'And the lives are many': the print culture of Australian communism

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Abstract
The tradition of communist thought and practice in Australia is strong and fertile. So, too, the print culture associated with official Australian communism has a vibrant heritage and is populated by significant figures from the field of literature, history, politics, art, theatre and journalism. This article investigates that culture by focussing upon key characters, critical issues, and significant debates that propelled a movement whose influence and power in Australian life is too easily underestimated.

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“Only when our own and other people have established Socialist States will war be abolished, and a spiritual renaissance based in love and service, unite the peoples of the world in an era of peace, and happier days than the doomed generations of Capitalism have ever known.” (Katharine Susannah Prichard).

“To me peace is three simple things…Peace is my son…Peace is the sons and daughters of all men…Peace is my books, Peace is poetry, Peace is my poem.” (David Martin).

The tradition of communist thought and practice in Australia is strong and fertile. So, too, the print culture associated with official Australian Communism has a vibrant heritage and is populated by significant figures from the field of literature, history, politics, art, theatre and journalism. This article investigates that culture by focussing upon key characters, critical issues, and significant debates that propelled a movement whose influence and power in Australian life is too easily underestimated.

In the academy-award winning film *Shine*, an early sequence has the gifted young pianist David Helfgott visiting the house in Perth of a prominent Communist author. That writer, with an established international reputation, was Katharine Susannah Prichard who was to become a sponsor of the young Helfgott. Prichard was a founding member of the Communist Party and she remained loyal to the organization her entire life. As others, including Dorothy Hewitt, Stephen Murray Smith, David Martin and Frank Hardy, fled from or were expelled by the Party, particularly in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Hungary, Prichard never wavered in her beliefs. She took out her final membership three days before she died in 1969, despite some disillusionment with the Party over its break with the Soviet Union following the invasion of Czechoslovakia.
Given what one might have thought of as Australia’s peripheral role in the international Communist movement, the print culture connected to Australian Communism is surprisingly rich. For a small nation almost suffocated by “the tyranny of distance”, Australia reaches beyond itself now in the field of culture, with prominent film stars, musical writers and novelists gracing the international stage. The same is true historically in the field of Communist cultural practice. Not only did Australia generate its own vital world of Communist writers and artists generally, it also produced two writers associated with the Communist movement who became based and established fame overseas – Christina Stead in America and Jack Lindsay in England. As Terry Irving points out, Australia has a rich tradition going back to the 1880s of labour movement activists variously writing, editing, publishing, public speaking and so on, giving voice to the “values of co-operation, solidarity, popular democracy, and militancy”, working towards and creating “a radical labour public”. While some of these activists are known because they also complied with the conventions of the ruling culture of the time, most are not.

The main attention in this paper is Australia itself, particularly during the Cold War, and we will turn to the journalists and writers who gave the literature of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) its great strength. A focus is upon one of the most prolific speechmakers, pamphleteers and writers, Rupert Lockwood. First, however, there is some necessary historical context.

The Communist Party of Australia (CPA)

Marx and Engels had found audiences in Australia since the early 1870s. During the turbulent 1890s and onwards, radicals ‘in the Australian labour movement had criticized capitalism in general and Australian capitalism in particular’. In the wake of the 1917 Russian Revolution, Australian radicals responded to the Russian call to establish communist parties in other countries. The CPA was founded in Sydney during October 1920 by twenty-six men and women representing a range of radical groups and interests drawn from the fragmented Australian socialist movement, 60 invitations having been extended by the organisers. Party membership peaked in 1944 at about 23,000. At the end of World War 2, the party ‘had the support of 25 to 40 percent of Australian unionists….it had one member of Parliament in Queensland and elsewhere its electoral support
sometimes reached 40 percent of votes cast; and it had municipal councils under its control'.

To get an idea of the significance of this peak membership, some comparison is relevant. Since 1945, the population of Australia has more than trebled. While Australian political parties are coy about revealing their membership numbers, at the time of writing (December 2015), the major party in the conservative coalition governing Australia, the Liberal Party, claimed a membership of 80000, though research suggests that in reality no Australian political party has more than 50000 members. Accepting the higher figure, and factoring in the huge population increase since 1945, on a per capita basis the CPA at its peak must be considered a significant political formation in terms of membership size. Further, contemporary membership of the major political parties in Australia only require from members the paying of dues, whereas throughout the life of the CPA, membership also involved being active cadres, to which end appropriate education and training was provided.

According to Gollan, writing specifically about the peak period of CPA membership, ‘the members of the party were much more active in political matters than is usual for members of political parties. Second, a high proportion of the members occupied key positions, or were influential in other organisations, in particular the trade unions’. In many ways, the party throughout its history, hit above its weight. After 1945, however, membership declined due to sectarian struggles, Cold War persecution within Australia, dramatic policy shifts within communism internationally, including the 1956 speech by Khrushchev denouncing Stalin and Stalinism, and the 1961 split between Moscow and Beijing. Most importantly, large numbers of intellectuals either left the Party following the 1956 Russian invasion of Hungary. Moreover, post-war economic conditions in Australia largely took away the sense of doom and physical hardship that had helped garner support for the party. By 1965 there were 5300 members, and the decline continued until the CPA voluntarily disbanded in 1991, placing its funds in the Search Foundation, financing progressive projects and causes. Nonetheless, as Andrew Wells and Stuart Macintyre have explained, the CPA had considerable impact upon the life of the nation. So, despite its negligible electoral support
nationally, it had a leading role in the peace and trade union movements and infused intellectual life with political and cultural passion. Its capacity ‘to bring organisational discipline and theoretical coherence to many political campaigns’ was a great strength and a provocation to the forces of reaction, including Government.\textsuperscript{12}

Pamphlets and Publishers

One of the key means of portraying CPA concerns and ideology in the late 1940s and 1950s were an extraordinary number of pamphlets that covered a range of subjects including Marxist theory, Australian political economy, American imperialism and, as always a key concern in that period and beyond, issues of peace and war. A number of the pamphlets have few or no publication details but many were produced by Current Book Distributors in Sydney or the International Bookstore or Rawson’s Books in Melbourne. The significant output of Current Book Distributors included David Martin’s short book of poetry from which one of the opening quotes comes.\textsuperscript{13} As the epigraphs reveal, Prichard and Martin shared the CPA’s perspective on its central role in the post-war period – the struggle for peace. Closely linked to that was a search for Australian national identity, independence and socialism. These concerns underpinned much of the print culture of the CPA in the cold war epoch, particularly the pamphlets, the newspapers (mostly the Sydney publication \textit{Tribune}) and the magazine \textit{Communist Review}. Many of the non-fiction books published by Party members made peace a clear focus. This was similarly reflected in some of the plays, poems, novels of the period but they were also concerned to explore the nature and character of Australian society. Thus much of Prichard’s published work (some of which was translated into many languages) dealt with the life, loves, labour and struggles of workers.\textsuperscript{14} Yet as her son Ric has put it: ‘Peace was Katharine’s Promethean flame’.\textsuperscript{15} Thus it was she set out to write her last novel \textit{Subtle Flame} ‘to make the masses of kindly, inert people, understand what is at stake for their homes and children – if they do not exert themselves in the interests of organisation for international disarmament and peace’.\textsuperscript{16}
The Australasian Book Society (ABS) published *Subtle Flame* in 1967 and with the ABS there is another link in the story of CPA print culture. ABS was created by the Realist Writers Group that included many loyal Party members like Frank Hardy, Judah Waten and Ian Turner. As suggested by the their name, the Realist Writers sought to promote a social or socialist realist mode of writing, particularly one focussed upon peace, justice and socialism. As we shall see, that had implications for painting also and effectively sidelined impressionism, abstraction and experimentation of any kind that departed from an official Soviet orthodoxy as laid out by Andrei Zhdanov. Hardy, whose book *Power Without Glory* was a blistering attack on the Melbourne establishment and emblematic of social realist practice, was at the centre of an attempt to create an alternative literary publishing world revolving around the Realist Writers, the ABS and *Overland*. Jack Lindsay’s assessment of the book is memorable: “…Hardy has written one of the few deepgoing novels of urban industrialized society. That is, a novel which does not merely have that society as its setting, but embodies in its structure, in the nature and development of its protagonist, the essential character of the market, of the hypnotic spinning coin. Such novels are rarer than one might think…”

While Hardy and some other CPA members were driving forces behind the ABS, it hovered in the orbit around the Party, being by no means a simple front organisation. Some founders were simply of the left but its first editor was a CPA member, the writer and historian Ian Turner. The Realist Writers Group also generated the journal *Overland*, founded in 1954, with Stephen Murray-Smith as editor. While *Overland*’s connection with the Party was brief with Murray-Smith being expelled following the Soviet invasion of Hungary, it continues to this day as a significant voice of the left. *Overland* actually grew out of a journal called the *Realist Writer*, which revived (initially edited by Hardy) following *Overland*’s break with the CPA and eventually became the *Realist*.

Some of the pamphlets published by Current Book Distributors company are actually short books - indeed, at times the words pamphlet or book could be used interchangeably. As already suggested, much of the pamphleteering focuses upon the struggle for peace in the Cold war period. Thus Jack Blake, a rising figure in the Party, noted early in the Cold War ‘All the daily newspapers are loudly beating the
drum of war’. There followed a polemic that signalled the radical critique developed (arguably in more sophisticated fashion) in the Sixties: ‘The war being planned by the wall Street dollar kings is a reactionary war for profit and loot – it is a war for the suppression of workers and Socialism. It is a war to establish the world domination of these same Yankee dollar kings.’\(^\text{21}\) As another pamphlet pointed out, the spread of war abroad meant, of course, a contraction of democracy at home. Repressive legislation at both state and federal level has been ‘facilitating the growth of fascism’.\(^\text{22}\) Thus the groundwork for 1960s radicalism, especially the struggle against the American war in Vietnam, was being laid by the CPA during the early Cold War.

**Why They Were Communists**

By 1951, the program of the CPA explicitly acknowledged that ‘The struggle to maintain peace is the most pressing task of the present time…’\(^\text{23}\) The Soviet Union, it argued, ‘has consistently fought for peace’\(^\text{24}\) whereas US imperialism has ‘ringed the world with air and naval bases and have troops stationed in many countries’ and Australia had become a U.S. war base.\(^\text{25}\) The more things change! Yet war and peace were hardly the only issues of concern. Aboriginal justice was paramount, as it had been for many years.\(^\text{26}\) The commitment to a ‘People’s Government for Peace’ signalled another concern reflected in many pamphlets – advocacy of public ownership or the question of who owns and controls Australia.\(^\text{27}\) This also related to trade union concerns with the rights of workers. The 1949 Miners’ Strike, effectively lead by CPA dominated unions and eventually crushed by a Chifley (Labor) government that brought the army in to break the strike, was perceived as pivotal. Jack Blake argued, for example, that the strike was ‘a great turning point in Australian post-war history’ in which the CPA emerged as the only Party capable of organising the working class and that it had exposed the true character of Labor Governments.\(^\text{28}\)

One of the most important pamphlets in the post-war period was Katharine Susannah Prichard’s *Why I Am a Communist.*\(^\text{29}\) It is a fascinating document that captures the personal and political sides of Prichard’s commitment. So in describing her childhood (outlined in the novel *The Wild Oats of Han*) she recalls their house
being dispossessed of furniture when she was 9 (the furniture had to be sold) due to her father’s illness and inability to work. She describes how poverty shaped her consciousness yet acknowledges a happy childhood with conservative Anglican parents.\(^\text{30}\) She details her journeys at University through almost everything but Marxism – Fabian Socialism, Syndicalism, Kropotkin’s Anarchism and even “orthodox economics and the history and policy of the Australian Labor Party.”\(^\text{31}\) She was subsequently to spend life as a journalist in London and met some Russian exiles in 1908.\(^\text{32}\) Yet, still she had not come across Marx or Communist theory. The Russian Revolution awakened her and she thus “lost no time in finding out all I could” about Marx and Communism. She had found a world in which the solution to poverty and injustice was ‘a social system created by the organised workers’.\(^\text{33}\) She then visited the Soviet Union, meeting with, amongst others, the Union of Soviet Writers. Her ideals forged, she went on to be a beacon of light for the cultural workers in the Party all her life. As one comrade told her in the early 1940s ‘When you take up your pen, Australia speaks’.\(^\text{34}\) She recounts this line in a speech to a Communist Party Congress in 1943 where she also notes ‘There is no higher honour than to be a member of the Communist Party’.\(^\text{35}\) For many others, the honour was soon to dissipate. This was to include Frank Hardy but in the mid 1950s he, like Prichard, was a loyalist. In a speech to a CPA Congress he spelled out the significance of the CPA’s cultural achievements:

> It was the Party and only the Party that brought you books by the Realist Writers’ Groups, it was the Party who initiated and took to the people Reedy River, it was the Party that brought about the screenings of progressive sixteen millimetre films and the importation of Soviet films, it was the Party that initiated extraordinary cultural developments in the Waterside Workers’ Federation and other Unions, it was the Party that brought about the rebirth of folk dancing in this country and the upsurge of interest in folklore.\(^\text{36}\)

And it is easy to overlook the print culture of folklore re-discovered by a number of Party members (notably John Meredith, John Manifold and Russel Ward), some of whom were closely involved in the production of the highly successful musical Reedy River, that premiered in Melbourne’s New Theatre in 1953. Here you find a distinctive blend of Australian nationalism and radical politics or, to put it another
way, a communism with distinct Australian characteristics. Hardy was right to highlight the CPA’s contribution to the cultural life of various trade unions and the critical role of the Realist Writers Group. Prichard also received special mention both in this speech and one honouring her 71st. birthday. She was, he suggested, ‘the greatest creative artist to emerge from the Party and Australia’s greatest living writer’. He pointed to an overseas visit he made: ‘Travelling in Europe four years ago, I was struck by the fact that her name and her work are household words in the Capitalist West and even more so in the Socialist East’. He noted that ‘The struggle for peace and against war’ took up much of her time and that she had been appointed recently to the World Peace Council.

Nonetheless, he bemoaned the fact that ‘Her works are not as widely read in Australia as in other countries’ and blamed not only the Australian publishing industry, the reluctance of Australian readers to embrace their own writers but also, and most interestingly, “the cultural backwardness of the Australia Communist movement only now being overcome”. This appears to contradict his slightly earlier observations about the cultural achievement of the Party and suggests a growing critical temperament that would reveal itself in the not too distant future. Or perhaps for a while there were two competing element in Hardy – one bound to orthodoxy, the other wanting to branch out. After all, as late as 1957 he could write that ‘The Soviet people are the best educated and most cultured in the world bar none – and this is due to forty years of socialism.’ Yet after leaving the CPA he would begin work on what would become, in part, a blistering critique of Communist orthodoxy - But the Dead are Many.

Socialist Realism, Literature and Art

In his speech to the Congress, Hardy mentioned also the international audiences achieved by many other communist Australian writers and points to the national and international success of his own Power Without Glory. It sold, internationally, half a million copies in twelve languages. In addition, he emphasised the roles of Overland, the ABS and the paper Tribune but argued for more developed cultural analysis such as that found in the French journal Nouvelle Critique. Here is that Hardy who would reveal himself, to some extent, as part of the avant-garde in his
novel *But the Dead Are Many*. He concluded that literature and art were central to the struggle generally and the struggle for peace specifically and that the Party could establish a united front by drawing both Party and non-Party members into print organisations like the ABS.45

Despite Hardy’s sometimes critical observations, there were lively contributions to both debates about literature and the role of the Communist press within the pages of the *Communist Review*. There was still, even by the late 1950s a tendency to embrace particular forms of socialist realism. Thus one of the more prominent cultural critics, Paul Mortier, in writing about socialist realism makes special mention of Party members like Prichard and Jean Devanny but concedes the writing of ‘democratic critics’ like Vance Palmer and A.A. Phillips ‘is also valuable’.46 Jack Beasley, writing at the end of the 1950s could write ‘The Communist Party, alone among political parties, regards questions of literature and art as important questions for the Party’.47 He refers specifically to the work of Prichard, Waten, Hardy, Devanny, Ralph de Boissière and others as fine examples of ‘socialist or revolutionary realism’. 48 And Judah Waten himself mounted a spirited defence of socialist realism in Australian literature and noted that the ABS had a proud seven year role in publishing Australian writers and not only those part of the socialist realist tradition. Indeed, he is more emphatic than that: ‘Perhaps in no other English speaking country are there such active groups of social realist writers as in Australia nor is there anything equivalent to the Australasian Book Society with its two to two and a half thousand members, a huge percentage of whom are workers’.49

Nonetheless, a defence of socialist realism, whether in literature or art can produce blinkered views. Thus there was Jean Devanny’s somewhat remarkable observation: ‘Naturally, in urging young writers to study literature produced under capitalism one does not include trash like the modern school of American writers. No writer needs to know how maggots germinate and breed in a dung heap’.50 Socialist realist painter Noel Counihan, whose body of work depicting the lives of ordinary people is impressive, conceded that while abstract art did have some anticapitalist sentiments historically, it is simply in the service of American imperialism today.51 Earlier he had referred to ‘the trivial content of so much
contemporary painting’, and somewhat surprisingly chastised the great Australian artists Roberts, Streeton and McCubbin for succumbing to the lure of impressionism and focusing on light ‘rather than Man as the proper hero of art’. And, earlier, Prichard had made her dismissive perspective on modernist literature quite clear. Similarly, Paul Mortier had taken up the cudgels against jazz music (conjoining it with the comic strip) – both ‘instead of inspiring action...dope to sleep.’ Nonetheless, we can find examples of more critical thinking such as John Oldman’s vigorous defence of Picasso’s art.

There is no questioning the vitality of the socialist realist project in Australian communist print culture (and art generally), even if strong criticisms can be levelled at the closed views of many commentators. There was also keen debate about the function of the Party press, with some arguing its appeal was not wide enough (circulation in the late 1940s and early 1950s was dropping steadily) and ordinary workers were not involved enough. *Tribune* manager G.H. Prescott urged in 1949 that it become a daily paper and pointed to the paradox that once the Party began selling it through newsagents contact with the working class had dropped away. There was a general belief in the importance of *Tribune* and the communist Press generally to the projects of peace and workers’ emancipation. And it is certainly the case that *Tribune* had a talented group of professionally trained journalists over its many years. One key person in the paper’s life at this time and beyond is Rupert Lockwood and we turn to him as another lens into CPA print culture.

**The Communist Journalist**

During the Cold War Rupert Lockwood (1908-1997) was one of Australia’s best-known communists. He tends to enter the Australian historical record by being referred to as “the communist journalist”. In 1949 he was leader of the Australian delegation to the World Peace Congress in Paris. During 1954-55 he was a high profile hostile witness subpoenaed by the partisan Royal Commission on Espionage, established following the defection of Canberra based Soviet diplomat and espionage operative Vladimir Petrov. The Commission was partisan political theatre, seeking, unsuccessfully, to establish links between Soviet espionage, the Australian Labor Party, and the CPA. When Lockwood left the CPA in 1969 following the Soviet
invasion of Czechoslovakia, it was an event drawing national media attention. His death in 1997 occasioned national and international attention. By looking at Lockwood ‘the communist journalist’, much of the richness and diversity of the communist media is seen. According to Australian intelligence operative Dr. Michael Bialoguski, who penetrated the CPA in the late 1940s, early 50s, at the behest of the Commonwealth Investigation Service, and later the Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO),

….Rupert Lockwood occupied a position of great authority (within the CPA). It actually reminded me of the scholasticism of the Middle Ages when any theological dispute was won merely by proving one’s argument to be identical with a quotation from Aristotle.

It was, claimed Bialoguski, “sufficient to state ‘but Rupert Lockwood said so’—in order to settle an argument beyond doubt.”

Lockwood joined the CPA in 1939. Trained from early childhood as a typesetter/journalist on the small rural newspaper owned by his father in rural Victoria, and educated in the elite Wesley College (Melbourne), Lockwood joined the growing media empire of Australian press baron Sir Keith Murdoch in 1930, working on the Murdoch flagship the Melbourne Herald. Historian Don Watson has described the paper at the time as ‘a hotchpotch of almost incredible banality, and intelligent, often liberal, social and political comment’. Its young journalists were among ‘the best of their generation’.

The liberal leftism of his colleagues helped shape Lockwood’s politics, and in 1935 he went abroad with permission to find media work and add to his value as a member of the Murdoch organisation, and with a roving commission to file Herald feature articles. Lockwood headed to Asia, and based himself in Singapore, variously working for the English language press and Reuters. He travelled extensively, visiting the Netherlands East Indies, Siam, French Indo China, and Japan. In the process he became aware of European racist attitudes and policies, the strength of national independence movements, and foresaw a future Asia freed from
colonialism. He also became alarmed by the strength, ruthlessness, and expansionist intent of Japanese militarism, something not widely understood in Australia at the time.

Heading to Fleet Street, Lockwood travelled through China, the Soviet Union, which impressed him, and in 1937 began filing reports from the front lines of the Spanish Civil War reporting the Republican cause and contributing to the propagandist work of the Republican short-wave station EAQ. These experiences radicalised him, and upon his return to Melbourne and the Herald he increasingly became involved in anti-fascist, left-wing, and civil libertarian issues and politics. In 1939, following a personal clash with Murdoch, Lockwood quit the paper and joined the CPA. He was one of many Australian journalists who either joined the party during the 1930s and 40s, or who were sympathetic towards it.

By 1950 Lockwood has become widely known in Australia as a journalist, pamphleteer, broadcaster, and orator. Following the re-legalisation of the CPA at the end of 1942 (it had been banned in 1940), he became Assistant Editor of Tribune, the supervising editorial role assigned to party ideologue L. Harry Gould. In reality Lockwood was the paper’s driving force, and remained so until he undertook other party duties in 1950. During his editorial time, and reflecting the growth of the party, Lockwood increased the size and sales of the paper. To the mix of left views of national and international industrial matters and politics he added a Sports backpage (with emphasis on horse racing, football, boxing), and columns, both serious and humorous. Scientific issues were the subjects of regular contributions by British scientist J. D. Bernal. Working with him on the paper was a talented pool of people, including Len Fox (1905-2004), George Farwell (1911-1976), both included years later in The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature, and former Rhodes Scholar W. A. Wood (1911-1976), a still largely overlooked Australian literary figure.

The Trade Union Press

The employment of communist journalists in editorial capacities in the trade union press was a way in which the party extended its influence during the Cold War, the
most significant of these publications Common Cause (Miners’ Federation), the Seamen’s Journal (Seamen’s Union of Australia), the Maritime Worker (Waterside Workers Federation-WWF). These three unions had communist leaderships, and represented work forces that were strategically placed in the economy and had considerable industrial muscle. These unions were the target of vociferous anti-union media attention during the Cold War, and extensive overt and covert government initiatives to variously limit, penalise, even outlaw, their activities. While communist edited trade union publications did publicise and promote the CPA, its policies and positions on issues, and its causes, they also reflected the issues, causes, and cultures of the workforces that were their respective readerships.

The Maritime Worker was regarded, along with the printed word generally, as a key union organising tool by the charismatic communist General Secretary of the WWF, Jim Healy (1898-1961) who led the union from 1937 until his death. From 1952 until retirement in 1985, Lockwood was assistant editor/editor of the publication. During this time the newspaper evolved from a Cold War 8-page letterpress fortnightly newspaper for between 24000-27000 unionised waterfront workers, organised in some 50 port branches, to a 32-page offset monthly journal for 6500 members. Changes in publication format and union membership reflected changing print technologies, and the effects of technology and related waterfront reforms on the workforce.

While the WWF leadership was nominally responsible for the paper and its oversight, in practice Healy allowed Lockwood considerable press freedom, and there was a close and loyal relationship between them. According to Industrial Relations' historian Tom Sheridan, Lockwood’s role as journalist/editor was a factor contributing to Healy’s long and successful term in office, noting that during the Cold War on the Australian waterfront, Lockwood in his capacity as a journalist was one of the three key people in the Federal leadership of the WWF, his work contributing significantly to keeping right-wing influence and aspirations at bay while keeping alive a militant politics and culture within the union.

Part of Healy’s leadership skill was his ability to work in a national/Federal way with the plurality of WWF Branches, with their own traditions, histories,
leaderships, work practices, and an overall WWF membership that was not overwhelmingly communist. The largest of the port-branches supported a range of sporting, cultural, and women’s organisations, along with family-based local communities. Lockwood’s *Maritime Worker* reflected the richness, diversity, and characters of this national network, with attention paid to membership social and cultural activities, sporting activities and interests. This mix was enlivened with cartoons and humorous pieces Lockwood regarded as part of a popular newspaper. Aside from its leftist news and comment and coverage of waterfront precincts, there were ways in which the *Maritime Worker* was, in Lockwood’s hands, a reflection of the community-based rural newspaper tradition/environment he had been raised in.

The communal aspect was reinforced by Lockwood’s successful encouragement of the ‘worker-correspondent’, an idea he had unsuccessfully experimented with in *Tribune*, whereby workers were encouraged to write and submit copy. Lockwood aimed to have at least ten per cent of the publication written by the rank-and-file membership, and not for it to become a leadership preserve or a blatant political platform. Lockwood recognised what collective and organisation research has established: that organisation loyalty and collective behaviour, are very much dependent on the extent to which individuals regard themselves as members of an organisation, and that organisation is seen to represent/reflect what its individual members perceive as their own self-concepts, their uniqueness.69

When Lockwood took over the newspaper, worker-correspondent/contributors were available in the large, diverse WWF membership. There was a significant rank-and-file presence of creative people – artists, musicians, film makers, poets, authors, drawn by the then periodic/casual nature of waterfront employment to support their creative endeavours, thus facilitating worker-correspondents. So much so, Lockwood claimed he could have ‘just about fill the paper with contributions written by wharfies on the job’.70
The Cold War Pamphleteer

During the Cold War Lockwood maintained a hectic and exhausting speaking schedule. He was also a prolific and popular pamphleteer. In Lockwood’s pamphleteering, the oral and the literary met, the launch of one of his pamphlets mounted as an event, usually done in association with a public address by Lockwood, and also available at the ‘cottage lectures’ that were a feature of Cold War Australian CPA culture. These were gatherings of between 12-30 people in private homes with a guest speaker, followed by supper and the sale of literature, and if non-party members were present, offering recruitment opportunities. Lockwood was a sought after guest on this circuit.71

Lockwood’s pamphlets were produced in runs of between 5,000-20,000 copies, in booklet form of about 4,000 words in length. How many he produced in his time with the party, Lockwood could not recall when interviewed by historians, but claimed huge productivity, for example turning out pamphlets ‘almost by the dozen’ in support of the Soviet Union during the war. What should be noted about pamphlets as literature, and CPA pamphlets in particular, is that they were produced for a utilitarian political/educative purpose, on cheap paper-stock, with ‘literary survival’ and matters relating to posterity not the concerns of either the creator or the publisher. The important thing was communication, and for many working people in Australia during the late nineteenth and through much of the twentieth, pamphlets, booklets, the working class press, oratory, were all founts for their intellectual development and their understanding of the world.72

There are at least eighteen surviving titles directly attributable to Lockwood; if collected, these would comprise a book-length manuscript.73 Lockwood’s titles range from the virulent anti-Japan war propaganda of Japan’s Heart of Wood (1943), to the biographical The Story of Jim Healy (1951), the latter still cited and drawn upon by scholarly researchers.74 Lockwood’s pamphlets had educational purpose and intent, tended to be lively, entertaining, the language accessible, and the text broken by sub-headings. His approach to pamphleteering tended to reject the quoting and referencing of communist stalwarts like Marx, Lenin, Stalin, and
instead referenced a diversity of other sources, for example the Bible, Oscar Wilde, Shakespeare, Lord Byron.

In the CPA approach to publishing, there was (as already pointed to) a crossover point where the pamphlet became a booklet, a much longer and sustained piece of writing/analysis. While more expensive, it was not prohibitively so because it was packaged cheaply and marketed in the same way as a pamphlet. An example of this is Lockwood’s 94-page *America Invades Australia* (1955). With a dramatic red and black cartoonish cover and racy title it was a best-seller, the large print-run completely selling. The booklet dealt with the growth and extent of American investment in the Australian economy, especially post-1945, and the ways in which this acted to establish a relationship of colonial dependence with the US economy.

It also examined the historical foundations of the key capitalist interests involved. The argument was supported and sustained by Lockwood’s extensive readings of American historical sources and financial literature. The end result of the Australia/US relationship, Lockwood argued presciently, was that Australia would become enmeshed in America’s future ‘plan for aggression against Asia’, with Australia used as a safe American military base for deployments against Asia. Undeservedly, this text has largely gone unnoticed. According to North American historian Bruce C Daniels it is a ‘prophetic’ book, ahead of its times, and is a pioneering work of political economy, manifesting an interest and a theme that scholars and analysts would take up a decade later, generating a ‘chorus of books’ in the process.

Radical Australian Nationalism

As well as his pamphleteering and journalism, between 1945 and 1966 Lockwood published 41 articles in the *Communist Review*, a substantial body of economic and historical writing that political scientist John Playford argued Australian scholars ‘could have learned a great deal from’. These later served as the basis of a book-length history of Australia, *Der Kontinent des Känguruhs* (Berlin), which despite its garish title, is a serious and perceptive account, ahead of its times in many ways, and also undeservedly overlooked by historians.
Lockwood’s lengthy articles ranged across Australian history, anticipating themes and issues associated with academic historians and political economists from the late 1960s onwards: indigenous dispossession and extermination; the development of ‘White Australia’ attitudes and policies; the history of monopolies and monopoly behaviour; the political economy of the 1890s; the development of political labour; the history and nature of the ALP and its emergence as the ‘the principal political organisation of Australian national capital’; US and Australia relations during the twentieth century; the development in Australia of a sense of ‘Pacific regional security’, in which the U.S. came to be seen as a necessary partner.

Demonstrating the utilitarian way Lockwood saw his role as an historian--as contributing to ongoing industrial/political campaigning and struggles, a cluster of articles in 1955-1956 explored aspects of the Australian shipping industry with particular regard to the role of British shipping interests in working, historically, to hinder/prevent the development of Australian shipping. These articles linked with a long running campaign by the Seamen’s Union of Australia to extend the operations, and increase the size, of the Australian shipping fleet.

Lockwood’s focus on Australian history was part of a cultural milieu within the CPA that developed significantly during the 1940s and continued through the Cold War amongst intellectuals drawn to the party. It was an attempt to understand and describe/define the ‘Australianness’ of Australian culture, particularly as manifest in its literature and history. The aim was to develop a sense of radical nationalism, one that was free from the legacies of British colonialism, strong enough during the 1950s to counter the conservatism of British traditions embodied in the ideology of the Menzies government, and robust enough to enable Australia to face the future independent from increasing subservience to the US. In researching, writing and publishing ‘history’ in the communist press, Lockwood was part of an Australian tradition described by radical historian Terry Irving, of historians ‘embedded in labour movement institutions’, their significant work variously challenging imperial, white dominated, ruling class histories, their accounts ‘scarcely recognised’ in the academy, their work often anticipating/predating themes and issues that are regarded as originating later in the academy.
Lockwood was, in short, an exemplary figure within Australian communism and one who, along with others like Katharine Susannah Prichard, embodied a tradition of dissent, advocacy and activism that enriched the political and cultural life of the Australian nation. Along with many others, they brought to the fore questions of peace, social justice, racial equality and national identity. Through the Realist Writers group, the Australasian Book Society, Tribune, Communist Review and, briefly, Overland, they were able to establish a distinctively Australian Communism. Added to this, the pamphlets produced by Current Book Distributors and other publishers enriched a leftist political community in the Cold War period. The enormous productivity of the CPA in culture as well as politics shines a frequently obscured light on a vital aspect of Australian life.


Gollan, Revolutionaries..., p130.

Davidson, The Communist Party..., p119.

For the 1965 CPA membership figure, Davidson, p171. For the Search Foundation, see its website http://www.search.org.au


David Martin, From Life: selected poems, with a foreword by Dame Mary Gilmore, Sydney: Current Book Distributors, August 1953; also see David Martin, My Strange Friend, Chippendale: Pan Macmillan, 1991.


Ibid, p33.
20 On the history of Overland see McLaren, Writing in Hope and Fear..., pp33-76.
24 Ibid, p12.
27 See, for example, Len Fox , Monopoly, Sydney: Sydney Left Book Club, 1940; Brian Fitzpatrick, Public Enterprise Does Pay, Melbourne: Rawson’s Bookshop, 1945; L.L. Sharkey & E.W. Campbell, The Story of Government Enterprise in Australia, Sydney: Australian Communist Party, January 1945 (Sharkey was then President of the CPA, while Campbell was director of its Sydney educational institute or school, the Marx House); Pete Thomas, Who Owns Queensland?, Brisbane: Coronation, 1955; Jack Spratt, The Great Pound Robbery, Sydney: Current Book Distributors, 1950; Eric Aarons, The Steel Octopus: the story of BHP, Sydney: Current Book Distributors, May 1961.


31 Ibid. (“Why I Am a Communist”) p6.

32 Ibid., pp6-7.

33 Ibid., p8.

34 Pritchard, “ A Foundation Member Speaks to the 13th Congress”, *Communist Review*, 20, p. 36.

35 Ibid.


39 Hardy, ‘Greetings to K.S. Prichard’, p381.

40 Ibid., p.382.


43 Hardy, ‘Forty Years…’, p380.

44 Ibid., p203.


48 Ibid, (‘For a…’), p.281

49 Judah Waten, ‘Socialist realism – an important trend in present day Australian literature’, *Communist Review*, 221, May 1960, p. 204.
52 Noel Counihan, “Decline of bourgeois art”, Communist Review, 90, pp58-60. One of Roberts’ most famous paintings is of shearers and it is hard to believe Counihan was not aware of this.
58 On the Australian delegation in Paris and the Congress, see Bernard Smith, Noel Counihan: Artist and Revolutionary, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp229-239.

63 See Cahill, “Rupert Lockwood…..” pp226-231 for detailed discussion of Lockwood’s *Tribune* work.
65 There is a close study of one of these editors, Della Elliott, editor of the *Seamen’s Journal*, in Diane Kirkby, “‘Those Knights of Pen and Pencil’: women journalists and cultural leadership of the women’s movement in Australia and the United States”, *Labour History*, 104, May 2013, pp81-100.
71 Cahill, ‘Rupert Lockwood…..’, pp255-256.

*Japan’s Heart of Wood*, Sydney: Current Book Distributors, 1943; *The Story of Jim Healy*, Sydney: Current Book Distributors, 1951. For detailed bibliographic data and discussion of Lockwood’s pamphleteering see Cahill, “Rupert Lockwood…..”, pp84-188.


For detailed bibliographic data and discussion of Lockwood’s *Communist Review* writings, see Cahill, “Rupert Lockwood…..”, pp245-252.
