THE EARSMAN REPORT

I was interested to read the Report of W. P. Earsman to the Central Executive on the 3rd Congress of the Comintern in issue 27 of *Left Review*.

The year 1921 is important to me as it was in this year that I began to take a more than casual interest in the labor movement, both political and industrial, and one of the things that quickened my interest was the letters published in the *Railway Union Gazette* from Bill Smith, who was then the Federal Secretary of the Australian Railways Union and who is one of the Australian delegates referred to in the Report.

In publishing a Report almost 50 years old there is a particular need for explanation, particularly in the way of footnotes, and more so in this case where W. P. Earsman does not use Christian names, which would have made identification more easy. There are 27 footnotes, but more could have been used to advantage.

I have already mentioned that the "Smith" referred to in the Report was William (Bill) Smith, the Federal Secretary of the A.R.U. at that time. "Casey" was Bill Casey, of the Seamen's Union, a former member of the I.W.W. and their chief song writer, who wrote, among other verses, "Bump Me into Parliament".

Bill died less than 10 years ago and was Secretary of the Brisbane Branch of the Seamen's Union at the time.

"Kelly" was Barney Kelly, also a member of the Seamen's Union and a lifetime close friend of Bill Casey. "Lamb" would be Paddy Lamb of Broken Hill.

I was surprised to read in the Report that "Comrade Howie was not a member of our Party, which means I had to keep a close watch on all that was being done". If he wasn't then, he certainly was soon afterwards and I thought the footnote identifying him could have said so.

Bill Smith, as I recall it, after nearly fifty years, worked his passage to England on a boat in order to attend the Red International of Trade Unions Congress; also on the same boat working their passage in the stokehold were Bill Casey and Barney Kelly.

As I recall them, some of the letters published in the *Gazette* refer to the discussions on political and industrial matters that were held wherever the opportunity arose, in the ship's forecastle, in which, no doubt, the three Delegates would take a prominent part.

I am not endeavouring to be too critical of the way the Report was presented, but I am sure there would be quite a few Communist Party members, and former members, who would have been able to supply information about the period and the personalities referred to had they been given the opportunity.

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Stan Willis.