government to move against the strikers. With no support from government agencies and profits threatened the employers crumbled. Bill Kewley would have been pleased. So too, one could imagine, in the privacy of their own company would two former militant trade union leaders - Ted Theodore and Bill McCormack.

These disputes would be over-shadowed, however, when William Morris Hughes (now Prime Minister following Fisher's resignation), in late August, announced a referendum would be held over the issue of increasing the Commonwealth's existing powers to conscript able-bodied men for home defence to include conscription for overseas service. Despite assurances to the contrary, Hughes' visits to Britain and the Western Front in 1916 had convinced him of the necessity of conscription. Hughes was aware of the opposition that existed within the Labor Party to conscription. This

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65 Evans, R., *ibid.*, p. 82.
66 In 1915 whilst debating the War Census Bill, Hughes had stated, 'In no circumstances would I agree to send men out of this country to fight against their will.'
attitude was confirmed by a specially convened interstate trade union congress which had expressed ‘uncompromising hostility to conscription’ by 258,018 to 753 on a card vote. Hughes would have to rely on his ability to appeal to the nation’s sense of Imperial duty and on the support of the most vociferous advocates of conscription - the Conservative daily press, anti-Labor politicians and their supporters, the Universal Service League (USL) and the Protestant churches. Those who were thus identified as anti-conscriptionists were the Labor Party, trade unions, the IWW and the Irish Catholics (based primarily upon the disastrous Sinn Fein-led Easter Rising of 1916 and the outspoken comments of Melbourne Archbishop Daniel Mannix).

In Queensland, with the increasing prospect of a Labor Party split in the Federal party and in New South Wales under its conscriptionist premier, W.A. Holman, the reaction of the Ryan Government was eagerly anticipated, especially by the anti-Labor forces within Queensland. Ryan’s response in particular was significant as he too, had been in Britain and on the Western Front at much the same time as Hughes. As elsewhere throughout the country all of the organised representatives of the labour movement in Queensland had expressed opposition to conscription including the BIC, the Labor-in-Politics Convention of 1916 and significantly, the Annual Delegates Meeting of the AWU which unanimously recommended, ‘...that if conscription was brought in they should strongly oppose it’. Although the anti-conscription resolutions attracted the most media attention following the Labor-in-Politics Convention perhaps the most significant development

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of the Convention was not directed towards policy but the changes to representation and administration initiated by none other than the AWU’s Bill McCormack MLA. If the AWU had achieved a position of dominance on the CPE and on the floor of the Convention virtually by default prior to the 1916 Convention, McCormack was about to enact a scheme to ensure that the AWU could not easily be removed from this position. He argued that as the unions paid more directly to the CPE than the Workers’ Political Organisations (WPOs) then the affiliated unions should have greater administrative participation commensurate with the number of members each union possessed. Representation at Convention now incorporated not only the traditional delegate elected from each state electorate but also union delegates on the following basis: one delegate for 1,000-2,000 members; two delegates for 3,000-6,000 members; three delegates for 6,000-10,000 members; a maximum of four delegates for over 10,000 members. The CPE was likewise subjected to this proportional union representation. Together with the eleven elected from the convention and the parliamentarians (now reduced to only one each from the State and Federal sphere) union representation on the CPE consisted of: 2,000 members and over, one delegate; 5,000 members and over, two delegates; 10,000 members and over, three delegates with two other members elected form those affiliated unions with less than 2,000 members. These recommendations from the committee chaired by McCormack were approved with little dissent and were to remain largely unchanged into the latter part of the century. Even potential rivals of the AWU such as the QRU could see the benefits such a scheme could give to their unions as

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69 Official Record of the Eighth Labour-in-Politics Convention.
70 Official Record of the Eighth Labour-in-Politics Convention.
71 Murphy, D.J., op. cit., 1975, pp. 191-192.
successful recruitment could lead to these unions also increasing their representation. Thus McCormack succeeded in securing for the AWU the most delegates for any one affiliated organisation at Convention and on the CPE even before the possible election of AWU members and sympathisers via the electorates, the Convention floor or the parliamentarians. As well, McCormack had effectively ended twenty-five years in which the Labor Party refused to countenance the direct representation of trade unions on the Convention floor. Trade unionism in Queensland was growing stronger and McCormack and many others within the labour movement could see no reason why the all important role of the unions within the Labor Party should be concealed under the banners of the WPOs when all were aware of where the real power was located.

Despite the seriousness of the emerging conscription furore Ryan's approach was typically measured and pragmatic. He and his cabinet knew that its greatest responsibility still remained to the programme of reform it was elected to pursue. The Dickson Award, granting retrospective pay increases of up to fifty per cent in the sugar industry was of a more immediate concern for Ryan. The patience of the AWU men in the sugar districts had paid off handsomely, whilst the growers and millers predicted ruination for the industry. The employers responded by ceasing operations, provoking random acts of canefield incendiariism by the workers. This was an important moment for the Ryan Government and the AWU in particular. The first major decision of the new Industrial Court, a cornerstone of both PLP and AWU policy, was seemingly about to be defied with great animosity between the employers and their employees in an AWU-covered industry. The Labor Party had to try to defend its belief in arbitration

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and conciliation whilst appeasing sugar growers and millers (especially small to medium growers). Fundamentally, this was not a clash between the AWU and the CSR, who could reluctantly fulfil the requirements of the Award, but between those sugar workers of the AWU and the smaller growers who faced real hardship under the Dickson decision. The combined votes of both these groups secured what was Labor's almost unassailable position in the sugar districts of the North.

Ryan responded by opening new discussions with the Commonwealth to renegotiate the price of sugar at a higher rate in order to compensate the growers for wage increases that were eventually successful for all concerned. Meanwhile, some of the Caucus members and even some Ministers were known to have sympathies with the cause for conscription. They included Hardacre, Coyne, G. Barber and in particular John Adamson, a Presbyterian minister and Cabinet member whom had accepted the vice-presidency of the Queensland USL. For Ryan, conscription was a Federal matter and not an issue that should destroy the Party. By appealing to the broader goals of the labour movement Ryan was able to convince most of these men to subordinate their conscriptionist beliefs to the wishes and ambitions of the labour movement in Queensland. Only Adamson reluctantly and unacrimoniously resigned from the Party (indeed Adamson would regularly vote with the Government in the House following his resignation). Thus, after a fortnight of silence, the Worker could announce triumphantly,

Members of the Rank and File of the Labor Party throughout the State should be highly gratified at the united and determined attitude taken by all sections of the

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73 Murphy, D. J., in Murphy, D.J., (ed.), op. cit., 1975, p.194.
movement in Queensland to fight the imposition of conscription by the Federal Government...

The antagonism has sprung spontaneously from each and every arm of our great movement and the 'Worker' is in the happy position of announcing that Cabinet Ministers, politicians, trade unionist's, W.P.O. members, Socialists, women's organisations, and the officials and rank and file of almost every craft union are standing shoulder to shoulder in what promises to be the greatest fight of modern times.\(^74\)

The task of bringing a disparate group of anti-conscriptionists that included within its ranks, pacifists, feminists, revolutionary extremists, trade unionists, moderate reformists and Labor politicians fell to Ted Theodore as Chairman of the Anti-Conscription Campaign Committee (ACCC). The ACCC contained representatives from many of these groups but the AWU presence was evident. As well as Theodore,\(^75\) the Chairman of the Literature Committee that produced the bulk of the propaganda for the campaign was AWU Vice-President, Ernie Lane. Of course Bill Dunstan took his place on the ACCC and in the four man delegation from the PLP, all four - Theodore, Fihelly, McCormack and J.M.Stopford - were AWU men, with Stopford a former organiser from Mt. Morgan. With Lane in control of the Literature Committee and with other powerful AWU figures involved the ACCC produced a campaign that not only dealt with the moral and ideological objections to conscription as espoused by those

\(^74\) *Worker*, 21 September 1916.

\(^75\) Despite the fact that Theodore had resigned from both the presidency and the Board of the *Worker* at the Annual Delegates Conference at the beginning of 1916 to concentrate on his portfolio, he could not be considered as anything but an AWU representative throughout his career in Queensland.
more militant members of the ACCC but also the more pragmatic issues of labour shortages, home defence, and racial, industrial and economic consequences that would appeal to a wider section of the electorate. In true AWU fashion the campaign appealed to broader elements within Queensland society, emphasising the sacrifice already made by Australians, the inequality of that sacrifice between the wealthy and the workers, the threat to continuing reform in Queensland, the threat to primary industries and the war effort labour shortages could bring and the potential threat posed to White Australia and wages and conditions by the alleged importation of cheap coloured labour to replace that which was conscripted. By exploiting the fears and prejudices which were already present within Queensland society, the AWU/PLP directed ACCC was able to appeal beyond not only those extreme elements within the labour movement but beyond the movement itself. The result was that the 'Anti' campaign in Queensland was more than capable of confronting the challenges placed before them.

When the Conservatives doubted Ryan's commitment to the campaign, he took to the speaker's platforms unleashing his impressive arsenal of debating and rhetorical skills, thus allowing Theodore to prepare the Government's first budget which would defy all predictions by returning a surplus. When two Irish-Catholic Ministers, Fihelly and Lennon addressed a function of the Queensland Irish Association to raise funds for refugees of the Easter Rising in Dublin they enabled the pro-Conscriptionist Opposition

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and press to exploit the sectarian element of Conscriptionist propaganda. In a rousing speech Fihelly had claimed, 'that every Irish Australian recruit means another soldier to assist the British Government to harness the people of Ireland.' The intemperate remarks combined with a perceived growth in the influence of Catholics within the Queensland labour movement provided Queensland's conservatives with a means to manufacture a schism. For Brisbane's conservative press, who had taken two weeks to pick up the story, they had found their Mannix and 'Fihellyism' became synonymous with other disloyal epithets such as IWWism, Prussianism and Sinn Feinism. Ryan simply counseled his ministers to remain more circumspect in their support of Ireland. In the conservative media and in the House Ryan simply scoffed at allegations of Labor disloyalty and in the most part refused to engage in any debate on the topic. By refusing to add any fuel to the fire the issue soon lost momentum as Labor got on with the business of the state. Labor maintained its discipline and the opposition once again failed to manufacture a schism within the Queensland labour movement.

By insisting upon loyalty and discipline the leaders of the Queensland labour movement was able to present a united front with the proponents of conscription being easily identified as the enemies of the labour movement. The ACCC were able to appeal beyond the moral and ideological objections to compulsion that existed within

77 Queensland contained one of Australia's largest proportions of Catholics of predominantly Irish descent with 137 000 Catholics in a population of 680 000 at the time of the two referenda.
78 *Catholic Advocate*, 7 September 1916.
79 Not only were Fihelly and Lennon Catholic but so too was Ryan and newly elected AWU President, W.J. Riordan. As well Ted Theodore, whilst christened Romanian Orthodox, had married a Catholic, attended Mass and along with Ryan considered Brisbane Archbishop James Duhig among his friends.
the labour movement. These more abstract objections were complimented by a broad ranging argument that exploited existing fears such as imported cheap labour, lower wages and poor conditions, inequality of sacrifice and the potential destruction to Labor's process of reform. Significantly, the ACCC was able to appeal beyond the confines of the labour movement to other sections of the community such as rural communities who feared the threat to primary industries caused by potential labour shortages due to conscription. Such fears helped to consolidate the Labor Party's support in many rural districts.

Thus on 28 October 1916, the people of Queensland returned a 'No' vote with a majority of 13,829 and combined with the 'No' majorities in South Australia and New South Wales to defeat the referendum by a small majority of 72,476. At the Federal and state levels (especially in New South Wales), the Labor purge began with the expulsion of conscriptionists. Hughes formed a Nationalist coalition with the Opposition and Holman did the same in New South Wales. Queensland was spared these tumultuous scenes to emerge as the beacon of the political labour movement in Australia with Ryan its brightest star. Both Hughes and Holman returned at elections in 1917 and despite assurances to the contrary Hughes called another referendum on the question of conscription for December of that year. Theodore as Acting-Premier responded, 'There is no question that the Queensland Labor Party will be unanimously opposed to the referendum, and will take the platform against it."

Set against the continued slaughter on the Western Front, a General Strike in

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2 *Daily Telegraph*, 9 November 17
eastern Australia, the trial of the 'IWW Twelve' and the Bolshevik Revolution, 1917 was characterised by increasing bitterness and acrimony. Throughout the period the Queensland Labor Party had unhesitatingly pursued its reformist platform becoming both a terrifying socialist tiger to the forces of capitalism and an heroic example to the labour movement throughout Australia desperately seeking stability amidst the confusion. Ryan quickly rose to prominence as the most effective anti-conscriptionist speaker in the country, surpassing Mannix as the most sought after platform speaker in Queensland and beyond. The Queensland campaign was notable for two incidents in particular - the 'Warwick Egg Incident' and the seizure of the Queensland addition of Hansard. Hughes' vituperous personal attacks upon Ryan and his Ministry were contrasted by Ryan's well researched, temperate and affable addresses from the platform and in the House. When mockingly asked during a debate in the Legislative Assembly whether he had a representative amongst the soldiers, Ryan silenced the hapless Opposition with the devastating response:

We have not a representative with the soldiers. The representatives we have with the soldiers are the tens of thousands of unionists and workers who have left this country to fight the great cause in which we are engaged. (emphasis added)

The conservative Argus claimed that, 'Almost any outbreak may be expected from the Ryan Ministry in Queensland ...'

However, with the support of the Queensland labour movement assured
Queensland returned another ‘No’ vote and, as with the national vote, with an increased majority of over 35,000\(^6\). The Queensland labour movement had remained united politically and industrially through the most bitter political campaign ever to confront the Australian community and Ryan had emerged as the most respected Labor leader in the country and the obvious successor to Frank Tudor for the Federal leadership. Although many factors contributed to this success, the loyalty demanded by and the influence exerted by the leaders of the AWU as well as the infrastructure provided by this most powerful of Queensland unions must be considered significant.

Despite the apparent unity displayed throughout the two conscription campaigns there was an emerging sense of discord emanating from the more militant sections of the labour movement. A dispute began in the railway industries primarily in the northern and central regions around the issue of ‘dirt money’ and retrospectivity in August 1917. In February 1917 both boilermakers and members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE) had been granted ‘dirt money’ by the railways commissioner\(^7\). The decision was a great victory for the two craft unions as it did not apply to non-members of those unions. However, it also alienated the vast majority of workers employed by the Department of Railways outside the workshops who were largely semi-skilled or unskilled labourers covered by the QRU and the AWU who also appealed to the Minister for Railways, Harry Coyne, for a similar allowance\(^8\). Coyne replied that he could not, but would willingly submit the issue for arbitration. Eventually in July, Justice McCawley granted these men their ‘dirt money’. However,

\(^6\) Evans, R., op. cit., 1987, p. 111.
\(^7\) Murphy, D.J., op. cit., 1975, p. 264.
\(^8\) Ibid., p. 265.
despite some rather ambiguous pronouncements regarding retrospectivity to February when the Boilermakers' and Engineers' were granted the allowances, McCawley finally refused to grant retrospectivity much to the dismay of the unions and strike action was threatened.\(^89\)

Unlike the other disputes which had occurred in the sugar, meat and pastoral industries since Labor had attained office, this threatened strike involved unionists employed by a Labor government and in defiance of the Industrial Court. Furthermore, the Ryan Government were attempting to maintain industrial peace in Queensland against a backdrop of intense strike activity in the other eastern states where 'national service' labour had been recruited as strike breakers by reactionary governments with the encouragement of Hughes at the Federal level. Already, waterside workers and railwaymen had refused to handle any goods moved by the strike-breakers and extremist elements in Queensland were beginning to push for general strike action in support of their southern comrades\(^90\). Despite the potentially serious economic consequences of the threatened strike, Ryan and his Ministry displayed not only their genuine sympathy for the trade union movement in this struggle but also incredible political acumen by steadfastly resisting Hughes' repeated calls for Queensland to use 'national service' labour to handle the 'black' goods from the south. This action effectively served to dampen workers enthusiasm for sympathy action on behalf of their southern counterparts that they knew would only serve to increase their own hardship.

Ryan, realising the enormous personal respect he enjoyed in the North,


despatched Theodore to confer with strikers and their leaders including the QRU’s George Rymer and Ernie Sampson and the AWU’s Northern District Secretary, Jack Dash. Whilst the former were noted advocates of industrial militancy, Jack Dash was a well respected and pragmatic man, who enjoyed the confidence and respect of both the AWU Executive and the CPE. He was able to reveal to Theodore that the strikers had a genuine grievance and that the action was not a result of IWW activity. Having been convinced by Dash’s evidence of the genuineness of the strikers’ claims, Ryan and the PLP were in the unenviable position of not wishing to undermine the authority of the Industrial Court they had established nor risk a schism within the movement that sustained them.

If tact and sensitivity were the required elements to bring the railway dispute to a successful conclusion then the opening salvo from Bill McCormack in the caucus meeting of 9 August, was not a promising one. The AWU stalwart with his own political ambitions wasted no time in moving a motion of condemnation on the strikers for their ‘flouting the Arbitration Awards and resorting to direct action’. It was an unequivocal statement not only of McCormack’s faith in the arbitration system but also an uncompromising challenge to those members of the caucus who hesitated in adhering to the Party’s policy and any others within the labour movement who courted notions of direct action. For McCormack too, the motion would also be a good test of his support amongst his parliamentary colleagues. On this day, however, McCormack would not prevail, with even his closest ally, Theodore, objecting to the confrontational

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91 Ibid., pp. 265-266.
92 Minutes, Parliamentary Labor Party, 9 August 1917.
tone of the motion. The meeting finally carried a more conciliatory motion ‘regretting’ the strike action, reaffirming the PLP’s support for arbitration and calling for another conference of the relevant parties. McCormack would have to bide his time before he had another opportunity to demand loyalty from the movement and purge those who faltered.

The strike had spread from Townsville to Mackay, Cairns, Charters Towers and Hughenden. Most of these areas were strongholds of the AWU and were now defying one of the core principles of their union. With the dispute now becoming a potentially ruinous stand-off between the policy makers and the rank-and-file, Ryan took control of the situation. His main aim was to end the dispute without embarrassing the strikers or undermining McCawley and the Industrial Court. He offered, with McCawley’s consent, that the highly respected Federal Court Judge, Justice H.B.Higgins arbitrate on the matter. Whilst those delegates to the conference agreed with the proposal, back in the strike centres themselves only the men at Cairns and Mackay agreed. Again the delegates met and supported the proposals. With this support, Ryan then telegrammed Rymer notifying him that if the men did not return by the morning of 28 August they would ‘cease to be in the employ of the Commissioner’. With this the men duly agreed to return to work.

The subsequent obstinancy on the part of Hughes by refusing to permit Higgins to hear the case did no more than divert pressure from the Labor Government in

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93 Ibid.
95 *Daily Standard*, 22 August, 1917.
97 *Daily Standard*, 29 August, 1917.
Queensland onto Hughes and casting Ryan and Theodore in the role of the workers’ friend. Although Ryan continued to search for a suitable arbiter, events such as the second conscription campaign and the 1918 state election served to push minor grievances into the background. McCawley finally redressed the issue in the worker’s favour the following year when the award was up for renewal.\textsuperscript{98} When compared with the confrontational tactics being employed by Hughes and Fuller in New South Wales, the legitimacy of arbitration had been confirmed in the minds of many in both the political and industrial sections of the labour movement in Queensland. However, those advocates of a more militant approach to dealing with the forces of capitalism had also emerged from the dispute relatively unscathed to fight another day, indeed they could claim that direct action forced Ryan to submit their claims to further arbitration.

The operation of the arbitration system was clearly emerging as a major source of potential division within the Queensland labour movement. Many Australian labour historians and industrial relations theorists have examined the concept of compulsory, state-regulated arbitration. Within the ‘labourist’ tradition the Labor Party and the AWU are seen as the major beneficiaries and proponents of such a system. One school of thought asserts that through arbitration systems unions become dependent upon that system to take the lead in determining wages and conditions and by means such as preference clauses the arbitration courts ensure that workers are compelled to join those unions that are registered with courts. What develops is a symbiotic relationship whereby unions rely on the operations and resources of the courts to pursue ‘industrial peace’ as opposed to more direct forms of industrial action that do not threaten the

\textsuperscript{98} Murphy, D.J., in Murphy, D.J., (ed), \textit{op. cit.}, 1975, p. 198.
existing systems. By implication this 'dependency theory' asserts that unions such as the AWU become overly beaurocratised and rely on the courts to encourage recruitment rather than more dynamic methods of union recruitment99. This thesis is extended to further implicate employers as well. Along with the unions employer representatives have grown to appreciate that the arbitration courts can sometimes provide a dependable system which may indeed benefit employers when market conditions favour the employees100.

However, other scholars have dismissed this theory on the basis that it presupposes that all unions chose to rely on the arbitration courts. Clearly not all unions did – particularly those ‘militant’ unions such as the AMIEU, the Miners’ or the QRU. Nor in all events did unions such as the AWU. More specifically it removes the concept of agency from the actions of trade unions and its membership. For many unions emerging from the 1890s the reliance on the process of arbitration was a tactic in its struggle to reform the industrial relations environment101. For a union such as the AWU which deliberately chose to embrace the arbitration system this decision provided a means of empowerment. Furthermore, it was a tactic that the rank-and-file was, for the most part, happy to support. As Webster quite accurately points out in her discussion of


trade unions in Rockhampton, the AWU's reliance upon arbitration and its willingness to rigorously hold employers and AWU members to the conditions of award was the tactic the AWU chose as its best means of assisting its constituents. Others such as the AMIEU chose more localised, floor-committee based methods of direct negotiations with employers.102

For the AWU the adherence to arbitration was already beginning to bear fruit in Queensland. Although the new Act did not grant preference to unionists it did allow for the Court to grant it. And this is precisely what McCawley did in April 1917 laying the foundation for 'preference' to be the convention in Queensland awards for years to come stating:

...giving the matter my best consideration, I have come to the conclusion that the possibility of injury to the company from the grant of preference to unionists is remote, and is outweighed by the probable benefits accruing to the company from the removal of what cannot be other than a cause of continued industrial friction.103

By 1920, McCawley and Justice Macnaughton were providing preference in awards without the need of legislation.104 For the AWU in Queensland arbitration was proving to be a successful tactic and so encouraged members to join and encouraged other smaller unions to seek amalgamation. As Macintyre states, arbitration enabled the AWU 'to swallow up smaller unions which thought they could get by on militancy

103 Queensland Industrial Gazette, 2, 1917, p. 326.
104 Howatson, R.J., op. cit., 1998, pp. 204-205.
alone\textsuperscript{105}. The challenge to the AWU-PLP clique was to ensure that the gains made by Queensland workers since 1915 by industrial relations policies enacted and administered by a Labor government was not undone by losing government at the next elections.

The election year of 1918 would be a significant one for the PLP and the labour movement in general in Queensland. Would the unity of the movement and its appeal to the wider electorate successfully return the Labor Party? The 1918 Labour-in-Politics Convention saw the emergence of a definite militant streak within the movement when representatives of the QRU, AMIEU and the other BIC unions expressed dissatisfaction with the speed of reform and even from within the AWU, militant delegates such as Charlie Collins and Ernie Lane clearly had lost touch with the wishes of the other officials although not necessarily the rank-and-file. Realising the potential for disruption at the Convention the President of the CPE Bill Demaine broke with protocol by persuading Ryan to take the Chair as Demaine voluntarily stood aside\textsuperscript{106}. The decision was a wise one with Ryan using his tact and discretion to appease dissent whilst leaving AWU heavyweights, Dunstan, Riordan, Theodore, McCormack and Fihelly to use their numbers (both union delegates and those from the electorates) to push through those resolutions needed and defeat those that could prove embarrassing. The Convention remained united and most sections of the movement left believing that their politicians were committed to ongoing reform and that they willingly subordinated


\textsuperscript{106}Official Report of the Ninth Labour-in-Politics Convention, Brisbane, 1918.
themselves to decisions of the movement as endorsed by the CPE\textsuperscript{107}. However, there was enough dissension from the floor of the Conference for the AWU men both within the PLP and outside of it to realise that a stand would have to be made to bring some unions into line in the near future.

The Labor Party conducted a campaign that emphasised the achievements of the Government and promised basically nothing other than a continuation of that program. Despite the objections of strident anti-militarist Ernie Lane, the campaign had included a number of references to a continued support of the war effort and where possible returned servicemen were given prominence near or on the platform. As part of the Party’s attempt to display its commitment to returned servicemen, the Labor Party included in its platform a version of a soldier settlement scheme and had employed Tom O’Hagan to help find employment for those returned men through the Returned Soldiers Bureau\textsuperscript{108}. O’Hagan learnt very quickly, however, who organised employment in the pastoral industry - and it was not him!

O’Hagan had written to Ryan in July 1918 claiming that the local AWU officials welcomed the ‘working in’ of the returned men as they would have ‘a good effect upon the IWW Section amongst them who are trying to stir up strife’.\textsuperscript{109} Given the recent troubles in the pastoral industry this report seems highly probable but a number of articles in various local papers, rightly or wrongly, accredited O’Hagan with claiming that he was organising the whole of the Western District for returned servicemen. The AWU would have none of this and Dunstan fired off a letter to Ryan that stated

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{106} Murphy, D.J., \textit{op. cit.}, 1975 (this edition 1990), p. 281.
\textsuperscript{108} O’Hagan to Ryan, 8 July 1918, QSA, PRE/A594, Folder 7553
menacingly, 'I am certain that if this is continued, we are going to have very serious
trouble in Queensland'. O'Hagan was duly advised to cooperate with the Union and
to be more circumspect when dealing with the media.

With a strong support base within the rural and provincial electorates and many
genuine reforms to its credit, coupled with an inept Nationalist Opposition, the Labor
Party was returned with an increased majority of three, thus holding forty-eight of the
seventy-two seats in the Lower House. Significantly, the Party lost four of its
metropolitan seats whilst gaining seven new seats in rural electorates. Clearly, with
the rural bias in policy direction and leadership, together with the support of the AWU,
the Labor Party in Queensland was developing into a de facto country party.

The new Ryan Cabinet included Theodore, Hunter, Lennon, Fihelly, Hardacre,
Huxham, Coyne and W.N. Gillies (a sugar cane farmer from the far north) as Assistant
Minister to Ryan. The portfolios remained the same apart from the appointments of
Fihelly to the Railways and Coyne to the Lands departments. Apart from Huxham and
Fihelly every member of the Cabinet came from a rural electorate. Furthermore,
nearly every member of the Cabinet owed their seat to the AWU, apart from Huxham
and Fihelly who, nevertheless, was a member of the union. Amongst the seats
represented on the Cabinet were the great strongholds of AWU power. In the pastoral
districts in the central and south-west - Barcoo, Maranoa, Leichardt and Warrego, and
to the north in the sugar and mining regions - Chillagoe, Eacham and Herbert.

Regardless of the urgings of more militant sections of the labour movement or even the

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10 Dunstan to Ryan, 3 July 1918, *ibid.*
occasional outbreak of industrial unrest (sometimes within the very heart of AWU territory) the electors of Queensland had overwhelmingly given its support to the Labor Party and thereby, to a very large extent, the industrial and political agenda of the union that dominated that Party - the AWU.

By the end of 1918 the Armistice had been signed and the world was ostensibly at peace. Although, Hughes had successfully used the powers of the *War Precautions Act* to outlaw the IWW, their influence was still apparent amongst the BIC unions, most significantly the QRU, AMIEU and Waterside Workers’ Federation (WWF). The influence of the Wobblies was also noticeable in the increased organisation of the OBU movement. In September 1918 the One Big Union Propaganda League (OBUPL) had been established in Queensland. The OBUPL was nothing more than a front for the old IWW ‘locals’ and contained many of the same people. Combined with the OBUPL at around the same time was the Union of Russian Workers, a group of Russian immigrants, mostly rural labourers, who were sympathisers with Lenin’s Bolsheviks.

In March 1919, in defiance of federal laws, the URW along with the OBUPL and some of the unionists within the BIC had taken part in a procession in which the Red Flag had been displayed in support not only of the Revolution in Russia but also as a clarion call to the workers of Queensland. Although minor skirmishes did occur, the march concluded peacefully. However, it was the violent response of ‘loyalist’ returned servicemen that distinguished the ‘Red Flag Riot’. The mob pursued the URW members and supporters back to their offices and then proceeded to the offices of the

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Daily Standard, where only the intervention of the police prevented further violence and destruction.\textsuperscript{115}

However, not all of the radical elements were in favour of the overtly revolutionary and ‘foreign’ ideological shift that was occurring within the BIC. The Engineers’, Carters’ and Printers’ had begun to condemn the actions of the BIC and in February 1919 the latter disaffiliated from the BIC. Elsewhere in Queensland, what Evans describes as ‘moderate workers’ were actively seeking out known extremists to expel them\textsuperscript{116}. This a combination of the conservative reformism of the average Queensland worker with, the influence of returned servicemen and the increasing fear of workers facing a contracting post-war economy. These workers believed they had just achieved peace and they were not about to risk an already uncertain future for a minority of revolutionaries.

Within the PLP and AWU, the growing threat to their authority as leaders of the labour movement forced them to act. As mentioned above, unionists were already beginning to expel disruptive elements in local centres. Although many had become disillusioned by their war time experiences either as soldiers or on the home front, they were not willing to risk the reforms provided them by the Ryan Government. As early as mid-1916, Theodore had spoken out against the IWW. Not only as a recognition of the many thousand AWU members who had volunteered for the AIF but also to counter the growth of militancy amongst some of the rank-and-file during the war, the AWU was now granting ‘Preference for Returned Servicemen’. As acting Premier at the time

\textsuperscript{115} For an excellent examination of the Red Flag Riots see, Evans, R., \textit{The Red Flag Riots. A study of intolerance.} St. Lucia, 1988

\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 27-30.
of the Red Flag Riots, Theodore again attacked the advocates of direct action, disassociating the Labor Party from any revolutionary doctrine. These themes were further endorsed by a CPE document called the 'Solidarity or Disruption' Manifesto. At the forefront of this expression of loyalty to the PLP was the AWU with an organiser at Mt. Cuthbert saying, 'Mr. Theodore had openly asserted that these undesirables must be got rid of, and when Mr. Theodore said that, he meant it.'

With increasing speculation over Ryan's move into the Federal sphere the political representatives of the AWU within the PLP were manouvering to assert their already dominant position within the PLP and the policies it espoused. As part of this process the PLP and AWU needed to definitely confront the militants within the movement. A series of disputes within the northern meatworks culminating in the 'Bloody Sunday' Riot of 29 June 1919, provided the opportunity. Since the AMIEU had rejected earlier attempts to amalgamate with the AWU, they had steadfastly rejected the arbitration system. A significant reason for this was the power exercised by the works-based Boards of Control who organised the employment of labour and the working conditions on behalf of the workers. The Industrial Court effectively removed this power from their hands. The most militant of the meat works were the two largest works around Townsville - Alligator Creek and Ross River.

In 1918 the AMIEU had been coaxed into the Court where they successfully defended their preference clause but following continued industrial action at the two Townsville works, McCawley removed the clause in 1919 claiming that he could not grant preference to a union avowedly dedicated to direct action and industrial upheaval.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{111}}\text{ibid., p. 98.}\]
whilst it was his job to maintain industrial peace. Here was a union defying the cornerstone of the Labor Party's industrial relations policy and unambiguous action was required. Ryan sent extra police to Townsville following 'Bloody Sunday', Fihelly suspended QRU men who refused to transport these reinforcements and Theodore insisted that the dispute could only be settled through the Court. Despite an outcry from the AMIEU, the QRU, the Townsville Industrial Council and even the militant AWU Northern Secretary, G. Durkin over the Governments heavy-handedness the strike collapsed.

Throughout the dispute the advocates of arbitration gave full support to the Labor Party in their efforts to thwart the militants. The AWU certainly benefitted as many of the men who refused to strike were either AWU members or would become such once they had commenced work at either of the works. They were further supported by the Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association (FEDFA) and the Engineers' who ensured that the railways continued to operate for the meatworks and offered a challenge to their more militant rivals the QRU. The result was that many militants within the AMIEU were marginalised or completely removed by either rank-and-file fear of greater hardship or employees refusal to re-employ known extremists.\textsuperscript{118}

The Townsville meat strike provided many examples of the divisions becoming more explicit within the Queensland labour movement. Furthermore it signalled the changing nature of the AWU. In this strike the AWU had actively recruited members from amongst a group that were nominally strike-breakers, its Cabinet members had

shown a willingness to use the full apparatus of the State to crush militant trade unionism and uphold the principle of arbitration, and it had colluded with employers (in this case the much maligned American Meat Trust) to ensure production requirements were met and extremists suppressed. The AWU had re-defined the meaning of 'scab' and the accompanying notions of loyalty and betrayal contained within. It was not the AWU members who took the places of the AMIEU strikers at Alligator Creek and Ross River who were the scabs. Indeed, they were loyally following the decisions of a Labor-established Industrial Court. The charge of disloyalty and betrayal was clearly placed at the feet of those workers who defied this court and succumbed to the extremist propaganda of the IWW and other 'revolutionary' and 'foreign' doctrines. For the AWU in Queensland, loyalty and adherence to the policies and leadership of both the AWU and the party it dominated had become synonymous with loyalty to the labour movement.

In October 1919, on the invitation of the Federal Conference of the Labor Party, Ryan was formally invited to enter federal politics. He accepted and immediately took up the position of campaign director for the federal election. His resignation left the Queensland Labor Party open to the ambitions of the AWU and its representatives such as Theodore, Fihelly and the hardline McCormack who had entered the Cabinet earlier in the year following a series of resignations. Although an AWU member, Ryan was able to transcend factional politics with his affable good humour, political astuteness and immense intellect. His obvious successor was AWU strongman, Ted Theodore who contradicted Ryan with a gritty determination and pragmatism coupled with an aloof

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brusqueness that alienated many. It would be these characteristics that were to confront a perplexed and increasingly divided labour movement in Queensland.

By 1920, the Queensland Branch of the AWU were poised to consolidate their position as the most powerful industrial and political organisation in the state. This position appeared almost unassailable. Through their manipulation of Convention rules and steady growth in membership the AWU had ensured that their delegates could not only dominate the major forum for policy making but also the labour movements peak decision-making body - the CPE. Many AWU policy initiatives helped secure seats for the Labor Party as did the AWU’s ability to provide the only effective organisational infrastructure in isolated electorates. As such the AWU had become ‘a machine for raising its officials to political honours’ or more correctly, electoral results for its preferred candidate. At least half of the PLP were either AWU members or beholden to the AWU for their support.

However, despite significant legislative reforms by the Labor Governments from 1915 onwards, some sections of the labour movement began to doubt the PLP’s commitment to the attainment of the movement’s goals in the face of electoral expediency. Militant industrial organisations such the BIC, the QRU and the AMIEU became increasingly threatened by, if not envious of, the prominence of the AWU in the Labor Party. They also became disillusioned by the AWU/PLP’s devotion to arbitration and moderate social and economic reform.

Thus by 1920 the AWU officials had learnt how to achieve industrial and political

Childe, G.V., How Labour Governs, 1923, p. 169
success. Many could see that their positions not only facilitated the achievement of established goals but also provided hitherto unimagined social status and economic security for both themselves and their families. They now had to fortify themselves against the challenge from the Left in order to protect not only their positions but also the genuine gains made on behalf of the Queensland labour movement. Furthermore, they had to convince the rank-and-file of the Queensland labour movement and the wider electorate that their policies were for the betterment of the state. In the sheds, mines and canefields of Queensland the AWU Executive demanded loyalty from its members. With Queensland entering an uncertain post-War era they would demand nothing less from the movement they sought to lead.