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Author: Christopher Sheil

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Christopher Sheil
University of Wollongong

THE INVISIBLE GIANT: A HISTORY OF THE FEDERATED MISCELLANEOUS WORKERS' UNION OF AUSTRALIA: 1915-1985

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CHRISTOPHER SHEIL B.A. (HONS.)

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CERTIFICATE

I certify that this thesis has not been presented for a Higher Degree at any other university.

Christopher Sheil

ABSTRACT

This thesis provides an account of the history of the growth and character of the Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia from 1915 to 1985. With an emphasis on its New South Wales Branch and the years up until 1955, the argument is pursued in examinations of the union's origins and its periods of major change and development.

It is argued that the union was originally created by craft unionists out of the arbitration laws enacted in Australia during the first two decades of the century. The union's general composition initially derived from the fact that its early members lacked the fundamental sectionalism assumed by craft unionism and these laws.

The major changes to the union over its first 30 years occurred during the period of working class radicalism between 1917 and 1927 and in the aftermath of the Great Depression from 1934 until the Second World War. As a consequence of this history, by 1945 the union reached a point of profound internal contradiction. It had a government that had become philosophically and structurally integrated with arbitration and a membership where sections which had come under militant rank-and-file leadership had developed to the extent that they were capable of taking their own direct action.

Arising from this contradiction, between 1945 and 1955 the union underwent a major period of internal conflict and re-definition that ushered in a new and more radical leadership and generally accounts for the union's subsequent growth and character. Between 1955 and 1970 the organisation developed into one of the largest, more progressive and most effective unions in Australia.

Against the orthodoxy that has defined trade unions primarily as autonomous instruments of sectional economic interests, it is argued throughout that the union's growth and character were determined by a much greater complexity of social relations.

While recognising the special significance of this institution's relationship with the state and the labour movement at large, central to the thesis is the proposition that at least as important to the union's history as its immediate relationships were the wider social relations which these presupposed. Trade unions are evidence as well as agents of change in society and, it is argued, any understanding of their history depends on the extent to which both these aspects of their past and the relationship between them are able to be realised.

"The Giants who formed this world into its
sensual existence and now seem to live in it
in chains, are in truth the causes of its life
and the sources of all activity, but the chains
are the cunning of weak and tame minds which
have power to resist energy according to the pro-
verb the weak in courage is strong in cunning.
Thus one portion of being is the Prolific, the
other the Devouring: to the devourer it seems as if
the producer was in his chains; but it is not so,
he only takes portions of existence and fancies
that the whole ...
But the Prolific would cease to be Prolific
unless the Devourer as a sea received the excess
of his delights.
Some will say: 'Is not God alone the Prolific?'
I answer: 'God only Acts & Is in existing beings
or Men'.
These two classes of men are always upon
earth, & they should be enemies: whoever tries
to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence."

William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, 1789-90

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ABL	Archives of Business and Labour, Australian National University
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ALF	Australasian Labour Federation
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANU	Australian National University, Canberra
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
AWU	Australian Workers' Union
BL	Battye Library, Perth
CIR	Commonwealth Industrial Registry, Melbourne
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
DLP	Democratic Labor Party
FCM	Federal Council Minutes
FMWU	Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World
ML	Mitchell Library, Sydney
NAWU	North Australian Workers' Union
NCC	National Civic Council
NSW	New South Wales
NSWBM	New South Wales Branch Minutes
NSWIR	New South Wales Industrial Registry, Sydney
NSWSA	New South Wales State Archives, Sydney
OBU	One Big Union
QIR	Queensland Industrial Registry, Brisbane
QLD	Queensland
QLDBM	Queensland Branch Minutes
RSL	Returned Solders' and Sailors' Imperial League of Australia
SA	South Australia
SU	Sydney University
UNSWA	University of New South Wales Archives, Kensington
VBM	Victorian Branch Minutes
WA	Western Australia

PREFACE

During the 70 years studied in this thesis the Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia (FMWU) changed dramatically. In 1915 it employed no Federal officials or staff, owned no property, administered two State awards and two Wages Board determinations and had a membership of under 2,000, all of whom were employed in seven service occupations in the main urban areas of New South Wales and Victoria. In the 70 years from 1915 to 1985 the size, composition and distribution of the union were to be utterly transformed. By 1985 the FMWU was to have an annual income in excess of $12 million, to hold assets valued at over $25 million and to have almost 130,000 members located throughout Australia, where they were possibly engaged in a wider variety of occupations and industries than the members of any other trade union in the world.

Seen within the general social context, the growth in the income and assets of the union pales into insignificance next to the wealth of individual Australian businessmen, some of whose personal fortunes were in excess of $1,000 million by 1985. Of course, the amounts are even less when placed next to the revenue of leading Australian companies or that of the Australian state, which received close enough to $60,000 million in 1985. Nevertheless, in terms of its own history, in the context of Australian trade unionism and especially insofar as the size, composition and distribution of its membership is concerned, by 1985 the FMWU was a remarkable phenomenon.

Employing 18 full-time Federal officials and staff in its handsome Edwardian-style Sydney office and more than 200 officials and staff overall, it had over 4,000 active delegates and administered almost 500 awards, agreements and determinations. It was somewhere between the fifth and second largest of Australia's trade unions, it had become one of only four with a full-scale office established in every State and Territory and it was the largest union in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Putting it into a wider perspective, expressed as a percentage of a country's total working population, Australia was the sixth most unionised of the so-called advanced OECD countries and the FMWU represented almost five percent of these unionists, including about 15 percent of Australia's unionised women.(1)

Against any measure, then, by 1985 the FMWU was one of the (if not the) most outstanding examples of trade union growth in twentieth century Australia. It had spread throughout the continent; both 'horizontally' over the working population and 'vertically' within it. That is to say, it had not just spread geographically. It comprised workers of every level of skill and status in the country. Perhaps the most ready index to the magnitude of the transformation the composition of FMWU went through over these years is the amount of space the list of industries and occupations it covered took up in its 'Rules' (that is, in Rule 2 - its 'Constitution'). In 1915 it took up three lines; by 1985 it took up 35 pages - and the size of the pages had doubled.

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1. For Australia's international union density ranking see B. Ford & D. Plowman (eds), Australian Unions: An Industrial Relations Perspective, Melbourne, 1981, p.544.

It is this extraordinary composition more than the overall aggregate and geographic distribution of the union that captures our attention. Beginning in 1915 with seven service occupations, the FMWU came to include unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled, white collar and professional occupations. It covered rural, urban and waterfront workers. It recruited members in service, manufacturing, construction, transport, pastoral and mining industries, and in both state and private employment. Among the tens of thousands of members in the hundreds of occupations and industries recruited throughout Australia can be found such apparently disparate workers as cleaners, dancers, paint makers, stonemasons, uranium miners, saddlemakers, farm labourers, waterfront watchmen, dentists, ferry drivers, prison officers, teachers, rubber workers and nurses - to name just a few.(2) By 1985 the only Australian trade unions still consistently claiming to be larger than the FMWU were the Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union and the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Union. However, both of these unions were significantly less diverse than the FMWU, being comprised mainly of male metal workers and female shop assistants, respectively. (Both were also older than the FMWU.)(3) Further, because the FMWU covered all 'types' of occupations, including tradesmen and professionals, it was also more diverse than

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2. See Appendix III for the evolution of the FMWU's Federal Constitution, 1915-1985.
3. The Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union has had a continuous existence in Australia since 1852 when it was established in Sydney as a Branch of the British Amalgamated Society of Engineers. In 1982 it had a membership of about 160,000. The Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Union emerged out of the New South Wales Shop Assistants' and Warehouse Employees' Union, which was established in 1901 (as a result of a closed-shop agreement negotiated with the Retail Traders' Association, between 1969 and 1979 the union's membership rose from around 24,000 to 150,000). See: T. Sheridan, Mindful Militants: The Amalgamated Engineering Union in Australia, 1920-72, Cambridge, 1975, p.IX; Co-operator, 7 October 1912, p.20; Sydney Morning Herald, 20 July 1982; J.S. Hagan, The History of the ACTU, Melbourne, 1981, p.375.

that other great Australian general union, the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) - and possibly even the two giant British general unions, the Transport and General Workers' Union and the National Union of General and Municipal Workers.(4)

This history seeks to explain the remarkable composition of the FMWU. How did the union come to comprise such a large, widespread and apparently disparate aggregate of workers over this time? Following from this, I have sought to define and account for the character of the FMWU. Like all words that involve social ideas, values and interests, there is no 'proper' meaning for the term 'trade union', only a range of different, contradictory and contested meanings. Nevertheless, a conception of society and the union's place in it is implicit in the guiding principles and practical activity of every trade union and I have sought to trace the definition that has been endorsed by the FMWU between 1915 and 1985, paying closest attention to shifts in meaning and suggesting reasons why this occurred. At one level or another, the history of any trade union must answer this question, just as a history of an individual implies a definition of individuality and a history of a nation implies a concept of nationality or nationalism. This line of inquiry is particularly apposite for the FMWU, however, as its history is, prima facie, the history of the making of one of the world's few and most complete examples of a general union - a concept that, in a strict literal sense, would seem to stand in contradiction to that of trade union.

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4. For the British National Union of General and Municipal Workers see: H.A. Clegg, General Union: A Study of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, Oxford, 1954, pp. 348-351; for the Transport and General Workers Union see: R. Hyman, The Workers' Union, London, 1971; J. Goldstein, The Government of British Trade Unions, London, 1952; R. Undy, V. Ellis, W.E.J. Macarthy, A.M. Halmos, Change in Trade Unions, London, 1981, Ch. 5.

What meaning, then, to summarise the point of the thesis, did this great Australian general union give to unionism in general over this time?

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The thesis was written between 1982 and 1988, during most of which time I was supported by funds from two sources. The University of Wollongong awarded me a scholarship that had been established by the FMWU and I thank Professor J.S. Hagan and Dr I. Maclean for favourably considering my application. In addition, for a substantial portion of the time I was granted leave without pay and given financial assistance by the New South Wales Department of Agriculture and I also thank Mr G.H. Knowles, Dr K.P. Sheridan and Mr S.J. Day for looking favourably upon this application.

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Because so many people helped me, and because of the magnitude of the assistance I received from some, perhaps I have a special need to emphasise that this interpretation of the union's history and any errors found in it are mine alone.

C.S.

Sydney, October, 1988

INTRODUCTION

THE PECULIARITIES OF THE FMWU

No history is written in a vacuum. While the historian usually works in physical isolation, the practice of defining, hypothesising, researching, analysing and composing is an active engagement, not just with what it is that is being written about and the terms of the discipline within which it is being written, but also with the wider complexity of social relationships of which the subject and method of study are aspects. Moreover, not only do both the subject and the discipline have histories of their own, so too, beyond these confines, do the historian, the pieces of evidence discovered, the language used and the other material out of which a historical account is made in our society. All of these histories - or the social history of which they are parts - are inherited and experienced as the present in which the historian works. Despite the physical sense of isolation, this present exerts pressures and sets limits that comprise, not just an immediate and practical, but a wider and more general context out of which the historical account is actively made, becomes explicable and attains significance.

This introduction attempts to briefly place the key part of the material out of which this thesis has been made - the question of the FMWU's character - in its intellectual historical context. A survey of the history of the relevant debate will more fully explain why the question has been raised in relation to the history of the FMWU and act as a backdrop to the inquiry that comprises the body of the

thesis. We will then - again, briefly - survey Australian trade union historiography where some indication of the points at which this study departs from it can be given. The introduction concludes with an outline of the order of the thesis.

1.

What is a trade union? "A trade union, as we understand the term," wrote Sidney and Beatrice Webb in 1894, "is a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment".[1] Twenty-six years later, in response to radical critics, they revised this definition, deciding unions were for the wider purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of wage earners' "working lives". This was a slight change, but a significant one in that it allowed for, as the Webbs put it, "aspirations towards a revolutionary change in social and economic relations".[2]

Prior to the Webbs, Karl Marx had hesitated over trade unions. While he consistently saw them as "bulwarks for the workers in their struggles with the employers," between 1847 and his death in 1883 he vacillated between seeing them as limited to fighting the effects of capitalism (low wages) and believing they also simultaneously acted to remove its causes (being integral to the process of class formation that would "abolish the wages system"). In this second ('optimistic') view, Marx incorporated unions within his general theory of social change and he outlined a paradigm of their formation and development. Unions arose, he suggested, as a result of the concentration of people

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1. S. & B. Webb, The History of Trade Unions, London, 1894, p.1.
2. ibid. 1920 edn., p.1.

in one place by large-scale industry and their recognition of their common interest in maintaining their wages. Combination stopped competition between workers and allowed them to compete with capitalists who would, in turn, combine to repress the union. The maintenance of the union would thereby become differentiated from and more important than wages, allowing workers to realise their common interest with other unions, forging ever-widening links that would provoke further combination among employers - and so on, in a dialectical process of class struggle and formation in which trade unions would take on a profoundly political character.(3)

While Marx never directly amended this general sketch, he and Frederick Engels encountered problems in matching it with their experience of the British trade union movement. They lamented the injudicious way in which trade unions used their power and drew attention to the exceptional circumstances of Britain. As host to the world's leading economy, it contained a strata of particularly privileged or "aristocratic" workers whose superior social position relative, not only to other British workers, but to those in the rest of the world, corrupted them in practice and outlook. Notwithstanding these difficulties, we may notice that, whatever their other differences, there was no essential conflict between the definitions of trade unions formulated by Marx and the Webbs. Both placed their initial emphasis on employment or economic conditions, both entertained a political and social role. Whereas the Webbs considered

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3. See: K. Marx, "Strikes and Combinations of Workers", The Poverty of Philosophy, in K. Marx & F. Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 6, London, 1975, pp.210-211; K. Marx & F. Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party", Selected Works, Moscow, 1977, Vol. 1, pp.116-117; K. Marx, "Wages, Prices and Profits", ibid., pp.65-76. Also see: R. Hyman, Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism, London, 1975, pp.4-11, 37-38, 47-48; T. Clarke and L. Clements (eds), Trade Unions Under Capitalism, Glasgow, 1977 (contains extracts from Marx & Engels and discussion).

the latter to be wider or alternative objectives, Dr Marx's contribution was to suggest that they were fundamentally implied from the outset and that their realisation would be a matter of social progress - a matter which he, incidentally, sought to hurry along.

In 1902 Lenin firmly concluded trade unions were limited to 'economism': "to the economic struggle ... the collective struggle of the workers against their employers for better terms in the sale of their labour power, for better living and working conditions". This conclusion affirmed the original position of the Webbs ("Read the works of ... Mr and Mrs Webb", wrote Lenin, "and you will see"). Lenin explained this as an extension of capitalism (the energy of workers is a commodity to be sold in a market like any other "purely commercial deal") and placed the emphasis on vanguard political parties capable of transcending "spontaneous trade union consciousness" to achieve fundamental social change.(4)

In 1911 Robert Michels and, a little later, Antonio Gramsci cut across the grain of this debate over the narrow economic versus wider political and social functions of trade unions. Michels defined them as oligarchies. He argued that, after succeeding "in throwing off the chains worn as a wage labourer and vassal of capitalism", sociological and psychological forces inevitably differentiated trade union leaders from "all true sense of solidarity with the class from which they have sprung," leading to a profoundly conservative officialdom successfully dedicated to its own tenure ("the iron law of oligarchy").(5) In 1919 and 1920 Gramsci effectively synthesised this and earlier positions in

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4. V.I. Lenin, What is to be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement, (1902) in Selected Works, Moscow, 1977, Vol. 1, esp. pp.114, 133-138 (Lenin's emphasis).
5. R.W. Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy, New York, 1959, pp.82,304.

a polemic against syndicalists (who suggested that trade unions - not the state, proletarian or otherwise - should take over the ownership and control of production). Gramsci agreed with Lenin (and, therefore, also the initial position of the Webbs) that trade unionism was "nothing but a reflection of capitalist society, not a potential means of transcending [it]," arguing that it was, by virtue of its economism, "in a sense an integral part of capitalist society". He also agreed with Michels' conservative, oligarchical, bureaucratic emphasis, but qualified it with the suggestion that revolutionary pressures from workers organised in their workplaces would continue to exercise an influence on unionism, acting as "a reagent dissolving ... bureaucratism".(6)

The argument did not so much advance after this point as it did turn around which of the features already identified were dominant, how this had happened and whether or not it was a good thing. In the 1930s Leon Trotsky concluded trade unions throughout the world had become "lieutenants of capitalism in the intensified exploitation of the workers" - the "trade union bureaucracy having substantially solved its own social problems", this was most clearly evidenced by "their drawing closely to and growing together with state power".(7) In 1948 C. Wright Mills also emphasised the incorporation of trade unions by capitalism, although he was more measured in assessing both the process and its results. By 'managing the discontent of their members', Mills wrote:

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6. Q. Hoare (ed.), Antonio Gramsci, Selections from Political Writings, 1920-1919, London, 1977, pp.99, 266.
7. L. Trotsky, "The Unions in Britain", (1963) and "Trade Unions in the International Epoch" (1938), reprinted in T. Clark & L.Clements, op.cit., pp.77-84.

> the leaders of labour will deliver a responsible, which is to say, a well-disciplined, union of contented workers in return for a junior partnership in the productive process, security for the union and higher wages for the workers in the industry.[8]

The debate was rejoined in the 1950s, with A.D. Flanders celebrating the virtues of the more limited definitions. The rightful role of trade unions, argued Flanders, was as agencies for collective bargaining to regulate wages and working conditions: this was their major activity and purpose, the condition of their survival and the basis of their growth. He drew on the democratic practices of unions to explicitly reject both Perry Anderson's reformulation of Lenin's conclusions about unionism's dead-end economism and the conservative position that unions should act as no more than industry's policemen in the interests of social harmony ("responsible trade unionism"). Between these points, Flanders' definition - which W.E.J. McCarthy stated in 1985 was the one most typically held by Britain's students and activists and which is like the definition in the Australian Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act - was that unions were democratic associations representing sectional interests: "the interests of the section of the population they happen to organise". The great social purpose of trade unions, said Flanders, was to protect the "dignity of human beings" from arbitrary forces. Their great achievement was the creation of "a social order in industry embodied in a code of industrial rights".

Yet, in this revisionism there remained a problem: how was the evident ebb and flow of trade union militancy to be explained? Extending his argument, Flanders suggested the key to trade union dynamics lay in the interaction of what he termed "movement and

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8. C. Wright Mills, The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders, New York, 1971, pp.9, 119.

organisation". "Movement," he wrote - drawing on the words of G.D.H. Cole (and implicitly declining the term 'class') - "implied a common end or at least a community of purpose which is real and influences [people's] thoughts and actions, even if it is imperfectly apprehended and largely unconscious". "Organisation" was defined short of bureaucratism and incorporation, meaning the achievement of "sanctions" - the most important of which "was to secure recognition from employers". Trade unionism was all about the conversion of 'movements' into 'organisation'.(9)

Arguing in Marx's name, Richard Hyman rebutted Flanders in 1975, emphasising that trade unions were not physical entities like factories or prisons, but were "first and foremost" agencies and mediums "for power". The power workers conceded over themselves as trade union members could be used for or against their interests and Flanders' definition of unions as agencies for collective bargaining over job regulations served the ideological purpose of legitimising and, indeed, encouraging this activity to the exclusion of others which presented more serious challenges to the social, economic and political order. Further, this active narrowing of the legitimate functions of trade unions effectively marginalised their relevance to workers' lives, thereby discouraging democratic participation and preparing the ground for leadership differentiation, bureaucratism and incorporation. His conclusion, however, approached Gramsci's concept of reagency and Flanders' own idea of movement. Specifically in

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9. A. Flanders, Management and Unions: The Theory and Reform of Industrial Relations, London, 1970, pp.37-40 (Flanders' emphasis). For a summary of Flanders' position see A. Flanders, "What are Trade Unions For?", in W.E.J. McCarthy (ed.), Trade Unions: Selected Readings, Harmondsworth, 1985 edn., pp.26-34 (also see McCarthy's assessment of Flanders, p.25). For P. Anderson, see "The Limits and Possibilities of Trade Union Action" in T. Clark & L. Clements, op.cit., pp.333-350.

opposition to Michels, Hyman pointed out that all the evidence of trade union oligarchy could also be read as evidence of democratic pressures. He argued that "the deprivations and aspirations which drive workers to create collective organisations" would continually lead to "rank and file revolt" (as A.W. Gouldner put it, this was "the iron law of democracy").[10]

In essence we may see Flanders and Hyman as simply re-contesting old ground, albeit with some refinements and more extensive elaboration. In the meantime, however, the very framework of the debate had come under attack from historians who debunked the whole idea of defining trade unions, not only as purely economic, but as isolated, independent or autonomous phenomena at all. In 1958 Raymond Williams argued trade unions were not essentially economic or political, but cultural. They were, he said, one manifestation of the "very remarkable cultural achievement" of the working class. Elaborating, he explained it was not proletarian art, public housing, a particular use of language or the individual character of people who might be economically assigned to it that represented "working class culture"; it "is, rather, the basic collective idea and the institutions, manners, habits of thought and intentions which proceed from this", which could be contrasted with bourgeois culture ("the basic individualist idea and the institutions, manners, habits of thoughts and intentions which proceed from that").[11] In 1963 E.P.

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10. R. Hyman, Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction, London, 1975, esp. pp. 26-27, 64-69, 85-93, 199-203. A summary of most of these points is in R. Hyman, "A Marxist Approach to Union Objectives", in W.E.J. McCarthy, op.cit, pp.47-57. Also see the discussion of many of these ideas in relation to the Workers' Union in R. Hyman (1971), op.cit., pp.173-226. For this conception of power, also see S. Lucas, Power: A Radical View, London, 1974, passim.
11. R. Williams, Culture and Society, 1780-1950, Harmondsworth, 1979, pp.312-313.

Thompson supported Williams with his immense scholarship on the English working class, correcting only the implication that the institutions proceeded from an idea: "both the ideas and the institutions arose in response to certain common experiences".[12] This was part of a wider thesis that suggested that 'class' was a social phenomenon to be found embodied in the relationships experienced by people in their contexts over time and manifested in cultural terms: traditions, value systems, ideas and institutional forms.

The following year E.J. Hobsbawm confronted these new developments in social history with the more time-honoured debate, as evidenced in British trade union history books. Eminent economic historian that he was himself, Hobsbawm nevertheless directly attacked the economist definition of trade unions implied in these histories, arguing that it was "unwise to take the Webb's definition of a trade union (or any similar definition) as exhaustive". He called for a widening of perspective as "'pure' trade union history merely produces historical distortion". While those "numerous, ostensibly 'economic' movements ... can be interpreted in purely trade unionist terms", this was "only at the risk of oversimplification". A trade union was more:

> ... than a self-contained operational sub-division ('industrial' as distinct from 'political') of the labour movement. It is an aspect of working class life, which exists whether there are strong and comprehensive unions or not, and a reflection of that life.[13]

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12. E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, Harmondsworth, 1981 edn., p.462.
13. E.J. Hobsbawm, "Trade Union Historiography", Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, No.8, Spring, 1964, pp.31-36.

The debate over the character of trade unions has not advanced past this point. In a book published in England in 1981 Hobsbawm argued in one article that trade unionism was now almost entirely sectional and economist, while Royden Harrison argued in another that this was unacceptable as "in our time the wages question is being transformed under our eyes from a sectional into a class question from an industrial to a political one".(14) Between these poles, articles by representatives of the British labour movement gave voice to practically every position we have traced. Nor, with perhaps the exception of a few who have made some attempt to define the peculiarities of the role of the state, have Australian scholars advanced the problem. Indeed, in 1983 B. Ford and D. Plowman begged all these questions when they asserted in the introduction to their 576 page book on Australian unions that they were fundamentally 'industrial' structures from which sprang many purposes and many parts: "Unions ... are basically industrial organisations and it is their industrial rationale which gives life and purpose to their political, economic, social, legal and other attributes".(15) If what may be defined as "political, economic, social, legal and other" are "attributes", what, we cannot avoid asking, can this "industrial" basis possibly refer to?

This, then, is the locus of the principal intellectual conceptions of trade unions produced in our culture during the last 150 years. It represents summaries of the conclusions of some of the most prolific scholars of the labour movement and what they evidence above all else is that there is no proper definition of trade unionism. The meaning of the very term itself, like all words that

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14. M. Jacques & F. Mulhern (eds), The Forward March of Labour Halted? London, 1981, pp.1-19, 51-58 (Harrison's emphasis).
15. B. Ford & D. Plowman, op.cit., p.2.

refer to activities that involve social ideas, values and interests, is contested: a matter of ambiguity, controversy and struggle. Are trade unions associations for improving employment conditions (and only that); a moment in the process of class formation; conservative, bureaucratic oligarchies; the outworks of capitalism and (or) the state; agencies to make regulations to protect sectional interests; generalised instruments of power; or are they cultural expressions of more complex social and historical relationships? Clearly, we cannot assume an a priori definition of trade unions. A trade union history - and at one level or another, whether acknowledged or not, all trade union histories do this - can only aim to contribute to this debate. This thesis seeks to bring the evidence of the FMWU's past character to bear.

2.

What is the relationship between this study and Australian historiography? First, it can be noticed that there are limited precedents for writing the history of an Australian trade union. At times there have been over 400 unions in Australia and, at times, it has had the most unionized population in the world. Yet, until recently, they have been largely ignored by historians.

There are 28 published histories of Australian trade unions. Of these, five deal with metal workers, three with coal miners, three with shipping workers, three with printers and two each with journalists, communications workers, teachers and shearers, thus rendering the number of unions in different industries studied to 13. The others cover bank officials, public servants, electricians, butchers, brewery workers and phosphate labourers. Therefore, in

total, and looking at it from another aspect, there are four studies of professional workers' unions (in two industries), four of predominantly white collar unions (two in the same industry), eight of craft-based unions (in five industries) and twelve of labourers' unions (but only seven different unions). There are no histories of general unions (both histories of the AWU are restricted to the union's pastoral phase), none of predominantly women's unions and none of the Builders' Labourers, Clerks, Railway Workers, Liquor Trades, Shop Assistants or the Storemen and Packers - to mention only some of the most obvious lacunae. Certainly no history has been written of an Australian union with a composition to compare with the FMWU.

Moreover, 16 of the histories have been written by former activists or journalists under official patronage and might be described - with some exceptions - as outlines, memoirs, commemorations or simple propaganda.(16) This leaves twelve histories written by professional or university historians. Two of these have

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16. In order of publication, these are: W.G. Spence, History of the AWU, Sydney, 1911; G. Sparrow (ed.), Crusade for Journalism: Official History of the Australian Journalists' Association, Melbourne, 1960; W.J. Hargreaves, History of the Federated Moulders (Metals) Union of Australia; 1858-1958, Sydney, 1962; E. Ross, A History of the Miners' Federation of Australia, Sydney, 1970; A.E. Davies, The Meat Workers Unite, Melbourne, 1974; J. Churchett, One Hundred Years of the Printing Union in South Australia: 1874-1974, Adelaide, 1974; A.H. Dawson, Points and Politics: A History of the Electrical Trades Union of Queensland, Stafford, 1977; F. Waters, Postal Unions and Politics: A History of the Amalgamated Postal Workers' Union of Australia, St Lucia, 1978; J.S. Baker, Communicators and their First Trade Unions: A History of the Telegraphists and Postal Clerks Union of Australia, Sydney, 1980; B. Juddery, White Collar Power: A History of the ACOA, Sydney, 1980; R. Murray & K. White, The Ironworkers: A History of the Federated Ironworkers' Association of Australia, Sydney, 1982; I. Wyner, With Banner Unfurled: The Early Years of the Ship Painters and Dockers' Union, Sydney, 1983; P. Thomas, Miners in the 1970s: A Narrative History of the Miners' Federation, Sydney, 1983; D.W. Cooky, Leading the Way: A History of Industrial Progress: 1910-1975, Perth, 1985; C. Lloyd, Profession: Journalist, A History of the Australian Journalists' Association, Sydney, 1985; R. Lockwood, The Miraculous Union: 100 Years of Melbourne Waterside Workers' Federation, Melbourne, 1985.

covered different periods in the history of the metal workers' union (K.D. Buckley, 1852-1920; T. Sheridan, 1920-1972), two have covered the same printers' union, albeit with differences in scale (R.T. Fitzgerald looking at Victorian printers; J.S. Hagan at printers Australia-wide) and two have dealt with different periods in the history of New South Wales teachers (B.A. Mitchell, 1845-1945; J. O'Brien, 1945-1975). Of the other five, one covers seven years in the history of phosphate workers on tiny Christmas Island off the coast of Western Australia, there is an uneven treatment of the Seamen's Union and another only gives an outline history of a regional Branch of the Boilermakers' Society. The three remaining studies are R.A. Gollan's history of the New South Wales coalminers, J.D. Hill's history of the Australian Bank Officials' Association and J.A. Merritt's history of the early days of the AWU.(17)

Thus, in a country that has had over 400 and currently has about 300 trade unions, a total of 28 histories - including only twelve by academics - that do not even represent a cross-section of the most prominent or obviously different 'types' of unions is barely a

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17. In order of publication, these are: R.A. Gollan, The Coalminers of New South Wales: A History of the Union, 1860-1960, Melbourne, 1963; J.S. Hagan, Printers and Politics: A History of the Australian Printing Unions, 1850-1950, Canberra, 1966; R.T. Fitzgerald, The Printers of Melbourne, the History of a Union, Melbourne, 1967; K.D. Buckley, The Amalgamated Engineers in Australia, 1852-1920, Canberra, 1970; B.H. Mitchell, Teachers, Education and Politics: A History of Organisations of Public School Teachers in New South Wales, St Lucia, 1975; T. Sheridan, Mindful Militants: The Amalgamated Engineering Union in Australia, 1920-1970, Cambridge, 1975; G. Robinson, A History of the Newcastle Branch of the Boilermakers' Society of Australia, 1877-1977, Sydney, 1977; B. Fitzpatrick & R.J. Cahill, The Seamen's Union of Australia, 1872-1972: A History, Sydney, 1981; J. Hill, From Subservience to Strike: Industrial Relations in the Banking Industry, St Lucia, 1982; L. Waters, The Union of Christmas Island Workers, Sydney, 1983; J.A. Merritt, The Making of the AWU, Melbourne, 1986; J. O'Brien, A Divided Unity: Politics of NSW Teacher Militancy Since 1945, Sydney, 1987.

historiographical beginning. The reasons for this are to be found within explanations that must take into account the dynamics that have shaped the writing of Australian labour history in general and are beyond this introduction.(18) To mark out the extent of the neglect comparatively, however, Britain - a country proportionally less unionised than Australia and with which the formal length of Australian trade union history can be nearly compared - can count over 128 histories, including 19 on printers' unions alone.(19) In any event, in the sense that it deals with many specific categories of unionised Australian labour that have never been studied professionally or otherwise, as well as being a study of a union with such a unique variety of categories, this thesis has some claim to break fresh historical ground.

Still, the meagreness of the literature should not be exaggerated. Attention to trade union history directly and through related studies has been increasing and contributions from other disciplines are also on the rise. While it was almost 50 years after W.G. Spence's History of the AWU was published in 1911 before another Australian union history appeared, five were published in the 1960s, nine in the 1970s, 13 have appeared in the 1980s and there are more in the making, as well as some unpublished theses. Also, there are now some general and period studies, two document collections, a history of the peak council, a biography of a trade union leader (who, incidentally, was the founder of the FMWU's Western Australia Branch), two books on strikes, an oral history of waterside workers and a study

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18. For a discussion, see J.A. Merritt, "Labour History", in G. Osbourne & W.F. Mandle (eds.), New History: Studying Australia Today, Sydney, 1982.
19. For most of these, see A. Marsh, Trade Union Handbook, Gower, 1971, pp. 353-359. For a critique of British trade union history, see E.J. Hobsbawm, op.cit.

of trade union banners.[20] More generally, in 1961 the Australian journal of Labour History was established and it has published, not only numerous articles specifically on trade unions, but also articles on related labour and social history - on which the number of books also escalated from about this time. Studies on the history of the working class, working women, labour parties and labour leaders have proliferated so much over the last 30 years the subject area has now been accepted as part of mainstream Australian historical study.[21] From outside the history discipline, contributions have increased along with booms in the study of labour economics and industrial relations. Established in 1959, the Journal of Industrial Relations has published many articles to do with trade union history in addition to regular reviews of current developments. Likewise there has been a growth in industrial relations books. While practically none of these

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20. J.T. Sutcliffe, A History of Trade Unionism in Australia, Melbourne, 1967, (1st Pub. 1921); R.N. Ebbels, The Australian Labour Movement 1850-1907, Sydney, 1983 (a document collection 1st pub. 1960); J.S. Hagan, Australian Trade Unionism in Documents, Sydney, 1986; J. Hutson, Penal Colony to Penal Powers, Surry Hills, 1983; L.J. Louis, Trade Unions and the Depression: A Study of Victoria, 1930-32, Melbourne, 1968; I. Turner, In Union is Strength: A History of Trade Unions in Australia, 1788-1978, Melbourne, 1976; J.S. Hagan, The History of the ACTU, Melbourne, 1982; S.F. Macintyre, Militant: The Life and Times of Paddy Troy, Melbourne, 1984; J. Iremonger, J.A. Merritt, G. Osbourne (eds), Strikes: Studies in Twentieth Century Australian Social History, Sydney, 1973; D.J. Murphy (ed.) The Big Strikes: Queensland 1889-1965, St Lucia, 1985; W. Lowenstein & T.Hills, Under the Hook: Melbourne Waterside Workers Remember, 1900-1982, Melbourne, 1982; A. Stephen & A. Reeves, Badges of Labour, Banners of Pride: Aspects of Working Class Celebration, Sydney, 1986.
21. For a representative sample see: R.A. Gollan, Radical and Working Class Politics: A Study of Eastern Australia, Carlton, 1960; R.W. Connell & T.H. Irving, Class Structure in Australian History, Melbourne, 1980; A. Curthoys & S. Markus (eds), Who are our Enemies? Racism and the Australian Working Class, Sydney, 1978; E. Ryan & A. Conlon, Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work, 1788-1974, Melbourne, 1975; D.J. Murphy (ed.), Labor in Politics: The State Labor Parties in Australia, 1880-1920, St Lucia, 1975; A Davidson, The Communist Party of Australia, Stanford, 1967; V. Burgmann, In Our Time: Socialism and the Rise of Labor, 1885-1905, North Sydney, 1985; H. Radi & P. Spearritt (eds), Jack Lang, Neutral Bay, 1977.

have had anything directly to say about the FMWU, the best of them have made significant contributions to our knowledge of the immediate context within which it has had to operate.(22)

But, even if this thesis has empirical claims to originality in terms of both many of the specific as well as the great variety of categories of labour the FMWU has represented, what of the theoretical and methodological achievements of the few serious attempts to write an Australian trade union's history? Here the most significant work has been Professor Robin Gollan's The Coalminers of New South Wales: A History of the Union, 1860-1960. This was the first professional scholarship on the history of an Australian trade union and set the pattern for most who followed. Generally, Gollan and his followers have sought to find the ways and the extent to which their unions have improved their members' employment conditions. The emphasis has thus been on sectional economic struggles. Broadly, they have measured their union's history against gains made in the period studied, focusing on strikes, cases in arbitration courts and pressures on legislatures. Above all, they have shown sensitivity to limitations on a union's bargaining power due to its members' location and role in relation to production and the pressures of connecting economies, and to the consequences of changes to these relations.

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22. See for example: B. Ford & D. Plowman, op.cit. (includes an extensive bibliography); R.M. Martin, Trade Unions in Australia: Who Runs Them, Who Belongs - Their Politics, Their Power, Ringwood, 1980; P.W.D. Matthews, & G.W. Ford (eds.), Australian Trade Unions: Their Development, Structure and Horizons, Melbourne, 1968; D.H. Plowman, Australian Trade Union Statistics, Kensington, 1980; D.W. Rawson & S. Wrightson, A Handbook of Australian Trade Unions and Employee Associations, Canberra, 1980; B. Dabscheck & J. Niland, Industrial Relations in Australia, North Sydney, 1981; M. Dickinson, Democracy in Trade Unions: Studies on Membership, Participation and Control, St Lucia, 1982; J.D. Hill, W.A. Howard & R.D. Lansbury, Industrial Relations: An Australian Introduction, Melbourne, 1982; S.F. & A. Coolican, Unions Against Capitalism: A Sociological Comparison of the Australian Building & Metal Workers' Unions, Sydney, 1984.

This approach has had benefits. First, while any explicit discussion of the assumptions upon which it was based is remarkable only for its absence, it did in practice relate to a large body of literature. As we have seen, to look at the ways and the extent to which unions have improved their members' employment conditions at least implicitly linked directly with the Webbs (if only their 1894 position). Second, it successfully demonstrated how much of the activity and development of many unions is inexplicable unless seen in relation to changes occurring in the size, technology and general economic circumstances of their members' craft or industry. As well as being union studies, they contained "pocket economic histories" (to use Professor Hobsbawm's phrase).[23] Third, these scholars, together with historians of the labour movement generally, have created a register of significant events that have impacted on the growth, organisational structure and policies of Australian trade unions and this forms an agenda around which we can begin to structure the economic and political context of further studies. Finally, the approach has focused on questions generally of common interest to unions and has provided some evidence against the worst propaganda of their opponents. Although they might be interested in much else and more, few unionists are not interested in improving their employment conditions and conceivably a better understanding of past battles may enhance prospects for future success. And while a record of substantial achievement is plainly apparent in these terms, (any Australian union flatly measured against the formal employment standards of 1985 compared with 1855 has to have a good case), the work has also contributed to disarming myths and debunking stereotypes. For example, as well as accounting for changing

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23. E.J. Hobsbawm, op.cit., p.33.

employment conditions, Gollan gave us the study of employers purposefully incorporating a militant industry union in their illegal monopoly, Hagan showed that an industry union by name could remain a craft union by nature and Sheridan debunked the popular perception that militancy is a consistent point of distinction between the labour movement's left and right wings.(24)

Given these achievements, some deficiencies also need mentioning. Most notably, trade union history has not escaped the many general criticisms of labour history levelled in Australia since the late 1960s. Labour history has been criticised for having an empirically positivist methodology, for ambiguous use of the concept of class, for preconceptions of nationalism and populism, for romanticising popular culture and for neglecting women, racism and ideological hegemony. This has been a complex and - as is traditional in labour history - an intensely ideologically charged debate with a range of positions and some mutually exclusive premises and there is not the space here to define it, let alone engage it adequately.(25) Except to make the point that this methodology, these preconceptions, the romance and the neglect are in some senses also present in the historical sources, suffice to say that I have tried to thread this history against the back cloth of both the earlier Australian trade union histories and the varied strands of these debates - many of which, it must be conceded, have an application, perhaps their greatest application,

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24. R.A. Gollan (1963), op.cit., esp. pp.14-16; J.S. Hagan (1966), op.cit., esp. pp.295-6; T. Sheridan, op.cit., esp. p.207.
25. See: J.A. Merritt, (1982) op.cit.; E.C. Fry, "The Writing of Labour History in Australia", Unpublished Seminar Paper presented at the University of Wollongong, 17 August 1983; M. Sampson, "Recent Criticisms of Labour History in Britain and Australia", Labour History, No. 36, May 1979; I. Turner, "Introduction", Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia 1900-1921, Neutral Bay, 1979 edition (contains a bibliography). Also see E.J. Hobsbawm, "Labour History and Ideology", Journal of Social History, Vol. 7, No. 4, Summer, 1974.

within the trade union 'field'; and many of which, it might be acknowledged, have drawn on the developments in British social history that we have already discussed and which represent the general theoretical context for this work.

More directly, while I have tried to make use of the earlier Australian trade union histories, by explicitly focusing on the questions of union composition and character I have stepped away from their pattern. As earlier trade union histories have generally followed the Webbs (and, insofar as they are not inconsistent, Lenin or Flanders) in being organised around systematic treatments of the changing employment conditions of workers in one craft or industry, the questions of content and definition have not seemed problematic. Craft or industry borders have been presumed to determine the area of a union's operations, the emphasis on improving the employment conditions of workers defined by techniques (craft) or units (industry) of production have been presumed to determine their character. These unions did face challenges to both these points of reference - machines, labourers and women have challenged craft borders, industries have integrated and disintegrated and the emphasis on improving employment conditions in one craft or industry has been challenged in the interests of the working class, the general public, the economy, the nation and God. But these have generally been treated as aberrant, antagonistic or other exceptional external social or political forces treading on the assumed economic territory and raison d'etre.

By contrast, the borders of the FMWU have been perpetually changing and they have not aligned along consistent craft or industry lines. The very name of the union, a simple matter of identification without any craft or industry connotations, signals a unity between

workers so devoid of any kind of particularism that they cannot be fitted under the orthodox trade union headings. Indeed, while the FMWU has something of almost every kind of occupation and industry, it practically has all of nothing. Even cleaners, the occupation of most of the union's original members in New South Wales and Victoria, were not part of its great Western Australian Branch till 1982. That the union has not developed along craft or industry lines makes it impractical to attempt to connect its history with reference to its members' employment conditions within these contexts. Such a study would only fragment the research into hundreds of investigations, few of which could be understood satisfactorily without studies of the other unions representing the same workers in different parts of Australia - and all of which would focus on points of molecular and exceedingly complex differentiation rather than unification. It would add up to a study of the working conditions of virtually the whole Australian trade union movement. Instead of "an economic thread for a treatise", as the Webbs themselves wrote in dismissing their attempt to take this approach to the history of the British trade union movement, we would have "a spider's web".(26)

Insurmountable practical problems point the way to theoretical shortcomings. The problem of applying the tacit assumptions of Australian trade union historiography in the case of the FMWU makes it, not only appropriate, but necessary to question the theoretical adequateness of this scholarship and to draw, as we have done, on the richer international discourse from which its assumptions have been largely derived. If trade union history is to be explained primarily in relation to the specific economic circumstances of a union's particular members, then the FMWU could not have existed. So varied

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26. S. & B. Webb, op.cit., p.vii.

is the membership of the union that the strict application of what has become an orthodox methodology must either dissolve it into numerous unions or absorb it into the history of just as many other unions. Yet, the FMWU has not only existed, if the scale and rate at which it was able to recruit members can be taken as a guide, it thrived - perhaps more than any other union in the country. If we are to understand the history of the FMWU, therefore, we must evacuate the assumptions received from Australian trade union history orthodoxy. Whereas past histories have made it seem as though the determinants of trade union composition and character can be assumed, they are the issues that a history of the FMWU needs to explain.

3.

The history is divided into two parts, each of which contains three chapters, followed by an epilogue. Part One deals with the FMWU's formation in 1915 and its first 30 years to 1945. Initially I have sought to explain and define the composition and character of the union as it was originally established. The subsequent chapters are focused on developments that illustrate, challenged or changed this original and later definitions as they occurred in the union's history. Following the examination of the union's origins, Part One deals with the post-war radicalism of 1915 to 1927 and the challenges to the union in the aftermath of the Great Depression. The first two chapters of Part Two are about the most sustained and successful struggle to re-define the union, which occurred between 1945 and 1955. The subsequent growth and character of the FMWU essentially stemmed from this struggle and it thus concludes the substantive position of the thesis. The concluding chapter surveys the history of the union's

growth and government over the 15 years 1955 to 1970. The epilogue outlines aspects of the union's history between 1970 and 1985.

It should also be mentioned that I have concentrated on the Federation as a whole and the New South Wales Branch to a much greater extent than the union's other seven Branches, which have generally only been marked out by way of comparison. This is not a Sydneysider's chauvinism. Nor is it just because the New South Wales Branch records were much better and more conveniently available or because to try to give equal treatment to every one of the FMWU's Branches would require a very much longer thesis. Rather, it is because to write a history of each of the FMWU's Branches would also mean writing a very different thesis, for the FMWU - if we use the term, not to refer to the union's Federal activities, but as a way to describe the whole of the organisation - has always been something quite different to the sum of its Branch activities. Moreover, it was also necessary to explore aspects of the history of the union in detail at the Branch level and the concentration on one Branch offered benefits in narrative continuity. Theoretically there was no reason why the study could not have been coloured more with the people and places of the other Branches to achieve the same objectives. The limits of time, space and tedium, however, demanded that one Branch be selected. The New South Wales Branch is the oldest in the Federation, it is the Branch which gave the union its name, it has always been the largest Branch and - as this suggests and I hope to show - it was also the Branch which, during this period of the FMWU's history, was most critical in determining its general composition and character.

PART ONE

THE ORIGIN OF THE UNION AND THE FIRST THIRTY YEARS: 1915-1945

"A new generation has risen under Australian skies,
Boys with the light of genius deep in their dreamy eyes -
Not as of artists or poets with their vain imaginings,
But born to be thinkers and doers, and makers of wonderful things"

- Henry Lawson (1904)

"The Mensheviks of the West have acquired a much firmer footing in the trade unions; there the craft-unions, narrow-minded, selfish, case-hardened, covetous and petty-bourgeois, 'labour aristocracy', imperialist minded and imperialist-corrupted, has developed into a much stronger section than in our country."

- Lenin (1920)

II

BETWEEN CRAFTSMEN AND THE STATE

THE ORIGIN OF THE UNION

A noticeable feature of present day organisation by means of Trade Unions is the tendency to embrace all classes of wage earners. A few years ago trade unions were confined almost entirely to male workers in skilled trades, and to those unskilled labourers whose numbers made them a powerful factor. Now it is difficult to point out any industry in which the workers, male and female, are not united ...

-John B. Trivett, Registrar of Friendly Societies, Report to the New South Wales Parliament, 1910

The FMWU was created as part of a general social movement. It was not formed because of developments specific to the particular labour of the women and men who comprised its original membership. Nor was it the product of the imagination and activity of any individual. No, it was neither the outcome of demands by the specific sections of the workforce it initially ostensibly represented nor the realisation of anybody's plans. It was a product, and a relatively incidental product, of a much wider field of social development, tension and conflict.

More precisely, it was the two unions that federated to form the FMWU in 1915 that were created as parts of a general social movement. The 'FMWU' was a subsequent by-product of this wider movement. And in a sense, it was an accidental and artificial by-product: a union in little more than name and law only. But we may put the federal organisation aside for the moment. It was to be many years before it would become anything other than a legal-bureaucratic annex to its constituent unions.

The FMWU's two original constituent unions were the Miscellaneous Workers' Union of New South Wales and the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Union of Victoria. The Miscellaneous Workers was created in 1910 as the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Union of New South Wales. It changed its name to 'Miscellaneous Workers' in 1914 after extending its membership to include car washers, gatekeepers and workers in motor garages, and after amalgamating with the Passenger and Goods Lift Attendants' Union of New South Wales. The Victorian union was created in 1913. The organisations in these two States which are now known as Branches of the FMWU have had a continuous existence from these years.

These two foundation years - 1910 and 1913 - fall within the greatest period of trade union formation and growth in Australia's history. Although there are problems in counting the number of trade unions in Australia at any one time, it is safe enough to say that at the beginning of 1907 there were around 300 unions with a combined membership of about 175,000, or less than 20 percent of the country's workers. By the end of 1913 the movement had expanded to over 430 unions with around 500,000 members, or almost 40 percent of workers.(1) Apart from the slightly earlier and related movement between 1900 and 1903, the only prior periods to rival these years are the 1850s, which saw the formation of predominantly craft unions during the eight-hour-day movement, and the period of 'new unionism' which emerged in the 1870s when organisations began to be formed at the mines, in the shearing sheds, around the sea-ports and in other key industries. The only later period of remotely comparable

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1. There are numerous ways of counting the number of Australian unions. All, however, show the unprecedented nature of this change, although they vary in the totals. These figures are from Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No.10 - 1917, Melbourne, 1917, p.955, and B. Ford and D. Plowman, op.cit., p.531.

significance would be the increase in unionism among professional, white collar and service workers that was to occur after 1970. But even if we place it flatly against the entire organisational history of the Australian trade union movement, the period from 1907 to 1913 still appears as the most outstanding for it was during these years that unionism was converted from a sectional to a truly mass movement. It was only after these years that publicists were able to claim that, with the possible exception of Churches, "more Australian adults belonged to unions than to any other single set of institutions".(2)

The FMWU's original constituent unions were just two of the many new unions created during these seven years and the reasons for their formation are to be found within the explanation for the wider movement, not in the narrow circumstances of the particular workers concerned.

In the first part of this chapter I attempt to establish the negative side of this proposition. I aim to show that the workers who comprised the original membership of the FMWU were certainly unlikely to constitute, if not incapable of constituting, a trade union in their own autonomous right. By briefly drawing on the social history of watchmen, caretakers and cleaners - the original core of the FMWU - and analysing their social position, their economic condition and the organisation and characteristics of their labour, it will be argued that these workers were unified only as much as, to use Marx's phrase, "potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes".(3) To imagine that they formed a natural, organic basis for a union would be to imagine, as

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2. B. Ford & D. Plowman, op.cit., p.2.
3. K. Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", in Selected Works, Vol.1, Moscow, 1977, p.479.

Gramsci once put it, "a mechanical juxtaposition of single 'units' without any connection between them".[4]

The second section of the chapter moves to more direct evidence to test the positive side of the hypothesis by examining the reasons for the great period of Australian union organisation as it occurred in New South Wales. Labour history orthodoxy has rarely allowed for a distinction between the slightly earlier period of formation and growth from 1900 to 1903 and the more spectacular period from 1907 to 1913. Typically, the growth of trade unionism during both times is lumped together as one 14-year period that is explained by reference to two developments: the recovery of the country's economy from the depression of the 1890s and the widespread introduction of laws compelling associations of employers and employees to submit their disputes to the state for conciliation or arbitration.[5] This explanation has, however, never been fully elaborated.

Presumably it is intended that we understand both of the orthodox explanation's parts to have acted independently: some growth was due to economic recovery, other growth was owed to the new legislation. Or, perhaps it is assumed they are to be taken as having acted together: economic recovery and the legislation joined to produce the same growth. On either count the contradiction between the two parts of the explanation is overlooked. If trade unions were being formed all over the country and growing rapidly in members because economic recovery was restoring the bargaining power of workers, why should

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4. Q. Hoare (ed.), Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, London, 1971, p.190.
5. See: R.A. Gollan (1960), op.cit., p.157; J.S. Hagan (1966), op.cit., p.138; J.S. Hagan (1981), op.cit., pp.8-13; J.T. Sutcliffe, op.cit., p.169; I. Turner, op.cit., p.34; D.W. Rawson (1981), op.cit., p.22; R.M. Martin, op.cit., p.6; F.K. Crowley (ed.), A New History of Australia, Melbourne, 1974, p.283; R.B. Ward, A Nation for a Continent: The History of Australia, 1901-1975, Richmond, 1979, p.45.

they have looked to the state for additional support, embracing all the limitations, compromises and, indeed, penalties that the new laws imposed on them? Or - more curiously - why should the state have patronised the extension of such vigorously recovering trade unionism? This suggests a relationship between the two parts of the orthodox explanation of a different and more interesting order than has generally been supposed.

It will be argued that the legislation was introduced to counter the increasing bargaining power and radicalness of the trade union movement. Integral to this counter-attack was the promotion of union organisation. There is no paradox in this for it was union organisation of a new kind; a kind that was dependent upon rather than isolated from or antagonistic toward the state. Unique to Australia, at least in their extent, a multiplicity of labourers' unions were organised along craft lines to weigh down the more militant and radical parts of the movement. Bogus unionism on a mass scale would be too strong a description, but the result was not too dissimilar. The watchmen, caretakers and cleaners' unions of New South Wales (particularly) and Victoria were two of these new 'law-made' unions.

In the final section of the chapter we turn to the actual history of the New South Wales union from its inception in 1910 through to the formation of the federation with its Victorian counterpart to officially inaugurate the FMWU in Sydney early in the summer of 1915. In general theoretical terms it was a novel union. Its constituency of disparate and highly mobile labourers inverted what has often been supposed as the organisational principles of early unions, for the settled part of the union was not its members but its government. Instead of being - as the Webbs would have it - a 'continuous association of workers', it was more an administration engaged in a

continuous process of re-association.[6] Certainly it is difficult to find, as Marx suggested, a union that was the result of the concentration of people in one place by large-scale industry. Lacking what the Webbs referred to as "the fundamental sectionalism of trade unionism", by default the members contradicted the craft mould into which the FMWU's forerunners were originally cast and, it is argued, this explains their transition to a general form of unionism.[7]

1.

So ubiquitous are the occupations of watchman, caretaker and cleaner today it is only after some difficulty that we are able to imagine a society in which they did not exist. True enough, watchmen have existed since antiquity, a fact captured on the original banner of the FMWU's New South Wales Branch. The banner was executed by Edgar Whitbread for £57.0.0 raised by a special levy in 1912 and it exhibited the renowned Redfern banner painter's characteristic attention to detail and his customary focus on the labour of the members of the unions he worked for.[8] The back of the banner displayed four panels set against a dazzling blue field, each showing separate cameos of the watchman, the caretaker and male and female cleaners at work. Whereas the caretaker and the male and female cleaners were shown caring for and maintaining impressive examples of Victorian architecture, the watchman was distinguished in that Whitbread depicted him as a bearded, breeched, stockinged, buckle-shoed lamp carrier standing at the door of a watch house that

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6. For the conventional assumption, also see H.A. Turner, Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy, London, 1962, p.86.
7. S. & B. Webb, op.cit., pp.476-78.
8. Balance Sheet, 1 May - 31 December 1912, FMWU Papers; A. Stephens & A. Reeve, op.cit., esp. p.4.

opened onto an idyllic moonlit cobbled street. It was a romantic image that drew on the fact of the watchman's pre-industrial genealogy. It recalled a time when he had not so much watched over things as been a guardian of communities; a time that had been eclipsed almost exactly eighty years before the banner's execution when the British Parliament instituted permanent state police forces in the mother country and her colonies.

Despite the state's assumption of the community responsibility that Whitbread was to recall, the number of watchmen had nevertheless multiplied as a relatively incidental function of Australia's continuing population growth, urban concentration and the breakdown of traditional means of protection. Between the 1830s, when the state's police forces were begun, and 1910, when the first watchmen, caretakers and cleaners' union was formed, the population of New South Wales increased from 60,000 to more than one-and-a-half million, notwithstanding that Victoria and Queensland had been carved out of it in the meantime. In 1910 the people of New South Wales represented about 40 percent of the total population of the Australian Commonwealth and, in turn, about 40 percent of these - or almost 15 percent of the Australian population - lived in Sydney. "The extraordinary progress," the State's Statistician had written of this urban concentration in 1902, "... has no parallel amongst the cities of the Old World."[9] In Europe, only Copenhagen, which hosted 20 percent of Denmark's population, exceeded the relative concentration of Australians in Sydney and, at around 670,000 people, only six of Europe's 20 largest cities - London, Paris, Vienna, Petrograd, Berlin

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9. T.A. Coghlan, The Wealth and Progress of New South Wales: 1900-01, Sydney, 1902, p.947.

and Budapest - were larger in absolute terms.[10] The census statistics for watchmen cannot be treated too seriously as they were usually casually or seasonally employed and watching was often mixed up with other activities in any case. The concomitant rise in their numbers was nevertheless registered. The New South Wales census of 1891 listed 300 watchmen, the 1901 census listed 500 and, by taking these figures and working back from later data, it might be supposed there were about 1,000 recognised watchmen in the State when the union was formed.[11]

If the history of the occupation of watchman seems unproblematic, such is not the case with the specialist cleaner, an invention of the late nineteenth century. Cleaning as a concept, of course, had a lineage as ancient as watchmen, but prior to the nineteenth century it was not related to hygiene and nor was it generally associated with good manners, respectability or practicality. On the contrary, it was conceived almost exclusively in terms of spiritual purity and other superstitions (baptism, for example). Where it was given practical expression its prime function was usually decorative. With the Industrial Revolution personal cleanliness was elevated as part of the new middle class culture, but despite the efforts of liberal reformers and respectable working class associations it was not extended to the 'Great Unwashed' until the famous bacteriologists - Joseph Lister, Robert Koch and Louis Pasteur - discovered hygiene's relationship to disease prevention between 1861 and 1890.[12]

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10. Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia: No.8 - 1915, Melbourne, 1915, p.108.
11. New South Wales Census, 1891 & 1901.
12. There is no history of cleaning although many authors mention it in passing. See: L. Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800, London, 1977, pp.13, 27, 77-81, 159-161, 256-257; F. Braudel, Capitalism and Material Life, 1400-1800, London, 1967 (cont. over)

Gradients would always remain, but the discovery that the good health of one was largely dependent upon the cleanliness of all dissolved the practice as a major point of class distinction. Just as it had taken over the role of the ancient watchman, as the nineteenth century drew to its close the state began assuming more and more responsibility for educating, setting standards and regulating for cleanliness to secure the modern social order. In New South Wales a Nuisance Prevention Act was passed in 1875 to control water closets, cesspits and the disposal of nightsoil, a Health Society was established in 1876, an Infectious Diseases Bill was enacted after the smallpox epidemic of 1880, a Public Health Act was passed in 1896 and - following an outbreak of bubonic plague - in 1907 compulsory medical inspections of school children commenced.(13) Such was the general change in consciousness throughout the modern world that in 1909 G.K. Chesterton was to lament the overturning of the famous dictum issued by John Wesley 70 years earlier. "Cleanliness is not next to godliness nowadays", he complained, with exaggeration, "for

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12. (cont.)
pp.224-226, 239-241, 456-487; C. Davidson, A Woman's Work is Never Done: A History of Housework in the British Isles, 1650-1950, 1982; M.C. Bauer, Health, Wealth and Population in the Early Days of the Industrial Revolution, London, 1969 edn., pp.76-95; J.H. Plumb, England in the Eighteenth Century, 1714-1815, Harmondsworth, 1950, pp.12-13; L. Wright, Clean and Decent: The Fascinating History of the Bathroom and Water Closet, London, 1960.

13. See the four articles by J.H.L. Cumpston: "The Development of Public Health in Australia", The Medical Journal of Australia, 17 March, 1928, pp.332-36; "Public Health in Australia: The First Forty-Two Years", ibid., 25 April 1931, pp.491-500; "Public Health in Australia: The Second Period, 1830 to 1850", ibid., 16 May 1931, pp.592-598; "Public Health in Australia: Developments after 1858", ibid., 6 June 1931, pp.680-685. Also see: Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia: No.7 - 1914, Melbourne, 1914, pp.963-983; T.A. Coghlan, The Wealth and Progress of New South Wales, 1886-1887, Sydney, 1887, p.177.

cleanliness is made essential and godliness is regarded as an offence".[14]

Given this new body of laws, institutions and attitudes, the emergence of the specialist cleaner to do the hard physical labour required to scour the surfaces of society was more complex. The middle class Victorian home, as shown in Edgar Whitbread's depiction of female cleaners on the FMWU's banner, was their incubator. By the turn of the century the spreading infrastructure of social services and 'labour saving' devices - which degraded and would eventually destroy the highly specialised structure of Victorian domestic service - began to turn thousands of women fully trained for this activity, and little other than this activity, onto the labour market. For the first time in Australia's history there was an over supply of domestic servants in the 1890s.[15] Prior to this decade a wealthy household might have had a cook, a housemaid, a lady's maid, a seamstress, a dairy maid and a housekeeper, and even a 'typical' house would have employed a cook, a housemaid and a nurse or a lady's maid. By 1901 80 percent of the 22,000 New South Wales households employing resident servants only employed one - the multi-skilled 'general domestic'.[16]

As domestic servants were dissolving into the one generalist category and entering the first major stage of their long-term decline - between 1891 and 1921 the percentage of women employed as servants in Australia fell from almost 40 to nearly 20 - the first from among

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14. G.K. Chesterton, "On Lying in Bed", Tremendous Trifles, London, 1909, p.60.
15. T.A. Coghlan, Labour and Industry in Australia, 1788-1901, Melbourne, 1969 edn., Vol.4, p.1464.
16. New South Wales Census, 1901, p.534. For the pre-1890s structure of domestic service in Australia see B. Kingston, My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia, West Melbourne, 1975, Ch.3, esp. pp.29-30.

this class of workers began making their appearance as specialist urban cleaners. The 1891 New South Wales census listed 43 workers under the new category of "cleaner" and the 1901 census listed 245, although this does not indicate the full extent of their presence. Next to the new classification - which was exclusively used to describe men in 1891 - the older title of "charwoman" persisted. Charwomen had traditionally been the lowest rung in the hierarchy of the Victorian household, originally being the women who did the odd jobs around the house (in the United States the original meaning of the 'char' was preserved in the derivation 'chore'). By the end of the century the word was commonly used to distinguish the woman who was hired by day from the live-in domestic and the 1891 census listed 202 of them in New South Wales. By the 1901 census this residual title had been joined to a new bridging category of "housecleaner" and their number had doubled to 410. Also, 70 percent of the specialist 'cleaners' were now women and they had claimed monopolies in churches and theatres and comprised 85 percent of the cleaners in government buildings, offices and banks. The only surfaces still held exclusively by men were those that were outside, dangerous or mechanical, such as windows and those on railways and tramways. By the 1911 Commonwealth census the original gender division attached to the titles had been destroyed. The bridging title of 'housecleaner' had been removed and the single heading of "charwomen, cleaners" had been introduced, capturing the end of one tradition and the beginning of another. A total of 2,342 were listed and less than ten percent were now men.[17]

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17. Data from the New South Wales Census, 1891 & 1901, and the Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1911 & 1921.

When the first watchmen, caretakers and cleaners' union was formed specialist urban cleaners were therefore still a relatively new occupation. Barely more than 30 years old, their presence in any strength extended over hardly a decade and the language was still adjusting to their arrival. We should not exaggerate their status. The most clearly defined remained the male cleaners, whom Whitbread depicted as daredevils catching the evening sun as they washed windows standing on the outside sills of a high building without any harness. At least one company - the Sydney and Suburban Window Cleaning Co. - had been established to organise and exploit the demand for these men, but they were few in number. Most cleaning activity still existed in the margins of other occupations, as the first duty given to a new apprentice or as something a messenger, porter, shop assistant or female factory hand might do when there was no other work, first thing in the morning or before they went home in the evening. "He kept me on," wrote Henry Lawson of one early boss he had, "until there was nothing left to do except clean and sweep the shop. He told me to do that and then go home ...".[18] By the same token, many of the women who were actually hired as cleaners had duties that still reached back to domestic servitude, perhaps having to light the morning fire, take towels home for washing and so on.

It is impossible to generalise about the conditions of the cleaning women, although there is nothing to contradict the assessment of Herbert Curlewis, a Sydney barrister who told the 1914 Royal Commission into arbitration that they were "scandalous".[19] Probably

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18. H. Lawson, "A Fragment of Autobiography" (1903-6) in L. Cronin (ed.) A Camp-Fire Yarn: Henry Lawson, Complete Works, 1885-1900, Sydney, 1984, p.33.
19. Evidence of H.R. Curlewis, Final Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Industrial Arbitration in the State of New South Wales, Sydney, 1914.

the best jobs were in public buildings and large city department stores like David Jones and Anthony Horderns where full-time day cleaners were employed. More common was part-time employment on either side of the standard working day in theatres, banks and, of course, schools. The worst conditions were endured by those who cleaned city offices at night. The "same old lady", said a witness in the hearing to establish the union in 1910, might attend "to perhaps a dozen different offices".(20) In 1933 one of the union's officials would still recall pre-award days when a woman could accumulate up to "100 1/4 hours each week" for 30 shillings.(21) Of course much of the work was seasonal and casual. Once a building had been constructed or repaired, said a witness for the employers at the 1910 hearing, a woman would be paid a couple of shillings to scrub it out. Master Caretakers in charge of large city buildings would hire women to assist with weekly, monthly or annual cleaning.(22) Most of the women, the census also records, were old. In contrast to female domestic servants who - as portrayed in Edgar Whitbread's romantic, anachronistic cameo of women cleaners on the union's banner - had an average age of 27, the average age of the real working cleaning woman was 47, indicating that most were driven into the jobs late in life by the loss of a husband or some other necessitous circumstance.(23)

But this is to attempt to assess the lot of cleaners in terms that largely still did not exist for them. Set wages, standard hours and a clear work identity were all part of a culture that was still foreign to these workers whose union had not been formed yet and whose

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20. "Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Association Application for Board in the Industrial Court of N.S.W.", 28 March 1911, NSW State Archives (NSWSA).
21. Labor Daily, 19 August 1933.
22. "Watchmen, Caretakers ...", op.cit.
23. Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1911.

very title was even still uncertain. It is only their later - organised - history that leads us to pick them out from among the mass of rude labour comprising the exploited underclass in Australia prior to the great extension of trade unionism between 1907 and 1913. Before the creation of their union, it is only against subtle changes in the meaning of the language, the evolving activities of the state, the problems that challenged the dedication of those who compiled the census and the well-documented decay of the Victorian world of domestic service that we are able to suggest the outlines of the broad social pre-conditions for their emergence in history. Before their union, what was there that specifically distinguished the cleaning woman's lot from the washerwoman, from the serving lady or any of these from the other floating and irregularly employed paupers, the pariahs of earlier centuries whose lives had not been ordered by their union, but by fatalism, deference and terrible need. As with his pre-industrial depiction of the watchman, was it not the commonality of the cleaners' condition that forced Edgar Whitbread to substitute the romance of a decaying but distinctive domestic past for their real circumstances in his determination to portray these workers with dignity on the union's banner? To regain an idea of what their pre-union working lives were actually like one must put aside the headings that were only to arrive with the FMWU. We must look, not for the cleaning woman, but for the milieu from which she was drawn.

Henry Lawson gives us something of her full experience. In attempting to write his autobiography in snatches between 1903 and 1906 he recalled the time when he had been a sensitive bush-boy making his way in the early hours across the city he had newly arrived in to get the train to the carriage works where he was employed as an apprentice:

> I walked through Hyde Park, Elizabeth Street and Belmore Park to the railway station, and it was then that the faces in the street first began to haunt me ... the worn faces and gaunt figures in the poor pitiful clothing. Meeting me and passing, and catching up and passing, and seeming to turn momentarily, hopelessly, fearfully, resentfully, appealing, as though looking to me for help or sympathy - or guidance - for something - I didn't know what ... I used to meet the same back-wash and eddy of the stream of life - the same debris of people - mornings and evenings when the workman's train ran to time. I remember one girl ... Elder, or only grown up sister; anything between twenty and forty; unlikely; ungraceful - ugly and hard; sexually starved or starved for love no doubt; lot of younger children; mother washing, serving or cleaning office, useless grown up brother or two perhaps. Father unemployed, drinking or dead. And they loyal to his drunken memory. She belonged to a mean little circle of Brethren and Sisters (round a dear minister) no doubt, who made mean, unscrupulous and snuffling use of her few spare hours. You'll see her face over and over again in the Salvation Army street gatherings at night in all weathers. These were sweating times and days of long hours in factories for girls. I used to meet her in Elizabeth Street every evening about twenty past six. She carried an old fibre bag like workmen carried their dinners in. She looked at nothing but went straight on and there was nothing but dogged endurance in every jerky wooden movement of her most ungraceful walk ...[24]

Lawson drew on the same experience to upbraid bush workers out of sympathy with the city:

> What of the poor city women - widows and the wives of loafing or drunken husbands - who have to keep their children and pay rent on ten shillings or fifteen shillings per week? What of the women who have to work twelve or thirteen hours a day for from 2s6d to five shillings per day - and do a strong man's work at that? What of the girls in sweating dens at five shillings per week? But the list is endless. I could take a bushman through the back streets of Sydney and show him scenes at every step that would hurt his heart, and make him wish he had a million pound to give away and so mitigate the awful misery he would see.[25]

For all the difficulties he had in coming to terms with women ("Mrs Scrubbus" he would dub one), Lawson could never escape his outrage

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24. H. Lawson, op.cit., pp.29-32.
25. H. Lawson, "The City and the Bush", (1894), in L. Cronin, op.cit., p.403.

over these working conditions.[26] In 1913 it was still the faces of working women in the street that stirred his revolutionary impulse, in contrast to unionised labour:

> Labour, worn out and blind, boasts of liberty and prosperity, and builds unto itself a temple on the skyscraper plan, and wants ever higher wages and shorter hours, while thousands of shop hands and factory girls are hopelessly worse than uselessly enslaved; and within a stone's throw of this office and in God knows how many other places, are the slums of 'Offal Pockets' and dirt, squalor, wretchedness, and vice such as Dickens never described. And so we go, with the motor car dust in our faces and the giggle and laugh in our ears; but the day shall come when the Sydney people shall remember "Faces in the Street", as I remember the boy who wrote it.[27]

The evidence of the watchmen's pre-union lot is scarcely more satisfactory, although it is clear that there was a class of independent 'block watchmen' who patrolled districts in the city at night for a fee from each dwelling or business in the area. One estimate is that there were around 100 of these men in Sydney in 1910 and, with fees ranging between sixpence and 30 shillings a week for each client, some were said to have been able to build their earnings up to as much as &10 or &12 a week, or even more.[28] These entrepreneurs apart, there is no room to doubt that most watchmen, like cleaners, lived in the margins of life with other drifting labourers.

Later evidence of the pre-union conditions of watchmen who worked for public authorities testifies to extraordinary hours. Beginning at 5 o'clock in the evening, they would be on duty until 7.30 the next

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26. H. Lawson, "Diogenes: A Yarn of Ancient Greece" (1900), ibid., pp.767-771.
27. H. Lawson, "From Mudgee Hills to London Town" (1913), in L. Cronin (ed.), A Fantasy of Man: Henry Lawson, Complete Works, 1901-1922, Sydney, 1984, p.947.
28. "Watchmen, Caretakers ...", op.cit.

morning from Monday to Friday and on Saturday they would commence at 11.30 a.m. or noon and go through until 7.30 on Monday morning: "a total of 43 1/2 to 44 hours over the weekend without a break and a total of 116 hours a week".(29) The weekly wage for this varied between 15 and 30 shillings. Below government and municipal standards the work was usually casual. Some such as those employed at timber yards mainly looked for outbreaks of fire and had to be fit enough to assist with carting and loading. Others such as those who watched the cargo at the shipping wharves would have to just wait around each day to receive perhaps "only two or three hours' work".(30) Like cleaning, the activity was often integrated within broader occupations. At building sites, for example, construction labourers would rotate the watching job each night.

But this slender detail also evades the experience of the watchman's - and particularly the nightwatchman's - work. Unlike cleaning, where all may have some claim to a general understanding because of the common experience of housework, even if few appreciate the gruelling nature of its extension as routinised wage labour, the nightwatchman's work made unique demands on one's sensibility. A British writer, many years later, was to capture so much of the experience after a period in the job that he may be quoted at length:

> Producing nothing, this labour exists to make nothing happen, its aim is emptiness. Its abstract and solitary structure, like a negative-image of day-time work, reverses the diurnal beat of life and betrays the meaning of labour, creating a new, pure, objectless estrangement lasting from every twilight until long after dawn ... it was boring by the second night, and turned into a slow torture that lasted all the time I was awake until I would have either gone mad or - worse - got used to the job's madness ... The first, strangest, thing was the silence ... It was like being underwater ...

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29. Labor Daily, 19 August 1933.
30. Interview with founding member in Miscellaneous Worker, February 1962.

It was the social isolation that cut deepest:

> Nightworkers go to work in the evening. That is, the evening ceases to exist for them, in the important, usual sense. But evening is the great cushion, the shock-absorber everything rests on, in normal labour. It is the mirage of afterwork, the collective dream of later-on ... at a dance, or with a wife; it draws people through their work by organising their feelings in relation to something else ...
>
> One always arrives just as other people go away, or before they appear. After a few weeks, they are surprised to see one, one has become like a distant, forgotten relative, or a ghost, whose movements are random or obey unknown laws. It was only possible to really emerge from this undersea silence when one had at least two nights off, though even then one walked blinking across the marvellous island of ordinary living, like an animal out of hibernation, scarcely able to re-adjust in the time available. Then one was back among the fish again.
>
> The worst point in this rhythm was always the return to work ... One was going in the wrong direction ... as the lights came on against the first, soft darkness and people passed the other way, relaxed and expectant, homewards to enjoy themselves. Through the rising temperature of the city one fell like a stone, in a marginal trajectory towards an area of darkness outside the normal milestones of living ... Night-workers feel regret, or resignation, or indifference on this journey, depending on how long they have endured their silence, and how deeply it has penetrated them ...

The watchman's patrol - the 'slow moving eye' - was no relief:

> To grasp its cumulative effect upon one, imagine an exceptionally lazy Sunday-afternoon stroll, a saunter, taking one nowhere in particular. This is the pace of the watchman. It is comparable to a policeman's on his beat, but does not carry one through a varying scene of streets and people that keep one's attention taut ... thus, an endlessly repeated inanimate nature passes round one at an invariable slow speed, a never-changing procession of images whose recurrence deadens one's attention a little more each time. The series of physical movements, identical with an easy promenade, assume a totally different sense inside this routine. A <u>forced</u> stroll whose pace can never be altered is exhausting beyond belief. The very ease of the actions - so misleading viewed from without - rapidly transforms itself into the nausea, the lead-like feeling of a half-activity from which no escape is possible.

The lack of any recognised skills only meant it was all the more demanding:

> ... In this job, there was no skill, no part of oneself, no set of dispositions developed as the valuable 'thing' sold in the transaction with the employer. The very vacancy of the task had this as a corollary. But in turn, paradoxically, this lack swallowed one up completely. Demanding no part of one's self, the job in fact demanded everything, on the lowest possible level.[31]

Like the other two of the FMWU's three founding occupations, the census also recorded the rapidly rising number of caretakers as a function of Australia's urban growth and concentration. The New South Wales census of 1891 listed 600 caretakers, the census of 1901 counted 1,200 and it might be guessed there were around 2,000 in the State by the time the union was formed in 1910.[32] We may leave aside the Master Caretakers, a class of petty businessmen who contracted for the care of buildings and paid cleaners and watchmen - or co-opted wives and children - to do the work and of whom it was estimated there were 57 in Sydney in 1911.[33] As for the rest, there was little that distinguished the caretaker from the other two occupations. The men who cleaned the Sydney Trades Hall, for instance, were all called 'Assistant Caretakers'. Their duties may have been more varied and they might have lived in. Perhaps their more all-round responsibilities also left them freer in their work schedules and allowed for a higher level of interaction with other people as owners,

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31. T. Nairn, "The Nightwatchman", in R. Frazer (ed.), Work, Vol.1, Harmondsworth, 1962, pp.34-54.
32. Based on New South Wales Census, 1891 & 1901.
33. "Watchmen, Caretakers ...", op.cit. Also see: "Municipal Employees' Union of NSW, Application for Board in the Industrial Court of NSW", 17 March 1911, NSWSA.

tenants or the public. But in essence it was the same story of solitude and, often, the estrangement from daylight living that demanded acclimatisation to 'a kind of half-organised vacancy'. To relieve the loneliness Whitbread painted a dog into the caretakers' cameo on the FMWU's banner.

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Widely scattered, ill defined, profoundly demanding and expanding service activities carried out by ageing, scandalously paid, short-term or casual shift or night labourers qualified by nothing but the skills engendered in them by home life and the capacity to use them for inhuman hours at a time: these were the unlikely general characteristics of the original members of the union that was to turn into the FMWU. What circumstances could have linked the people in any one of these three barely discernible categories of work with each other? What circumstances could have linked people in all three of the categories together? And how could any such circumstances be prevented from linking them up with others from among the city's drifting labourers who carried out the numerous other similar activities under comparable conditions?

What greater contrast could be found with the "homogeneous communities" of coalminers, the "working together, eating together, fighting together" spirit of seamen or the "unifying power" which technology give to telegraphists?(34) What opportunity was there for these workers to develop durable 'natural links' when by their work's nature they were divided by large amounts of physical space and

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34. R.A. Gollan (1963), op.cit., p.1; B. Fitzpatrick & R.J. Cahill, op.cit., p.xiv and J.S. Baker, op.cit., Ch.5 (respectively).

scattered throughout the city? Solitude was their common experience, not solidarity. This, after all, was the overriding feature of Whitbread's banner. Not only did the character of each of the occupations demand that Whitbread give them separate cameo treatment, but each worker within each of the cameos also had to be physically separated from his or her others.

Nor was their work integrated or dependent upon the work of other unionised workers as was the case with, for instance, the tradesmen's assistants who started the Federated Ironworkers' Association.(35) And they were clearly a world apart from the "sober, upright citizens" who made up the great associations of the "intelligent and well paid" male aristocracy of labour.(36) While women cleaners felt the decaying, ununionised tradition of dependent domestic servitude at their backs, printers, for example, had over four centuries of standards, conventions and myths attached to the arts and mysteries of their trades behind them.(37) While elderly watchmen long deprived of their role guarding the human community confronted their inanimate, isolated voids, engineers felt a deep sense of belonging through their long history and pride in craftsmanship.(38) Unlike the craftsmen, these workers did have everything to gain simply because they had nothing to lose, as the recently formed Industrial Workers of the World might have told them. In a society where less than one percent of its people owned 54 percent of all personal wealth and where a smart businessman could earn over &100 a week, most earned well

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35. J.A. Merritt, "A History of the Federated Ironworkers' Association of Australia, 1909-1952", Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, 1967, p.47.
36. K. Buckley, op.cit., p.73; J.S. Hagan (1966), op.cit., p.15.
37. J.S. Hagan (1966), op.cit., p.1.
38. H. Lawson "Australian Engineers" (1904), in L. Cronin (ed.), A Fantasy of Man: Henry Lawson, Complete Works, 1901-1922, Sydney, 1984, p.228; T. Sheridan, op.cit., pp.16-22.

below, not just the craftsman's wage, but also the 42 shillings that had been judged in 1907 to be the amount required to provide for the weekly needs of the average male labourer regarded as human being living in a civilised society.(39)

Of course it would be absurd to compare these workers to the secure, salaried clerks in the Commonwealth public service or the middle class professionals in journalism and teaching whose unions were also being formed around this time.(40) Even their nearest rural counterparts, the 'nomad tribes' of the 'pastoral proletariat' who formed the AWU, were clearly a separate and, as Henry Lawson knew, a more privileged class. It was not just that they earned more money. While cleaners and security workers were concentrated in the cities and towns but widespread within these centres, the rural labourers - conversely - were widespread through the country but concentrated within their camps. They also stood in a direct and obvious relationship to their common, tangible production within their nationally important industry, were more defined by the skills and united by their tools and shared a strong common male culture built on the physical challenges of the Australian bush and the traditions of the rural community.(41)

This trail, then, has been found closed. In terms of a market economy and in terms of the history, organisation and daily experience of their work, it would be difficult to find a less likely group to combine into a union. Unconnected by their labouring instruments, not united by the nature of their product, not occupying any of the pivots

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39. For the distribution of wealth and class and society generally in Australia at this time, see S. Macintyre, The Succeeding Age: 1901-1942, The Oxford History of Australia, Vol.4, Melbourne, 1986, Ch.3 (esp. p.51).
40. See B. Juddery, op.cit.; B.A. Mitchell, op.cit.; G. Sparrow, op.cit.
41. See R.B. Ward, The Australian Legend, Melbourne, 1981, passim.

upon which wider economies turned and being fractionated, isolated and unevenly developed, neither were they open to a common catalytic shock into unionism, such as the "half-crown cut" was for shearers in 1886, or as the London Dock strike of 1889 and the British Engineers' strike of 1898 were for the unions which developed into the giant British National Union of General and Municipal workers and the Transport and General Workers' Union.(42)

Moreover, unionisation would have meant going against the grain, not only of the residues of the abject subjection embodied in the personally dependent relationships that had characterised the middle class world of domestic servitude, but the myriad employer bodies whose organisational unity had already been forged in response to earlier, substantial challenges: the Employers' Federation, the Master Retailers' and Master Builders' Associations, the Warehousemen's Association, the Associated Banks, Licensees of Halls, the Coastal and Interstate Steamship Owners' Associations, Timber Associations, Municipal Councils, State Government instrumentalities, and real estate agents and property owners' associations.(43) Who were more open to harrassment and victimisation than these lonely, isolated, old and often desperate figures? Indeed, when the British Workers' Union sought to organise the much larger body of London's window cleaners in 1898 the campaign collapsed almost as soon as it began under the impact of wide scale victimisation by employers. If that union, which was based among semi-skilled engineering workers and had over 4,000 members in 60 Branches at the time of its London campaign, failed to be able to organise the most distinguished section

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42. On the origins of these three unions see: W.G. Spence, op.cit., Ch.1; E.J. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour, London, 1986 edn., p.180; R. Hyman (1971), op.cit., p.1 (respectively).
43. "Watchmen, Caretakers ...", op.cit.

among these three occupations in a city where they were concentrated in much greater numbers, what likelihood was there of them forming a union on their own account in Sydney?[44] These workers, it can be concluded, were incapable of community, bond or organisation in their own right. Unable to organise themselves, they had to be organised.

2.

The Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Union may be said to have been started by the New South Wales Labour Council's Organising Committee at a meeting called for that purpose in the Sydney Trades Hall on 6 May 1910.[45] The Council's Committee had convened 51 similar meetings in 1910 and its Secretary, Harold Mercer from the Clerks, later claimed to have established 37 new unions in only three months.[46] Indeed, the Organising Committee was instrumental in the creation of nearly all the unions formed in New South Wales between 1907 and 1913, years that saw 168 new registrations under the State's Trade Union Act and an increase in the number of its unionists from less than 100,000 to more than 200,000.[47] Such was the Organising Committee's enterprise that in June 1914 the Labour Council's Secretary, Edward Kavanagh from the Pressers' Union, claimed that it had "formed fully 80 percent of the Unions at present on the Council".[48] If we are to understand the reasons for the formation

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44. R. Hyman (1971), op.cit., p.19.
45. For the early attempts to form the union see the Co-operator, 7 October 1912, Labor Daily, 19 August 1933 and the Executive Minutes of the Trades and Industrial Hall and Literary Institute Association Ltd., Sydney Trades Hall, 28 April 1910.
46. The claim may be found in Flame, Vol. 1, No.1, 1936.
47. J.B. Trivett, The Official Year Book of New South Wales: 1916, Sydney, 1917, p.810; C.E. Martin, The Development of Trade Unionism in New South Wales, 1900-1920, Sydney, 1976, pp.1-2.
48. Labour Council of New South Wales, Report and Balance Sheet for Half-Year Ending 30th June 1913, Sydney, 1913.

of the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Union, we must understand the raison d'etre of this Committee.

The Organising Committee had been established in February 1900 by the craftsmen who founded the Sydney Labour Council in place of the Sydney District Council of the Australasian Labour Federation. The Federation had been formed in 1894 as a militant working class answer to the defeats in the Great Strikes of 1890-92 and the economic crisis of 1893. It had been a simple idea. The trades and labour councils of Australia and New Zealand were to be abolished in favour of a pyramid of District and Provincial Councils with an overriding Australasian Council, unions were to be represented and contribute funds in their Districts according to the number of workers they spoke for and strikes were to be fully co-ordinated and supported by a Labour Defence Fund.(49) It was, however, too simple for a movement as heterogeneous as that which existed in Australia at this time and, except in the less developed economies of Queensland and to some extent Western Australia, the scheme failed. In Sydney this was primarily because the urban craftsmen - who would have reduced influence under the Federation's more democratic structure - refused to surrender their autonomy or their funds. The Amalgamated Engineers "stood aloof" as they had a defence fund of their own and were already "federated all over the world". "Our craft," apologised the Typographers, "had the misfortune of having an 'Australasian Federation of Typographical Unions'" and its leaders took "umbrage" at the proposal as they were "afraid their influence would be weakened ... a mean and contemptible action." The Painters' delegate explained that he "had a lot of 'fogyism' [sic] to contend with ... numbers of old men who maintained that the only object of Unionism was to keep up

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49. NSW Trades and Labour Council Minutes, 7 April, 5 May 1894.

the rate of pay". Only 14 of the 42 unions that had been affiliated to the old Trades and Labour Council had joined the new District Council.[50]

The Sydney militants had maintained the Council until the end of the century, but the desertion of the craftsmen effectively crippled it from the outset and the six years had seen an inevitable wearing away of its initial position. Reduced to only ten affiliates, in 1898 the Council had begun to lower its colours to attract more support, reducing subscription fees, omitting "all reference to the Defence Fund" and entertaining compulsory arbitration.[51] The final blow had come when the Provincial Council had called on the Sydney District to support a miners' strike in 1899. Having lured some of the craft unions in with the assurance that it was not "comprised of firebrands and socialists", the District Council was attacked from within.[52] George Jones, the General Secretary of the Political Labour League and the President of the Typographers (which had affiliated in 1897), claimed that he had been deceived into joining the Council and threatened to withdraw.[53] The Lithographers had argued that the miners were strike happy.[54] The Sydney Council, the Federation's Provincial President had said, was "a huge pretentious sham".[55] The Sydney body seceded from the Federation on 30 September 1899, soon after the AWU had subsumed the Provincial Council (and the Labor Party in the country) and thereupon the militant New South Wales answer to the Great Strikes was gone.

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50. ibid., 5, 17, 26 May 1894.
51. Sydney District Council Minutes, 15 March, 7 July 1898.
52. ibid., 18 November 1897.
53. ibid., 31 August 1899.
54. ibid., 17-31 August 1899.
55. ibid., 17 August 1899.

For four months the pro-Federation militants and radicals had fought a rearguard action against the craft unions led by George Jones over the direction of the Sydney movement. The left had argued to retain the Defence Fund, to keep up the minimum number of members required by a union before it could affiliate, to halve the payments to Council officials and to have the new central body established on the widest possible basis ('Council of Labour' was their preferred title).[56] On 1 February 1900, however, Jones had been able to claim a majority for the establishment of the Sydney Labour Council.[57] The key to his victory was his support from unions of Sydney's labourers, many of whom he had organised himself for this precise purpose. It was out of this alliance that the new Council's Organising Committee and ultimately the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners Union was made. To understand why this was so we must consider the relationship between craftsmen and labourers in greater depth.

The policies and representative structure of the new Council were built around the alliance between the great craft associations and the urban labourers. First, an upper limit of two delegates from each affiliated union was placed on representation in the Council, which ensured craft dominance over the larger industry based militants and socialists.[58] Second, the minimum membership requirement for affiliation was reduced to 25.[59] This encouraged the participation of small labourers' unions and maximised the Council's influence within the labour movement's new extra-parliamentary political apparatus. New rules adopted by the Political Labour League in the

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56. ibid., 21 September 1899 - 1 February 1900.
57. ibid. Also see J.S. Hagan (1966), op.cit., pp.122-124.
58. Sydney Labour Council Minutes, February 1900.
59. ibid. Also see report of the speech by the retiring Council President in Sydney Morning Herald, 6 February 1902.

wake of the collapse of the New South Wales Province of the Australasian Labour Federation granted the new Sydney Council the two positions previously reserved for the Provincial Council on the League's Executive and allowed each union in the State one delegate to its Annual Conference.(60) Thus the organisation of Sydney's labouring underclass into small occupationally-based client unions acted to counter the influence, not only of militants and socialists, but also the giant pastorally based AWU with which the craftsmen were at odds over issues such as the eight-hour-day - a work measurement entirely obnoxious to the traditional natural rhythms of rural labour.(61) To secure this arrangement the craftsmen gave their support to the introduction of compulsory arbitration and established an on-going Organising Committee, both of which need to be discussed at more length.

Despite later claims to the contrary, initially - in New South Wales at least - the question of the state compulsorily resolving disputes between capital and labour was not conceived as a mutually exclusive choice: 'arbitration versus direct action'. For liberals, arbitration offered a framework of regulations that would encourage class diplomacy and hence economic stability and security in the interests of modern industrial development and the protection of society at large. "Trade is a social act," said one politician, quoting John Stuart Mill, "Whoever undertakes to sell any description of goods to the public ... affects the interest of other persons, and of society in general; and thus his conduct ... comes within the

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60. P. Loveday, "New South Wales", in D.J. Murphy (ed.), Labor in Politics: The State Labor Parties in Australia, 1880-1920, St Lucia, 1975, pp.35-36, 39-40, pp.47-54; V.G. Childe, How Labour Governs: A Study of Workers' Representation in Australia, London, 1964, pp.56-57.
61. I. Turner, op.cit., p.33.

jurisdiction of society."[62] As to the freedom to strike: "I know very well there must always be disputes between capital and labour which no court can settle," said the liberal Attorney-General, Bernhard Wise, K.C., who introduced the original New South Wales bill, "just as there must always be quarrels between nations which can only be determined by the sword."[63] The explicit recognition of the continuing right to strike was critical to the Sydney craftsmen. "It did not prevent strikes" said George Jones flatly when the issue was put to him as a mutually exclusive choice while he was building up support for arbitration in the Labour Council in 1901.[64] Publicly the craftsmen repeatedly stated that the adoption of compulsory arbitration did not mean giving up the strike, only relegating it to 'the last resort'. Privately, because the Wise Act did not prohibit direct action until one or other of the parties submitted a dispute to court, they would have been secure in feeling it could still also be used as a first resort. For the strong craft unions compulsory arbitration was thus originally conceived in a way that demanded no or negligible compromises to their autonomy, security and traditional mode of operation. Where it was relevant to them was in relation to labourers.

Compulsory arbitration promised to make small occupationally based labourers' unions viable and it was therefore essential for the success of the craftsmen's organising campaign. While not prepared to go as low as the Sydney Labour Council, the original Wise Act of 1901 allowed for the registration of unions with as few as 50 members, this granting them protection against the criminal charge of conspiracy,

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62. NSW Parliamentary Debates, First Series, Vol.CIV, 2 August 1900, p.1540.
63. ibid., First Series, Vol.CIII, 4 July 1900, p.656.
64. Sydney Labour Council Minutes, 11 April 1894.

the possibility of preference of employment for their members as protection against victimisation and enforceable awards setting minimum wages and conditions.[65] Such provisions would underpin the Organising Committee's work and thereby secure the craftsmen's hold on the Labour Council and their position within the labour movement at large against the interests of the AWU and the more radical unions.

Yet there was more to it than this. It should not be assumed that the internal union struggle was not willing. In April 1901 George Jones organised the Weekly Hands of the Tobacco Trades Union behind the back of Jamie Moroney who, in addition to being a pro-Federation die-hard, was the Secretary of the Amalgamated Tobacco Workers' Union.[66] Eight months later the Council withdrew its support for a strike of tailoresses led by Harry Holland, another prominent socialist who was subsequently expelled from the Council altogether.[67] Nor, however, should we retrospectively assume that it was a simple sectional 'numbers' game, for in organising Sydney's underclass into manifold craft-like unions the artisans were also protecting their own position against the labourers themselves. To understand this, the relationship between craftsmen and labourers needs to be placed in a larger historical frame.

The craftsman's world cannot be measured in pounds, shillings and pence, although the myth of nineteenth century Australia as a 'workers' paradise' had been based on his relatively privileged lot. It is true that the scarcity of men possessing craft knowledge and skills made them an even more privileged strata within nineteenth century colonial society than they were in Britain, and in the 1850s

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65. NSW Parliamentary Debates, First Series, Vol.CIII, 28 June 1900, pp.538-544.
66. Sydney Labour Council Minutes, 11 April 1901.
67. V. Burgmann, op.cit., p.96.

they had led the workers of the world in their earnings and in claiming the eight-hour day.[68] But more than their relative wealth and bargaining power, they were marked out by a distinctive culture, in the full sense of the word. "Although oceans may separate us from each other," stated the preface to the rules of the Colonial Branch of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, "our interests are identical ..."[69] This international consciousness derived from their common experience of a pre-industrial past, many of the residues of which persisted. The 'Chapel' that formed the basic organisational unit of the typographers' union, for example, existed 'by the Custom of Time out of mind'.[70] Stonemasonry, entertained the Webbs, was "the unique instance of an industry which had a period of Trade Unionism in the fifteenth century".[71] Indeed, the very notions of the 'fair price' and the 'just wage' reached back to the 'moral economy' that had existed before the law that everything should be bought in the cheapest market and sold without restriction in the dearest had begun to transform the world. Although his original independence may have been subsumed within the basic framework of capitalist productive relations, over and above his earnings and hours was the fact that, because of the small scale of Australian manufacturing, the 'all round' tradesman persisted longer in Australia than in the major industrialised countries. Working according to arts and mysteries originally laid down by tradition and guild, the all round craftsman owned his own tools and retained almost full control over his work, which was so full of challenges, intricacies, discretion and aesthetics that it acted as a room for life-long human

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68. R.N. Ebbels, op.cit., pp.58-77; E.J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital, 1848-1875, New York, 1979, p.245.
69. R.N. Ebbels, op.cit., p.79.
70. J.S. Hagan (1966), op.cit., p.7.
71. S. & B. Webb, op.cit., pp.9-10.

development and satisfaction. Almost right up until the end of the nineteenth century the master of the workshop could commonly be found working next to his men and, differing only slightly in his manner and education, his position remained one to which they might still aspire to hold themselves one day.[72]

By the early 1900s this craft world was in crisis. Over the 30 years from 1881 to 1911 the number of manufacturing establishments in New South Wales may not have so much as doubled, rising from around 3,000 to 5,000, but the number of manufacturing workers had increased by over three times from 30,000 to 100,000, taking the average number of workers in each establishment from ten to over 20.[73] This was sufficient to take a disturbing enough number of production units across the crucial threshold between workshop and factory, between hand tools and power driven machinery, between the primacy of individual craft labour and capital investment. By the early 1900s the craftsman's knowledge and skills were being widely broken down by new machinery and distributed among labourers, while the individual master, the private company and the partnership were giving way to the more remote public company, mergers and trusts. "Vale! old-fashioned tradesmen and gentleman," wrote Lawson early in the new century, recalling the "out of date" coachmaker he had worked for in the 1880s who had been unable to "get out of the habit of working with his men".[74]

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72. See generally: E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century", Past and Present, No.50, pp.76-136 & The Making of the English Working Class, Harmondsworth, 1981 edn., esp. pp.259-296; S.F. Macintyre, "Labour, Capital and Arbitration, 1890-1920", in B.W. Head (ed.), State and Economy in Australia, Melbourne, 1963, esp. p.109
73. J.B. Trivett (1917), op.cit., p.889.
74. H. Lawson, "A Fragment of Autobiography" (1903-6), op.cit., p.34.

The craftsman's position was also being eroded by social changes from 'below'. No one should form a rosy idea of the conditions under which the common labourer lived and worked during this time. Still, this world was also turning. In the 1850s almost 30 percent of the population - equivalent to about 75 percent of male wage earners - had been so illiterate as to have to sign the marriage register with a mark. By 1900 - 20 years after the introduction of compulsory state education for children - the percentage of the population who were illiterate had been reduced to one-and-a-half.(75) Other less substantial but nevertheless significant levellers included the introduction of the Factories and Shops Act in 1896 and the Truck, Early Closing and Old-Age Pension Acts of 1900.(76) All took edges off the distinction between craftsmen and labourers, even if the differences remained great.

Soon after the turn of the century the craftsman had to come to terms with this changing world, with his changing social and economic relationship with the new owners of the means by which he produced and his increasing number of labourers. As well as defending himself against the exactions of those who stood over him, he had a vested interest in ensuring that the arts and mysteries of his craft remained precisely that in relation to the labourers who worked under him. And insofar as the latter was not possible, he had to organise them to retain his customary control over his work. In these circumstances one should see the Sydney Labour Council's Organising Committee and support for arbitration, not just as ways of extending working class organisation and a means of furthering the craftsman's interests against those of the militant industry unions and the pastoral

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75. T.A. Coghlan (1902), op.cit., p.167.
76. J.B. Trivett (1917), op.cit., pp.827-828.

labourers. They were also important to control and fortify against the labourers themselves.

Arbitration made the small craft-like labourers' unions viable and ensured that the terms under which they operated, not only avoided contradiction with the objectives of the craftsmen, but positively furthered them. Thus the loud appeal for the 'living wage' to be paid to labourers, which could be heard everywhere in Australia between 1890 and 1910, was converted - under the terms of the arbitration system - into a campaign to entrench the principle of the 'minimum wage' for the 'unskilled' and a priori this embodied the assumption that more should be paid to the 'skilled'. Every advance that the great craft associations made on behalf of labourers based on their lack of 'skill' could not but simultaneously fortify their own more elevated position. The idea that the unskilled labourer was deserving was indivisible from the claim that the skilled labourer was owed even more and this proposition was entrenched in the construction of every award made under the arbitration system over these years. In every sense the terms of this relationship worked in the craftsman's favour.

Between 1903 and 1908 the axis between the Sydney craftsmen and their labourers came under attack from three directions. First, the 1901 Industrial Arbitration Act proved inadequate for the labourers. The freedom to pursue direct action retained in the Wise Act also turned out to be a freedom to allow employers to dismiss all their labourers before they could prove to the new court that a dispute existed. The provision to allow the court to apply the new awards commonly to all workers occupied in classifications listed in them throughout the State irrespective of whether the workers were union members, (a provision included by Wise on the personal advice of the

Webbs), was overturned by the Commonwealth High Court on an appeal by employers. Costs and delays made it worse.(77) Although 149 unions had been registered between 1900 and 1906, by 1907 there was only a net increase of 54 unions.(78) Such were the encumbrances that to maintain its numbers the Labour Council removed its requirement that unions had to have a minimum of 25 members before they could affiliate.(79)

Second, in June 1907 radicals regrouped around a new socialist and, above all, militant working class program based on the principles of industrial unionism and syndicalism contained in the manifesto of the American Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). They directly challenged the Sydney Labour Council's strategy, condemning arbitration as having "weakened trade unions in spirit and achievement" and endorsing the famous manifesto committing workers to direct action, declaring craft unionism redundant and proposing the formation of One Big Union (OBU) that would make "an injury to one an injury to all".(80)

Finally, three months after the formation of the IWW the New South Wales Government proposed to rewrite the Arbitration Act so as to abolish strikes completely and bring the trade union movement under direct state control. At the State election in September the Labor Party had received 33 percent of the vote, allowing it to become His Majesty's Opposition for the first time and provoking a fusion of the

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77. See: P.G. Macarthy "Labor and the Living Wage, 1890-1910", Australian Journal of Politics and History, April 1967, p.72; same author, "Wage Determination in New South Wales, 1890-1921", The Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.10, 1968, p.192.
78. Trade Unions, Building Societies and Co-operative Societies, Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies for the Year 1914, Legislative Assembly, New South Wales, 1915, p.7.
79. Rules of the Sydney Labour Council, Revised and Adopted 21 December 1905, Sydney, 1906.
80. V.G. Childe, op.cit., pp.106-107; V. Burgmann, op.cit., p.104; I. Turner, op.cit., p.57.

non-Labor parliamentarians into the one 'Liberal' party under the militant Charles Wade, a Kings and Oxford educated barrister and rugby champion who had fought many briefs against the union movement. With Wise's 1901 Act due to expire in June 1908, Wade proposed a new bill that would allow wages to be fixed independently of unions and contain penalties and prison terms, not only for striking, but also for aiding or instigating them. Under the Wade Act unions were to be recognised only insofar as they could be penalised if their members breached any of its provisions or awards made under them.(81)

The Act galvanised the craftsmen. The independence and the autonomous control over their funds that they had fought to retain against the Australasian Labour Federation in the 1890s were now suddenly threatened by the state. Moreover, the freedom to take direct action under the arbitration provisions that they had negotiated with the liberals was being threatened by conservative hard-liners in an economy now fully recovering its demand for skilled labour. It is "glaringly apparent", concluded the Sydney Labour Council Executive in April 1908, "that the measure has been ingeniously devised in response to the insidious pressure exerted by opponents of trade unionism". The Executive recommended that all of the State's unions ignore the bill "and that the method of the strike be relied upon as the only means of securing fair wages and conditions which Parliament has denied them".(82)

The Council convened a Congress of New South Wales unions to consider action. A Council Executive member from the Typographers moved the motion:

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81. Industrial Disputes Act, 1908, Act No.3, 1908. On Charles Wade see P. Se rle, Dictionary of Australian Biography, Sydney, 1949, p.450.
82. Sydney Labour Council Minutes, 11 April 1908.

> They had an Act which could smite workers hip and thigh ... Let them touch one Union and there would be such a war in this country that they would for all time put an end to divisions between Unionists and the working classes ... Under this Act scabs were just as good as Unionists ... scabs who ought to have their hands cut off and made to crawl about on their bellies for the rest of their lives ... this Act created boards to subjugate Unions and put them under the heel of Capitalism, to have their every nerve crushed and every spark of life reduced to its lowest ebb.

"Let Capitalists, if they dared," threatened the Amalgamated Engineers, "attack a union fund and workers would put up a fight throughout the State and if necessary through the Commonwealth that would leave no doubt as to the strength of Unionism." The craftsmen were supported by the radicals. The Newcastle miners, said their delegate, had already withdrawn "from the yoke of arbitration". "The act," said Harry Holland of the Tailoresses, "bound Unionists hand and foot ..." and he hoped "to see Unionists stick together to down this infamous attempt upon their rights as white men and white working unionists."(83)

The Sydney Council's militant opposition to this full form of compulsory arbitration, which it maintained for another twelve months, failed. At one level this was because of the defeat of three big strikes that followed the introduction of the new Act. Six months after the 1908 State Congress Sydney was paralysed for nine days by a Tramways strike. As a measure of the tension, when Henry Lawson stepped out onto Sydney's deserted streets in the middle of the strike after a period of confinement (where he had heard no news), he immediately imagined himself to be witnessing a prelude to revolution.(84) Three months later a 16-week lockout of Broken Hill

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83. Official Report of the Trade Union Congress Convened by the Sydney Labour Council and Held at Trades' Hall Sydney from 21st to 29th April, 1908, Sydney, 1908.
84. H. Lawson, "From Mudgee Hills to London Town", op.cit., p.946.

miners began when the men refused to accept a twelve-and-a-half percent wage cut and in November 1909 all the State's miners commenced what would turn out to be a three-and-a-half-month general strike, effectively against the Industrial Disputes Act. It was the greatest conflict since the 1890s.

All the strikes were defeated, partly because their ambition was not matched by their co-ordination or their support from the rest of the labour movement, which allowed for the widespread use of strikebreakers and militant counter-attack by the state.(85) Numerous union leaders were arrested, including Peter Bowling, Harry Holland and the visiting socialist and founder of the British Workers' Union, Tom Mann. Bowling and others were given substantial prison sentences in proceedings that denied them a jury and the right of appeal under new amendments to the Act introduced by Wade. Other amendments included an extension of the maximum term of imprisonment for strikers from two to twelve months, a special prohibition on strikes affecting 'essential' services and commodities, the outlawing of meetings between "two or more persons" that may have any connection with strikes, and authority for any policeman to enter buildings "by breaking open doors" and to seize "any documents which he reasonably suspects to relate to any lock-out or strike or intended lock-out or strike".(86) The state was thus licensed to terrorise and punish working class radicals and militants, real or imagined.

At another level, the fact that the strikes were inadequately supported by the rest of the labour movement signalled wider problems in rallying opposition to the Act, as did the defeat of the Sydney

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85. V.G. Childe, op.cit., pp.58, 95, 109; I. Turner, op.cit., pp.40-42; R.A. Gollan (1963), op.cit., p.127.
86. Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Act, 1909, Act No.26, 1909, esp. Section 42A.

Labour Council's motion at the 1908 State Congress proposing direct action over arbitration by three votes. Why the wider apathy? One reason was that once the Sydney craftsmen convened a State-wide meeting they found themselves confronted by a more diverse range of interests than they faced in the metropolitan Labour Council. Their motion toward militancy had been supported by the Amalgamated Engineers - who had hitherto stood aloof from the Council - and the unions from the mining towns where the IWW had taken hold, but the wider conference also admitted the AWU and Labor Party representatives. For the AWU and other unions that had already registered under the new Commonwealth Act, matters pertaining to regional jurisdictions were now less urgent. The Commonwealth Court had become operational in 1906, in July 1907 it had granted the AWU a particularly favourable award and less than six months before the State Congress it had crowned the long campaign for the living wage when Justice Higgins brought down his famous 'Harvester' judgement setting seven shillings a day as the minimum wage for male human beings.(87) For the Labor Party the answer was the ballot box, not just in New South Wales, but also in the Commonwealth Parliament where it had received 37 percent of the vote in December 1906.(88)

What really secured the defeat of the militant craftsmen, however, was all the Council's own new labourers' unions. While Wade retained and then strengthened the penal provisions of his Act, the Labor Party secured amendments that kept trade unions as the effective units of arbitration's operation and its new fully compulsory provisions now offered the labourers the chance of an award without all the costs, delays and insecurities of the Wise Act. Unlike the

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87. See J.A. Merritt (1986), op.cit., pp.354-357.
88. "Official Report ...", op.cit., (for evidence of the attitude of the AWU and Labor Party).

craftsmen, the labourers had no funds to worry about and the bait was made all the more attractive in that Wade offered them monopoly rights to represent the occupations and industries listed in their constitutions, the possibility of preference of employment for their members, common rule for their new awards and registration with a new low of only 20 members.(89) These benefits - which craftsmen did not need - were irresistible to the labourers and, just as the craftsmen had done in the Australasian Labour Federation ten years earlier, the labourers now attacked the Sydney Council from within. The Hairdressers and Wigmakers Employees' Union, for example, had been formed by the Labour Council's Organising Committee in 1902, but had failed to obtain an award under Wise's 1901 Act because employers just dismissed its members every time they started a dispute. It registered under Wade's Act "because there was no possibility of a strike in their trade".(90) The Milk and Ice Carters' Union had been formed by the Committee in 1903 and, "there being no alternative but a strike", it also registered.(91) The United Storemen's Union had been established by the Committee in 1907. When -

> the Wade Industrial Disputes Act became law and the Labour Council, to which body the storemen were affiliated, carried a resolution that all Unions should ignore the Act, the controlling spirits of the Storemen's Union, seeing that by following this advice they could not hope to better their comrades' conditions, proved their mettle by ignoring their rediculous [sic] resolution thus carried, and instructed their Secretary to register.(92)

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89. Industrial Disputes Act, 1908, Act No.3, 1908; H.V. Evatt, William Holman, Australian Labour Leader, Sydney, 1979, pp.163-168.
90. See: Co-operator, 7 October, 1912; Sydney Labour Council Minutes, 10 September 1908.
91. Sydney Labour Council Minutes, 21 May 1908.
92. Co-operator, 7 October 1912.

As with the Storemen, so with the Millers, the Clerks, the Shop Assistants and other new unions.[93] Allen Spence of the Bread Carters was emphatic about the divisions within the movement:

> Regarding the opposition to the Industrial Disputes Act, he would defy anyone to contradict what he said: That there were sections of Unions in Sydney that the great organisations of labour left practically unhelped when they were fighting the cause of Unionism. And among the former were the Bread Carters. They might be sweated in any way, and these Great Associations would never attempt to assist. The Arbitration Act in the first instance and the Industrial Disputes Act in the second, had enabled them to get something like a fair deal - not all they wanted, but something better than they had.[94]

What of the Council's Organising Committee? Where we may have expected the Labour Council's Executive to turn its authority and resources against the labourers - either to push them in its own direction or to shed their weight from around its legs - we must appreciate the role of the IWW. Rhetorically the problems of the craftsmen were answered by the radicals. Where craftsmen felt the exactions of the state, radicals proposed syndicalism; where craftsmen fretted about "the machinery coming in and turning men in their hundreds into the street to starve", radicals replied that "craft unionism, owing to the circumstances of production and exchange, had outlived its usefulness"; and where craftsmen forecast that "the lot of the unskilled today will be the lot of the skilled tomorrow", radicals urged the formation of One Big Union.[95] Between the problems and these solutions, however, fell the traditions and privileges of the artisans and they were no more prepared now to throw their lot in with the labourers than they had been in 1899 or than

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93. "Official Report ...", (1908), op.cit.; Co-operator, 7 October 1912.
94. "Official Report ...", (1909), op.cit.
95. ibid., (1908).

they were to concede it to Charles Wade. This neutralised craft pressure. If they had actively sought to prevent labourers from seeking the advantages of Wade's Act they would only have pushed them towards the IWW.

Thus when the spectre of the OBU was raised at the 1908 Congress every Labour Council Executive member rose to displace it by referring to the need for further organisation. "Given better organisation both industrially and politically, there was nothing to stop the Labor Party from controlling the politics of the States and the Commonwealth" said the same Labour Council Secretary who had voted with the IWW to challenge Wade's Act minutes before. It was "only by organising that they would greatly extend the influence of unions here" said the Furniture Makers. They should affiliate with the Labour Council "if they want some better and stronger means of combating Capitalism" said the Plasterers. "I am a conservative Unionist" declared the Bricklayers' delegate. IWW stood for "Indifferent, Wretched, Wrigglers" laughed the Engineers.(96) Three cheers were raised for the Labor Party and numerous motions were then passed for further organisation. In this way the craftsmen - caught between the devils in Wade and the IWW and the deep blue sea of general labourers - were forced to continue and, in fact, extend their support for their Organising Committee and all the new unions they had created - indeed, to extend it so far as to reach watchmen, caretakers and cleaners.

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96. ibid., (1908).

The New South Wales trade union union movement, it may be concluded, did not simply expand after 1900 as a spontaneous function of a recovering economy and the arbitration laws. It 'did not rise like the sun at an appointed time'. It was present at its own extension and it was the primacy of craft unionism within it which, while it does not account for all the movement, certainly explains the specific way in which the increasing numbers were organised. The emergence of urban labourers as a significant social class and a potential new political force was the result of a long and complex history involving the consequences of the way in which the changing technology of production was diluting craft skills in favour of the 'semi-skilled' as the work process was recreated on a larger scale. It was also a function of their organisation by the state through compulsory education and basic social security. Their increasing social presence in these years was measured in myriad ways. It was measured by Henry Lawson's revolutionary poems, it was apparent when the Sydney Morning Herald introduced a new employment heading - 'Positions Vacant' - between those of 'Tradesmen, Professionals etc.' and 'Servants Wanted', both of which it would eventually replace, and it was reflected less directly in other new working class social organisation, such as in the formation of the professional Rugby League in Sydney in 1907 in opposition to the upper class amateur Rugby Union and the political activity of the Roman Catholic Church, most of whose members in Australia were among the poor.(97) If the general experience of the labourers appears as though it was determined by the changing scale and technical means of production and

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97. The particular issue of the Sydney Morning Herald appears to have been 5 October 1909. On the political activities of the Roman Catholic Church, see: P. O'Farrell, The Australian Catholic Church in Australia: A Short History, 1788-1967, Melbourne, 1968, pp.184-198.

extending state activity, then these specific ideas and institutional forms within which it was expressed do not. In particular, how the changing experience of the underclass was to be organised in relation to their work remained a matter of ambiguity and contest between the prevailing traditions, ideologies and interests in the labour movement, the experience of the labourers themselves and the rest of society.

Certainly it may not be simply supposed that the new organisation was caused by the spontaneous combustion of a tightening labour market. Had not the labour market tightened before in Australia without provoking extensive organisation within this strata of society, and would it not tighten again (for example, in an unprecedented way between 1955 and 1970) without any apparent automatic stimulation of organisational activity within the trade union movement? In any event, far too little is known about the actual supply of and demand for urban labourers at this time to imagine with any confidence that their economic bargaining power could produce anything other than the humiliation, heartbreak and cruel irregularity witnessed and experienced by Henry Lawson.(98) Without doubt this was the experience of working women. Without doubt this was the experience of the categories of labour who were to be represented by the FMWU. For the labouring underclass the very category of 'employment' has to be treated with caution during this time, for the connotations of 'permanency' and 'full-time' that we might attach to it today were not yet regarded as 'normal' for these people and this throws doubt on every contemporary statistical survey conducted under the heading. But even if we put this historian's quibble aside and forget for the moment that the lot of these workers,

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98. H. Lawson, "A Fragment of Autobiography", op. cit., esp. p.33.

by definition, fell outside the range of trade union surveys, it nevertheless remains that even these statistics never dropped below five percent over this period.[99] And the only reliable figures that do exist - those for the elite Amalgamated Engineers, a union whose members remained so strong that they did not affiliate to the Sydney Labour Council until 1909 and are therefore hardly representative - show no more than that the craftsmen pursued compulsory arbitration when work was plentiful between 1900 and 1902, and that they opposed it the next time business peaked between 1908 and 1910.[100] The amenability of employers towards compulsory arbitration on both occasions of increasingly scarce skilled labour is unsurprising, but we can only understand the contrary response of the craftsmen if we grant trade unions recognition in their own right as agencies more or less struggling to determine their destinies within the full circumstances of their contemporary class relations.

Economic recovery did mean that there was a greater social surplus of wealth available for distribution to labourers and, under the shadow of the Great Strikes of 1890-92, the arbitration laws did act to incorporate the trade union movement within the framework of the liberal-democratic state and prepare the path to further industrial growth. But the economy did not just recover, it also developed and changed and neither it nor compulsory arbitration can be considered simply as external factors stimulating or imposing upon a trade union movement whose character can be assumed or thought of as a dead husk. Neither the changes in the scale, means and conditions of production or the state's intervention can be considered separate from

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99. See: Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia (relevant years).
100. N.G. Butlin, "An Index of Engineering Unemployment 1852-1943", Economic Record, Vol.xxii, December 1946, pp.241-60.

or independent of the working class agencies that conditioned both, through which they were partly constituted and for whom they formed fields of struggle.

Craft unionism, or 'craftism' as the radicals referred to it, was the most resilient of the grids through which this history was passed and, in the process, changed. It was the pressure of craft unionism which precipitated the organisation of small, correspondent organisations among Sydney's urban labourers in 1899 and it was the limitations of craft unionism that prevented their transformation into anything else after 1908. It was the craftsmen who promoted the urban labourers in their 'craft-like' unions by co-operating with the state to isolate and defeat the radicals in the Australasian Labour Federation and to protect their interests in the workshop and within the Labor Party. It was the craftsmen who baulked at converting their militancy into radical reorganisation in co-operation with the IWW when they found the state turning against them.

But the craftsmen could not have it both ways. Having got their fingers caught in 1899 they were now sucked into the whole labour-state machine. Just as the militants had found the craftsmen deaf to their calls for direct working class action a decade before, so in 1908 the craftsmen found that the way in which they had formed the labourers' unions ensured that their ears would be similarly blocked. The collapses and compromises with the state in 1899 thus prepared the way for the collapses and compromises of 1908, the sectionalism of one strata gave way to the sectionalism of the other and the plebians thus proved only too true to the model presented to them by the aristocrats. What had been subsidiary to the artisans had become primary for the labourers and the craft unions now surrendered much of the control they had won over the trade union movement in 1899

to the state. It was between these two forces - the distinctive form of craft unionism and the authority of the state - that the union to forerun the establishment of the FMWU was created. It was this conjunction that provided the machinery for the extraordinary combination of watchmen, caretakers and cleaners and their depiction in the romantic guise of craftsmen on the banner that the union was to commission from Edgar Whitbread.

Over the 18 months after the 1908 State-wide Congress virtually all New South Wales unions were drawn like "flies into the spider's web that Mr Wade had set", as the Miners' leader put it.(101) Wade defeated the stubborn militants in the 'field', employers took advantage of the monopoly provisions of his new Act to establish bogus unions in place of those which refused to register (some sitting "in camera"), the chief judge in the new court warned unions they would not be able to sue for any contraventions or membership arrears for the time between the expiration of their awards under the Wise Act and their registration under Wade's and, all the while, the Organising Committee kept building up the number of labourers' unions, shifting the balance of power in the Sydney Labour Council and further undercutting the militants. With the 1910 election and the possibility of a parliamentary solution drawing closer, 40 of the Council's 68 affiliates had registered under the Industrial Disputes Act by April 1909.(102) A month later the Council, which had been flushed out of its Sydney base and reconstituted as the New South

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101. "Official Report ...", (1909), op.cit.
102. Bogus unions, for example, were established to compete with the Sydney Wharf Labourers, the Rock Choppers and Sewer Miners' Union and the Electrical Trades. See: "Official Report ..." (1909), op.cit.; Sydney Morning Herald, 12 June 1908; V.G. Childe, op.cit., pp.85-90. For the Court's warning see Labour Council of New South Wales Minutes, 19 August 1909. For the number of registrations see "Official Report ..." (1909), op.cit.

Wales Labour Council, rescinded its militant 1908 resolution and within another month 75 of its unions had registered.(103)

In April 1910 the Labor Party was elected to government in both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament and in November 1910 it was elected in New South Wales for the first time. The trade union movement and the state seemed completely integrated. Writing in December 1910 the New South Wales Labour Council Secretary, Edward Kavanagh, declared that the time was "now opportune for the organising of every wage-earner in the State either into existing unions or by the formation of new unions, the 'New Unionism' had come to stay".(104) Among the most recent of the new unions to be organised was the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners.

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The conversion of the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners Union into the Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union was due to the gradual corrosion of the craft mould into which the union was originally cast by the real circumstances of its members. The problems were manifest from the outset. Signs that the basic assumption of craft unionism - the exclusive sectional interests of a distinctive 'horizontal' strata of workers - was misplaced appeared immediately in such a rapid turnover of office holders that its survival could not have been confidently anticipated.(105) If the union was to continue, the first

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103. See Sydney Labour Council Minutes, 9 May-5 June, 10 September 1908 & 15 April, 6 May & 24 June 1909.
104. Labour Council of New South Wales, Report and Balance Sheet for Half-Year Ending December 31 1910, Sydney, 1911.
105. Evidence of official turnover can be found in all the early documents of the union's registration where a number of almost completely different executives can be found within the space of the first two months. See FMWU Files, New South Wales Industrial Registry (NSWIR).

requirement was the internalisation of a mechanism to establish unity and stability comparable to that of the craftsmen and the state within its own government. Far from being a sign of decaying solidarity and leadership corruption, the most basic condition of this union's early operation was a government that was the opposite and the answer to the floating, vulnerable circumstances of those whom it would represent. The first important event in the union's history in these circumstances was the election of Joe Coote as its Secretary.

Joe Coote's employment history reflected the rootlessness of the labouring underclass he would come to represent. Not possessing his father's blacksmithing skills, for five years he had worked consecutively as a rockchopper, as a pick and shovel man laying the new gas mains in the city and as a lumper on the waterfront where he faced the indignity of lining up for casual selection each morning. "I would stand around the wharf for a week and get no job" he recalled a few years later.(106) Unable to make a living in the city during the 1890s, he went to the bush where he worked as a farmhand, a sawmill labourer and a tree feller up in Queensland. After three years the chance of higher pay lured him back to Sydney where he got work as a casual lumper taking timber up from the punts and lighters in Darling Harbour to the nearby mills. Now strong enough to be the tenth or twelfth man selected out of the casual pool in the morning,

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106. Biographical details on J. Coote have been culled from the following documents: Death Certificate No. 3989, 22 November 1956; "Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners ...", op.cit., 9 March 1911, pp.26-28; "Municipal Employees ...", op.cit., 17 March 1911, pp.30-33; "Watchmen Caretakers and Cleaners ...", op.cit., 27 March 1911, pp.43-44; "New South Wales Sawmill and Timber Yard Employees' Union versus Kauri Timber Company", Industrial Court of New South Wales, 28 November 1907, pp.134-151 (NSWIR); Co-operator, 7 October 1912; Sun, 23 November 1945; Hotel and Cafe News, August 1945; Miscellaneous Worker, February 1956. Also interviews with: J.J. Dwyer, Pagewood, 21 June 1982; D.C. Howitt Grafton, 25 August 1982; R. Gietzelt, Sydney, 6 September 1982.

he could average around 30 shillings a week. Still, he had to cut timber in Kosciusko during the slackest part of summer and could often find himself having "to go around and get 3d worth of bone to make soup during the week".

Coote became active in the Sawmill and Timber Yard Employees' Union set up by the Labour Council in 1901. He was elected to the union's executive, took his turn as President, became a delegate to the Trades Hall Association and the Labour Council and represented the union at the State-wide Congresses of 1908 and 1909 over the Industrial Disputes Act. The Sawmill and Timber Yard Employees was rent by its attitude to the Wade Act - a reflection of divisions between the 'permanents' and 'casuals' in its ranks. The permanents embodied sufficient skill to feel confident of their bargaining power and carried the union in refusing to register. For the casuals, however, it was Wade or the IWW.

By 1908 Coote was 31 years old, married with children and living in a small workman's cottage with the rest of the lumping community in Glebe. Earning twelve shillings less than the 'Harvester' minimum, he had no security in an occupation where men were lucky to be employable by the time they reached 50. After eight years on the job he had lost two stone and complained of "bad legs" and "elastic ribs". Each evening he had to rub his shoulders with Halsham and Sweet Oil to cure blisters that rose from the combination of the weight, heat and perspiration and he found his eyes regularly going black under the heaviest burdens. He thus had all the reason in the world to be discontented, but spoke up at the State Congress against his union's policy to ignore the Wade Act. In 1909 he seconded the motion to rescind the Labour Council's militant opposition to the law because, he told the delegates, he had:

> consideration for the small unions ... under the Act only 20 persons could apply for a board and get an award ... the boss could go ahead and get twenty scabs to apply for a board, and could arrange with them the wages and conditions they should frame ... It was necessary for them to have some tribunal to regulate and settle disputes ... strikes should be the last resort.(107)

When once asked why he had continued to work in the timber industry while outlining his conditions in evidence for the Sawmill and Timber Yard Employees', Coote replied that it "was better to have that than a big aching void in the middle of your belly". However, he added, he was always looking to see "if I could get something better". His break came two months after the 1909 Congress when he successfully contested an election for a position of Assistant Caretaker in the Sydney Trades Hall.(108) With secure, full-time employment and the 'Harvester' minimum of 42 shillings a week, it would be difficult to imagine a better or more sympathetic position from which to become active in the government of the fledgling Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Union. He joined the new organisation a month after it had been established and was elected Secretary at its first Half-Yearly Meeting on 19 October 1910.

Coote thus provided the union with its necessary stability and he moved quickly to consolidate it as a going concern. The Organising Committee had secured the union's registration under the Trade Union Act on 16 June, a week later the Industrial Registrar had given his approval to its rules, resolutions had been passed in both Houses of Parliament to have watchmen, caretakers and cleaners registered as 'industries' in the schedule to the Industrial Disputes Act, the

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107. "Official Congress Report ..." (1909), op.cit. Also see the article on the Timber Workers' history in the Co-operator, 7 October 1912.
108. Executive and General Minutes, Trades and Industrial Hall and Literary Institute Association Ltd., Sydney Trades Hall, 23 June 1908, 8, 13, May & 24 June 1909.

Governor had given the Royal Assent and on 31 August an application for the constitution of a Wages Board was made to the Industrial Court as a preliminary step to obtaining an award. While the union's licence was being processed by all this state machinery, Coote had instances of victimisation by employers and obstruction by industry unions raised in the Labour Council - which also assisted in organising - and set about dividing off the class of independent block watchmen and Master Caretakers, who had infiltrated the union to prevent a Wages Board from being established. "Needless to say," Coote wrote after the independents had tendered their resignations once it was clear that the Wages Board application would go forward, "the Union gladly accepted."(109) To assist with the application he obtained the help of James Stuart-Robertson, the Labor Member for Camperdown and a regular advocate for the Shop Assistants.

A more important initiative was to take in women members. In all the debates over the direction of the trade union movement during this period women had been excluded. They existed in a sphere beyond: in the family with children where they had only to be protected. "It was wrong for an employer to impose a hardship upon his employees," said one delegate in the debates over the Industrial Disputes Act, "it was a much greater wrong to involve women and children in the sufferings of a strike".(110) This presumption belonged to the traditional

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109. Co-operator, 7 October 1912. The union applied for Labour Council affiliation on 26 July 1910 and was admitted on 4 August 1910. For the Council's Organising assistance see: Labour Council Minutes, 15 September 1910; Statement of Receipts and Expenditure Half-Year Ending 31 October 1910, FMWU Papers. For an example of the Council's role regarding victimisation by employers see Labour Council Minutes, 5 May 1910. For the opposition of industry-based unions, see the example of the United Labourers, who covered the Sydney Trades Hall Caretakers, in Labour Council Minutes, 27 October, 3 November 1910. On J. Stuart-Robertson see P. Loveday, op.cit., pp.82-83, 88, 114.
110. "Official Congress Report ..." (1909) op.cit.

community, it belonged to craft unionism and, in turn, it was built into the arbitration system where working women - if recognised at all - were consigned to the lowest rank. Between tradition and the difficulties Coote faced in establishing his union, however, fell the reality that women not only comprised the bulk of people paid to clean, their confined social circumstances also meant they were more stable. Further, whether it was out of Wade's liberalism or his general intent to dilute the militancy of the trade union movement, the Industrial Disputes Act contained special, simpler provisions for establishing Wages Boards where the "industry or group of industries consist largely of females".(111) Unsurprisingly, women took "a very important part in the union, school cleaners in particular," Coote wrote later.(112) Edgar Whitbread was to commemorate this event by the unique depiction of distinctively male and female hands clasped in the traditional unity handshake on the front of the union's banner.(113) Slowly the craft form was being subverted, if from within.

The union's craft pretensions faced another test when the hearing of its application for a Wages Board came before Justice Charles Heydon in March 1911. The case ran for three months and turned around three questions. Did the union represent an industry? What defined the occupations of watchman, caretaker and cleaner? And if the industry and the occupations were deemed to exist, was this the union to which the workers could most "conveniently belong"? Lined up against Coote and Stuart-Robertson were 15 employer associations, five

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111. Industrial Disputes Act, 1908, Act No.3, 1908, Part II, Sec.16.
112. Co-operator, 7 October 1912.
113. See A. Stephen & A. Reeves, op.cit., p.43.

industry unions and the newly formed Block Watchmen's Union and Master Caretakers' Association.(114)

In the hearing Coote appealed to the logic of craft unionism, arguing that this was the most convenient form of organisation for the court: "if all watchmen, caretakers and cleaners were under one award, all carpenters another, all boilermakers under another, there would be no possibility of boards overlapping".(115) He also pressed the circumstances of women in deference to the special provisions in the Act. "I am sorry to say that most contractors employ a woman and give her 2/6 or 3/- to get the place ready," said Coote, "I am not objecting to their being employed: we have as many women as men in our Union. I say that you should give them a good wage." He dismissed the independent contractors "getting a high wage" and claimed that the industry unions had no real interest in his members, citing his own experience with the Sawmill and Timber Employees (who had "never made an effort to control their branch of the industry and have no intention of doing so"). He also stressed special provisions included within the structure of the union's government to make it convenient for these workers to belong; viz it met twice a fortnight in the afternoons and evenings to allow "men who worked at night to attend ... in fact some of the meetings were held at my home on Sunday morning". As they were "not a very large body of workers", added Stuart-Robertson, they would have "a better opportunity of placing their case ... [if] ... the whole of these people were included in one

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114. Co-operator, 7 October 1912.
115. All evidence of this hearing has been taken from transcript: "Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Association Application for Board in the Industrial Court of NSW", 9, 27, 28 March, 17 19 & 22 May 1911, NSWSA. Also see the transcript for the Municipal Employees Union which overlapped with this case: "Municipal Employees' Union of NSW Application for Board in the Industrial Court of NSW", 17 March 1911, NSWSA.

Board". Stuart-Robertson also drew the most general distinction marking them off as a coherent group; that is, they were "people whose hours [were] entirely separate from those of other employees".

In reply the employers flatly denied the activities were industries, denied they were occupations and complained that, if the application was successful, it would only inconvenience everybody by needlessly multiplying the number of Wages Boards. A watchman, they said - appealing to the generalised social position of labourers - might be a "maintenance man, a garbage man and a kerber and gutterer ... a sort of handyman capable of carrying out two or three occupations, with regard to ... caretakers and cleaners, the same applies". In fact, these people were not so much employed as they were hired as an act of charity: they were "disabled", "Incapacitated labourers", "old carpenters and old painters" - "you give one shilling a week, not because you want them, you really do not want the night watchman; you prefer to do without them". The industry and house unions also appealed to the undifferentiated character of the occupations, arguing that the workers would more conveniently belong to them because this would continue to facilitate their interchange with other occupations "instead of being cast adrift".

Heydon resolved the contest by a process of elimination. At the outset he settled the question of 'industry' by reference to the anterior power of parliament ("This is an industry because 'industry' means something in the schedule"). He then rejected Coote's appeal to craft unionism:

> I think there is a difference between the Caretakers and Watchmen's Union and the old established Unions like the Carpenters and the Engineers and other old trade unions which have been in existence for generations. This Union is, it seems to me, the fruit of the Act; they have come together in order to

> get advantage of the Act ... the old established Unions had their separate sets of conditions which employers recognised and complied with long before we had any Act at all ... But this is not the case with this Union ... and looking at the matter from that point of view, I think I ought to consider the employers ...

On this basis he excluded all already represented by registered unions and those where industrial or house unions had been formed. He excluded Master Caretakers and the Block Watchmen ("Trades ... are one thing, but a purely scattered and individual thing like this ...") and invoked Stuart-Robertston's distinction to draw the line between cleaners and other labourers - cleaners being those who worked outside shop assistants' hours. He also confined the union to the local County of Cumberland. Joe Coote was left with the residue, most of whom were women. Unwanted by the industry unions, they attracted the paternalism of Heydon. "It would be a hard job to get a builders' labourer to do that" said the Builders' Labourers when it was suggested it could represent cleaners of newly constructed buildings. And the Timber Workers, while keen to cover outside watchmen, was "quite prepared to abandon ... women cleaners who came in and cleaned offices". Heydon saw women as an "important body" and agreed this was the union to which they could most "conveniently belong". "They are more likely, I think, to be able to have their interests looked after in the way they want them looked after ... Besides," he added, "the very fact that they are in that union ... seems to show that the union represents [them] more fully".

Given this closely - and socially rather than economically - defined licence, the next step was an award. The hearing came on in October before barrister Herbert Curlewis. Coote represented the union on the Wages Board, Stuart-Robertson did the advocacy, a great

number of witnesses were called and the case ran for four months. How were the minimum standards of the factory, shop or site to be applied to this work which existed outside all other conventions? Again, the real circumstances of the members had to be measured. The result was a document constructed by the nominal application of general standards amended by six pages divided into 16 sections and 65 paragraphs - some of which had up to twelve clauses - providing for a mass of exemptions, qualifications and special provisions that effectively reflected the transition the occupations were undergoing from the personal, task-oriented status hierarchies of domestic service to the time routines of outside wage labour.(116) The minimum wage for caretakers was set at the 'Harvester' minimum of 42 shillings, but overtime rates were only fixed for after midnight and Sundays and additional amounts were specified if there were no quarters, firing, lighting, water, a lift or 25 holidays a year. Separate rates were not only fixed for male and female cleaners but also for buildings of different status and the hours of women contained latitudes of between three and six hours without pay differentiation. Rates were also included for women who took towels home for washing and there were allowances for supervising "forewomen". Watchmen had the most clear cut provisions. The sunset to sunrise measure that had existed since antiquity was converted to clock time: twelve shifts of twelve hours to be worked over a fortnight, although provision was also made here for a host of contingencies.

The mass of qualifying regulations make comparisons within the award and between it and other awards difficult. A caretaker without the benefit of decent lodgings could earn up to 70 shillings a week,

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116. The award was handed down in two parts, see: New South Wales Government Gazette, No.156, 1911, pp.5925-6; New South Wales Industrial Gazette, Vol.2, 1912, pp.920-5.

but he was virtually permanently on call. A watchman received only 30 shillings for a 72-hour week. A woman who cleaned a shop for between 24 and 30 hours a week was paid 20 shillings. Who was better off? Certainly on any hourly calculation it was an uncommonly good award for women, but was this just a way of restricting or 'protecting' the extent to which they could work?

The great number of provisions was also good for the union, allowing a great range of points of authority upon which it could intervene wherever its members - or, more importantly, potential members - worked. As well as the numerous computations for time and money, it contained valuable general conditions. Employers would now have to provide all cleaning materials; working hours would have to be legibly displayed in an accessible place and any alterations were subject to a week's notice; provision had to be made for night cleaners to eat their meals in shelter from the weather; only casuals would be able to be dismissed without a week's notice or the equivalent in wages; employers would have to provide statements showing the period they worked; and, all other things being equal, the union's members had "to be employed in preference to other persons". A Wages Board Chairman explained the impact of such awards:

> ... I think there are few people who realise now what tremendous changes in the industrial structure of society are capable of being achieved, and in part are now going on under this [i.e. Wade's] Act and similar Acts ... Nothing in recent times has aided the increase of Unionism and the spreading of its principles so rapidly as the Wade Act ... Under the first ... Arbitration Act, it was the strong Unions, already existing, with well-filled member rolls that made their appearance as claimants before the Court; when that Act was replaced by the Wade Act ... smaller and less well-organised Unions obtained Boards for their industry upon application (some sprang into existence for that purpose) ... that is to say, a Union at first had to be strong to get an award; but later, awards were obtainable by weak Unions as well as strong ones; and a Union having got an award became able by its organiser to go round to employees in the industry

> concerned and say: 'Look here! See what we have obtained for you; here are hours beyond which you cannot be worked without receiving overtime pay, here are wages below which your employers can never depress you', and so on - pointing out to those they canvass that it would be selfish and mean to remain outside the Union or abstain from contributing to the funds of the Union which has obtained their benefits for them.(117)

When the case had opened in October the union had around 280 members on its books. By the end of 1911 this had doubled to 558. In April 1912 - a month after the award had been granted - there were sufficient members to open up a permanent office in the Trades Hall and for Coote to take his position on a full-time basis. By the end of 1912 the union had a full-time clerk, a duplicator, a typewriter, an annual income of more than £40, assets valued at over £600 and 1,133 members.(118)

Yet tension remained. The union's balance sheets reveal that underneath the craft and liberal-state cultures within which the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Union was methodically establishing itself the floating less differentiated reality of its constituency endured. In the 32 months up to December 1912 the union had grown from 27 to 1,133 members, but the net increase for 1913 was only 47 and the entrance, contribution and arrears figures in its balance sheets reveal that the equivalent of its entire membership was turning over in the course of each year.(119) The FMWU was, to use Robert

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117. F.A.A. Russell, "Industrial Arbitration in New South Wales", The Economic Journal, September 1915, pp.330-332.
118. Executive Minutes of the Trades and Industrial Hall and Literary Institute Association Ltd., 11-13 April 1913; Balance Sheets of the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Union for the periods 1 May-31 December 1913 and 1 January-31 December 1913, FMWU Papers;
119. ibid., Reports of the Registrar of Friendly Societies for 1912 and 1913 (op.cit.)

Michels' phrase, "like a pigeon-house where pigeons enter and leave at their caprice".(120)

How many members in these circumstances could have a lasting consciousness of what had been achieved? If the union was based on exchanging its award conditions for subscriptions, would not that exchange only have currency for as long as that particular worker stayed on the job? After the union recruited with the benefits of its award, and the incumbent beneficiary had departed, was it not available for the new worker, not having experienced the prior conditions, to take the new ones as given - indeed, as given by the state or even the employer? For the next worker, would not the transaction have to be concluded afresh under circumstances in which, if all the award conditions had been introduced, there would be little else to sell? If the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Union lived by its first award, would not it soon die from the lack of another one? In short, the union's members not only had no authority in their own right, they had no memory.

The problem was all the more acute for having brought conditions largely up to the barrier lodged between skilled and unskilled work. In 1913 an extra shilling a week was won for male cleaners by breaking down the differentials based on the status of buildings, another penny an hour was won for casuals, another halfpenny an hour for male cleaners working for contractors and huts were won for watchmen at construction sites.(121) But these improvements were only marginal compared to the initial gains. Hostile and dishonest employers also kept the union busy policing the award and Coote was able to claim over £10,000 (!) won in backpay through the courts in the first two

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120. R.W. Michels, op.cit., p.79.
121. New South Wales Industrial Gazette, Vol.4, 1913, pp.1022-29.

years.[122] But would not these victories largely disappear with the members for whom they were gained and, in any case, would not their scattered, isolated character mean that any gain made (at cost) in one place would often only be an individual gain and have little impact on the other members? Was not the union subject to an inherent law of diminishing and fragmenting return and, hence, diminishing and fragmenting membership?

Beyond this there was a wider challenge. After beginning by releasing the trade union leaders whom Wade had imprisoned, the Labor government elected in New South Wales in 1910 progressively disappointed the labour movement. At the first Annual Conference of the Party in government in January 1911 the Labour Council's separate representation was abolished and thereafter virtually the entire Labor program was sold out by degrees.[123] In the meantime the IWW benefited. Having gone through a series of splits and leadership challenges between 1907 and 1910 it now arose as the most revolutionary working class organisation ever seen in Australia on a large scale. Like the Chicago 'Wobblies', it eschewed everything but the most direct prosecution of class warfare, ranging from industrial unionism (the OBU) through to industrial sabotage. Estimates of its membership vary between a couple of thousand and 50,000, but there is little doubt about the far reaching nature of its ideas. "Nobody", V.G. Childe would write in 1922, "has exercised a more profound influence on the outlook of labour in Australia ... the new doctrines spread like wildfire."[124] How much had to be gained by the new

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122. According to Labor Daily, 19 August 1933.
123. See V.G. Childe, op.cit., passim, for example.
124. See V.G. Childe, op.cit., pp.131,135; V. Burgmann, "The Iron Heel: The Suppression of the IWW During World War I" in Sydney Labour History Group, What Rough Beast? The State and Social Order in Australian History, Sydney, 1982, p.187.

unions such as the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners before the IWW's growing appeal to Henry Lawson's faces in the street was disarmed?

In a reversal of the conventional pattern of trade union development, the government of the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners now turned to the traditional unifying practices and expressions of craft unionism to link up its members. On the strength of the 1912 award a union badge was introduced and Edgar Whitbread was commissioned to execute his remarkable banner. "WATCHFULNESS & CLEANLINESS" Whitbread emblazoned on the sides of a crest placed between the four cameos of work on the banner's rearside. The crest featured a watchman's or caretaker's key hanging between the cleaner's crossed broom and mop over a bucket flanked by a dustpan and scrubbing brush in comic-pathetic imitation of the craftsman's traditional identification with his tools. In 1913 an annual picnic was inaugurated and a Sick and Needy Fund commenced.(125) In 1914 a Watchmen and Cleaners' Social Club began meeting in the Trades Hall on Friday evenings for dancing and refreshments.(126) This was not habits of association leading to unionism, but unionism leading to habits of association: a reversal of the Australian myth about unionism emerging from the discussion of workers in the pub. Success was short-lived. The benefit fund and the social club both had brief histories. Craft unionism was a vanishing mirage. These developments did not mark its approach, but its apogee. The turnover of members remained largely undiminished. It was time for the craft vision to be surrendered altogether.

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125. Balance Sheet of the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Union of NSW for the Period 1 May-31 December 1912; Balance Sheet of the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Union of NSW for the year Ending 31st December 1913, FMWU Papers.
126. Trades and Industrial Hall and Literary Association Minutes, Sydney Trades Hall, 28 August 1914.

To understand the formal conversion of the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners into a general union it is necessary to recognise that the illusive assumption of sectionalism cut two ways. Just as sectionalism appeared artificial at the membership level, so its fiction was reflected in the leadership of this and many of the other craft-like unions established at this time. These leaders emerged, not as a group of individuals representing particular workers, but as a class of professional intermediaries between labourers and the machinery of the law. They were the embodiment of the relationship that had been established between the craftsmen and the state, although they did not necessarily carry with them any special loyalty to craftism once the state began to override. They were not, as the Webbs put it, distinguished by their "intimate acquaintance with their members' daily lives", their mastery over "elaborate piecework rates" and "long official training", which were characteristics of the craft official.(127) Rather, they were guardians of the complexities of court etiquette, rules of evidence and the principles, rights, regulations and precedents that determined the limits and possibilities of those trade unions which were, as Justice Heydon had called the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Union, 'the fruit of the Act'. They were, perhaps most accurately, professional arbitration bureaucrats.

Joe Coote joined this class, although he was by no means the most outstanding example. Harold Mercer, the Secretary of the Organising Committee that had instigated the formation of the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Union and who had the unlikely working class background of being a former chess champion and actor educated in England, France and India, made his living writing poetry and fiction

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127. S. & B. Webb, op.cit., p.461.

while managing five of the other unions he had started from his Pitt Street Chambers.[128] Alfred Carter had been elected to the Organising Committee from the Seamen's Union in 1906 and made his living managing three of the new unions.[129] Another 'professional' managed five unions and there were a number who managed two.[130] Indeed, the Labour Council itself set up an Industrial Arbitration Department which thrived on undercutting lawyers' fees until the man in charge left to set up business on his own account and took most of the clients with him.[131]

As well as being the Secretary and only full-time official of the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Union - a position that had taken him from being a cleaner to a client in the Sydney Trades Hall - Coote became the President and only male member of the Caterers' Waitresses' Union and generally acted as a freelance industrial advocate.[132] Thus unfettered by any sectionalism from 'below' or 'above' and confronted by an actuarially debilitating turnover of members, diminishing opportunities for additional benefits from the state and the threat of the IWW, he sought to increase the number of his clients. In December 1912 he established a Sub-Branch in Newcastle and in 1913 he won a State-wide application for the union's

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128. On H. Mercer see: Co-operator, 7 October 1912; The Clerk, 1909-1910; Minutes of the Sydney/NSW Labour Council on the following dates: 25 February 1908, 11 October, 23 June, 30 June 1909, 1 September 1910, 12 January and 2 February 1911. Also see Mercer's papers in the Mitchell Library, Sydney (ML).
129. The general union was the Factory Employees, see: Sydney Labour Council Minutes, 5 July 1906, 10 January 1907; Co-operator, 7 October 1912.
130. See: "List of Industrial Unions of Employees Registered under the Industrial Arbitration Act, 1912", New South Wales Industrial Gazette, February 1913, pp.1161-77; generally on this point, see V.G. Childe, op.cit., pp.128-129, 136.
131. V.G. Childe, op.cit., p.96.
132. On the Caterers' Waitresses' Union see: Reports of the Registrar of Friendly Societies for 1911, 1912 and 1913 (op.cit.); Sun, 23 November 1945.

award.[133] Gradually the borders of the state, rather than craft or local demarcations, were becoming the union's own. The next step was to abandon the sectional restrictions on the union's constitution and in this Coote was assisted by developments within the wider movement where the disillusionment with the Labor Party and the activity of the IWW were provoking renewed organisational initiative.

The implications of a defecting Labor government in the face of an increasing surge of interest in the IWW were not lost on the craftsmen and the leaders of the new labourers' unions in the New South Wales Labour Council. By June 1911 the IWW could count 22 of the 99 votes in the Council and for the first time the activities of the Organising Committee - which was multiplying the number of small unions in direct contradiction to the idea of the OBU - came under challenge. In turn, plans to form a Labour Federation were revived, the AWU joined the Council for the first time and there were proposals to establish a fresh political party.[134]

The answer forged under this pressure was to remove the task of organising labourers from the Labour Council and put it directly under the control of the individual unions: a 'closer organisation' policy. In his December 1911 report Council Secretary Kavanagh urged the craftsmen to gather in their labourers:

> A few years ago the trades were more distinct. The line of demarcation was broad and plain; now it is narrow and in many instances you need a powerful microscope to discern the dividing

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133. New South Wales Industrial Gazette, Vol.4, 1913, pp.1022, 1828-29. The first Newcastle members were enrolled on 4 December 1912, FMWU File, CIR.
134. NSW Labour Council Minutes, 4 May-1 June 1911. For the fresh party proposal see Labour Council of New South Wales, Report and Balance Sheet for Half-Year Ending 31 December, 1911, Sydney, 1912. For the Labour Federation see the Council's June 1912 Report. For the AWU affiliation see Labour Council Minutes, 14 September 1911.

line ... In one or two instances it [i.e. the Organising Committee] went on with its work, formed the Union and then discovered that the members of the new union were eligible to join some existing union or unions ... The fact is they are the victims of the 'specialising process' and they do not know it ... it must be admitted that their ignorance is due to a very large extent to the conservative attitude adopted by many of the older Unionists who ... ignore the specialist and only consider what they are pleased to term the 'tradesmen'. The specialising process is here, it has come to stay; it is to be found in every trade and occupation from the highest profession to the lowest trade or calling. What was a trade a few years ago is not a trade today. It is probably half-a-dozen trades and unless we want to see half-a-dozen little unions instead of one big, powerful union [i.e. in each industry, not the OBU] we must put aside the idea that the 'all round' tradesman is superior to the specialist.(135)

The instrument of this new policy was the Industrial Arbitration Act introduced in place of Wade's Act in 1912 by the former Boilermakers' Secretary, Premier McGowen. The new measure installed "the principle of craft unionism" as "the assumption of the Act", but simultaneously gathered the 213 Wages Boards that had been created under the Industrial Disputes Act into 28 industry groups, each with a single chairman.(136) It was industrial unionism, but strictly within the terms of craft demarcations. Concurrently the Organising Committee was wound up. "It served a useful purpose in the past" Kavanagh wrote in June 1914, announcing its end, "... But the day of the new union has passed".(137)

What were the implications of a legal framework designed to accommodate crafts to industries for a union that in reality represented neither? In December 1912 the Governor gave the Royal

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135. Labour Council of New South Wales, Report and Balance Sheet for Half-Year Ending 31 December, 1911, Sydney, 1912.
136. New South Wales Industrial Gazette, Vol.2, pp.1051-2. Also see J.B. Trivett, "Industrial Legislation in New South Wales", Handbook for New South Wales, British Association for Advancement of Science, Sydney, 1914, p.118.
137. Labour Council of New South Wales, Report and Balance Sheet for Half-Year Ending 30th June, 1914, Sydney, 1914. Also see reports for 1913.

Assent to resolutions passed in both Houses of Parliament to place watchmen, caretakers and cleaners under a board in the 'Miscellaneous Group of Industries'.(138) The paint of Whitbread's banner may have been barely dry, but the craft mould was now formally broken. Within twelve months Coote had recruited motor-car washers, gatekeepers and labourers in motor garages, and had amalgamated with the Passenger and Goods Lift Attendants - a union established by the Organising Committee in 1909 which had gone bankrupt after exhausting its award.(139) In December 1914 he officially adopted the non-descript title of his industry group. Simultaneously he fine-tuned the union's administrative machinery, changing the rules to make himself immune from election and sensitising the collection system to the problems of membership turnover.(140) All fees were raised by 50 percent except in that the entrance fee for men - who had the highest turnover - was increased by 150 percent and progressive discounts were introduced for quarterly, half-yearly and annual subscriptions.(141) A new kind of union - a general union - was taking shape. Five months later - in May 1915 - he wrote as the Secretary of the Miscellaneous Workers' Union of New South Wales to the Secretary of the Victorian cleaning and security union, among - it appears - many others, as part of a wider plan:

> This Union has now instructed me to write to Secretaries of those small Unions that are not able to do much for themselves with the object of having a Conference to see what could be done in the

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138. New South Wales Industrial Gazette, Vol.3, 1913, p.760.
139. Labour Council Minutes, 9 July 1908, 7 October 1909. Also see J. Coote to G.H. Wallin, 6 May 1915, FMWU File, CIR
140. Rules of the Miscellaneous Workers' Union of NSW, Sydney, 1916 (Registered by J.B. Trivett, 8 December 1914), FMWU Papers.
141. ibid.

> way of giving mutual assistance.... Personally I should like to see a Federation of the whole of the States that is as far as these industries are concerned.[142]

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Joe Coote's letter was not welcomed in Victoria where the hegemony of craft unionism had gone comparatively unchallenged. "Victoria's entire workforce can be seen as an aristocracy of labour, within which the Melbourne [Trades Hall Council] operated as a House of Lords" one critic has written of the period between 1890 and 1920 without too much exaggeration insofar as the mentality was concerned.[143] The Council had been scarcely involved in the Great Strikes of the 1890s, no Labor Party was formed in Victoria until 1902 and the region took no part in the Australasian Labour Federation. Not too much should be made of the differences. The relationship between the Victorian factory owner, the craftsman and his labourers was changing, an Organising Committee had been established by the Hall in 1900 and the Victorian Government had reacted militantly to a big railway strike in 1903. Moreover, Thomas Mann culminated six years of organising in the region by establishing the Victorian Socialist Party in 1906, the AWU assumed organising responsibility for the Labor Party in the local countryside in 1907 and by 1908 the Hall was displacing challenges from the IWW with resolutions to "consolidate the industrial movement ..."[144] It was not that the experiences, interests and ideologies were any different in themselves in Victoria, but that they carried different weights with the result that the dynamics that we have followed closely in New South Wales were played out at a slower pace, on a smaller scale and with different emphasis.

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142. J. Coote to G.H. Wallin, 6 May 1915, FMWU File, CIR.
143. H. McQueen, "Victoria", in D.J. Murphy (ed.), op.cit., p.295.
144. I. Turner, op.cit., p.60.

The most significant difference was that, without such a strong challenge from labourers - pastoral, industrial or general urban - there was less appeal to or intervention by the state and therefore no alternative to craft unionism available for unstrategically placed urban labourers. It was symptomatic of craft hegemony over the meaning of trade unionism that no general unions were established by or resulted from the organisation campaign conducted among labourers in Victoria which, from a smaller base, only amounted to the establishment of around 50 unions between 1907 and 1913 (compared with New South Wales' 168).(145) The Wages Boards constituted by the Factory Acts did not provide the same level of protection or the consequent convergence of legal interest that the compulsory arbitration acts of New South Wales had done. The Victorian craftsmen had pursued compulsory arbitration while the economic crisis of the 1890s was at its worst, but were happy to settle on the more classically liberal Wages Board system in 1896.(146) Technically the Wages Boards ignored the existence of unions and this suited the great craft associations as it allowed them to retain their full autonomy and integrity while at the same time it put a floor under their margins. The Boards did not protect the claims of one union over another for the right to represent different sections of labour, they did not permit unions to directly apply for or become party to awards - which were called 'determinations' - and nor, therefore, could

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145. P.G. Macarthy, "Victorian Trade Union Statistics, 1889-1914", Labour History, Vol.18, May 1970, p.71.
146. On Victoria's wages Boards see: T.A. Coghlan, Labour and Industry in Australia, 1788-1901, Melbourne, 1969 edn., Vol.4, pp.2112-3; P.G. Macarthy, "Victorian Wages Boards: Their Origin and the Doctrine of the Living Wage", Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.10, 1968; K. Chan, "The Origins of Compulsion in Australia: The Case of Victoria, 1888-1894", Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.13, 1971; J.H. Portus, The Development of Australian Trade Union Law, Melbourne, 1958, pp.108-110.

unions directly police them; there were no provisions for allowing unions to sue their members for fees or levies owed; and nor was there anything to prevent employers discriminating against unionists. Indeed, as the Wages Boards had to be comprised of workers and employers directly elected from their industry, full-time trade union officials were effectively excluded from participating in the system at its most important level. In short, Joe Coote's trajectory from casual timber lumper to full-time union official and freelance industrial advocate simply could not have occurred in Victoria.

The immediate pre-condition for Victoria to organise cleaning and security workers was nevertheless the widening provisions of the State's Factory Act, which evolved in competition with the Commonwealth legislation. In 1910 the provisions relating to the establishment of Wages Boards were extended to "any occupation" and the union was formed in 1913, most likely following the New South Wales example.(147) Beyond this similarity, however, the Victorian union bore nothing but the imprint of craft unionism. It was, for example, much more prominent and persistent in its exclusion of women, originally calling itself the Watchmen, Caretakers and Male Office Cleaners' Union, and its rules contained a host of provisions echoing the craftsman's claim to be part of the 'better sort of working folk' which had no parallel in the New South Wales union. Workers would only be admitted to the union "providing they were of good repute", members could be fined for striking or "offering to strike another in the meeting or using obscene language or bringing intoxicating liquor into the meeting" and all members were required to attend Special Meetings where a roll would be called on pain of a fine or written

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147. On the increasing jurisdiction of Wages Board see P.G. Macarthy (1968), op.cit., pp.122-123.

apology. There were also provisions for "members leaving the trade" and clearance card provisions for applicants from "kindred unions", both within and "outside Australia". More, the union sought to buttress the price of its members' labour by adopting the traditional exclusivist practices of the artisans. Instead of a host of conditions conceding to the domestic origins of the occupations as in New South Wales, the first Wages Board Determination was restricted to nightwatchmen and office cleaners and the wage rates were constructed according to a three-year apprenticeship system.(148)

The idea of an aristocracy of watchmen, caretakers and cleaners was absurd, of course, and the union found it virtually impossible to recruit and retain members and was compelled to seek registration under the Commonwealth Act, which offered protection comparable to that prevailing in New South Wales. Commonwealth access, however, was restrained by the condition that a union had to have at least 100 members. Under pressure to survive, the union dropped the exclusive 'Male' from its title in 1914 and by the time Coote - who had over 1,500 members - wrote in May 1915, he wrote to a leadership that had just succeeded after "struggling for two years to get the required number to admit of registeration [sic]".(149) As jealous of its autonomy as any craft union, Coote's letter was ignored and the Victorians made an application for registration under the Commonwealth Act in their own right. Coote objected and lodged his own application, to which the Victorians objected in turn. Angry correspondence was followed by a conference convened by the Registrar

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148. "Rules of the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Union of Victoria", FMWU File, CIR.
149. G.H. Wallin to Industrial Registrar, 5 July 1915, FMWU File, CIR.

in Melbourne in October 1915 where the rivals agreed to join their applications.(150)

The craft-like determination of the Victorian union to retain its full independence ensured that the Federal union would be nothing but a legal-administrative device. The first Federal Council of the FMWU, which was convened in suite 49 on the second floor of the Sydney Trades Hall on Wednesday 15 December 1915 beginning at 10 a.m., was almost entirely spent on machinery matters. The six Councillors - three from each State - initially dealt with the Federation's rules. The rules contained no preamble of any sort and, although they did list four "OBJECTS", these were no more than matters of form, referring to the right of the union to represent its members, to gain fair wages and conditions and its aim to promote industrial peace. They could hardly have been more indistinct. Indeed, the exact words of the "OBJECTS" can be found in any number of other trade union rules around this time, although few unions confined themselves just to these words.(151)

The rules themselves did nothing so much as ensure that the Federation would not disturb the operation of its constituent State based unions. There were no new policies, there was no transfer of power and nor was there any significant alteration to the formal structures of government and administration within the constituent unions. In every respect each Branch retained absolute veto power

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150. Age, 27 October 1915.
151. Federal Council Minutes (FCM) 15 December 1915, FMWU Papers. For objects with the same words see for example: Rules, Federated Ironworkers' Association, Sydney, 1911; Rules, Federated Clothing Trades of the Commonwealth of Australia, Sydney 1907-10. In contrast, see the objectives and rules of plumbers, miners, shearers, bootmakers, carpenters and joiners in R.N. Ebbels, op.cit., pp.73-82, 105-117 and the Constitution and General Rules, Australian Workers' Union, 1910-11, Sydney, 1910.

over the other and, with an agreement to provide ten percent of contributions to fund Federal matters, there was only a slight displacement of resources. The FMWU was a union only by dint of the minimum legal requirements.

By shortly after lunch the rules had been dealt with and carried and the principal business of the afternoon was the election of the inaugural office holders. Joe Coote was elected General Secretary, underlining the practical reality that the New South Wales Branch had more than 15 times the number of Victorian members (and would therefore be providing 15 times the funds). That a woman - Mrs Joan Anderson from the Newcastle Sub-Branch - was elected as the first Federal Vice-President and that the elections were followed by talk of an amalgamation with the Federated Lift Attendants' Union of Victoria tended to betray the particularly undiscriminating character of the union's membership, but such novelties had nothing specific to do with the formation of the Federation. The meeting adjourned at 9.00 p.m. and the only hint of auspiciousness associated with the occasion waited until the next morning when the Councillors briefly reconvened to adopt a design for a Federal badge and have a commemorative photograph taken. Symbolically, the badge was never made and the photograph was lost. The FMWU was no more than an administrative annex to two undisturbed State trade unions. It was, as such unions were known at this time, a 'law-made union'.(152)

Yet as we have seen, the FMWU was also much more than this, not in its own autonomous right, but as a part of the general social movement that had more than doubled the size of the country's trade

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152. J.T. Sutcliffe, op.cit., p.135. For an analysis along these lines by another contemporary, also see M.M. Blackburn, "Trade Unionism - Its Operation under Australian Law", Business Lectures for Businessmen, Sydney, 1940.

union movement since 1907. The immediate fact about this movement may have been the embrace of labour by the state through the institutions of arbitration, but was this not only a manifestation of the more complex changes occurring in social relations? "To seek a protector, or to find satisfaction in being one - these things are common to all ages," as the great French social historian, Marc Bloch, once wrote, "But we seldom find them giving rise to new legal institutions save in civilisations where the rest of the social framework is giving way".(153) Was this not the case in early twentieth century Australia?

The movement out of which the FMWU had been created may have been impossible without the widescale introduction of arbitration, but were not these laws only an extension of the incorporation of labourers within the expanding scale and changing technical means of production and the concomitant increase in the range and diversity of the state's activities to facilitate this process? Can we, for example, separate out the discipline and reasoning inculcated among labourers by the spreading system of state education from those entailed in the arbitration system, both of which prepared the practical and ideological way for the semi-skilled worker? Similarly, was not the spreading system of social security needed for the practical and ideological protection of all this investment? And, in turn, were not these developments both a cause and a consequence of the ebbing hegemony of the craft world and the declining hold of other local, regional and traditional social relations, identities and institutions: including those of the ancient watchmen and the domestic servant. The existence of the FMWU may have presupposed the arbitration laws, but these laws in turn presupposed the whole complex

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153. M. Bloch, Feudal Society, London, 1962, Vol.1, pp.147-148.

of changing social relations and the historical development of neither can be disclosed in isolation from this general context.

The question which burned was: now that the state had embraced labour on such a large scale would it be able to hold it within the old terms of liberal, constitutional democracy? Does not the lion tamer always run the risk of being devoured? As the FMWU's first Federal Council was being convened events were already underway that would put this question to the test. The union, as we shall see, would be among those parts of the world re-shaped in the conflict.

III

WARRING CAMPS

THE IMPACT OF POST-WAR RADICALISM: 1915-1927

The red flag suddenly flashing like blood, and bellowing rage at the sight of it. A Union Jack torn to fragments, stamped upon. A mob with many different centres, some fighting frenziedly round a red flag, some clutching fragments of the Union Jack, as if it were God incarnate. But the central heap a mass struggling with the Diggers, in real blood-murder passion, a tense mass with long, naked faces gashed with blood, and hair all wild, and eyes demented, and collars burst, and arms frantically waving over the dense bunch of horrific life, hands in the air with weapons, hands clawing to drag them down, wrists bleeding, arms with sleeves ripped back, white naked arms with brownish hands and thud! as the white flesh was struck by a chair leg.

D.H. Lawrence, Kangaroo, 1922

There is no doubt about the FMWU's involvement in the working class radicalism of Australia's later war and post-war years. Active members and officials of its New South Wales Branch joined in the anti-war movement as it gathered momentum, they became part of the Trades Hall Reds who swept the craftsmen from the Labour Council in the wake of the 1917 General Strike, they lent their weight in support of the IWW Twelve, in 1919 they took the Branch out of the Labor Party to which it had only recently affiliated, and in 1920 they were instrumental in the foundation of the country's Communist Party, two of the union's officials being members of the Party's initial Central Committee. In 1924 the re-alignment that had occurred since the union's establishment was dramatically evident when Joe Coote lost a contest for the Branch's leadership to an opposition headed by Communist Party members, Christopher Hook, Robert Webster and Lance Sharkey.

The radical movement was, of course, defeated in the FMWU and Australia generally - and, indeed, internationally, for these years of insurgency were felt throughout the capitalist world. When the guns of the Great War had gone quiet and the trail of radical smoke they left had cleared, all the major capitalist powers remained intact and the sole communist state standing was the geographically and demographically vast but economically backward territory now known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Australia remained one of the world's most stable - if less significant - capitalist countries. It also remained one of the few nations that still had functioning parliamentary democracies, despite a noticeable loss of faith in the system, and its trade union movement - the FMWU included - remained generally committed (or locked in) to pursuing its ends within the constitutional framework of the state.

The failed course and objectives of the radicals is not, however, what makes these years of potential world revolution important for this study. For the history of the FMWU, the period is significant for two reasons. First, the light of these radical years further illuminates fundamental aspects of the union's character and the causes of its changing character. Second, the defeat - or containment - of the revolutionaries had important ramifications within both the union and the wider society which continued to endure. The principal aim of this chapter, then, is not to recount the events of these years and re-argue or re-evaluate the causes of the protagonists, but to isolate and assess the impact of the contest itself, both insofar as it provided more evidence to which the central questions of the thesis may be taken and insofar as it created new conditions under which the FMWU's subsequent history had to be made.

The first section of the chapter deals with the period in a general way up until the adoption of the socialist objective by the All-Australian Trade Union Congress in 1921, and with the specific way in which it impacted on the FMWU up until the government of the New South Wales Branch fell to the communist-led opposition in mid-1924. The FMWU, it is argued, was particularly vulnerable to being taken over by revolutionaries, especially to a well-organised 'vanguard' willing - as Lenin instructed - to make any sacrifice to "get into the trade unions, remain in them and carry out communist work within them at all costs".[1] This was not just because of the obvious appeal the promise of a new proletarian social order might be expected to have for the FMWU's members, who remained among the most scandalously exploited in the country. It was also because of the particular history of the FMWU. Being, as we have seen, the product of one general social movement, it was highly susceptible to being swept up by another.

The second section examines the response of the rest of the FMWU - which now included a third Branch in Queensland - to the red advance in New South Wales and follows the course of what would turn out to be the only communist-led government to head one of the union's major Branches during the period of this study. As might have been anticipated from the examination of the FMWU's origins, social revolution and the FMWU proved to be uncomfortable bedfellows. The arbitration laws that had provided the authority for the union to exist and upon which it continued to depend had originally been conceived by their liberal promoters as a way to turn the trade union movement from "mere machinery of menace ... to an instrument of

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1. V.I. Lenin, "'Left-Wing' Communism - An Infantile Disorder" (1920), in Selected Works, Moscow, 1979, Vol.3, pp.291-370.

industrial peace".[2] How, then, could the 'fruit of the Act' now be turned back to menace the garden out of which it had grown? The limitations of these arbitration-unions as revolutionary instruments was perhaps nowhere more starkly obvious than in the FMWU where the Red New South Wales government only lasted 18 months because, it is argued, of a failure or unwillingness to come to terms with the organisation's relationship with the state.

The reasons for the defeat of the Communist Party in the FMWU, it is further suggested, had parallels in the defeat of the radical movement at large where the most effective weapon of conservative defence also proved to be the state, especially as it became harnessed to a new heightened and aggressive sense of Australian nationalism. At one level this was manifest in the many physical brawls between trade unionists and returned soldiers that began to break out during the war and continued on into the early 1920s where they eventually found their way into the fiction which D.H. Lawrence wrote during the Australian portion of his personal exile in 1922.[3] At another level it was personified in Prime Minister Hughes, a British immigrant and former leader of the Waterside Workers' Union who deserted the Labor Party, created the Nationalist Party, took to personally carrying a revolver around with him, adopted the title of 'Little Digger' and brought all the force of the civil state to bear on the radical threat.

Yet nothing is won without cost, not even social stability. The final section of the chapter draws out the themes of the first two and attempts to assess this important and exciting period. Within the

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2. NSW Parliamentary Debates, First Series, Vol.CIV, 2 August 1900, p.644.
3. D.H. Lawrence, Kangaroo, Harmondsworth, 1986 (1st Pub. 1923), p.346. Also see R. Williams, Culture and Society 1980-1950, Harmondsworth, 1979, pp.199-213.

FMWU the most obvious changes wrought by the conflict were its explicit politicisation and the restructuring of its federal government. Instead of power in the Federation being confined within its Branch boundaries, as it had been when the union was formed, it was rearranged along political lines to ensure the neutralisation of the still ideologically suspect New South Wales Branch. The integrity of the union's internal democracy was lost in this new order. Again, it is relevant to observe that this had parallels in the wider world where the overthrow, distortion or limitation of democracies was a price more or less paid everywhere to effect the containment. It was a price that brought the fascist era of history nearer. At the same time there was an extent to which the radicalism of these years was domesticated and internalised, both within the FMWU and the national working class culture. A degree of accommodation was the other price paid for stability, at least in Australia. The resolution of the conflict of this period, it is therefore concluded, was no resolution at all in any final, profound or transcending sense. Rather, it was a combination of oppression and concessions that left the basic causes of the conflict intact, if - for now at least - disabled.

1.

The war exacerbated the disappointment within the trade union movement over the performance of the Labor Party in government. At one level it exposed its unreliability on economic policy. The litmus test was taken to be the proposal which arose out of the economic disruption of the war to hold a referendum to give the Commonwealth Labor government constitutional power to control prices and rents. Being an economy dependent upon exporting primary products to pay for manufactured and

capital goods, and loans to fund public works, when the war interrupted international trade and finance, business activity and government programs were arrested, stock exchanges closed, labour shedding commenced, the government acquiesced to demands from employers to freeze wages and within twelve months trade union returns were showing an increase in unemployment from slightly over five percent to around ten. At the same time the shortage of imports was compounded by drought, thus fueling inflation and adding to increasingly widespread distress that deepened and hardened as it became clear that the war would not be over in the hurry that all had originally anticipated.

In these circumstances the labour movement reasoned that, if wages were to be frozen and 'equality of sacrifice' was to have any meaning, prices and rents would also have to be controlled. In May 1915 the Inter-State Labor Conference duly proposed that a national referendum be held to give the Commonwealth the necessary powers. The Conference formed a Federal Executive charged with ensuring the decision was carried out, the necessary bills were passed through both Houses of Parliament by the Labor majorities and the date for the vote was set as 11 December. In the meantime, however, Prime Minister Andrew Fisher resigned to become the Australian High Commissioner in London and was succeeded by Billy Hughes, an erstwhile advocate of the referendum who now convened a meeting of the State Premiers and dropped the idea. No measure had been more widely supported within the labour movement and Hughes had dropped it without any reference to the Party's new Federal Executive, which moved to censure him. Hughes overturned the censure motion with a threat to resign, the arbitration courts had been re-opened and he later took action to control prices. But the damage was done. The number of working days lost in strikes

tripled from 580,000 in 1915 to 1,678,000 in 1916. Among the more notable victories the Waterside Workers won price control over bread, miners won the 44-hour week and even shearers defied AWU officialdom to successfully strike for higher rates.(4)

At another level the Labor government was undermined by opposition to the war itself. The IWW had immediately declared itself against the war ("WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE! DON'T BECOME HIRED MURDERERS!") as had other socialist parties, but their voices were initially drowned by overwhelming popular support for the hostilities.(5) Organised opposition proceeded nonetheless and when Hughes, as Attorney-General, introduced a war census bill providing for men to be centrally registered in July 1915, anti-war activists began to focus on opposition to any proposal to introduce conscription. Anti-Militarist and Anti-Conscription Leagues and No-Conscription Fellowships were formed and anti-conscription motions began to be passed by individual unions and the trades and labour councils, where they were often linked with the promised referendum on prices and rents.

When Hughes betrayed the movement's trust on the referendum the campaign escalated to the extent that, upon his return to Australia after six months in Britain in July 1916, the Prime Minister confronted almost universal opposition to conscription within the labour movement. "Welcome home to the cause of Anti-conscription" wrote Henry Boote, the editor of the AWU's Worker.(6)

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4. See I. Turner, op.cit., pp.76-93; S.F. Macintyre (1986), op.cit., pp.163-164.
5. V. Burgmann, "The iron heel: The suppression of the IWW during World War I", in Sydney Labour History Group, What Rough Beast? The State and Social Order in Australian History, Sydney, 1982, p.174; G. Souter, Lion and Kangaroo: Australia 1901-1919, The Rise of a Nation, Sydney, 1976, pp.211-215.
6. Cited in H.V. Evatt, op.cit., p.301.

Anti-conscription resolutions were passed by Labor Party Conferences in four of the six States, by the annual convention of the AWU, by the trades and labour councils in every State and by a Special All-Australian Conference of representatives from every Council and the 79 largest and most powerful unions in the country. In contrast to his attitude toward prices and rent control, on this issue Hughes was determined to proceed, appealing over the head of the labour movement by calling a national referendum in October 1916. When the citizenry voted no to the proposal, Hughes and other Labor pro-conscriptionists defected or were expelled from the Party and all of a sudden anti-war activists, "who twelve months previously had been howled down and pelted with stones, were speaking to large, orderly and enthusiastic audiences".(7)

The discontent peaked in 1917 and it peaked highest in New South Wales where disappointment with the State Labor government had been mounting since it was first elected in 1910. In a remarkable victory it had been returned in 1913 under the leadership of William Holman, although its total vote dropped from 48.9 to 46.6 percent - a drop that disguised the extent of the anger in the trade union movement over the failure or inability of the government to introduce legislation for the 44-hour week, fair rents, accommodation for shearers, workers' compensation, the abolition of the undemocratic upper house and other measures. The discontent led to the formation of an Industrial Section within the Party under the motto "You can't trust the politicians" which briefly deposed Holman at the 1916 Annual Conference and then expelled him completely when he supported Hughes

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7. I. Turner, op.cit., p.171.

on conscription.[8] Holman formed a government with the earlier bete noir of the New South Wales trade union movement, Charles Wade.

In May 1917 the defection of Premier Holman, Prime Minister Hughes and other former Labor politicians to the ranks of the conservatives where they headed newly-formed Nationalist Parties saw Labor defeated in both the State and Commonwealth elections. The split, however, was almost completely confined to the politicians. The Labor vote remained at around 42-44 percent and the Party was now more united in dissatisfaction. How explosive class relations were became apparent three months after the elections when the Holman government chose to attack financial losses in the State Railways and Tramways with new management techniques. As well as the discontent of the moment, the rail and tramway workers had sectional grievances over wages, retrenchments and schedules and they petitioned the government to have the issue investigated by an independent tribunal. When this was refused, beginning at the Rail and Tramways' Randwick Workshop, the men started to down tools to commence what rapidly escalated into a general strike that extended over 82 days, involved 100,000 workers at its peak and cost four million days in lost production and $2.5 million in lost wages. "I never hoped to live to see the workers so united," wrote Henry Boote, "... They needed no prompting. They did not wait to be appealed to. With a passion for class loyalty as grand as unparalleled they took the field and swept to battle ..."[9] The strike was defeated by the combined weight of the Hughes and Holman governments at a cost of $100,000, the arrest of the union leaders, large-scale use of strikebreakers brought in from the country, the de-registration of the 27 strongest unions and the registration of

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8. Molesworth Papers, ML. Also see V.G. Childe, op.cit., pp.61f.
9. Cited in I. Turner, op.cit., p.33.

bogus unions in their place. It eclipsed every conflict since the Great Strikes and the disorder was quickly reinforced by another failed attempt by Hughes to win a referendum on conscription and by the inspiring news of the Russian Revolution.(10)

In the New South Wales trade union movement the defeat of the General Strike made it impossible to avoid the conclusion that the Labor Party, arbitration and the great further and closer organisation campaigns had been inadequate. In January 1918 the craftsmen who had controlled the Labour Council since the destruction of the Australasian Labour Federation were defeated by a radical leadership headed by Jock Garden and the central body declared itself for the OBU, refused to take part in the official soldier recruitment campaign and called for all "the workers of this and all other belligerent countries to urge their respective Governments to immediately secure an armistice on all fronts, and initiate negotiations for Peace".(11) Militancy and anti-war, syndicalist and international socialist aspirations now began to seize the working class in other States. At its Federal Conference in June 1918 the Labor Party welcomed the Russian Revolution, called for an international peace conference and decided on a ballot of Party members to decide on its further participation in soldier recruitment. In August 1918 the OBU was endorsed by a Congress of about 150 New South Wales unions and a month later a version of the concept more amenable to craftsmen was endorsed by the Melbourne Trades Hall Council. Campaigns for the right to fly the red flag broke out around the country, motions from all parts of the movement began to come forth in sympathy with the revolutionary

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10. ibid., Chs.6-8.
11. Cited in ibid., pp.175-176.

Russian leaders and OBU endorsements followed in Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania.[12]

When the war ended in November 1918 the social unrest combined with a renewed demand for labour and therefore improved conditions for direct action. In January 1919 the OBU was endorsed by an All-Australian Trade Union Congress, in the following twelve months a greater number of working days were lost in strikes than in 1917 and in 1920 and 1921 new records were set in the annual number of industrial disputes.[13] In the meantime, labour's political parties grappled with this movement. At the New South Wales Labor Party Conference in 1919 a motion to replace the "collective ownership of monopolies" objective with one to establish a "State of social democracy in which the means of production shall be owned and controlled by the community of workers industrially organised" was narrowly defeated by 13 votes and led to a Conference walk-out by militants, some of whom went on to form Australia's first Communist Party in 1920.[14] The Victorian Labor Party had already called for "the peaceful overthrow of the capitalist system" and the "democratic control of industry" and in July 1920 the Melbourne Trades Hall Council resolved in favour of "an immediate demand for the control of socially-owned industry by boards representative of the government, the community and the workers directly involved".[15] The socialist thrust culminated at the All-Australian Trade Union Congress convened by the Labor Party's Federal Executive in Melbourne in June 1921 where, amid tributes to Marx, the new objective of the Party was set as the "socialisation of industry, production, distribution and

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12. ibid., pp.182-186; V.G. Childe, op.cit., pp.165-167.
13. I Turner, op.cit., pp.194-202, 254.
14. V.G. Childe, op.cit., pp.179-180.
15. I Turner, op.cit., pp.217-218.

exchange".[16] The OBU was endorsed by the Congress, plans were formulated to introduce a Supreme Economic Council along Soviet lines to manage production once it was socialised and an on-going Council of Action was elected to implement the decisions.

This was the high point in the development of a formal socialist program within the major institutions of the Australian labour movement. How near did labour come to an uprising during these years? Certainly there were many "acts of vengeance against the dominant consciousness of the day", as D.H. Lawrence characterised the substance of all great mass uprisings. From time to time, Lawrence wrote of the working class while in New South Wales the year following Labor's adoption of the socialist objective:

> some great life-idea cools down and sets upon them like a cold crust of lava ..., and then, like whales which suddenly charge upon the ship that tortures them, so they burst upon the vessel of civilization. Or like whales that burst up through the ice that suffocates them, so they will burst through the fixed consciousness, the congealed idea which they can now only blindly react against. At the right moment, a certain cry, like a war-cry, a catchword, suddenly sounds and the movement begins.[17]

Historians have agreed that such an occasion did not realistically exist in Australia - or in many areas of the world - at this time. Henry Lawson, an admirer of "Boote's vigour and one-eyed vision", regarded "syndicalism as possible only in a highly-educated community and remained "an individualist in favour of socialism - or, rather, extension of State functions". He nevertheless felt the contemporary sense of panic, claiming that if Boote had his way "he'd pull out the

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16. ibid., pp.223-224.
17. D.H. Lawrence, op.cit., pp.331-332.

keystone and let the whole social fabric go wallop".[18] We can only note that the argument has thus far depended more on flat assertion than a careful consideration of the evidence and turn to examine the impact of the developments on the FMWU.

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One person who physically bridged the pre-war and early post-war years and a number of the issues at play in this period both in the FMWU and the world at large was the union's first full-time organiser, James Vance Marshall. Marshall was born in 1887, grew up in the comfortable northern Sydney rural suburb of Pymble, attended the elite Fort Street High School and gained his initial employment as a bank clerk. After "two dull years" at the bank he commenced the more remarkable part of his life when he joined a freighter bound for Vladivostok to begin seven years' travelling the pre-war world. His travels took him to most of the fault lines of the globe's forthcoming social earthquakes. He arrived in Vladivostok - the most south-eastern port of the doomed Russian Empire - soon after its war with Japan and insurrection of 1905, later recalling "army deserters and suspected revolutionaries being either strung up on gallows or shot in batches publicly every day".[19] After Russia he travelled into the Chinese Empire, which was also about to finally fade away, and then onto Europe, which was soon to become a human killing field of unprecedented dimensions. Finally he went to the United States from whence he turned south and entered Central and the most northern parts of South America. Here in

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18. H. Lawson, "Letter to the 'Bulletin' re Political Views" (1918), in L. Cronin (ed.), A Fantasy of Man: Henry Lawson, Complete Works, 1901-1922, Sydney, 1984, p.728.
19. J.V. Marshall, "The Way the Wind Blew", unfinished autobiography, passim., Howitt Papers.

this zone of massive economic inequalities and therefore almost permanent social upheaval he had first-hand experience of the great Mexican Revolution.

Marshall supported himself on his journey by drawing on his well-tutored upbringing to obtain clerical jobs and develop his ability as a writer, which brought him work as a reporter and allowed him to make money selling articles and short stories about his adventures. When these attributes failed, he turned his hands to manual labour, taking all manner of jobs ranging from being a linesman in Columbia to a farmhand in Britain. Out of this combination of practical and political experience he developed into a socialist. Upon returning to Australia on the eve of the war he joined the Darlinghurst Branch of the Labor Party. Before long he was sharing public anti-war platforms with the rest of Sydney's socialist movement and was later remembered to have been "a fiery and emotional speaker".[20] On 24 February 1917 Joe Coote selected him from 79 applicants to be a full-time organiser for the FMWU's New South Wales Branch.[21] His appointment can be taken to measure three features of the union at the time.

First, it was a measure of the union's continuing geographical, compositional and overall membership growth. Almost immediately after the first Federal Council Joe Coote had gone to Brisbane to organise a Queensland Branch and the new body was admitted to the Federation at its third Federal Council in November 1916, where plans had been made to move into Tasmania and South Australia.[22] Shortly after this Council - on 16 November 1916 - the union's registration had been

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20. N. Jeffrey, "Some Notes on James Vance Marshall, 1887-1964", 1964, FMWU Papers.
21. J. Coote to J.V. Marshall, 24 February 1917, FMWU Papers.
22. FCM, 8 May, 5 November 1916, FMWU Papers.

granted in the Commonwealth Court and meanwhile it had continued to diversify. In Queensland the membership comprised liftmen and gatekeepers - as well as watchmen, caretakers and cleaners - from the outset and in 1917 laundry and ferry workers were recruited. In Victoria the first breakthrough had been made into manufacturing industry with the recruitment of ice-cream makers and negotiations were continuing with the Federated Lift Attendants over the prospect of amalgamation. In total, by 1917 the Federation comprised around 3,000 members - almost 50 percent larger than it had been when it was formed and a respectable number in a movement where the average union size was less than 1,500. The New South Wales Branch remained far and away the largest with a membership in excess of 2,000: sufficient to warrant and to be able to afford the appointment of Marshall.[23]

Second, it was a measure of the distinctive needs of a union like the FMWU. Could there be any greater contrast than that which existed between Vance Marshall's exotic background and the limited locus of life that economic circumstances dictated to be the lot of the vast majority of FMWU members? His background and the fact that he was appointed and not elected reflected the union's need for general organising ability rather than the specific knowledge and experience engendered by the work of its members. The need to open its management to outside experience was formally recognised in the New South Wales Branch rules, which declared the union to consist, not only of persons employed within the callings listed in its constitution, but also those "who have been approved by the Board of Management or general meeting".[24] A similar provision was included (after some debate) in the Federal rules.[25]

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23. See appendices for Federal constitutional variations and membership growth.
24. Rules of the Miscellaneous Workers' Union of NSW, Sydney, 1916.
25. FCM, 15 December, 1915, 8 May 1916, FMWU Papers.

We must press this point. No doubt Marshall's superior education and wide experience assisted in distinguishing him from the 78 other applicants for his job in the union, but more than this he was outstanding by virtue of his passionate commitment to the working class - a fact that further underlines the unstable character of the FMWU's membership. Why? Because the union was not based on a naturally occurring subaltern association of workers - or a concentration of people in one place by large-scale industry as Marx suggested - maintaining and increasing its membership demanded constantly advocating the case for unionism among its current and potential members. "In contrast with the practice of the old established societies," as the Webbs wrote in discussing the administration of labourers' unions as they occurred in Britain, "[their] officers are not always selected from the ranks of the unions whose affairs they administer."(26) This was because these unions were "for one reason or another, always crumbling away; and the total membership is only maintained by perpetually breaking fresh ground".(27) This meant that:

> ... the greater part of the organisers' time is taken up in maintaining the enthusiasm of his members, and in sweeping in new converts. This involves constant travelling, and the whirl of excitement implied in an everlasting round of missions in non-Union districts. The typical organiser [of these unions] approximates, therefore, more closely than any other figure in the Trade Union world to the middle-class conception of a Trade Union official. He is, in fact, a professional agitator. He may be a saint or he may be an adventurer; but he is seldom a man of affairs.(28)

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26. S & B Webb, op.cit., p.461.
27. ibid., p.461.
28. ibid., p.461.

Marshall's credentials as an agitator were substantial. He had been imprisoned twice during his travels - once when he was found carrying a revolver in Russia and a second time when he got too near one of Pancho Villa's uprisings in Mexico - and he had already spent a further four months in prison in Australia after declaring during an anti-war demonstration that "as far as the working class is concerned, the colour of the flag matters not so long as that class gets a share of the good things of life".(29) In addition, he had been instrumental in establishing the Social Democratic League which operated as a socialist ginger group in the Labor Party in Sydney. Marshall wrote the League's original manifesto, using the literary talent that he turned to greater effect after his experience on the inside of the New South Wales penal system to write a short book exposing its brutality. The book, Jail from Within, reputedly sold 48,000 copies and provoked the police to raid the League's office to seize the printing plates.(30)

Described by the Socialist in 1919 as "the irrepressible leader of the Social Democrats in Sydney", Marshall also worked with Henry Boote in the campaign to free the IWW Twelve who had been imprisoned after a show trial in 1916, and before the end of 1917 would himself be imprisoned again, this time for declaring that "soldiers in war are the blind tools of the capitalist class".(31) After this second internment he produced another book denouncing the penal system, The World of the Living Dead. Despite the fact that Henry Lawson supported the war, he agreed to write the book's preface. "I read his

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29. D.C. Howitt, "Foreword to Memorial Edition", in J.V. Marshall, The World of the Living Dead and Jail from Within, Sydney, 1969, p.iii; J.V. Marshall "The Way the Wind Blew", unfinished biography, Howitt Papers.
30. J.V. Marshall to D. Howitt, 10 January 1956, Howitt Papers; I. Turner, Sydney's Burning, 1967, pp.221-222.
31. Socialist, 28 November 1919; D.C. Howitt, op.cit., p.iv.

Jail from Within from cover to cover in one reading to-day for the first time," wrote Lawson, "and I wish I had read it before. Perhaps I did not do so because of some inexplicable latter-day prejudice or bitterness I may have developed against this young man and his class", he wrote self-consciously, "the very army I marched with when I was even younger than he is now." Lawson became a regular visitor to the FMWU's Sydney office.(32)

Finally, Marshall's appointment indexes the radical temper of 1917. The FMWU had been created from the relationship forged between craftsmen and the state, partly in opposition to radical trade union leaders who used language like Marshall's to denounce capitalism and support the IWW. His appointment signals the weakening of these original divisions and the re-definition of trade unionism to take into account radical working class conceptions of the world. Certainly Marshall saw no distinction between his work in the FMWU and as a political agitator. He later remembered:

> ... being thrown out of every big firm in Sydney proper ... the employers used every device to prevent Union organisation expanding, including physically ejecting me ... Police were often called to assist in throwing out Union Officials from City Buildings, which they did so with great pleasure.(33)

Marshall believed he had been arrested "by the war-mad authorities and the Employers' Federation, both as a political rebel and a bitterly determined Trade Union Organiser".(34)

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32. J.V. Marshall, The World of the Living Dead and Jail from Within, Sydney, 1969. On Lawson and Marshall, see J.V. Marshall, "Re Lawson and Myself", Howitt Papers.
33. J.V. Marshall to D.C. Howitt, 4 April 1961, Howitt Papers, Miscellaneous Worker, May 1961.
34. J.V. Marshall to D.C. Howitt, 2 July 1962, Howitt Papers.

Yet, while Marshall holds some special interest because of his engagement by the FMWU, his significance ultimately derives from his position as part of a wider movement. In his identification with the working class, his dedication to anti-war and trade union activity and, above all, in his profoundly international socialism, Marshall represented a position that was more prominently held by his friend Henry Boote. Boote's stature as the most widely respected voice of the war and immediate post-war radicalism stemmed from the fact that he was at once the editor of the AWU's newspaper, the foremost publicist of the anti-conscription cause, a leading supporter of the OBU and the decisive force in the movement which freed the IWW Twelve. He thus successfully straddled the diversity of working class outlooks ranging from that embodied by the giant pastoral union, which the IWW regularly pilloried as being led by corrupt time-servers, through to the dreaded Wobblies themselves. The common ground upon which he stood, he explained, was the "desire to serve and save the exploited millions".(35) In August 1920 he expressed the universal character of this period of radical optimism:

> The war with Germany has brought into existence a new Power, greater than all the Great Powers put together - the Organised Working Class, thinking internationally. And at any moment, under the impact of some precipitant event, that international thought may be fused into international action. The political rulers of Europe and America probably recognise this, and may, therefore, be expected to behave with the caution of capitalist representatives who know that a single false step will spell disorder for the whole capitalist system.(36)

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35. I. Turner (1979), op.cit., p.132-133. Also on Boote, see the consensus on his role in the movement among historians as diverse as: H.V. Evatt, op.cit., p.313; B. Nairn, The 'Big Fella': Jack Lang and the Australian Labor Party 1891-1949, Melbourne, 1986, p.130; F. Farrell, International Socialism and Australia: The Left in Australia, 1919-1939, Sydney, 1981, p.138.
36. Cited in F. Farrell, op.cit., p.106.

Boote's relationship with the FMWU extended beyond his paper and his comradeship with Vance Marshall, for he also appears to have been directly connected with two other prominent radicals, Robert Webster and George Jago, who were listed in the union's membership register as the caretaker and cleaner, respectively, in the office of the Worker.(37) Webster had been a member of the IWW, by 1917 he had become the union's most regular delegate to the Labour Council and in 1920 he became a founding member of the Communist Party. He joined Jock Garden as a member of the Trades Hall Reds who formed the Labour Council Executive from 1918, he was elected to the Executive of the Trades Hall Association and he carried the red flag on the lorry at the front of what The Communist claimed to be Sydney's first May Day march in 1921 (being bashed by returned soldiers for his trouble).(38) If he was not a member of the IWW, George Jago was sympathetic and testified for them in their trial in 1916.(39) Other activists are also in the evidence of the FMWU's activities at this time. In 1917 it provided the credentials for Ernest Judd - who was second only to Boote in his prosecution of the campaign to release the IWW Twelve - to attend the Labour Council and from 1919 it sent Christopher Hook to the Council where he joined Webster as an executive member and then as a founding member of the Communist Party's Central Committee.(40)

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37. NSW Branch Membership Registries, FMWU Papers.
38. On R. Webster, see the reports of the Secretary of the Labour Council of New South Wales, 1917-25. Also see: Minutes of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), 30 October-22 December 1920, ML; The Communist, 6 May 1921; R. Gietzelt to J.V. Marshall, 6 November 1959, FMWU Papers.
39. I. Turner (1967), op.cit., pp.52, 189.
40. On C. Hook, see the reports of the Secretary of the Labour Council of New South Wales, 1919-1925, and the Minutes of the CPA, 30 October-22 December 1920, ML. E.E. Judd belonged to the Socialist Labor Party, the descendent of the original Australian Socialist

(Cont. over)

That a cadre of officials and activists within the FMWU were deeply involved in the radical movement is, then, not in doubt. But why the FMWU? The explanation cannot be found in reasons peculiar to the particular workers who comprised its membership. Certainly its members were among those who derived the least from the prevailing social order and therefore stood among those with the most to gain from any radical change, but this was because of general circumstances common to numerous other categories of urban labourers, not to particular conditions they endured as watchmen, caretakers, cleaners, lift-attendants, gatekeepers and motor garage workers. What was there that was specific to these workers that did not apply with at least equal force to shop assistants, storemen, restaurant and hotel workers, casual factory hands and many other labourers? There was no specific set of circumstances common within any one or combination of these categories that can provide an explanation for the radical presence in the union; no circumstances, that is, that did not apply to numerous other workers and insofar as the answer lies within their general experience as a part of the most impoverished, unknown and oppressed strata of Australian society, we have traced the causes of discontent at this time.

Indeed, it was precisely the extent to which the FMWU lacked any naturally defining subaltern sectional base that was its most distinguishing feature, as our study of the union's origins showed and the appointment of Vance Marshall may be taken to illustrate. The union did not exist as an expression of the particular needs and

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40. (Cont.)
League via the 'milder' Detroit stream of the IWW. For Judd's relationship to the FMWU see Labour Council of New South Wales, Secretary's Report, 31 December 1917, Sydney, 1918. On E.E. Judd generally, see: I. Turner (1967), op.cit., passim.; F. Farrell, op.cit., pp.48-49.

aspirations of the specific workers it represented, but as a product of general social needs and aspirations that were a measure of a much wider field of social development, tension and conflict. In this, however, the FMWU was more open to radical agitators than most unions for its government did not even have the appearance of particular sectional interests to underpin it and set it apart from other unions, it had no sectional ideological barriers to appeals from (or permeation by) followers of Henry Boote.

Yet, in the way in which the FMWU had been created there was a contradiction as the victory of the radical program would mean not only a political realignment but ultimately the union's demise. On this point tension arose. The New South Wales Branch supported the 1917 General Strike, after the left-wing walked out in 1919 it disaffiliated from the Labor Party (which it had joined in 1916), and it did not demur over supporting the Trades Hall Reds, the Communist Party, the Labour College or the IWW Twelve, but the practical organisational question of the OBU became a matter of sharp dispute implying, as it did, the dismemberment and assignment of the union's different callings and industries to different departments in the giant new structure.(41) In the only ballot on record, in February 1920 the New South Wales members voted against the proposal by 137 to 119, triggering off a struggle for complete control of the Branch between - as one of the radicals later put it - "Two distinct warring camps, one warring against the other".(42)

The conservative resistance in the union was based around Joe Coote who had opposed the IWW from the outset and argued consistent

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41. Railway Strike 1917, Report and Balance Sheet, Labour Council of NSW, Sydney, 1917, p.7; Sun, 3 August 1919; NSWBM, 21 & 22 January 1920 (ABL).
42. NSWBM, 18 February 1920, 19 March 1924, ABL.

with his past that the "class" of workers the FMWU represented would be neglected by any organisation with a predominance of more highly paid and skilled workers.(43) As the union's full-time chief executive and advocate, he also had a heavily vested interest in the status quo and his position was a strong one. Having removed the original provision in the rule book for the Secretary to be annually elected, Coote now held his position 'during the union's pleasure'. Only a two-third's majority vote of members could remove him and ambush was impossible because it had to be done at a special meeting summoned specifically for that purpose.(44)

More than this, one part of the union's membership - cleaning women - had actually begun to develop a sectional identity and the Executive and the rules of the annual ballot had been anchored around them. Except in that the force of necessity meant they were generally more stable in their employment, it is important to note that this sectionalism was not made out of any naturally occurring economic conditions, but from social and political relationships. From the start women had been the group Justice Heydon and barrister Curlewis had been most concerned to protect in forming the union and during the war it was able to negotiate an arrangement with the State Government for preferential employment for widowed, deserted or otherwise disadvantaged women as school cleaners. Out of these circumstances the women began to build up a collective and cumulative identity - not in their independent right, but from their knowledge and experience of the conditions the union had won. They reciprocated with loyalty to the established leadership where their presence was embodied in Margaret Colbourne, a cleaner at the Glebe Public School and an

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43. See, for example, J. Coote to the Industrial Registrar, Brisbane, 7 February 1917, QIR. Also see above p.84.
44. Rules of the Miscellaneous Workers' Union of NSW, Sydney, 1916.

Executive member of the union since 1913.[45] In effect the women had begun to approximate a 'continuous association' of workers in the traditional sense of unionism, although this was not a spontaneous, autonomous product of common economic circumstances, but a result of the union's political relations. It was an identity created from 'above', although none the less real for that.

The position of the women, and therefore Coote and Colbourne, was strengthened by rules that entitled them to between four and six Executive positions when no other membership calling or industry category could have more than three. Moreover, every Executive member except the Secretary and President was elected by the whole of the membership assembled at the union's Annual General Summonsed Meeting, not just by the members within their own category. The large bloc vote of the women cleaners thus gave Coote the edge in selecting the other Executive members and, in turn, the Executive so structured elected the Branch President who chaired all meetings and interpreted the rules. A further advantage to the anti-OBU officials was gained when Vance Marshall resigned in 1920 to take a position with the Queensland Worker before resuming his international adventures and Coote once again became the union's sole organiser and principal embodiment among the members.[46]

There is no point in following every twist in what turned out to be a four-year power struggle. Two points are relevant. First, by 1921 the prospect of the trade union movement adopting the OBU structure was all the more alarming to those attached to the FMWU as

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45. NSWB Membership Registries and minute books generally.
46. Rules of the Miscellaneous Workers' Union of NSW, Sydney, 1916. In addition to the earlier references on Marshall see: Federation News, Vol.11, No.1, March 1984; Building Worker, March 1964; Tribune, 19 February 1964; The Realist, No.26, 1967; The Bulletin, 13 June 1964; and Marshall's own papers in the Mitchell Library.

it existed by virtue of its continuing diversification. In 1920 the New South Wales Branch had amalgamated with two small organisations, the Tent and Tarpaulin Makers and Machiners' Union and the Billiard Markers' Union, and had extended over oilskin and flagmakers, bag and sack makers, toymakers and assemblers, bone-millers, bottle accumulators, porters and paint makers. In 1921 it began expanding into the new manufacturing industries that had been established under the protection from international trade during the war and immediate post-war period, adding plaster of paris, glue and gelatine, lead and asbestos makers, and in January 1923 it amalgamated with the Licensed Billposters' Union. The readiness with which the union was able to absorb diverse groupings again emphasises the artificiality of much of the organisational sectionalism of the time. Yet, if this artificiality helps to explain the appeal of general working class causes, paradoxically, within the FMWU it also served to further frustrate the OBU. "The branches, as it were, are not of a tree", criticised one of the union's militants, attacking the unsystematic accumulation of industries and callings and presuming a sectionalism that had little real content, "For instance, what sympathies does a Bag-Maker and a Lady Cleaner hold in common, so far as their industrial interests are concerned? I emphatically say 'None'."(47)

Second, after reaching a peak of 4,200 members in 1921 the Branch suffered a severe decline, returning to around 2,300 members in 1922 because of the effects of a general economic recession due to the exhaustion of immediate post-war demand and an internal management crisis. The recession led to a reduction in the living wage for labourers in New South Wales from 85 to 78 shillings and the return of unemployment statistics to double figures. All of the FMWU's award

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47. NSWBM, 19 March 1924, ABL.

rates were cut and many sections had their hours increased.[48] With members turning away from the union, its administration came under greater pressure and, to Joe Coote's misfortune, it was found wanting.

The opposition capitalised on the crisis. At the 1923 Annual General Summonsed Meeting the Reds carried motions to introduce Half-Yearly General Summonsed Meetings and sought to break the cleaners by creating countervailing sections. Motions were carried to allow each section to exclusively elect its own Executive members and to allow them to hold meetings separate from other members.[49] Coote's organising capacity was then cut back when Robert Webster successfully moved to sell the Secretary's motor-bike.[50] At the first Half-Yearly General Summonsed Meeting in July 1923 motions were carried to have the Branch President directly elected by the members and to elect an organiser to replace Vance Marshall - a position communist member Christopher Hook subsequently won.[51] The turning point was reached in November 1923 when Webster announced that an inquiry into the union's administration had found "Mr Coote was in arrears for an amount that would approximate three years' contributions".[52] A second inquiry upheld these findings, the clerk was dismissed, Coote was found to be "deserving of the severest censure" and a subsequent Special Summonsed Meeting held that all officials had to be annually elected and be subject to removal by a simple majority vote.[53]

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48. The course of wage levels in New South Wales can be found in the indexes in NSW Industrial Gazette, Vols.31, 50 & 52. The reductions in the FMWU's awards can be followed in the same journal.
49. NSWBM, 30 January 1923, ABL.
50. ibid., 27 March 1923.
51. ibid., 31 July 1923.
52. ibid., 24 November 1923.
53. ibid., 12 December 1923, 28-29 January, 19 March 1924.

On 29 July 1924 the first elections under the new rules installed Christopher Hook as Branch Secretary by a better than two-to-one majority and the Communist Party members effectively assumed the leadership of the union. The locks on the union's door were changed and for the first time the official form of address within this part of the FMWU became 'comrade'.(54)

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By the time the Reds had won their battle to take the leadership of the FMWU's New South Wales Branch in mid-1924 the left had lost the wider war and the working class generally was in retreat. It simply took the FMWU's radicals too long to break through the bulwarks Joe Coote had built up around him. By the time they did their moment had passed. The IWW had been stamped out by the authorities, the Labor Party's new socialist objective had been safely qualified by electorally conservative politicians, the OBU had been defeated, Lenin was dead, the inspiration of the Russian Revolution had waned in the face of democratic and nationalist critics and the Communist Party had become a discordant rump instead of a serious threat. "Bolshevism, Communism, Labour had all sunk into a sort of insignificance" D.H. Lawrence had written on the New South Wales south coast in the winter of 1922.(55) What had been a serious and remarkable movement became so improbable as to invite ridicule and contempt. "Bluff, intrigue, faction, indiscipline, hypocrisy, talk, ineptitude", wrote a Communist

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54. ibid., 29 July 1924. The record of requests for new locks in the Minutes of the Trades and Industrial Hall and Literary Institute Association of the Sydney Trades Hall is probably the readiest (if roughest) index to changes of government in the trade union movement.
55. D.H. Lawrence, op.cit., p.168.

Party member to friends in 1924, "- this is all the old Party is able to trade on now."[56]

The key to the conservative counter-attack was its appropriation of the meaning of Australian nationalism, a task made all the easier for the radicals having left it vacant. Prior to the war there had been two primary senses of Australian nationalism. One was the liberal sense of progress toward nationhood as a mark of social improvement and maturity that did not mean a break with the British Empire, only a break with Australia's second-class colonial status within it. The other stronger sense was a working class one that drew on the convict experience, the battle of the Eureka Stockade, the myth of the noble bushman, a hatred of tyrants and beliefs in democracy, equality and social justice. The former found its expression in the Australian Natives Association, the creation of the Commonwealth, the flag and the more classical and morally principled wing of the Liberal Party, the latter in the 'new unionism' of the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Labor Party, the Bulletin and, most famously, the poems of Henry Lawson. There were overlaps - particularly in the extent of their racism - and ambiguities as these were organic social movements not precise philosophical formulations, but the working class sense of nationalism had always contained radical republican and revolutionary dimensions. "Sing the strong, proud song of Labour", Lawson had written as "The Australian Marsellaise" for the Sydney poor in 1890, "... when the Mammon Castle crashes to the earth and Trampled lies, Then from out of the blood and ashes True republics shall arise ...".[57] This radical sense of

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56. Cited in A. Davidson, op.cit., p.33.
57. H. Lawson, "The Australian Marseillaise" (1900), in L Cronin (ed.), A Camp-Fire Yarn: Henry Lawson, Complete Works, 1885-1900, Sydney, 1984, p.114. Also see R. Ward (1981), op.cit., passim.

nationalism was lost during the war and the new heightened and conservative meaning was counter-posed against the revolutionaries, isolating them from what was effectively presumed to be the rest of the nation.

The war itself was not a war between rival social systems, of course, but a war between rival capitalist nation states. The eight million people slaughtered on the battlefields of Europe and the Middle East in the Great War did not die in defence of any fundamental moral or philosophical principle, or real way of life, but in the largely unknown and even - as every school student knows - today still hotly argued-about interests defined by the small, remote, rival bourgeois elites who practised international statecraft at the time. Its prosecutors, however, depended fundamentally on the mass identification of people with 'their' nation and its interests as defined by their state. Without this massive hardening of thought and feeling the war would have been impossible and ultimately the millions of deaths and tens of millions of lesser casualties were an awesome measure of the great power of this appeal.

Because Australia was not menaced its involvement depended, not just on an appeal to nationalism, but the identification of the nation with Britain and its Empire. It was in this equation of Australia with Britain, the Empire and the war that the sleight of ideological hand occurred which squeezed the radical republican and revolutionary senses of nationalism out. "Every citizen must decide in which camp he must stand," insisted Billy Hughes, "- for or against Australia, for or against Britain, for or against the Empire".[58] The noble bushman, the working class traditions of mateship and mutuality and, indeed, the Eureka Stockade itself, were all conjured up in the

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58. Cited in G. Souter, op.cit., p.253.

service of the British Empire. "You would answer a cooee for help in the bush," said Hughes, "the ANZACS are cooeeing ... Are you going to scab on the ANZACS?"[59] "Rolling out to fight for England", wrote the same Henry Lawson whose first poem had been a song for the republic free from the wrongs of the north and the past, "Fighting hard for Australasia and the honour of the World! ... (And the Memory of Eureka - there were other tyrants then)".[60] It "is the business of the Australian people to see the thing through," wrote the same Bulletin which had once listed republicanism and the abolition of private ownership of land among its policies.[61]

Those who objected to the war, the Empire or Britain were guilty by association of also objecting to Australia and had the national flag brandished against them as traitors and foreigners. Under the War Precautions and Unlawful Associations Acts Prime Minister Hughes set about 'extending State functions', but not in the way Lawson had envisaged. Hundreds of IWW members were arrested, ideologically suspect public servants were dismissed, the printing equipment of the radical press was confiscated, overseas-born agitators were deported, a special Commonwealth police force and secret state agencies were established, ballots were manipulated and private deals were struck with the press at large to bias reports in favour of the government.[62] By the end of the war a process of national redefinition had been completed. Moreover, the relative weights of the original ideological complex had altered. Whereas it had

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59. ibid., p.253.
60. H. Lawson, "Fighting Hard" (1915) in L. Cronin (ed.), Fantasy of Man: Henry Lawson, Complete Works, 1901-1922, Sydney, 1984, p.618.
61. G. Souter, op.cit., p.253.
62. I. Turner (1965), op.cit., pp.97-121, 163-166, esp. pp.107 & 163. On the repression of the IWW see V. Burgmann (1982), op.cit., pp.180-181. On Hughes and the editors of the Sydney Morning Herald, see G. Souter, Company of Heralds, Melbourne, 1981, pp.118-119.

initially been the relationship with Britain and the Empire that had called the Australian nation into being, the resort to native appeals and justifications during the war had the effect of subordinating the British connection to Australia's own imaginary sense of national community. What had originally been secondary became primary and took on a life of its own. Imperial loyalties, if still ever-present, existed at a remove from an Australia that was hereafter to be both officially and popularly said to have become a nation through the valour of its soldiers.

For radicals who dreamed of mobilising the working class into direct political action, the implications were disastrous. The rugged independence, sardonic humour and democratic temper of the ANZAC now occupied pride of national masculine place instead of the bushman. ANZAC day and the memory of 60,000 dead was built up into an occasion that would overshadow Eight Hour Day and May Day. The Returned Soldiers and Sailors' Imperial League (RSL) recruited a membership of 150,000 - equivalent to about a quarter of the entire trade union movement - and it effectively negotiated on the soldiers' behalf for gratuities, preference of employment and land (and set up an Anti-Bolshevik Committee).[63] The heroic defeat of the troops on the Gallipolli Peninsula, which cost over 10,000 lives, loomed larger than the defeats in the Great Strikes and the Eureka Stockade. In 1919 the Labor Party, which had governed in the Commonwealth Parliament and all but one State at the outbreak of the war, now only governed in Queensland - and in nearly every parliament it faced Nationalist Parties instead of Liberals. Everywhere radicals faced a nationalism imbued with working class cultural elements that had fused with the

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63. S.F. Macintyre (1986), op.cit., p.188-191; R. Ward (1983), op.cit., p.142.

capitalist status quo. Throughout 1919 and for some years after returned soldiers and trade unionists traded blows and gunshots. Those who dared fly the red flag found themselves physically attacked with practical impunity.[64]

The effect of this within the labour movement was to isolate and break down the radical internationalism that had emerged during the war, forcing the working class back into the framework of the constitutional-state and onto traditional and regional alignments, which had always played a much stronger part in the discontent of this period than either the government or the left had cared to acknowledge in any case. It had been, for example, not labourers but craftsmen who had triggered off the General Strike in New South Wales in 1917. While it was true that the IWW had advocated 'go slow' and 'the right to be lazy', the new management techniques were not simply about speeding up work. The card system that the Railways and Tramways management sought to introduce into its Randwick Workshop entailed a transfer of the control of work processes from the individual worker to management through a systematic breakdown of each activity into timed parts that would allow them to be told what to do and how much to produce. The objective may have thereby been speed up, but the way in which it was to be brought about was the very antithesis of traditional, autonomous all-round craftsmanship and the massive strike that resulted can be seen therefore as essentially defensive, a protest in favour of saving and consolidating their past - not a strike to overthrow the order that was reducing them in favour of a new future as the government portrayed it and the IWW would have liked.[65] 'Defence not Defiance' was the craft motto. Similarly

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64. S.F. Macintyre (1986), op.cit., pp.184-187; G. Souter (1976), op.cit., pp.290-298.
65. I. Turner (1979), op.cit., Ch.6.

with conscription, socialists generally may have opposed the war and compulsory service in favour of the arbitration of international disputes and disarmament, but there had also been calls to protect the purity of the race against "Chinese, Japs and Hindoos ..." who might be imported to work in the white labourers' absence.(66) Likewise, there were women pacificists who opposed the senselessness through the Women's Peace Army, but there were also men who opposed it because it would allow women to take their jobs.(67) And while the IWW was denouncing Labor politicians for coquetting with the Catholic Church, Melbourne's Catholic Archbishop was mobilising his laity in opposition to the "sordid" or "ordinary trade war" out of sympathy for Irish republicanism.(68) In short, while revolutionaries and socialists may have taken most of the credit (or blame) for the apparent radicalness of these years, the truth was that the upheaval was expressed within the terms of every available opposition. Plain sectional economic interests and traditional prejudices and loyalties joined with socialist reasoning, outright rebellion and high moral principle.

The important point for our purposes is that, as the international moment of radical protest was broken up and isolated by the new, stronger sense of Australian nationalism, it was these other traditional, regional and sectional organising principles and interests that came to the fore within the labour movement which, unlike in earlier revolts, now amounted to a massive extra or alternative state in its own right. "We had no grand head-office", Henry Lawson reminisced about the 1890s in 1920, "Where staffs are mild and meek And bosses fight for freedom On fifteen pounds a

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66. Cited in I. Turner (1979) op.cit., p.163.
67. S.F. Macintyre (1986), op.cit., p.166; G. Souter (1976), op.cit., p.255.
68. S.F. Macintyre (1986), op.cit., p.172.

week".[69] As the electoral disabilities of communist alarums became apparent, like in the FMWU, the radicals came up against the weight of the movement's own establishment. Just two months after the 1921 socialist objective Congress a Special Conference of mainly Labor Party parliamentarians held in Brisbane weakened the new program and refused to recognise the Council of Action on the recommendation of a committee chaired by E.G. Theodore, a former AWU President, converted Catholic and the Queensland Premier.[70] Six months later representatives of the AWU, the Miners, the Waterside Workers and the Railway Workers convened on the OBU (now, tellingly, known as the Australasian Workers' Union), only to come to grief shortly afterwards over its structure, resources and the pastoral giant's racism.[71] In June 1922 the AWU's ticket made a clean sweep of the New South Wales Labor Party Conference (with the help of rigged ballot boxes) and rejected the socialist program altogether.[72] In July the AWU was conspicuously absent from a follow up All-Australian Trade Union Congress and Jock Garden got nowhere attempting to have Theodore's counter-attack on socialism repudiated.

The final blow came from the Victorian craftsmen. In September 1922 the Council of Action had discredited itself when it failed to manage an inter-State dispute over the 44-hour week, leaving the way open for a group of 32 almost exclusively Federally registered craft unions based in Melbourne to by-pass it and the radical trades and

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69. H. Lawson, "The Delegates" (1920), in L. Cronin (ed.), Fantasy of Man: Henry Lawson, Complete Works, 1901-1922, Sydney, 1984, p.772.
70. I. Turner (1965), op.cit., pp.223-6. On the socialist objective, also see G. Evans & J. Reeves, "Two Views on the Socialist Objective", in G. Evans & J. Reeves (eds.), Labor Essays, 1980, Richmond, 1980, pp.155-81. On E.G. Theodore, see I. Young, Theodore, His Life and Times, Sydney, 1971, op.cit., Ch. 1.
71. R.A. Gollan (1965), op.cit., p.168; J.S. Hagan (1984), op.cit., p.23; I. Turner (1965) op.cit., p.212.
72. J.T. Lang, op.cit., p.140-1; M. Perks, op.cit., p.31. On the AWU's ballot rigging, also see V.G. Childe, op.cit., p.66.

labour councils to establish a Commonwealth Council of Federated Unions to operate on strictly sectional economic lines within the framework of the state.(73) Established in February 1923, its functions were, as its founding Secretary later recalled, "limited to questions arising out of the administration of the Commonwealth legislation".(74) The antithesis of the original concept of the OBU, it had the great advantage of being functional almost immediately - uniformly co-ordinating the protection and extension of state benefits, reinforcing the hierarchy of wages that perched craftsmen at its apex and women at its base, winning incremental advances within these terms and draining the life out of the socialist and revolutionary movements. Twelve months later the OBU met its formal demise when the 'revolutionaries' failed in the face of numerous objecting unions to gain counter-vailing registration in the Commonwealth Court.(75) "The old traditions surrounding crafts," wrote a presentient Jock Garden shortly before the formation of the Commonwealth Council, "are nearly as strong as those surrounding Kings."(76)

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The regional counter-revolutionary pattern within the movement at large was echoed within the FMWU. We will first consider the Queensland Branch, which Joe Coote had established in 1916 with the assistance of the Labor Party, the craftsmen in the Brisbane Industrial Council and the AWU. The AWU was by far the dominant force

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73. F. Farrell, op.cit., p.97; J.S. Hagan (1984), op.cit., p.24.
74. J.S. Hagan (1981), op.cit., pp.25, 37-9.
75. Labour Council of New South Wales, Secretary's Report, 31 December 1922, Sydney, 1923.
76. R.A. Gollan (1963), op.cit., pp.12-13.

in this region's labour movement, a fact that essentially stemmed from the overwhelmingly rural character of Queensland's economy and the way this homogeneity had facilitated the adoption of the Australasian Labour Federation concept in its economic and political entirety in 1890. The Queensland Province of the Federation had survived the Great Strikes and the financial crisis of 1893-95, won a number of important conflicts, conducted its own organising campaign and delivered the first, albeit brief, Labor government in the world in 1898. The smaller number of craftsmen in the region's trade union movement, opposition to arbitration (wages boards were not introduced until 1908) and the small urban population were conditions unlikely to produce a proliferation of urban labourers' unions, as had occurred in New South Wales and, to a lesser extent, Victoria. The conditions actually facilitated the reverse as unions were encouraged to amalgamate under the umbrella of the Labour Federation.(77)

It was only after the defeat of the Federation in the 1912 Brisbane General Strike that working class relations in the region began to resemble those down south. The General Strike provoked the conservative Queensland Government to introduce an arbitration act along the same lines as Charles Wade's 1908 Industrial Disputes Act and in 1913 the AWU was created out of the wreckage of the Australasian Labour Federation with virtually complete control of the labour movement, prompting the urban craftsmen to respond with the formation of the Brisbane Industrial Council in 1914. In 1915 Labor was returned to government and the AWU, the craftsmen and the Party found themselves with a common interest in building trade union organisation out of the state in the face of the challenge from the

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77. See in particular: C. Cameron, Unions in Crisis, Melbourne, 1982, pp.48-53.

IWW. Conditions had thus ripened for Joe Coote and the FMWU's welcome in Queensland by 1916.[78]

However, after all the necessary initial action had been taken to establish the Queensland Branch, it foundered. Awards of complexity rivalling those in New South Wales had soon been won, although state employees had been separated out from the rest and rates were lower because of a lower regional price index (and the "increasing difficulty of getting boys willing to apprentice themselves to some trade so that they may become, instead of labourers, skilled artisans").[79] The Branch had also extended into still more diverse occupations in 1918, recruiting among many small trades, including ship and boat fender makers, sailmakers and rope splicers, glass founders, broom and brush makers and flag, tent, tarpaulin, bag, sack and basket makers. In December 1918, however, a host of irregularities were discovered in its accounts, with some receipt books missing, others with their butts torn out and funds depleted.[80] In 1919 - a year in which sporadic riots between unionists and ex-servicemen involved up to several thousand people in Brisbane's streets - the FMWU's Branch was obliged to get by with an honorary Secretary before coming under the stable guardianship of Sidney James ('S.J.') Bryan.[81]

The occasion of S.J. Bryan's succession to the leadership and his background are important for they instance a recurring pattern in the

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78. ibid., pp.48-53. Also see, inter alia: V.G. Childe, op.cit., esp. Ch.IX; C. Lack, Three Decades of Queensland Political History, 1929-1960, Brisbane, 1969, pp.723-724; D.J. Murphy, "Queensland", in D.J. Murphy (ed.), op.cit., pp.129-215.
79. Queensland Industrial Gazette, 10 April 1918, p.708. Also see: Brisbane Courier, 19 February 1916; Daily Telegraph (Brisbane), 18 February 1916; Daily Standard, 18 February 1916; FCM, 8 May & 5 November 1916, FMWU Papers; J. Coote to Industrial Registrar, 7 February 1917, QIR.
80. FMWU File, QIR.
81. On the Brisbane conflicts see: F. Farrell, op.cit., pp.1-3.

FMWU's history. Not only did Bryan come from outside the union's membership and, like Joe Coote and Vance Marshall, bring with him considerable trade union experience, he was a craftsman from the New South Wales Labour Council. Indeed, he was actually an electrical mechanic who had been employed in the Randwick Workshop of the Railways and Tramways where the General Strike of 1917 had been triggered off. Disabled somewhat as a craftsman because of a badly mutilated right hand caused by a work accident, he had concentrated on trade union affairs and by 1917 he had become an executive member of the Labour Council representing the Electrical Trades Union. He thus arrived on the Council just as its death knell was about to be sounded from within his own place of employment. When Jock Garden and his Trades Hall Reds swept into the Council executive early in January 1918, the Electrical Trades was among the first of many unions to disaffiliate on the classical craft grounds that it now "devoted too much of its time to political matters instead of industrial interests".(82) Belying the apparent ascendency of the Reds, between 1917 and 1922 the New South Wales Council was reduced from 104 to 63 affiliates as craft union after craft union retired into the shelter of their new autonomous legal identities and safe monopoly coverages.(83)

Being one of the unions at the heart of the General Strike it was not long before a radical ticket emerged among the electricians and in 1919 it re-affiliated to the Council with its new delegate, Jack Beasly, joining the Red executive. In the meantime, however, Bryan had made a neat exit, becoming Secretary of his union's Queensland

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82. Labour Council of New South Wales, Secretary's Report, 30 June 1918. On S.J. Bryan generally, see A.H. Dawson, op.cit., p.23.
83. Labour Council of New South Wales, Secretary's Report, 31 December 1922, Sydney, 1923.

Branch, from whence he also became Secretary of the Theatrical Employees' Union, the Jewellers, Watchmakers and Allied Trades Union and the Queensland Branch of the FMWU, with which he soon amalgamated the Queensland Undertakers' Assistants and Cemetery Employees' Union. The FMWU's Queensland Branch thus became a part of a wider arrangement that, with the help of a rule restricting unions to a flat two delegates each, kept the region's left-wing at bay in its central council. In 1922 the (newly designated) Trades and Labour Council of Queensland decided its objectives were to wrest "from the capitalist class the economic powers which they as a class possess, and to use them in the interests of the workers" and "to secure closer unity amongst the different sections of industry, with a view to organising into One Big Union the whole of the workers in the State".(84) Effective power in the Council, however, remained with the traditional craft-labourer nexus exemplified by S.J. Bryan.(85)

It was a similar story in Victoria where the FMWU came under the leadership of an experienced unionist soon after a management scandal. In June 1918 the Victorian Branch's balance sheet was found to have been "faked", the Secretary was expelled and the membership rapidly fell from 2,000 to 1,200.(86) Two Secretaries in quick succession then gave way to Fred Katz. Katz had led an important and successful strike in Tasmania in 1911 as Secretary of the Hobart Branch of the Federated Carters and Drivers' (later Transport Workers') Union and, along with his office assistant, Jack O'Neil, had served on the first Tasmanian Wages Board for transport workers.(87) In 1914 he went to Melbourne (leaving the union to O'Neil who would turn the position

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84. Rules of the Trades and Labour Council of Queensland, Brisbane, 1922.
85. For a defence of Queensland's craft structure, see Council Secretary Robert Mulvey's statement in Daily Standard, 14 March 1924.
86. VBM, 27 April - 1 June 1918, ABL.
87. Labor Call, 17 August 1911. Also see notes 88 and 89 below.

into the most powerful in the Tasmanian trade union movement, becoming Secretary of seven different unions and the Hobart Trades Hall).[88] Katz became a trade union organiser for the Victorian Socialist Party, which was quick to disavow communism in favour of Labor Party parliamentarianism, and he was employed by the Clerks' Union. He was particularly active in the anti-conscription campaign - being set upon one day by a mob of returned soldiers who tarred, feathered and dragged him down his office steps into Little Collins Street after he had successfully moved an anti-conscription motion in the Hall.[89] Through the Trades Hall, Katz was instrumental in securing amalgamations between the FMWU and the Victorian Female Office Cleaners' and State School Caretakers' unions. The Branch took him on as organiser in July 1922 and elected him Secretary four months later.[90]

Katz and Bryan set out to secure the FMWU against the Red advance in New South Wales. A month after Katz had been elected Victorian Branch Secretary (on 29 December 1922, the Friday preceding the New Years' Day weekend and a time when the union was in recess), he met with Coote and two others from the New South Wales Branch in an Extraordinary Federal Council - the first Federal meeting of any kind held by the FMWU since 1918. Joe Coote, who at this stage had still been holding out as New South Wales Branch Secretary, resigned as General Secretary of the Federation in favour of Katz and the Federal office moved to Melbourne.[91]

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88. The Journal of the Building, Transport and Timber Workers' Trades, Hobart, Vol. 1, No. 1 (n.d.); The Examiner, 26 January 1971; Mercury, 26 January 1971.
89. On F. Katz, also see: Australian Worker, 30 December 1915; E. Scott, Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18, Vol. XI, Sydney, 1936, pp.312-13; L. Ross, John Curtin for Labor and for Australia, Canberra, 1971, p.32.
90. VBM, 12 July, 6-20 September 1920, ABL.
91. FCM, 29 December 1922, FMWU Papers.

Three months later - during which time the Victorian craftsmen launched the Commonwealth Council of Federated Unions at the OBU - Katz, S.J. Bryan and just two others from Victoria convened another Federal Council in Melbourne to consider the FMWU's Rules. The changes were sweeping. The absolute veto power of each Branch over all Federal decisions was removed and the "supreme control of the Union" was vested in the Federal Council. Each Branch was made "subject to the direction and control of the Federal Council and Federal Executive". Federal Council was given absolute power over the union's rules and sole power to expel members, and the Executive was given power to fine or suspend any Branch refusing or failing to immediately comply with a resolution or rules of the Council. If any offence persisted for three months, "such Branch shall be closed and all property of such Branch shall be vested in the Union" and its members transferred under conditions "the Federal Council deemed expedient". The Federal positions of Treasurer, Assistant Secretary and the two Trustees were abolished, leaving an Executive of three - a Federal President who was the Victorian Branch President; a Vice-President who was Queensland Secretary Bryan; and General Secretary Katz. Finally, representation on the Council was restructured to ensure the absent New South Wales Branch would always remain in a minority. The rule entitling each Branch to a flat three Councillors each was changed to allow each one delegate for up to 500 members, another for between 501 and 1,000, and a third for over 1,000, with the limit of three delegates remaining. As both the Victorian and Queensland Branches had around 1,000 members compared with New South Wales' 3,000, on the now theoretically all-powerful Council comprising a maximum of nine delegates, under a legitimising democratic veneer, the New South Wales Branch would always be

outnumbered by between one and three.[92] In this way, legally, secretly, neatly the New South Wales Branch was locked into the Federation and the Reds and their OBU out.

Not that, as it turned out, this conspiring mattered much in the short-term. When the Reds finally broke through in New South Wales 16 months later they barely took time to settle in before self-immolating. The new government had started happily enough. Quarterly public audits began, a new clerk and office assistant were hired, the minutes of meetings began to be typed, systematic contribution collections were planned for the city blocks, shop delegates were to be appointed everywhere else on ten percent commission and a refund of travelling expenses incurred to make pay-ins, section by section award reviews commenced, Secretary Hook went to Newcastle to boost the sub-Branch, a former miner, Labor Party and AWU official, Bill Smith, became an Organiser and Lance Sharkey, a former craftsman who had joined the Communist Party in 1922 and the FMWU as a lift attendant in November 1923, produced a leaflet announcing the advent of the new leadership and telling members they could now expect stronger support.[93]

The union, however, did not conform to the new leadership's imagination. Aside from the school cleaning women, who continued to return the hostile Margaret Colbourne to the Executive, and the cleaning men, who had a core drawn from the Trades Hall itself, the only section successfully activated was the Paint Section. For the rest, sectional meetings generally lapsed through want of quorums and

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92. ibid., p.26-27, March 1923.
93. NSWBM, 30 July-18 November 1924, ABL. On L.L. Sharkey see: W.A. Wood, The Life Story of L.L. Sharkey, Fighter for Freedom, Sydney, 1950; The Observer, 19 September 1959; T. Wells, "Right Strange for Mr Sharkey", in Nation, 2 June 1962; L. Harry Gould (ed.), The Sharkey Writings, Sydney, 1975.

Executive positions fell vacant through non-attendance.[94] To keep the union going the government therefore had to rely on arbitration, but not having the experience to work the system this meant relying on advocates. Joe Coote made it his habit to turn up at Monthly Meetings to correct technical and tactical aspects of their approach to the courts.[95] Nor does there seem to have been a consciousness of the Federation at large. Neither the new Federal Executive nor the Federal Council met in 1924 or 1925 and it was twelve months before a copy of the Federal Rules was sought. Here again the Reds had to rely on Coote's expertise and once they discovered their predicament found it was all they could do to send the Rules off to the Commonwealth Registrar to test their legality.[96] By this time, however, the leadership had sub-divided along the lines of the shrinking, fracturing radical movement generally.

Here it is necessary to appreciate the decline of the communist left. From the outset the Communist Party had adopted a mix of traditional Australian socialist, IWW and Leninist beliefs and practices and it had divided and re-divided over whether or not to work within or without the Labor Party, a dilemma compounded by the initial enthusiasm for the Russian Revolution in Australia and the other developments that had seen Labor move further toward a socialist position. In any event, at its Third Congress in Moscow in 1921 Comintern (the Communist International) had abandoned the view that world revolution was imminent and introduced a policy of forming a united front with the rest of the world's working class organisations to avoid isolation.[97] At the June 1923 Labor Conference in New

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94. NSWBM, 8 January & 23 June 1925, ABL, (for example).
95. ibid., 10 July, 7-9 December 1924, 24-31 March, 28 April, 26 May 1925 (for example).
96. ibid., 21 July, 25 August, 22 September 1925.
97. A. Davidson, op.cit., p.24.

South Wales the CPA affiliated with the larger Party and Jock Garden, Jack Kilburn and other leading Trades Hall Reds were elected to its Executive where they worked with Jack Lang to break the AWU's dominance as part of an extraordinary alliance of craftsmen, state-dependent labourers' unions, Peter Laughlin (a leading Catholic ideologue), and traditional democratic and non-aligned socialists (such as the Miners' leader, Albert Willis). A month after the CPA's affiliation, Lang became Labor Leader and Laughlin his Deputy.(98)

The extraordinary alliance began to fall apart the moment its immediate purpose had been achieved. Not only were Catholicism and communism ideological opponents, but the CPA soon also spoiled its relations with Albert Willis. A splinter group called the Central Left Wing Movement formed within the CPA on a policy of entrenching Red cells within shop committees among trade union rank and files to provoke militancy and force the choice between communism and Labor. Willis had a record as an astute strike leader for the miners and soon after he had given his vote to allow the CPA into the Labor Party he found their members involved in one of his disputes and became an angry opponent.(99) This destroyed the tenuous structure of support for the communists. In October 1923 Garden and his comrades were expelled in New South Wales and a year later Queensland Premier Theodore led a successful motion to have the CPA proscribed by the Federal Labor Conference.(100) Support for the Communist Party now dwindled in all quarters. In June 1925 Lang won the Premiership and the CPA polled so badly its candidates lost their deposits.(101)

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98. See: H. Radi & P. Spearritt, op.cit., Chs. 1-4; F. Farrell, op.cit., pp.157-61; J.T. Lang, op.cit., Ch.39; I. Young, op.cit., p.56.
99. F. Farrell, op.cit., pp.62-4 & 157; J.S. Hagan (1981), op.cit., p.25; A. Davidson, op.cit., p.28, 37-38.
100. J.T. Lang, op.cit., p.188.; F. Farrell, op.cit., p.158.
101. ibid., p.65.

Reduced from an estimated 900 members in 1921 to 250 by the time of its national conference six months after this defeat, the CPA's theoretician, Guido Baracchi, concluded that his Party had become so putsch-minded and counterproductive it was a "tragic farce" that he could no longer be associated with and so resigned.(102) Garden, Beasley, Kilburn and most of the other Trades Hall Reds came to a similar conclusion over the course of 1926-27 and threw their lot in to bolster the left-wing within Lang's government.(103)

This division was replicated in the FMWU's New South Wales Branch where Robert Webster and Bill Smith led one part of the leadership into the Labor Party behind Garden, Beasley and Kilburn while Christopher Hook, Lance Sharkey and a cell of about 20 members went with the Central Left Wing Movement and set about validating Baracchi's 'tragic farce' thesis in a dispute between the Trades Hall staff and the Trades Hall Association.

Despite receiving wages and conditions superior to the FMWU's award, tension between the caretakers and cleaners in the Sydney Trades Hall was endemic. The head caretaker's position was highly coveted, being less arduous than cleaning, more highly paid, having more opportunities for overtime and carrying the benefit of the quarters on the Trades Hall roof. Because of the need to be 'on call' the resident caretaker also received a month's annual holiday compared to the cleaners' single week. As well as the usual friction between supervisor and supervised, tension also stemmed from union officials patronising the cleaners - giving them tips or a little extra for putting more effort into their offices. This made it difficult for the caretaker to alter shifts or restructure routines as each cleaner

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102. A. Davidson, op.cit., pp.26, 34.
103. F. Farrell, op.cit., p.65.

built up his patronage. It was also an incentive to slacken attention to non-tipping tenants which accumulated complaints that fed back in a vicious circle through the Association to put pressure on the caretaker to improve his supervision. Hook and Sharkey encouraged the cleaners to become active in the union and took their side against the head caretaker, James McConville - who also happened to be the Branch's President and a Labor Party supporter. The discontent between the cleaners and the caretaker thus became linked to the division between the two factions in the CPA. "This place was worse than a capitalist institution" became a typical retort by the cleaners to McConville's supervising instructions.(104)

The content of the dispute as it first arose in October 1924 was a demand for an additional week's annual holiday for the cleaners, something the craft-dominated Trades Hall Association agreed to if it meant no additional cost. Secretary Hook proposed the cleaners rotate their annual holidays and, while each was away, they be relieved by one of the two caretakers. In turn, it was proposed that the Secretary of the Association, George Rutter of the Stonemason's Union, could temporarily assume one of the caretaker's shifts. No doubt to Rutter's relief, the caretakers refused, with President McConville suggesting a casual cleaner be employed as relief, a suggestion that was in turn refused by the Association because of its cost. To bring the staff into line the Association rearranged all the rosters and gave the caretakers the power to suspend delinquent cleaners and there the matter rested while the cleaners stood against McConville (unsuccessfully) and Webster (successfully) for their positions in the

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104. Minutes of the Trades and Industrial Hall and Literary Institute Association, Sydney Trades Hall, 25 October, 16 November, 14 December 1922, 11 January, 8 February 1923.

union.[105] The dispute came to a new head on 25 June 1925, a day McConville had made plans to mop down the corridor on the Hall's second floor beginning at 7 a.m. sharp. When one of the staff, who had turned up 29 minutes late and appeared "to be dragging out time", told McConville he was working "as fast as he intended to" and was not going to "break his neck", the caretaker suspended him and the other five cleaners walked out in solidarity.[106] After extensive hearings the Trades Hall Association concluded "it was impossible for the present staff to work in harmony" and sacked them all.[107]

Following representations from many parts of the movement, a petition from the Hall tenants, a FMWU delegation led by Hook and Sharkey, testimony that all differences had been settled and agreement that "the buildings were not kept as clean as they should be, also that wages and conditions were most satisfactory", the staff were reinstated for a three-month trial.[108] Positions hardened. Hook and Sharkey mobilised a campaign in the Labour Council to have a General Meeting of the Trades Hall convened to "appoint a Committee to go into the management of the Association", the scheme to allow the cleaners an extra week's holiday with relief provided by the caretakers and George Rutter was revived, complaints about the cleanliness of the Hall continued and, as the three-month period approached expiry, the cleaners served notice that they had "decided to place the whole matter in the hands of the union".[109] Meanwhile, one of the cleaners, Thomas Doherty, formally charged McConville with

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105. ibid., 6 November - 11 December 1924, 5 February, 27 April 1925. Also see NSWBM, 21 October, 2-9 December, 1924, ABL.
106. Minutes of the Trades and Industrial Hall and Literary Institute Association, Sydney Trades Hall, 23 June 1925.
107. ibid., 24 June 1925.
108. ibid., 2-22 July 1925.
109. ibid., 27 August, 17 September, 15-19 October 1925; NSWBM, 27 October 1925, ABL.

"divulging union business to persons outside the union" (that is, to the Association) and a Special General Summonsed Meeting was called to vote on "removing the President from Office".[110]

The meeting was summonsed for 15 December 1925 and this was, to say the least, bad timing. It was only a few months after the CPA had been soundly defeated in the New South Wales State election that had given Lang the Premiership. Moreover, as part of a more general employers' counter-attack, throughout the year serious conflict over 'pick up' conditions on the docks had been on-going between the Seamen's Union and Billy Hughes' conservative replacement, Prime Minister Stanley Bruce. At one stage Bruce had precipitated a seven-week strike by de-registering the union and the tension had escalated when British seamen walked off their ships in all Australia's ports as part of a world-wide strike by the British National Union of Sailors over a wage reduction. Bruce arrested the sailors and passed legislation to deport the communist leaders of the Australian Seaman's Union, Tom Walsh and Jacob Johnson. With the Sydney Morning Herald baying that Italy "was only saved from Red Dominance by the heroic remedy of Fascism", retired army officers recruited a secret force of 5,000 patriotic ex-servicemen to back-up the Prime Minister who capitalised on the general atmosphere of hysteria he had created by calling a snap election in November.[111] Although the Communist Party had been reduced to a couple of hundred members, in this first full-blown 'Red Bogey' national election, stories about the local CPA jostled for space in newspaper columns on

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110. NSWBM, 3-24 November 1923.
111. Sydney Morning Herald, 29 September 1925. Also see: K. Amos, The New Guard Movement, 1931-1935, Melbourne, 1976, pp.11-12; B. Fitzpatrick & R.J. Cahill, op.cit., pp.608; C. Edwards, Bruce of Melbourne: Man of Two Worlds, London, 1965, pp.111-120; F. Farrell, op.cit., pp.117-120.

the British and American communist movements and the general impression of imminent invasion by "hordes of lawless and orderless agitators" was conjured up.(112)

An anti-communist witch-hunt was triggered off in the trade union movement when Bruce's Nationalist Party increased its parliamentary majority in what was the first election in which voting was compulsory, a tactic that almost doubled the number of votes cast (and, one might surmise, diluted the serious intent that may be read into the final tallies by the same amount). In the three weeks between the time Hook and Sharkey summonsed the FMWU meeting to remove McConville and the time the meeting was actually held, Theodore forced his Queensland Labor Party Executive to take an anti-communist pledge, Lang accused the CPA of being in conspiracy with Bruce, the Municipal Workers launched a campaign to have unions in the the Labour Council refused affiliation with the Labor Party, Deputy Premier Loughlin sought to have CPA members banned from holding office in unions altogether and, as we have already noted, with Guido Barachi leading the way most of the remaining communists moved to the verge of liquidating the Party.(113) Under these conditions news of the FMWU's meeting was published by the Sydney Morning Herald where it was framed in terms of the wider conflict with the result that an unprecedented number of members turned out for the occasion.(114) On Joe Coote's motion the leadership's agenda was discarded and all the Branch officials were sacked by a vote of 230 to 17. It was then successfully moved: "THAT in the opinion of this Meeting, no known or avowed Communist should be eligible to hold Office in this Union, or be a Delegate, or Representative for, or, on behalf of this

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112. C. Edwards, op.cit., p.114.
113. Sydney Morning Herald, 26, 28 November; 1,4,11 December 1925.
114. ibid., 4, 16 & 19 December 1925.

Union".[115] At the following Branch elections Hook and Sharkey stood on a CPA ticket with the Hall cleaners and were defeated by an average of 260 votes to 60.[116] The locks on the office doors were changed and the official form of address within the union reverted to 'Mr'.[117]

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Such was the life of the FMWU's first radical government. It held office for exactly eighteen months before the communist officials fatally isolated themselves in trying to advance their cause against the rest of the union's government and all the odds. If examined solely within the confines of the FMWU it is difficult to attribute such a self-defeating course of action to anything but fanatically militant sectarianism. Perhaps, however, it should be seen in the larger political light. Outside the union the Communist Party's position was declining so dramatically that the militancy of its FMWU officials may have been more simply a resort to the desperation that is often conceived as the only option available by those dedicated to a cause that would appear lost by any other calculation. All or nothing is a rational proposition for those who have nothing. As a tailpiece to the story, two months after the communists had been banned from the union's office the Trades Hall cleaners were granted the additional week's leave they had claimed in exchange for an undertaking to put a little extra effort into their work.[118] Once

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115. NSWBM, 15 December 1925, ABL.
116. A.S. Varley to R.T. Cash, 8 February 1926, in NSWBM, 10 February 1926, ABL.
117. Minutes of the Trades and Industrial Hall and Literary Institution Association, Sydney Trades Hall, 17 December 1925.
118. ibid., 14 October 1926.

the communists had been removed from the dispute, so, it seems, had all of its heat. But would this concession have been granted without all the conflict that had preceded it? Do not those who strive for great horizons have the effect of making lesser ones more approachable? And is not the suppression of the larger claim that threatens to overturn an existing order of relationships made even more thorough by concessions within the terms of those relationships?

More directly to the overriding purpose of our study, the ignominious demise of the Communist Party within the FMWU's New South Wales Branch should not distract us from those aspects of the union shown up or changed by this period of upheaval. Most obviously, the events of these years further illustrate the non-sectional character of the union. All the features of the union's history we have examined over this time can be seen in one way or another as evidence of this central fact. The presence of Vance Marshall, Ernest Judd, Robert Webster, Christopher Hook, Lance Sharkey and others clearly committed to the broader socialist and communist movements in the New South Wales Branch can be read along with the assumption of the leadership of the Victorian and Queensland Branches by the also more widely aligned Fred Katz and S.J. Bryan as evidence of the same internal general orientation. None of the Branches turned on characteristics that could be said to be distinctive to the specific members they represented. Even the circumstances under which they had all been absorbed within the larger political arrangements in their regions had been those pertaining to the union's general administration rather than any particular economic conditions or claims of its specific members.

To this same general character we may also attribute both the success of Henry Boote's call to the 'Organised Working Class' in the

New South Wales Branch and the continuing diversification of the union's recruitment and its amalgamations. Just as there was no defining sectional economic interest to prevent the FMWU from identifying with Boote's 'desire to serve and save the exploited millions', so there was no reason for it to object to new categories of labour and more unions being joined to the organisation. While the union's radicals were arguing to break down sectional interests to bring about the OBU, an amalgamation with the Chemists' Assistants' Association of Queensland in 1924 brought the total number of the FMWU's amalgamations up to seven and its extension over wireworkers, male domestic servants, messengers and linoleum makers between 1924 and 1926 brought the number of different categories represented by it up to 32. While the radicals sought to realise the essential unity of labour's general interests, the FMWU was to this extent actually demonstrating it.

But if these features were alike in that they express the general character of the union, they were not, of course, alike in the way they expressed that generality. The second obvious aspect of the FMWU shown up by this period is that, while it may have been non-sectional in its orientation, this cannot be taken to mean that it existed in a vacuum which the radicals only had to invade to succeed. While the insurgency of this period can only be understood as a product of general national and international events - the recession of economic activity, the failure to hold the prices referendum, the success of the anti-conscription campaigns, the Labor Split, the General Strike, the Russian Revolution - and the way these fertilised socialist, syndicalist and other radical working class schools of thought, it remains that the very existence of the FMWU already presupposed a wider complex of relations, as the study of the union's origins aimed

to show. The FMWU had not been made out of the specific economic conditions experienced by its particular members, but from the legal arrangements that had been created by the labour movement in its relations with the state, relations that had been partially forged in response to the economic conditions endured by labourers generally and as a defence against the militant position the radicals now sought to establish within it. Thus when the Reds claimed the FMWU's New South Wales Branch, they claimed an organisation that had no economic autonomy or independence, only a legal and political autonomy and independence - which to is to say that it had no real autonomy or independence at all. The FMWU existed as a result of and could only operate in relation to the state and, beyond that, the political movements that aimed to effect change within this framework.

In failing to understand or place any value on the general legal and political relations implicit in the union's very existence, the Reds served to illustrate their fundamental importance by default. Juridicial and political skills were essential for its leadership if the union was to go forward on the terrain out of which it had been made and, in lieu of the ability or will of the Reds to come to terms with this, the union's Federal apparatus had been completely captured by the other Branches and relations with the arbitration system had remained the virtual preserve of the 'deposed' Joe Coote. Aside from administration, the only opening that was left for the militants to take an effective role in the direct activities of the union was the dispute between the Trades Hall cleaners and the craft-dominated Trades Hall Association. This remaining aperture for direct action was, of course, fundamental to the New South Wales Branch in the sense that it was where it had been originally created more or less as a house union by Harold Mercer and the Labour Council's Organising

Committee back in May 1910. As well as being one of the few places where the FMWU's members and their employers could be expected to be fully conscious and respectful of the right of workers to strike, it thus also represented the core from which the rest of the union had emanated. However, instead of the Reds being able to fan the flames of discontent within this fundamental aperture, they disappeared up it.

But if the course of the FMWU's first radical government principally served to emphasise the way in which the union was just one constituent part of a much larger and more complex structure of relationships, it remains that it also served to change the union within these terms. In the first place, the political character of the union had now been internalised and made explicit. All three of the union's Branches were now affiliated to the Labor Party, the New South Wales Branch having re-affiliated in August 1923 to help save the Communist Party's affiliation and having continued its membership thereafter. Moreover, instead of the nominal arrangements of 1915 that had established the Federation as a composite of fully autonomous and equal unions, the Federal apparatus now effectively operated as a national political instrument to contain the union's larger and still ideologically suspect New South Wales Branch on behalf of the more moderate Victorian and Queensland parts of the movement. The union's internal democracy had been subverted, as it were, to save the union from itself - a situation that became more extreme at the 1927 Federal Council where Fred Katz resigned as General Secretary in favour of S.J. Bryan, who promptly re-wrote the rules apportioning representation on the Federal Council to allow Branches with as few as 500 members the maximum of three delegates; a farce placed next to the fact that New South Wales had reached a new peak of 4,000 members and

neither of the other two Branches had anywhere near 2,000. Indicative of the extent of the manipulation of the rules was the fact that eight days before Bryan's election as the union's chief executive, Coote and Colbourne had to go through the motions to formally admit him as a member.(119)

In the second place, there had been significant restructuring at the Branch level which represented a potential challenge to the 'supreme power' now held by the rigged Federal Council. The most positive organisational legacy of the Red New South Wales Branch leadership was the establishment of the principle, if not the reality, of sectional autonomy within the union. Few of the FMWU's categories were yet so distinguished as to take the opportunity they now had to independently organise, define and bring forward their particular concerns, but nevertheless the internalisation and institutionalisation of the principle of sectional interests was taken up by the other Branches and constituted a fundamental organisational change. It heralded the demise of its members' status as general labourers and represented a turn away from the model of general unionism based on systems of geographic representation first introduced in Britain by Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trades Union and carried on in Australia by the AWU, where it placed all power in the hands of the shearer and the Branch official in the same way that it had been held by Joe Coote and the cleaners in the FMWU. It was more like the model of union government established by Ernest Bevin in the British Transport and General Workers' Union and the idea of the OBU, which took the structure of the economy at large as the guide to internal arrangements. Yet it was not exactly like this. Rather, it was a union of sections defined, not according to

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119. FCM, 2-6 May, 28 April 1927, FMWU Papers.

productive economic divisions, but according to the variety of craft, industry, gender, geographic and actual enterprise categories that the labourers had been organised under within the terms of the arbitration system. Just as craftsmen had endorsed industrial unionism within terms that had retained craft demarcations, the FMWU had endorsed sectionalism within the unsystematic variety of terms used by the state to differentiate the general labouring underclass in the great further organisation campaigns. In its appearance, then, the FMWU effectively came to resemble the heterogeneous structure of the wider Australian trade union movement writ small. In outline, if not yet in its substance, it resembled not a trade union but a Trades Hall. How long could it remain little more than a self-generating legal shell in this form? Already the school cleaning women had begun to develop a life of their own and it may be noted that the defeat of the Communist Party ticket in the New South Wales Branch did not result in the re-installation of Joe Coote, but in the election of Robert Cash - a paintworker. These signs of internal sectional development were, as we shall see in the next chapter, ominous.

The impact on the wider relations within which the FMWU had to continue to operate was no less mixed. The insurgency may have dissolved, but it had been an extraordinarily creative phenomenon that permanently altered the landscape upon which class relations were played out in Australia. First, the conscription referenda, the IWW Twelve, the General Strike, the OBU movement and the Trades Hall Reds all became accepted parts of the Australian labour movement's significant past, along with the Eureka Stockade, the Great Strikes and the formation of the Labor Party - which hereafter carried the high water-mark of the working class in the 1921 socialist objective, albeit qualified. These remained important historical, political and

cultural reference points for Australian radicals, widening the field of legitimate working class aspirations and making it much more difficult, if not impossible, for politicians in the Labor Party to define its direction in the narrow ways Hughes and Holman had done - at least in New South Wales where the benefits were immediately manifest in Jack Lang's government between 1925 and 1927. The impressive list of this government's reforms included the 44-hour week, the establishment of Conciliation Committees with union representatives, compulsory workers' compensation for injuries and death, a government insurance office, accommodation for shearers, unrestricted access to political literature, adult suffrage for local government, the restoration of seniority for railway workers victimised in the 1917 General Strike, no co-operation by the New South Wales police with Bruce's continuing assault on the Seamen's Union, plans for a state shipping line, the abolition of school fees, a substantial attempt to abolish the Legislative Council, fair rents legislation, widows pensions and child endowment.(120) State functions were thus extended, as Lawson had suggested in answer to Boote, not just to persecute those who threatened the capitalist order, but to make unprecedented concessions to the working class within the terms of that order.

Second, the challenge resulted in permanent organisational benefits. Each time the working class barricades had gone up over the prior 30 years the process of incorporation and dissolution had been at the cost of permanently altering and expanding the existing organisational structures. Political organisation had been followed by further organisation and then closer organisation; now there would

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120. For a discussion of Lang's reforms see H. Nelson, "Legislative Record, 1925-27: How Radical?", H. Radi & P. Spearritt, op.cit., pp.68-87.

be national organisation. In 1925 Jock Garden established a New South Wales industry-based Commonwealth Industrial Disputes Committee as a rival to the Victorian craft-based Commonwealth Council of Federated Unions. Two years later, like the first Labor governments, the Commonwealth Council discredited itself opening the way in 1927 for the Victorian craftsmen and New South Wales radicals to compromise to form the Australasian (later Australian) Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). Based on the existing Labour Councils and tolerant of the existing union forms, the ACTU had authority over inter-State disputes, allowed unions to be represented according to their total size, adopted the "socialisation of industry" as its objective and specified "the transformation of the trade union movement from the craft to an industrial basis" as its first method of achieving this.(121)

The wave of post-war radicalism may have been rolled back, but the traces it left behind both in the FMWU and the labour movement generally were thus deep and, as it would turn out, lasting. This did not only occur in Australia, of course, for the years of the 'Great Fear' were felt around the economically developed world. It was no coincidence that in 1920 the Webbs amended the definition of trade unionism in their classic work to include a revolutionary dimension and it was around the same time the brilliant Italian communist intellectual, Antonio Gramsci, formulated his Factory Council thesis, which he saw as the way to recharge the trade union movement. From England, through Europe, from Australia, to the United States, the prison cells of the capitalist world had been opened to accommodate its dissidents while its scholars had set about revising their

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121. See J.S. Hagan (1981), op.cit., pp.38-45, 81-93, 455-456.

theories. The meaning of trade unionism in capitalist society seemed to have recovered its radical content.

But as important as these developments were - or would turn out to be - they were, in Australia for now at least, overshadowed by (or contained within) the much stronger practical and ideological machinery of the nation-state. The trade union and political labour movements were now more centralised, more strongly marked by radical aspirations and, as in New South Wales, capable of extracting concessions that almost appeared to amend capitalism out of all recognition, but nationally the movement still only amounted to an unevenly developed confederation of numerous working class 'states' within the much larger apparatus that had been greatly strengthened by the war and the subsequent tensions. Against labour's still meagre resources, its mass parliamentary machinery, its cadres of militants, agitators and strike leaders and its new half-held objective of socialising the means of production, distribution and exchange, stood a Commonwealth administration that had increased its expenditure per head of population by more than four times since the war to now easily exceed the combined revenue of the former colonial machinery, that had the Crimes Act, the Navigation Act and the Immigration Act to allow it to charge any instances of 'sedition' and that had an Anglo-Australian Prime Minister whose catchcry was not liberty, fraternity and equality but 'men, money and markets'. The liberalism of the pre-war world had not just been qualified by the extent of its acceptance of unprecedented responsibility for the social consequences of the mode of production. Just as the meaning of trade unionism and the labour movement more generally had been widened to incorporate a vision of the good society capable of allowing for the development of a 'real People', as the Sydney labour leader in D.H. Lawrence's Kangaroo put

it, the framework of the nation had been strengthened and narrowed to exclude such free aspirations on the hinge of disloyalty to an Australia that now had 60,000 dead and more than another 150,000 returned war heroes to its name.(122)

It appears, then, that Vance Marshall had been wrong. It seems as though, as far as the working class was concerned, the colour of the flag mattered a great deal, even if that class did not get a fair share of the good things of life. Despite his pro-war position, Marshall's mate, Henry Lawson - who had been 'buried like a Lord' (as his brother-in-law Jack Lang put it) in 1922 - had been too committed an artist to be able to resist the ambiguities of this aspect of Australian working class experience:

> Our fathers they were rebels by backwood, bog and glen;
> Our fathers and their fathers were hanged and hunted men;
> Our fathers marched from Creswick to die by Digger Town,
> And we joined up for England and the King his crown
> We'd fought with tongue and pen
> For years the wrongs of men -
> And then we fought for England and the King his crown ...
>
> A rebel while my beard was red and while my hair was brown,
> I've yapped four years for England and the King his crown -
> "Flag-flapper, turncoat, clown!"
> Old comrades wince and frown!
> I sold their cause for England and the King his crown ...(123)

This tension reminds us that nothing was settled. To appreciate something of the inequalities that still existed in this society, we need only juxtapose the image of Prime Minister Bruce, born into Melbourne's rich, married into a pastoral dynasty, educated at Melbourne Grammar and Cambridge, living in a £20,000 house and travelling to and from his official duties in a Rolls Royce with a

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122. D.H. Lawrence, op.cit., p.221.
123. H. Lawson, "The King His Crown" (1918), in L. Cronin (ed.), Fantasy of Man: Henry Lawson, Complete Works, 1901-1922, Sydney, 1984, p.731.

£50 note pinned in his pocket, with that of the 1922 FMWU meeting which pondered ways to assist a cleaning woman whose husband was an out-of-work boilermaker and who, having already lost two of her children at seven months, had been dismissed with three days' pay in lieu of notice for leaving her work early (with permission) on the night she heard news of her third child's death.(124) "Perhaps we'll find that we betrayed the rebel cause in vain," Lawson had reflected, "Perhaps some day we'll dare to raise the rebel flag again."(125)

Yet it would take another world war in this century of mass traumas before the labour movement would be able to firmly reclaim the flag within the terms of Australia's constitutional democracy - a war that was to be waged against the complete subsumption of the world's democracies within the tendencies to emotional, xenophobic, authoritarian national aggrandisement which can be found emerging in these years. It would also take this second world war against unbounded, militarised state-nationalism - or fascism - before socialists would be able to firmly re-occupy the offices of the FMWU - a union whose character, and the causes of its changing character, plainly cannot be understood separately from the general history of the society out of which it was made. In the meantime there would be an unprecedented world-wide economic depression and further protracted struggle, not just against the impositions of a ruling class that seemed to have reabsorbed all the social control if not quite the material advantages it had enjoyed before the 1890s, but also against the traditions, superstitions and alignments of the working class's own past and the now, at least in world terms, imposing shadow of Lenin.

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124. For the description of Bruce, see S.F. Macintyre (1986) op.cit., pp.222-223. For the cleaning woman, see NSWBM, 18 October 1922, ABL.
125. H. Lawson, "The King His Crown" (1918), op.cit., p.731.

IV

WAIFS AND STRAYS?

THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND ITS AFTERMATH: 1927-1945

"This Miscellaneous Workers' application for a change of Constitution of conditions for eligibility for membership is a hardy annual ... It was some news to me that the Miscellaneous Workers' Union ... catered for all these particular sections mentioned ... When the Miscellaneous Workers can class themselves as being connected with ... workers of a highly skilled character, it is a pretty big stretch of the imagination to give the name 'Miscellaneous'. That name implies people who are at odds and ends of different industries, because people who have any skill or some skill belong to organisations that are [already] registered. I suppose the original intention of their activity was to rope in all the odds and ends and call them a miscellaneous crowd."

- Secretary of a craft union in the Commonwealth Court, 1938

"This Union is constantly moving towards new points as they arise."

- Advocate for the FMWU in the Commonwealth Court, 1945

This chapter deals with the effects of the Great Depression of 1929-34 and the emergence of two major challenges to the union in its aftermath: a conservative but militant Catholic-based working class movement that began in 1931 and contradictory elements that began to disclose themselves within the union's own membership by 1945.

The 'Great Depression', as it was to become known, dramatically undermined the FMWU, operating as it did as part of the arbitration machinery. A union created and based on the extension and enforcement of benefits and conditions won through this mechanism had no answer when wages began falling and trade union rights came under attack as

unemployment soared during the greatest international crisis of capitalism this century. The actual response varied in the different Branches depending on the overall strength and character of the labour movement in each State. Generally, however, the effect was to render the union increasingly irrelevant as an economic instrument while allowing the entrenchment of pre-existing political positions and divisions. Such a response was not just apparent in the governments of the FMWU, it was also manifest in the society at large.

The militant Catholic working class movement that began to emerge in Australia in 1931 was a novel reaction to the evident failings of capitalism during the Great Depression. In essence this movement was a cry for a return to an idealised, traditional, perhaps even pre-industrial, form of society where "we shall be led in progressive stages", not to the human equality, abundance and happiness that liberals and socialists aspired to, but "to the final end of all, God Himself".(1) The implications of this outright rejection of both the capitalist present and the socialist future in favour of a return to the graded hierarchical order characteristically associated with feudalism were naturally dismal for those who traditionally inhabited the bottom ranks of society; namely, labouring men and particularly women - the bulk of the FMWU's membership. In practical terms, it dovetailed with Jack Lang's attempts to save his leadership of the New South Wales Labor Party, the conservativeness of the union's Federal leadership and the more general deterioration of social relations in this era - which was, after all, the era of fascism - to license the complete rout of the remaining radical and democratic content in the FMWU's government.

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1. Pius, PPXI, Quadragesimo Anno, Melbourne, 1931, p.44

The most profound challenge to the union in the aftermath of the Great Depression, however, was that which was implicit (and increasingly explicit) in the character of the membership of the union itself by the close of this period. The final section of the chapter examines the process of the FMWU's growth and the general changes that had occurred within its membership by 1945, a year that marked the 30th anniversary of the union's formation. For a generation the union had recruited those whom one of its advocates referred to as the 'waifs and strays' of the workforce within an economy that had experienced 30 years of faltering and uneven, but nevertheless appreciable, growth and development. What were the implications of three decades of 'constantly moving towards new points as they arise' in a dynamic capitalist economy? It was inevitable that the union would sooner or later find itself presiding over areas of major economic growth and by 1945 there were many signs that this change was cystallising within the FMWU. Moreover, it was crystallizing at a time when radical and democratic aspirations had once more been released in Australia as the nation mobilised in the Second World War. What of the 'waifs and strays' in these circumstances? Would they be content with their old peripheral status as they moved closer to the economic centre of their society? The combination of this new practical economic and ideological configuration of forces within the FMWU would prove highly combustible, as we shall see in the next chapter.

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An intelligent observer looking at the FMWU in 1927 could have easily concluded that its future prospects were bright. The decline in members caused by the early administrative failures and recessions

appeared to have been completely reversed. With the living wage in New South Wales having returned to its pre-recession peak of 85 shillings, the Branch had made up all of its membership losses and could now boast of surpassing its previous highest tally of 4,200 in 1921 by 100 members.(2) Proportionate growth had also been achieved by the other Branches. The Victorian Branch, which had been reduced to less than 500 members in 1923, now had over 1,600. The Queensland Branch, the headquarters of the Federation, had over 2,000 members - thanks largely to the assistance of state-compelled unionism. The FMWU's 1927 total of 8,000 members meant that it was more than three times the size of the mythical average Australian union. Moreover, it was also continuing to expand geographically and constitutionally. Between 1924 and 1927 the New South Wales Branch had recruited members as far north as Lismore, as far south as Cooma and as far west as Hay and Cobar. The other Branches had also begun to look to country towns and in 1927 General Secretary Bryan renewed the FMWU's interest in other States. The South Australian Branch, which had folded 18 months after the first attempt to establish it in 1917 when the initial Secretary "ratted", was re-started with the help of the Adelaide Trades Hall officials, another attempt was made to become established in Tasmania and, for the first time, prospects for the union were investigated in Western Australia.(3) In addition, negotiations were on-going with at least two unions over amalgamations and a sheaf of

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2. Wages rates are from the New South Wales Industrial Gazette (relevant years). For membership statistics see Appendix One.
3. For South Australia see VBM 13 April, 3 August, 9 November 1927, ABL. For Tasmania see: VBM 12 october 1927, 18 October 1928, ABL; FCM, 19 January 1928, FMWU Papers. For Western Australia see: NSWBM, 16 July 1927, ABL; FCM, 19 January 1928, FMWU Papers. The country organising of the NSW branch may be traced through the Branch minutes after 1924. See particularly, NSWBM, 4 August 1925, 13 September 1927, 25 October 1927, 13 September 1927, 25 October 1927, 27 November 1927, ABL.

new industries and callings was being prepared for another claim for constitutional extension in the Commonwealth Court. The FMWU, it might have been reasonably concluded, had weathered the war and early post-war years well.

Yet within another twelve months the FMWU's membership began to fall away dramatically and it kept on falling for at least another two years until the union was less than half its 1927 size. Wages followed the membership down. Within twelve months of being made, the plans for Tasmania and Western Australia were abandoned. An agency established in the new national capital city of Canberra in January 1929 was close in May 1930. The Newcastle Sub-Branch was shut down in 1932.(4) The South Australian Branch survived these years in little more than name only, and even this depended on Federal subsidies. Once more under pressure, the union's position was compounded when its administration failed a second time. In January 1930 the Victorian Branch Secretary was dismissed for incompetence and misconduct and before the end of the the year the appropriately named New South Wales Branch Secretary, Robert Cash, absconded with his clerk and all the funds.(5) The only part of the union that was to be solvent by the end of 1930 was the Queensland Branch, although this too disappeared in a sense for S.J. Bryan rationalised his costs by combining his FMWU resources with those of two of his other unions in the 'Electrical, Theatrical and Miscellaneous Unions Committee'.(6) The Great Depression thus devastated the union, wiping out all the gains in wages, funds and members made since 1922.

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4. On Canberra see: FCM 18 January 1929, 17 May 1930, FMWU Papers; NSWBM, 24 June 1930, ABL. On Newcastle see NSWBM, 22 November 1932, ABL.
5. VBM, 26 February - 24 June 1930; NSWBM 30 September 1930 - 15 June 1931, ABL.
6. QLDBM, 8 October 1929, FMWU Papers.

The massive economic crisis of 1929-34 was of course international in its origin. The spectacular crash of the New York Stock Exchange in October 1929 announced a haemorrhaging of world capitalism the like of which had never occurred before and has never been seen since on a comparable scale. The Australian economy was particularly exposed to the smash, being reliant on trading in industrial commodities and British loans to balance its expenditure on manufactured imports and fund public works. Australia's two major commodities, wool and wheat, accounted for nearly 75 percent of the value of exports and their value fell from a peak in 1928 to little more than a quarter of this return by 1931.(7) Meanwhile the international loan market contracted and Australia's inflow of long-term British loans halted in 1929. During 1930 and 1931 the Commonwealth fought off the threat of insolvency on its short-term London overdrafts as its overseas reserves dwindled and it struggled to meet payments out of its reduced income, a situation compounded by its large operating deficit - an accounting feature it shared with the State Governments. Farm workers and state day labour forces in the cities were the first to feel the effects of the calamity, but such a dramatic and sustained curtailing of export and loan funds inevitably spread throughout the economy. As rural workers were made unemployed and farmers ruined, so the reduced income was soon felt in the related transport and processing industries and as governments shed their day labour so the construction industry and its numerous related supplying, secondary and service industries were depressed. The collapse of these two key industries was soon manifested in tighter consumer and financial markets and so business activity fell away

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7. Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No.26 - 1933, Canberra, 1934, pp.231-2, 255.

virtually right across the board.[8] There are no comprehensive statistics on the extent of the unemployment that ensued, but those that exist illustrate the suddenness of the turn-around and something of its order of magnitude. Trade union returns only came from half the movement and did not include figures for day labourers - among the worst affected - or public servants. Nevertheless, they reported a rise in unemployed members from around six percent in 1927 (the lowest figure since 1920) to 30 percent by the winter of 1932.[9] If the machinery had existed to collect it, how high would the real percentage of unemployed have been? One historian has suggested that around one million of a total workforce of slightly more than two million lacked full-time employment, but even this might be a conservative estimate.[10] The consequences, of course, were hunger, eviction, destitution and all the harrowing effects of these on personal and social relationships. The Great Depression was a terrible experience. None of its victims ever forgot it, many had their lives permanently changed by it.

For the ruthless among the Anglo-Australian ruling class the solution to the economy's failure was, as always, simple. Australia's governments should immediately reduce their expenditure to balance their budgets and allow for the repayment of their loans while wages were cut and working hours increased to restore the profitability of the depressed industries. Produce more for less and let the devil take the hindmost. The most explicit government expression of this view issued from the Melbourne Premier's Conference of August 1930 addressed by the flint-hearted representative of the Bank of England,

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8. See generally: J.R. Robertson, "1930-39", in F.K. Crowley (ed.), op.cit., p.417; S.F. Macintyre (1986), op.cit., p.251-54.
9. Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No. 26 - 1933, Canberra, 1934, p.743.
10. S.F. Macintyre (1986), op.cit., p.275.

Sir Otto Niemeyer.[11] Such a solution - known as the Melbourne Agreement - had nothing but agony in it for the working class. The development of an effective alternative strategy, however, proved elusive.

The strong unions made their stand in 1928-29 when employers sought to drive down wages and destroy conditions as the crisis first began to disclose itself. With the local community-based miners, timber workers and waterfront workers showing the way, strikes had approached the record 1919 level, but the unions had been broken. Men stayed out for months on end, timber mills were burnt down, scabs were bashed, an effigy of an arbitration judge who had decided on reduced wages was sent up in flames, but falling returns, spreading unemployment and a state that was prepared to employ a greater level of violence in support of employers defeated labour's big battalions. When miners refused to work for lower wages coal owners simply closed down their sites, one coal miner and a waterside worker were shot dead by the police, the timber men also came under rifle fire and many other workers were wounded or batoned into submission.[12] There were also disarming sectional divisions within the trade unions, with craftsmen - a few of whom made money in real terms during the crisis - failing to support their labourers in some of the most crucial disputes. As Jock Garden pointed out, "the employers had no craft barriers to surmount".[13]

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11. ibid., pp.258-59; J.R. Robertson, op.cit., p.424.
12. See: H. Radi, "1920-29", F.K. Crowley (ed.) A New History of Australia, Melbourne, 1974, pp.408-414; R.A. Gollan (1963), op.cit., pp.195-7; J.S. Hagan (1981), op.cit., pp.89-93.
13. Some printers, for example, "were possibly even better off for a substantial part of the years 1930-2", J.S. Hagan (1966), op.cit., p.252. For J. Garden's comment, see: J.S. Hagan (1981), op.cit., p.92 (Garden's emphasis).

As unemployment rose, wages and union memberships fell. From a peak of 911,000 members or nearly 60 percent of workers in 1927, the union movement declined to 740,000 or 45 percent in 1931 and kept right on falling.(14) Such was the powerlessness of the movement - the new ACTU included - on top of the reductions in wages that occurred with falls in prices, in January 1931 the Commonwealth Court successfully reduced all its awards by ten percent. State courts followed suit, some affecting reductions in areas by more than 20 percent.(15) Institutions built in response to capitalism were enclosed within its chains and they declined right along with it.

The only avenues available for redress were political ones. The class conflict of 1928-29 secured the defeat of the Nationalists, but the new Commonwealth Government headed by Labor Prime Minister James Scullin found itself in a hopeless position, caught between supporters who demanded ameliorative action and a Senate controlled by conservatives who refused to let it do anything on any terms other than ones that would exacerbate the circumstances of these same supporters. As social conditions deteriorated the electoral goodwill of the government ebbed away in the stalemate and it became more and more divided within itself, finally breaking up. When Treasurer Theodore made a far-sighted proposal to expand credit to restore prices, stimulate production and thereby reduce unemployment, Joseph Lyons led part of the government onto the cross-benches in support of businessmen horrified at the prospect of inflation. Six weeks later Premier Jack Lang rejected the proposal in favour of suspending British interest payments and other radical measures, prompting the New South Wales members of the Commonwealth Government to also move to

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14. Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No.26 -1933, Canberra, 1934, p.147.
15. ibid., pp.726-27.

the cross-benches. With its majority gone, bills to enact Theodore's plan were blocked by the Senate, leaving the government with little choice but to support the so-called 'Premier's Plan', entailing a massive reduction in public expenditure, tax increases and a reduction in domestic interest rates, the latter reducing returns to bondholders in a token gesture toward the utterly fallacious but heavily promoted principle of 'equality of sacrifice'. The additional hardship the Plan placed on workers and the unemployed was intolerable to the 'Langsters' and in November 1931 they voted to bring the government down.(16) In retrospect it appears to have been merciful euthanasia.

A more radical solution was proposed by the Communist Party. At the sixth Comintern Congress in Moscow in 1928 Stalin had carried the day with his predictions that international capitalism had reached a stage of extreme contradiction that would lead to a new period of slumps and usher in a bout of proletarian revolutions. The strategy for communists in these circumstances was to break with all other parties and get into a position to lead the insurrectionary movements against the bourgeoisie, who would be forced to adopt fascist methods to maintain control when the working class turned away from liberal and social democratic solutions. In the interim, Labor and other working class parties were to be discredited for their 'social fascism', or even 'left social fascism', and communist parties were to be strictly organised along the lines of 'democratic-centralism' - a misnomer for a strict hierarchy based on trade union and locality cells over the top of which would preside a Secretariat, an exclusive conduit for Comintern policy. This was an extremely ambitious program for the Australian Party, which had fewer than 250 members and little

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16. See W. Denning, Caucus Crisis: The Rise and Fall of the Scullin Government, Sydney, 1982, passim.

credibility in 1928, but appeals to Moscow and the arrival of a Comintern delegate overruled the counsel of wise-heads. The leadership was purged and the 'Third Period' program was adopted at the CPA's Christmas conference of 1929.(17) Among the new leaders was the FMWU's unremittingly militant Lance Sharkey.

Perhaps the most convincing evidence that social revolution was actually on the agenda is that which goes to the reaction of Australia's conservatives who, with scant regard for Stalin's predictions, began rallying in earnest against Labor from the outset of the downturn. In New South Wales the 'Who's for Australia? League' sprang up with the Scullin government and soon claimed 5,000 rabid nationalists baying for the Empire and non-party government. By 1931 the more overtly fascist 'New Guard' could count a force of 50,000 citizens. In Melbourne the 'Order of Australian Knights' commanded 2,000 belligerent well-to-do toughs and the 'White Guard' was revived in 1930 as the 'League of National Security', an undercover militia of some 30,000 standing ready to seize all strategic parts of the state in a crisis. As well as these hard core conservative forces, large rural movements to secede from New South Wales (that is, Sydney) emerged and in January 1931 Sydney Rotarians founded the 'All for Australia League' "to uphold the traditions of the Anglo Saxon Race". Within two months it recruited around 100,000 members.(18) Similar movements of conservative citizens emerged around the rest of the country.

Against this mobilisation, the CPA's membership rose to slightly over 1,000 in 1931 but it remained an electoral non-entity. As dedicated working class militants, the contribution of this small band

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17. A. Davidson, op.cit., pp.51-65.
18. K. Amos, op.cit., pp.14-19, 38.

of activists proved effective in local struggles over evictions and the organisation of unemployed protests, but as openly Communist Party members they achieved little more than a reputation for "overbearing, unscrupulous, uncompromising, pigheaded" fanaticism.(19) When, as communists had unceasingly predicted, Commonwealth Labor proved unable to manage the crisis, the electorate turned - not to the left - but to the United Australia Party. Comprising the Nationalists and the citizens' bodies and headed by the 'Labor rat', Joe Lyons, it was the largest conservative vote in Australia's history and the fascist squads faded from sight. Stalin's theory could not have been more awry. If Labor was guilty of the wounding charge of 'social fascism', events stripped communists of all defence against the trade unionist's retort that they were 'social fatheads'.(20)

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The FMWU found it no easier than the labour movement generally to formulate a response to the crisis. The union's Federal Council was among its first casualties. Although Federal meetings had resumed after the defeat of the communist leadership in New South Wales, they remained soured by the rule changes of 1922-23 and the refinements of 1926, which effectively combined to exclude the Branch that, after all, had more than half the members and contributed over half the union's funds. Robert Webster, James McConville and the other New South Wales Labor left-wingers became obsessed with obtaining some reform, usually with the support of most of the rest of the Branch's government and often with the assistance of the CPA members, who

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19. A. Davidson, op.cit., p.63.
20. Sydney Morning Herald, 8 August, 1930

remained active at Monthly General Meetings. The Branch withheld its contributions and boycotted the 1928 Council held in Adelaide to celebrate the opening of the South Australian Branch, acquired copies of the minutes of all the previous Federal meetings, convened Special General Meetings to decide tactics, established an on-going Committee of Investigation and passed a never-ending stream of protest motions.(21) At the 1929 and 1930 Councils the Branch moved resolution after resolution calling for Federal representation to be based on total Branch membership, for delegates to be entitled to cast votes in proportion to their membership, for a limit to be placed on the number of positions any one Branch could hold on the Federal Executive, for the introduction of a mechanism to allow appeals over Council decisions to be taken to the members, for Councils to be held biennially or triennially, for reduced Federal contributions and, when all else failed, for an easing of the rules governing withdrawal from the Federation altogether.(22) The other Councillors rejected each motion with monotonous steadfastness, endorsed the minutes of all prior Council meetings, censured and imposed a penalty on the Branch for withholding its funds and went so far as to double the annual rate of contributions to five percent of Branch income.(23) In the meantime nothing was achieved.

With the establishment of a second Federal Vice-Presidency to admit the South Australian Branch Secretary to the Executive in 1929, even S.J. Bryan could no longer deny New South Wales some representation and the Branch's experienced organiser, Bill Smith, was

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21. NSWBM, 18 October 1927, 10 May, 16 July 1928, 31 January, 28 February 1928, ABL.
22. ibid., 6 November, 20 December 1928, 24 June 1930; FCM, 14-19 January 1929, 13-18 May 1930, FMWU Papers.
23. FCM, 18-20 January 1928, 14-19 January 1929, 13-19 May 1930, FMWU Papers.

elected Federal President.[24] Further concessions were made at the 13th Federal Council, which was convened in Sydney as the Great Depression approached its nadir in October 1931. Margaret Colbourne, the conservative leader of the New South Wales cleaning women, was elected Vice-President, giving the Branch two Executive members, and a rule was introduced to allow Federal decisions to be taken to the members upon motions passed at General Meetings of at least two Branches.[25]

The rest of the New South Wales Branch's long list of proposed reforms were defeated as usual, but these concessions at least showed some renewed interest in the Federation, an assessment supported by the Council's first genuine consideration of policy initiatives extending beyond the machinery of the union itself. With the official trade union unemployment returns passing 30 percent, the FMWU's membership falling away everywhere by an even greater margin and conservative Australia mobilising on a large scale - and with S.J. Bryan's Queensland Branch experiencing its first non-Labor State Government in 15 years - the union called on the Labor Party "to declare itself in favour of the restoration of pensions, hours, wages and social services", to include the claim for a 35-hour week in its platform and to press for a "National Insurance Scheme for maturity, sickness and unemployment and the abolition of State Parliament". The Council also unanimously condemned "the Capitalistic Organisation known as the 'New Guard' recently called into being for the express purpose of destroying the existing Industrial and Political conditions of the workers" and protests were registered against the issue of 'Slow Worker Permits', which were being abused by employers as a way

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24. ibid., 14-19 January 1929.
25. ibid., p.26-31 October 1931.

of further reducing the wages of lift attendants, and against the Commonwealth showing preference for banks outside of New South Wales because of Premier Lang's policies.[26] The Queensland Branch went so far as to promote applications for Federal awards.

There was, then, some evidence that the FMWU was moving toward unified and more democratically based political action. Instead of a beginning, however, it was the end. Twenty-five days after the 1931 Council the Commonwealth Labor government collapsed, six months later the New South Wales and Victorian Labor governments fell in the one week and in June 1932 the Queensland Branch's interest in Federal action disappeared following the return of its State Labor government. With the Queensland Branch the only solvent part of the union, the 1932 Council was abandoned. The 1933 Council was notable only for the fact that the New South Wales and Victorian delegates successfully invoked the union's new referendum rule to prevent S.J. Bryan from abolishing open meetings of the FMWU's members. The New South Wales Branch attended the Council to call for the complete disbanding of the FMWU.[27] No further Federal meetings were held until 1935.

At the Branch level the union's response is telling for its contrasts. The impact on the Queensland Branch government was slight. Thirty pounds had been donated in support of the timber workers in 1929 and, after the Commonwealth Labor government had fallen, a protest was lodged against the new conservative coalition for "displaying their class bitterness and their desire to crush workers in the interests of British Capitalists".[28] Other than this, Bryan simply rationalised his administration and campaigned for a return of

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26. ibid., 26-31 October 1931.
27. NSWBM, 20 June, 29 August, 28 November 1933; VBM, 14 June, 12 July 1933 (ABL); FCM, 20 May 1935, FMWU Papers.
28. QLDBM, 1, 3 March, 5 April, 14 May 1929, 24 May 1932, FMWU Papers.

the Queensland Labor government. The able Secretary was now also a Brisbane alderman, the President of the Queensland Trades and Labour Council and an Executive member of the Queensland Labor Party and the ACTU. As a consequence his orientation was to the policies of the Queensland labour movement as a whole, not any particular circumstances of the small FMWU part of his responsibilities: a stance that was easily maintained because of his absolute immunity from democratic account. Not only was he not open to election for his position as Branch or General Secretary, but in 1929 he had taken the extraordinary step of abolishing open meetings for the FMWU's Queensland members.(29) These measures combined with state-compelled unionism meant that members could neither question him nor resign in protest. With a hand-picked government, resolutions from workers calling for General Meetings were roundly defeated, sectional meetings of state employees - who were the largest, most coherent and most militant Queensland section - were suspended and CPA correspondence ignored. By 1934 the Branch was recovering, Bryan reporting the abolition of work rationing and an annual increase in members from 1,500 to over 1,600.(30)

The government of the Victorian Branch, on the other hand, was wracked from end to end and the FMWU was fortunate to have survived in this State. Although no membership figures exist an estimate of 200-300 at the lowest point would probably be generous. As early as February 1929 the Branch mortuary fund - which had been operating for eight years - was abolished because "there were about 300 members

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29. ibid., 5, 23 April, 3 May 1929, FMWU Papers.
30. ibid., 8 October, 10 December 1929, 22 December 1930, 2 January 1951 (for cancellation of meetings of Government Section), FMWU Papers. For Bryan's report on recovery, see The Australian Labor Year Book, 1934-35, Sydney, 1935, p.723 (published by Labor Daily).

threatening to resign if it was persisted in".[31] In November 1930 the Secretary reported that the Branch "had been showing a loss for the last fourteen weeks".[32] Nightwatchmen, who comprised the largest section of male members, attempted to pull out of the union completely.[33] In March 1931 the sole organiser had to be laid off and not long after the two shillings Executive attendance fee was abolished, membership fees were reduced, both the Secretary and clerk's wages cut, legal proceedings commenced against members in arrears who were in constant work and reduced Labor Party affiliation fees were sought.[34]

The reason for the comparative destitution was clearly the much weaker relationship between the Victorian labour movement and the state. Whereas Queensland had compulsory unionism, under the Victorian Wages Board system the Branch had not only been more restricted in its membership growth and diversity, it legally stood outside, not between, the members and the state. Whereas Queensland had experienced half a generation of Labor governments and had been the only State to have unemployment relief in place when the crisis broke, Victoria's short-lived, hamstrung Labor coalition government was its first Labor administration to last longer than a month and the region had the lowest level of unemployment relief in Australia.[35] To close meetings of members here would have closed down the union.

Still the Branch did survive, largely through the efforts of its new Secretary, Florence Anderson: the first (and, as it turned out, in the period of this thesis, only) woman to win one of the FMWU's

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31. VBM, 27 February, 17 July 1929, ABL.
32. ibid., 3 November 1930.
33. ibid., 3 June 1931.
34. ibid., 2 March, 1 April 1931, 10 February, 1 June 1931, 11 January 1933.
35. On conditions in general in Victoria see S. Macintyre (1985), op.cit., pp.73-4, 77-8.

chief executive positions. A former teacher who had been prevented from re-entering her profession after her husband was killed and left her with three children to rear, Anderson had come into the union as the Secretary of the Female Office Cleaners' Union in 1921.(36) Her rise to the head of the Victorian Branch stemmed from the amalgamation conditions, which had included her appointment as full-time Assistant Branch Secretary and guarantees that there be a female Vice-President, at least one other female Executive member, a female delegate to the Trades Hall Council and a female Wages Board member.(37) Having been forced to organise their own separate union because of the original craft-derived sexist assumptions of the Victorian labour movement, women thus found themselves in a much stronger position here than in the apparently more liberal New South Wales Branch once the barriers finally gave way. When the FMWU began to cave in during the Depression, Anderson was a woman with rare trade union experience and seniority and the most qualified to assume the Branch's ultimate responsibilities.

In addition to taking hard decisions to minimise expenditure, in contrast to the other male led Branches, Anderson was able to keep Victoria's office doors open by hosting a long round of social events: Roast Dinner Raffles, Euchre Nights, Saucepan and Kettle Raffles, Goose Club Raffles, dances with door prizes.(38) Besides maintaining a skeletal presence, this allowed parcels of blankets and groceries to be put together for the terribly distressed.(39) Anderson also escalated the Branch's political activities, although she would have nothing to do with the CPA's new policy, condemning it and "its

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36. See the biographical article by R.A. Cameron, 20 February 1978, FMWU Papers. Also see Labor Call, 18 April, 2 May 1942.
37. VBM, 20 January 1921, ABL.
38. ibid., 10 March, 20 April, 6 May, 23 July, 3, 5, 10 August 1932.
39. ibid., 15 July 1931.

subsidiary groups as obstacles to the progress of the working class and as such [to] be treated as other opponents of the Labor Movement".(40) Nevertheless, the Female Office Cleaners had a history of activity in the anti-conscription campaign and in the defence of the IWW Twelve, and it had actually been as another of the conditions of its amalgamation that the FMWU's Victorian Branch had affiliated to the Labor Party.(41) After attending a meeting of the World Disarmament Movement, she made up for the lack of money in her treasury in typical fashion by promptly organising a social for the cause.(42) By 1935 the Branch was growing again. "There is not so much unemployment among our members and rationing which was so rife has passed altogether" Florence reported to the February 1936 Annual General Summonsed Meeting.(43)

Circumstances were more fluid in New South Wales where the FMWU's New South Wales Branch continued to turn around the figure of Jack Lang and his trade union based 'Inner-Group'. After the defeat of Lang's government in 1928 there had been some reconciliation between left-wing Labor and the CPA members in the Branch.(44) Sharkey had been returned unopposed as its Labour Council delegate in 1928 and 1929 and other leading Party members were invited to address members on developments in the Soviet Union.(45) Sharkey's elevation to the CPA's Central Committee, the adoption of Third Period policies and the re-election of Lang in 1930 brought this dialogue to a halt. When Sharkey went to Moscow for a Comintern Conference in July 1930 his

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40. ibid., 18 May 1931.
41. Minutes of the Female Office Cleaners' Union of Victoria, 5 August 1917, 4 October 1919, ABL.
42. VBM, 26 July 1933, ABL.
43. ibid., 19 February 1936.
44. NSWBM, 23 February, 10, 30 March, 27 April, 25 May 1926, ABL.
45. ibid., 28 February, 27 March, 31 July, 25 September, 16 October, 12 November 1928.

Labour Council delegateship was declared vacant, when he returned he was outvoted in his attempt to address the members on his trip and when he moved his Third Period motion against the Labor Party at the Branch's 1931 Annual General Summonsed Meeting he was ruled out of order.(46) During the depth of the Depression between January 1930 and May 1933 only two motions moved by the chief Australian spokesman for communism in his own union were carried: one for a May Day donation and one against the New Guard, this body particularly alarming the FMWU because of its policy of recruiting caretakers at city banks, insurance buildings and other key centres of capitalist order.(47)

As for the government as a whole, two episodes stand out from the general story of immiseration as they show the co-existence of the two contesting strategies that were available, the appeal to the traditional sense of social justice for the downtrodden and the impulse for more radical political solutions. At one level an attack on the wages of the loyal school cleaning women by the Minister for Education triggered off stories and editorials in the press and questions and speeches in parliament which focused on the inhumanity of reducing the conditions of such helpless labourers. "Tearful Widows Face Wage Crash" announced one headline, "Pity the Poor Charlady" cried another. The need to safeguard and regenerate capitalism met a moral border, as a third headline - "Economy Gone Mad - Robbing the Widows" - made plain. The Labour Council, the Labor Party, the Teachers' Federation, parents and citizens' associations

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46. ibid., 24 February 1931.
47. ibid., 28 April, 29 September 1931. On the New Guard and the city caretakers, see K. Amos, op.cit., p.44.

and churches all manned the barricades. "Minister Rebuffed" reported Labour Daily within four months of the women's wage cut.[48]

At another level the Branch took some significant party political initiatives. At the 1930 New South Wales Labor Party Conference socialists found themselves unanimously supported in a motion to establish a committee "to devise ways and means to propagate the first and principle platform of the Party - the Socialization of Industry" and thereupon developed a popular socialist movement in the Party to rival any radical movement in its history.[49] By the time of the 1931 Labor Conference, which briefly endorsed a practical three-year program to introduce socialism, 97 Socialization Units had been established in the Party's Branches. By the end of 1932 there were 178 Branch Units and it has been estimated that at the peak nine-tenths of the 250 odd Sydney Labor Branches and two-fifths of country Branches established Units.[50] In July 1932 an Industrial Socialization Committee was established to set up Units in unions and the FMWU had one of the first formed.[51] For six months the Branch's members met to discuss the introduction of socialism, distributed socialisation newspapers and leaflets and passed supporting resolutions.[52] Frank Midgley - a cleaner of eight years' standing in the union - became Assistant Secretary-Organiser of the Industrial Socialization Committee at large and in November 1932 Branch President

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48. The following references indicate the popular extent of the campaign: Sydney Morning Herald, 6, 12, 27 September, 27 November, 12 December 1929; Daily Telegraph, 6, 27, September 1929; Sun, 1, 2, 8, 16 October, 27 November, 12, 13 December 1929; Newcastle Herald, 12, 13 September, 15, 16 October 1929; Newcastle Sun, 16 October 1928; Daily Guardian, 4, 6, 7, 12, 27 September 1929; Kurri Times, 17 October 1929; Workers' Weekly, 29 September 1929; Ryde Leader, 26 September 1929; Cessnock Eagle, 15 November 1929.
49. R. Cooksey, Lang and Socialism: A Study in the Great Depression Canberra, 1970, pp.6-7.
50. ibid., p.22.
51. ibid., pp.30-2; NSWBM, 8 July 1930, ABL.
52. NSWBM, 26 July, 27 September, 22 November 1932, ABL.

Thomas Keniry was elected to the New South Wales Labor Party Executive to make up a narrow socialist majority - the first such majority since Jack Lang's election as Labor leader in 1924.[53]

By this time, however, there was great conflict in the Party. New South Wales Labor had been expelled from the Federal Party when the 'Langsters' split from Scullin's government and it was now in opposition itself as a result of Lang's dismissal by His Majesty's New South Wales representative for going ahead and deferring payment on overseas loans. Out of office, the tensions between the Party's factions proved too great for the Inner-Group to reconcile. The Victorian and Queensland-based Federal Labor Party began sponsoring a competing New South Wales Labor Party under the leadership of Theodore with the support of the AWU while the Catholic Church urged Lang to crush the Socialization Units - one Archbishop warning of "civil war".[54] Attempting to restore equilibrium, the Inner-Group moved against the socialists and, without explanation, the ballot that had put Thomas Keniry onto the Labor Executive was overturned.[55] Keniry was defeated in the fresh ballot, removing the narrow socialist executive majority.[56] The FMWU, which had always instructed its delegates "to support the Lang Policy in every shape and form" and was well known as "one of the staunchest supporters of the Inner-Group", disaffiliated from the Party for the second time in its history.[57]

The break with Lang led to a polarisation within the Branch. Lance Sharkey on the one side and Margaret Colbourne on the other had

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53. ibid., 22 November 1932; R. Cooksey, op.cit., p.31.
54. R. Cooksey, op.cit., p.67.
55. ibid., p.63.
56. ibid., pp.69-71; Sun, 9, 17 December 1932.
57. Quotes from Sydney Morning Herald, 31 October 1935; NSWBM, 10 February 1931 (ABL). For the disaffiliation see NSWBM, 12 December 1932 (ABL). Robert Webster had a reputation as Lang Minister Eddie Ward's "right-hand" man, see M.H Ellis, The Garden Path, Sydney, 1949, p.31.

represented a fringe minority consistently opposed to the socialist Labor movement and now they attracted sufficient support from the disillusioned to crush those fighting a rear guard action to save it.[58] The union's political position remained fluid throughout 1933. Support was given to CPA front organisations such as the Militant Minority Movement and the International Defence League, but in October it re-affiliated to Lang Labor following addresses to the members about Keniry's ballot by craft unionists representing the Inner-Group.[59] This was soon followed by the CPA's abandonment of Third Period policies in favour of building a united international working class front to fight fascism, allowing a consolidation of the Branch's socialists for the first time since the divisions of 1925.[60]

In 1934 the government of the FMWU's largest Branch thus returned to a straightforward left-right dichotomy with the left usually able to claim comfortable majority support from the members. The brimming socialist movement in the New South Wales Labor Party was, however, gone. So, too, more and more voices were beginning to claim, was the Great Depression. Stringent government budget and borrowing policies, a substantial devaluation of the currency, the rationalisation of the organisation and ownership of many industries and continuing low wages, together with a preferential trade deal with England for primary producers and tariff barriers as high as 80 percent for manufacturers, saw economic activity once more begin to expand.[61] By the end of 1932 trade union unemployment figures had stopped their

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58. Note Lance Sharkey voting with Margaret Colbourne against the Labor Party left, NSWBM, 27 June 1933, ABL.
59. ibid., p.31 January, 28 March, 11, 26 April, 9, 30 May 1933.
60. ibid., 29 August, 26 September, 10, 24 21 October 1933 (for re-affiliation).
61. See J.R. Robertson, op.cit., pp.436-39; S.F. Macintyre (1986), op.cit., pp.286-293.

seemingly inexorable upward climb and in 1933 the official percentage out of work fell to 25. In 1934 the figure fell to almost 20 percent and the downward trend began to seem established.[62] In March 1934 workers in Victoria's State Coal Mine at Wonthaggi commenced a successful four-month strike and by the end of the year the Commonwealth Year Book's broad industry categories showed the first rise in the number of working days lost in disputes since 1929.[63] These were unmistakable signs of recovery.

So the trade union movement began to regather its strength and the FMWU to regather its members. Slowly the crisis receded. Its history was left behind, not in the records of the unions such as the FMWU, which had nothing in its past to prepare it sufficiently for such a challenge, but in the legacy of charities, lotteries and relief agencies, in the lingering shanty camps, soup kitchens and ration systems, in the deferred marriages, the fallen birth-rate and the less easily measured number of broken human spirits, in hours that had been wiled away in libraries, growing vegetables or hunting rabbits, in the disconnected telephone, the sold car and worn clothes, in the pangs of being unable to afford even a rare evening at the cinema, a bet on Phar Lap or to go and watch 'Our Don Bradman', in the haunting memories of tramping hobos, thousands sleeping in the big city parks and the sound of hungry children crying themselves to sleep at night, in the photographs of the unemployed armies marching in the streets beneath the hammer and sickle, in the police records of suppressed neighbourhood riots, in the endless tales of some exceptional act of generosity, selfishness or victimisation and in the myriad accounts of desperately ingenious exigencies taken. The experience of the FMWU's

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62. Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No.28 - 1935, Canberra, 1936, p.395.
63. ibid., pp.388-89.

members could only be found in amongst these multifarious expressions of the hardship, not in the records of an apparatus that, had the crisis lasted much longer, would have certainly disappeared from history altogether - at least in the form we have got to know it.

Yet, as the economy and the FMWU now began to recover, such a mass trauma could not be forgotten. Admitted or not, the certain knowledge that this capitalist system of production was capable of sudden, violent breakdown continued as part of everyone's consciousness. It had, of course, always been part of the individual life experience of most of the FMWU's members. Now, however, one way or another, it was part of the material out of which the union and the broader society of the future would have to be reconstructed. We will look, first, at the union's government in the aftermath of this experience and, second, at the more general experience of its members and the patterns of the union's regrowth.

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In February 1940 the New South Wales Branch Secretary and notable survivor, Bill Smith, reported to his members gathered at their Annual General Summonsed Meeting that the 19th Federal Council held in Melbourne two months earlier had been the "most cordial conference that I have attended".[64] Smith, who had attended the FMWU's Federal Councils since 1926 and had been Federal President since 1929, was in a better position than nearly anyone else to know. The delegates had met, he reported, "in a spirit of comradeship that has been absent

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64. "Report of Federal Conference", December 1939, NSWBM, 27 February 1940, ABL.

from all other conferences".[65] From this point Federal relations only improved. At the Federal Council held in Sydney in November 1942 New South Wales' long list of motions for Federal reform was absent from the agenda for the first time in 16 years and the 1943 Council was positively celebratory. "The unity of purpose which exists at the moment," sung Harry Harvey, who had succeeded S.J. Bryan as Secretary of the Queensland Branch and the Federation in 1938, "has never been surpassed in the history of the Union. Branch jealousies and suspicions, which have loomed so large in the past, have disappeared."[66] The 1944 Council passed in similar vein and in 1945 Harvey could barely contain himself: "I feel it unnecessary to refer to the good feeling which exists between the President and myself", he wrote in his Federal report, "There has never been a President and Secretary atmosphere between us and we have been able to work at all times as friends. Actually this feeling permeates the whole of the Branch Officials ... Long may our own set up continue".[67]

By this time, however, it would have been difficult for the Branch Secretaries and the delegates to report this rosy picture back to their members. The Queensland Branch had not held a general meeting of its members since 1929, general meetings had been abolished in Victoria and South Australia in 1944-5 and the New South Wales Branch's General Monthly Meeting scheduled for January 1946 was expected to be the FMWU's last. Sectional meetings could, and in some places did, continue to be held, and a new institution - State Councils comprising elected representatives of the sections - had been

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65. ibid.
66. "Delegates Report of Federal Conference, Sydney, 1942", NSWBM (ABL); FCM, 1-6 November 1943 (FMWU Papers); "Delegates of Federal Conference, Adelaide, 1943", NSWBM (ABL).
67. "General Secretary's Report - 1945-46", FMWU Papers.

substituted for the general meetings. Neither the General Secretary, any of the Branch Secretaries, or any of the union's organisers were, however, subject to election - and these officers almost exclusively occupied all the Federal Council, Federal Executive and Branch Executive positions. More, with the exception of an occasional broadsheet from the New South Wales Branch, there were no sources of information about the union's activities available to the members and, with the abolition of open general meetings, there was no longer any way in which decisions of the all-powerful Federal Council or any other of the union's governing bodies could be placed before the members. The government and activities of the union could hardly have been placed more safely beyond the influence and, indeed, the knowledge of the members. The government had become an almost completely and permanently sealed bureaucracy, a perfect oligarchy - a secret society.

Further, it had become an extremely conservative secret society, particularly its New South Wales Branch. The Branch was not only resolved, as Bill Smith put it in November 1944, "to obey the law of the land and refrain from direct action", which was not an unusual position for the FMWU, but it had also reached a new era in the vehemence of its anti-communism.(68) In March 1945 the New South Wales Branch, which had been the odd radical Branch out in the Federation since 1917, organised its Labour Council delegates into an official anti-communist "Team" under the direction of a "Leader" and further resolved to amend its rules so "that no member of the Communist Party and/or actively associated with the Communist

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68. New South Wales Branch Secretary's Report, 3 November 1944, FMWU Papers.

propaganda or activities be eligible for any position in the Federation".[69] Any members, it was separately moved, "seeking a position of office in the Federation will be required to sign a pledge that he is not a member of a communist organisation".[70] The Branch was also now opposed to the ACTU. Sixteen years earlier, on the eve of the Great Depression, New South Wales had defied the rest of the Federation to affiliate with the peak council. Despite the fact that S.J. Bryan had represented the Queensland Trades and Labour Council on the ACTU's Executive, the FMWU's Federal Council had insisted, in line with the AWU, that adherence to the principle of industrial unionism as embodied in "the constitution of that body imperilled the existence of the union".[71] Ruling the New South Wales Branch's affiliation unconstitutional, the Federal Council had stayed out until 1937, to the Branch's unremitting opposition.[72] Now, it seemed, all the ideological tables had turned. The New South Wales Branch now led the FMWU in berating the ACTU and in July 1945 it moved to abandon its affiliation.[73]

What is the explanation for this turn-around by the FMWU's largest and, for nearly 30 years, most radical Branch? The answer is not perfectly clear, although the first point to be registered is how internationally enlightened in outlook and activity the New South Wales Branch was from 1934 to 1938, years that saw the world slide into position for its second terrible war. Most of the Branch's activity stemmed from the rapproachment between the CPA and the Labor

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69. NSWBM, 14 August 1945, FMWU Papers.
70. ibid., 26 July 1945.
71. Labor Daily, 22 January 1929.
72. FCM, 30 November - 7 December 1937, Dwyer Papers, University of New South Wales Archives (UNSW).
73. NSWBM, 26 July 1945, FMWU Papers.

left in the policy of forming the united front (from 'above' as well as 'below') against international fascism, a rapproachment that strengthened as more and more of the State's labour movement gave up on Jack Lang. As Germany, Italy and Japan destroyed the measures that had been put into place to preserve international peace after the Great War, and while Australia's governments did all they could to confine their perspectives within the borders of the country, interpreting the rest of the increasingly dangerous globe, when it could not be ignored, through the appeasing eyes of comforting British Imperialism, loyalty to the Soviet Union and the internationalising influence of Marxism gave the left a more clear-eyed view of the perilous way in which the world was turning.(74)

In this the Branch became one of many unions, or parts of unions, to come under capable left-wing leadership between 1934 and the early 1940s. In 1934 the Miners returned two communist leaders, Bill Orr and Charlie Nelson, in 1936 the Federated Ironworkers elected Ernest Thornton and the New South Wales Teachers went to the left, in 1937 Jim Healy won through in the Waterfront Workers, other communist victories occurred in the Seamen's Union, the Clerks, the Amalgamated Engineers, the Sheet Metal Workers, the Actors and elsewhere. Sydney's two industrial satellite towns - Wollongong and Newcastle - went to the left and the Queensland Trades and Labour Council effectively came under communist leadership. As distinct from the earlier generation of CPA activists, most of these leaders were as astute as trade unionists as they were dedicated to their cause. Schooled in the experience of the Great Depression, they formed what was perhaps Australia's most distinguished working class elite.

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74. S.F. Macintyre (1986), op.cit., p.295.

As early as 1933 the FMWU's New South Wales Branch had petitioned the German Consul over its "horror [at] the murder and torture of Trade Unionists, Socialists, Communists, Jews and Intellectuals under the present system in Germany".(75) In 1934 donations and delegations were sent to the National Committee for the relief of the Victims of German and Austrian Fascist Terror, the National Movement Against War and Fascism and the Workers' Educational Association.(76) Tickets were sold for Anti-War Movement dances, protests were lodged against the Commonwealth Attorney General, Robert Menzies, for attempting to prevent the anti-fascist Czech writer, Egon Kisch, landing in Australia and then having him arrested. Communists and their erstwhile 'social-fascist traitors' now repeatedly debated whether the Branch should continue affiliation with Lang Labor or join the CPA - or both.(77)

With Hitler beginning to re-arm Germany and with Mussolini's armies rolling into Abyssinia in 1935, Lance Sharkey and James Baker, a communist nightwatchman employed at the State Library, once again won the Branch's Labor Council delegate positions. The Branch also began supporting the Friends of the Soviet Union, the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights and the War, What For? Movement.(78) It purchased dozens of copies of Labor Defender and Egon Kisch's books, promoted the New Theatre, sent delegates to the Communist Party Youth Conference on War and put its own banner aside on Six-Hour Day so that the members could march behind the anti-war movement's.(79)

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75. NSWBM, 30 May 1933, ABL.
76. ibid., 27 March, 10 April, 8 May, 12 June, 31 July, 28 August 1934.
77. ibid., 24, 28 April, 13 August, 28 November 1934.
78. ibid., 29 January, 30 April, 14 May, 12 June, 4 July, 27 August, 24, 29 September, 29 October, 12 November 1935.
79. ibid., 28 May, 12 June, 27 August 1935.

Although affiliation to Lang Labor remained, by October 1935 it was publicly criticising the Inner-Group for its neutral policy toward events in Europe, its banning of anti-war bodies, its curtailing of local autonomy in Party electorate councils and branches and unions, its "complete absence of any continued and effective propaganda", its restrictions on "freedom of speech and action" and its generally "narrow and sectional attitude".[80] Between the moribund Lang Machine and the looming international war, comradeship grew. In 1936, as Hitler formalised his alliances with Italy and Japan and occupied the Rhineland, and as Spain plunged into bloody civil war, the activism increased. The Branch praised "the great Industrial progress made by our fellow-workers in the Soviet Union", elected a delegation to the Congress of Peace and Friendship, purchased dozens of copies of Soviets Today and "Hitler's Threat to Peace" and began donating to the Spanish Relief Committee. Simultaneously it stiffened its stand for democracy in Australia, supporting the AWU Membership Rights Committee, fighting Lang over the control of Labor Daily (which was lost) and the Labour Council's radio station 2KY (which was won).[81] Although the position of the members remained too weak for direct action, energy was poured into the Annual Picnic (for which a day off work had been granted by Lang in 1927), numerous donations were voted in support of other striking workers and in March 1937, as wage rates began to approach their pre-Depression levels and struggles for fresh improvements were beginning, economics discussion classes began to be held at sectional meetings.[82] In 1937 the Branch added the Left

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80. Sydney Morning Herald, 26 October 1935.
81. NSWBM, 25 February, 10 March, 29 April, 26 May, 29 September, 26 November 1936, ABL.
82. ibid., 30 January, 27 March, 22 June 1934, 12 February 1935, 11 August 1936, 2, 3 March, 16 June 1937.

Book Club to the long list of organisations and movements it supported, joined the National Council of Action for Equal Pay for women, endorsed the ACTU's policy of seeking collective world security against fascism through co-operation with the Soviet Union and the tattered League of Nations, endorsed the Labour Council's Hands Off China Committee as a protest against its invasion by Japan and pledged the union to boycott Japanese goods.(83)

Meanwhile, every opportunity continued to be taken to cut down the dead weight of Lang and his Inner-Group. In January 1938 it joined the - this time successful - "fight to remove the control of Labor Daily from the 'Lang Inner-Group' domination", repudiating the "misuse of Labor's paper for factional purposes" and demanding "the resignation of Lang and Beasley".(84) It also enthusiastically backed the inspiring struggle of the Waterside Workers against 'Pig Iron Bob' Menzies over the export of raw war materials to Japan and began splitting its party political donations between Lang and a new Industrial Labor Party based among the growing opposition to the burnt out demagogue gathering behind Bob Heffron in the Labor Council.(85) It would not be long before Lang's leadership would be on the line. In the meantime, however, he fought back, organising supporter groups to maintain union backing under the guise of anti-communism.

Was the left-wing government of the FMWU's New South Wales Branch destroyed by Jack Lang's rearguard action within the trade union movement to save his leadership? If this is the first possible explanation, the second involves one novel Australian response to the

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83. ibid., 23, 31 March, 27 April, 29 June, 2, 27 July, 11 August, 28 September, 14 October 1937.
84. ibid., 25 January, 26 April 1938. Also see R.B. Walker, "The Fall of Labor Daily", Labour History, No.38, May 1980, pp.67-75.
85. NSWBM, 29 March, 26 July, 30 August 1938, ABL.

Great Depression: the development of a militantly conservative Catholic Action movement. The history of the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Australian working class remains to be written. However, it is safe enough to note here that up until the 1930s the fact that the Church's flock was almost exclusively composed of a class whose only other suitors were socialists had led to ambiguities in the Catholic position not usually found in other parts of the world where, of course, the great Church remained the implacable opponent of progress, science, liberalism and modern society generally.(86) In 1905, for example, the Cardinal had made a case for 'exceptionalism' for Australian socialism ("keep the Ten Commandments and nationalise every bit of land as far as you please").(87) By the same token, the Church had contributed to the cohesiveness of the Australian working class. Labourers were not just defined as a class apart in Australia by the consequences of their relation to production, but also by their Catholicism which, in turn, was not so much "a religion of naked assent to intellectual dogmas or a religion of mystical experience" as "a religion of loyalty to the Catholic body".(88) The strong emotional and moral strands of Australia's socialist movements also have a part of their explanation here, as does their emphasis on redistributing wealth, their hatred of banks and 'big' corporations and, perhaps, even the full-blooded commitment of many communists to what also often only added up to little more than loyalty to a few simple universal truths. Lance Sharkey was not rare in being both an Australian Stalinist and lapsed Catholic.

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86. E.J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital, 1848-1895, New York, 1975, pp.115, 301-305.
87. Cited in P. O'Farrell, op.cit., p.185.
88. E. Campion, Australian Catholics: The Contribution of Catholics to the Development of Australian Society, Ringwood, 1987, p.115.

In the event, a 1931 encyclical by Pope Pius XI heralded the beginning of a powerful movement to gather wayward Australian sheep back into the orthodox Catholic flock. In analysing the globe's ills, the Pontiff conceded much of the familiar socialist critique, condemning the buying and selling of labour "like any piece of merchandise", the transformation of the labour market into an arena for class combat and declaring that the polarisation of society clearly showed that "the earthly goods so abundantly produced in this age of industrialism are far from rightly distributed and equitably shared among the various classes of men". The problem in this for Australia's labour movement, and particularly for its left wing, was that all the Holy Father's solutions lay behind, not beyond. The state should rule in "kingly" fashion above party contention, private property was to be defended, women were to go back inside "domestic walls", class conflict was to be abolished by the fostering of harmony between "ranks", the proletariat was to be uplifted by a wage that allowed for necessities and shares in ownership or profits, legislation should bind men into vocational rather than class groupings, corporations of working men and employers were to be established, strikes and lockouts were forbidden and, although unions were allowed, this was provided other associations were established side by side to impart religious and moral training.(89)

These nostrums were obviously dangerously disarming for the labour movement, and one must remember that they were almost exclusively propagated among the working class, and the general labouring and mainly female segments of the working class at that. For the other 75 percent of Australia, the Catholic siren was irrelevant. Irrelevant, that is, except insofar as its emphasis on a

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89. Pius, PPXI, op.cit., passim.

return to the certainties, order and authority of a romanticised lost world, its prohibition against strikes and its comprehensive attack on socialism (over half-a-dozen different kinds expressly forbidden) represented a political godsend, in the full sense of the word, to Australia's establishment. For the members of a union such as the FMWU, operating among the 'waifs and strays' of society and comprising up to 50 percent or more working women, it was nothing but a recipe for surrender to grinding work, poverty and oppression - at least in this life.

It is not surprising that such an appeal should find adherents in a country recovering from the Great Depression and now (as it would later be recognised) beginning the major period in its transition to full-blown industrial capitalism. Nor is it surprising that Catholic Action's most zealous advocate turned out to be a young man of some intellectual bent growing up in industrialising Melbourne with parents only freshly removed from pre-industrial parts of Italy - Bartholomew Augustus (B.A.)Santamaria. What is remarkable about Catholic Action and Santamaria is not that they existed, but that they achieved such rapid and large-scale success. Following the publication of Quadragesimo Anno an association for Catholic Action was established in Sydney and over the next couple of years the putsch began to develop, getting underway in earnest from 1936 when deep lines were drawn with the left after the Church sided with the fascists in the Spanish Civil War. In 1937 a Plenary Council of the Church established an Episcopal Committee on Catholic Action with a permanent National Secretariat, in 1938 public evidence of Catholic campaigning in Melbourne's trade unions began appearing, in 1939 Santamaria founded the National Catholic Rural Movement as the first of his lay battalions and in 1941-1942 he started the secret and specifically

anti-communists-in-the-unions Catholic Social Studies Movement (the 'Movement'). In 1943 a Sacred Heart Missionary founded a similar organisation in Sydney and in 1945 the two bodies amalgamated to form the core of a national Movement with Santamaria as National Director. Australian Bishops agreed to secretly fund the Movement through a separate Episcopal Committee. Around the same time, or slightly earlier, the Movement was successful in having the New South Wales Labor Party endorse the establishment of Industrial Groups within the trade union movement to do its bidding. Like their secret parent organisation, the Labor Industrial Groups (or 'Groupers') would soon be a national phenomenon.(90)

The third body that may have had an interest in removing the left from the FMWU's New South Wales Branch was, of course, the rest of the FMWU itself. Immediately Federal Councils recommenced in 1935 the pre-Depression pattern of Federal relations had also resumed, with New South Wales campaigning relentlessly and unsuccessfully to restructure the Federation on a fairer basis, adding new demands for all officials to be subject to removal from office by a simple majority vote of members at specially summonsed meetings, to disallow officials acting as electoral Returning Officers and, most of all, to abolish S.J. Bryan's 1929 Queensland rule which first introduced State Councils in place of General Meetings.(91)

"May I describe the Conference as a large vacuum into which all the NSW proposals were dumped," reported Branch President Thomas Keniry to his members after the 1937 Federal Council.(92) Thomas

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90. See: P. O'Farrell, op.cit., pp.254-64; G. Henderson, Mr Santamaria and the Bishops, Sydney, 1983, pp.3-17; B.A. Santamaria, Against the Tide, Melbourne, 1981, pp.3-38; R.A. Gollan (1975), op.cit., pp.57-9; A. Davidson, op.cit., pp.126-9.
91. FCM, 15-20 May 1933, 20-24 May 1935, FMWU Papers; FCM 14-18 September 1936, 30 November - 7 December 1932, Dwyer Papers, UNSW.
92. "Federal Conference Report, 1 February 1937", NSWBM, ABL.

Keniry was a veteran of the New South Wales socialist movement, having emigrated from Ireland in the 1880s and been a member of the original Australian Socialist League in the 1890s. He had joined the FMWU as a caretaker in 1929 after retiring as a customs officer. Remembered with genuine love by many who knew him, he has been largely credited by old timers with the intellectual and political leadership of the Branch's successful united front.(93) Together with Bill Smith, who had become Branch Secretary following the 1931 defalcation, and Robert Webster, who had been elected organiser in Smith's place, Keniry had become the focus for hope by many Queensland Branch members. Their complaints were many and various, but, most of all, there was the fact that he would not allow them to meet. "I would like to attack Bryan from top to bottom" one Queensland State Councillor wrote to Keniry, "... I can tell you Tom that the Miscellaneous Workers' Union is a great joke.... if it was not for compulsory unionism they would all pull out".(94) "The sooner the State Council is wiped out the better" another wrote to Smith "... Mussolini Bryan has not got a leg to stand on as the saying is. It is time things were altered here and we had a Secretary of our own".(95) The tension broke into violence in 1937. Bryan was hauled before a magistrate for assaulting a member in February and in October he landed in hospital himself after being "felled by punches about the face and then kicked about the body" by

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93. V. Burgmann (1984), op.cit., p.88; NSWB Membership of Registers, FMWU Papers; Labor Daily, 6 August 1935. Also interviews with J. Dwyer, Pagewood, 2 June 1982, and R. Gietzelt, Sylvania, 11 February 1985.
94. W. Matheson to T. Keniry, 1 November 1936, Dwyer Papers, SU.
95. G. Shaw to W.H. Smith, 7 April 1937, Dwyer Papers. Also see G. Shaw to F. Anderson, April 1937; G. Shaw to W.H. Smith, 5 May 1937, Dwyer Papers, SU.

unidentified assailants while making his way between the lift and his Trades Hall office.[96]

As the struggle intensified, following his appointment as one of the founding Queensland Electricity Commissioners Bryan resigned all his FMWU positions in 1938 in favour of Harry Harvey, another senior official in the Queensland labour movement. Born in 1901, a Catholic and educated at night school while employed in the public service during the Great War, Harvey had been President and Labour Council delegate for the Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association in 1922, became the caretaker in the Trades Hall (and a member of the FMWU for a time) before rising to be the Hall's librarian and then its Assistant Secretary. In 1935 he succeeded Robert Mulvey as Secretary of the Trades and Labour Council. Council President Bryan and Secretary Harvey formed a traditional core of the Queensland labour movement and with Bryan's resignation, under a storm of protest from New South Wales (and many of his own members), Harvey took over his positions as the General and Queensland Branch Secretary of the FMWU (and the Presidency of the Queensland Labour Council).[97]

Did the FMWU's New South Wales Branch move to the right as a result of Lang's rearguard action, Santamaria's anti-communist conspiracy or because of action by the rest of the Federation? Before reviewing the evidence, a fourth and final suspect must be considered

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96. W. Matheson to T. Keniry, 15 February 1937, newspaper clippings, Dwyer Papers, SU. Also see VBM, 11, 26 October 1937, ABL.
97. The background has been culled from: Minutes of the Trades and Labour Council, Queensland, 12 April 1922; QLDBM, 9 April 1926, FMWU Papers; Rules of the Trades and Labour Council of Queensland, 1935, 1936, 1937; Brisbane Telegraph, 7, 9 June 1966; Courier Mail, 7, 9 June 1966. Also see W. Matheson to Tom Keniry, 5 July 1938, 16 March 1939; G.A. Urry to W.H. Smith, 4 July 1938, Dwyer Papers, SU; "Federal Council Report for 1937", NSWBM (ABL); W.H. Smith to S.J. Bryan, 7 & 19 April 1937; T.J. Keniry to W. Matheson, 23 January 1939; FCM 1 December 1937, Dwyer Papers, UNSW; T.J. Keniry to M.M. Stewart, 13 February 1939; M.M. Stewart to T.J. Keniry 26 April 1939, Dwyer Papers, SU.

and that is the more general character of Australian society at this time, of which these other developments were partial evidence. How could this largest part of what had once been the most successful Labor Party in the world have allowed Jack Lang to lumber on as its leader through debilitating division after division and electoral defeat after defeat over these years? How could the more profoundly anachronistic Santamaria have organised what practically amounted to a national mass movement in just a few short years? How could the FMWU's Queensland Branch not give even token regard to democratic forms? What was the wider malaise within Australian social relations of which these must in some sense finally be seen as signs?

Historians have found the 1930s an awkward period to write about. Central threads have proved elusive, many solving - or, rather, deferring - the problem by continuing reference to the calamity that opened the decade and the terrible conflagration that concluded it. Others have passed it off as the 'mean', 'dismal' or 'devil's decade'. It was as though the bankruptcy of government coffers penetrated social relations generally, as though the certain knowledge that social development had come to an end on its previous terms robbed people of any belief in progress at all. Just how far this society had departed from the confident liberalism of the turn of the century is indicated by the fact that the document of Australia's constitutional sovereignty, the Statute of Westminster, was not ratified for over a decade after passing through the British Parliament in 1931. Citizens now talked of abandoning Canberra, the Western Australians voted to secede from the Commonwealth and some taxation rights were actually handed back to the States.(98) The national community of the imagination had stalled.

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98. See J.R. Robertson, op.cit., pp.432-33, 449-450.

This was a decade that has become conspicuous for its lack of poetry, a time when Australia's population growth was the lowest in its history, a moment when the boast of unbounded opportunity for material progress grew quiet. The downward trend for women to be employed as domestic servants was reversed, rising from its low of 94,000 in 1922-23 to 100,000 in 1929-30 and reaching an all-time peak of 124,800 in 1938-39.(99) Australian juries, generally loath to convict on capital offences, suddenly executed eight people in New South Wales and Victoria between 1938 and 1940: over twice as many as had been hung in these two States over the prior 15 years.(100) More films were banned than in most other countries and, as well as withholding books by Marx and Lenin, the public was prevented from reading the work of Defoe, Joyce, Lawrence, Huxley, Orwell and Hemingway.(101) Clergymen fulminated over gambling, drunkenness and sexual licentiousness.(102) The government denied entry of an Englishwoman to the country on the bizarre grounds that she might break up 'a perfectly good Australian marriage'.(103) The number of citizens who nominated a religion in the census, which had dropped from 96 percent to 86 between 1911 and 1933, began to rise again.(104) As an election stunt, 'Honest' Joe Lyons, who remained Prime Minister until he died in office in 1939, appeared in film advertisements that focused on the fact that he had eleven children.

There were contradictions, of course, but these were not yet strong enough to override the senses in which Australia - and, indeed,

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99. M. Keating, The Australian Workforce, 1910-11 to 1960-61, Canberra, 1973, p.299.
100. See relevant volumes of the Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia.
101. R. Ward (1983), op.cit., p.222.
102. J.R. Robertson, op.cit., p.445.
103. R. Ward (1983), op.cit., p.220.
104. See Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1911, 1921, 1933, 1947.

the increasingly tense world at large - seemed to be falling back on itself. This was a society in which its government could count on the support of most people when, with breathtaking disregard for any sense of honour in applying the rule of law, could declare Egon Kisch - fresh from Hitler's gaols - to be a prohibited immigrant because he failed a dictation test in Scottish Gaelic.(105) Only the High Court prevented this in the same way that it proved to be a refuge for liberty in preventing Lyons from hardening the Crimes Act to reverse the British common law principle that people are innocent until proven guilty to aid the hunt for social dissidents.(106) This was a time when Joe Lyons could castigate H.G. Wells for calling Hitler a 'certifiable lunatic', when a leading Victorian politician could call on the people to "firmly resist such an evil" as welcoming Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany in 1939.(107) After his own visit to Germany in 1938, Menzies had reported that there was a "really spiritual quality in the willingness of young Germans to devote themselves to the service and well-being of the State".(108) When die-hard Foreign Minister, Billy Hughes, declared that he would not believe a word the Nazi dictator said if he swore an oath on every one of enough bibles to pave a road to Broken Hill, Menzies, who took over the Prime Ministership from Lyons in 1939, shifted him from his portfolio.(109) This was a time when leaders did not seem to lead any more, only to dominate. Certainly it was a time when one could expect a degree of blind support for an attack on officials in a trade union who could be labelled, true or not, as 'commo troublemakers'.

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105. J.R. Robertson, op.cit., p.448.
106. R. Ward, (1983) op.cit., pp.202-3.
107. S.F. Macintyre (1986), op.cit., p.309; Argus, 9 May 1933.
108. Cited in S.F. Macintyre (1986), op.cit., p.309.
109. R. Ward (1983), op.cit., p.232.

Unhappily it is less easy to positively account for the events that actually directly caused the left to lose the leadership of the FMWU's New South Wales Branch than it is to identify the range of likely suspects. It is scarcely reasonable, after all, to expect to be able to find direct disinterested evidence of change resulting from successful conspiracy, whether it be orchestrated by Jack Lang, Santamaria's cadres, Harry Harvey or the unplanned course of Australia's social history.

What is clear is that Sharkey and the other CPA members in office in the FMWU's New South Wales Branch were defeated in the union's 1937 ballot and Thomas Keniry and the Labor left were defeated in 1939.(110) Keniry attributed the loss to the secret betrayal of Secretary Smith. Prior to the 1939 election Keniry had sought to limit the involvement of full-time officials in the Branch's ballots and before he left the President's chair when the result was announced he laid a charge against the Secretary.(111) The substance of the charge went unrecorded, but over the next four years he never gave up appealing in private correspondence to Smith to break with those who he did not name, but nevertheless assumed to have manipulated him. It was "a tragedy that within the Trade Union Movement", he wrote to Smith in October 1939, "there are to be found those who from ignorance and the influences exercised over them, are used by unscrupulous and interested persons to undermine its Democratic Governing".(112) The only other erstwhile activist within New South Wales to survive the rout was the veteran Robert Webster, who, as full-time organiser, was

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110. Also note the allegations of vote rigging that surrounded the 1937 ballot, see: Labor Daily, 25 February, 4 March 1937; NSWBM, 27 April, 11 May 1937; NSWBM, 28 March 1939, ABL.
111. NSWBM, 28 March 1939, ABL.
112. T.J. Keniry to W.H. Smith, 6 October 1939, Dwyer Papers, SU.

also immune from election. He, too, saw Smith as the key figure. "I used to be a Communist. But you know how it is", he explained to one young militant member, in a comment through which sounded the wider mood of the times, "I am getting old, and I cannot afford to go against them. I could tell you a lot of things that go on in that office. But I have to keep quiet to keep my job. Smith tried before to get rid of me".(113)

What motivated Smith? "During 1938 and 1939," one political scientist has written, "the official or federally-recognised ALP in New South Wales, dominated by J.T. Lang, tried to establish groups of its supporters in unions whose leaders were hostile to Lang".(114) This was part of the explanation. Labor Daily, which was at that time under the control of Lang, trumpeted the defeat of Lance Sharkey (who henceforth had no more to do with the FMWU) in the 1937 election ("COMMUNISTS ROUTED IN UNION BALLOT") and, after Lang lost Labor Daily, his new Century newspaper continued to monitor the struggle.(115) More telling, in July 1938 the doughty 70-year-old leader of the school cleaning women, Margaret Colbourne, suddenly rejoined the union after having retired with full fanfare from the labour movement in 1936. A strong fighter for the school cleaners, throughout Lang's period Mrs Colbourne had been upheld by the New South Wales Labor machine as the epitome of a 'good Labor woman', she had been repeatedly voted as the Most Popular Lady in the annual competition promoted by the Eight-Hour Day Committee, had served on the Labor Executive and was reputed to be "able to make and break Labor aldermen" in her Glebe local council and "to have shared more

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113. Diary Notes, Dwyer Papers, SU.
114. D.W. Rawson, "The ALP Industrial Groups", in J.E. Isaac & G.W. Ford (eds), Australian Labour Relations: Readings, Melbourne, 1971 edn., p.206.
115. See, for example: Labor Daily, 25 February, 4 March 1937; Century, 30 April 1947.

Government secrets than any other woman in Australia". "A fair fight and a bonny one," was said to be her 'creed', "But don't go around making charges about people" she would add, making it clear the reference was to factional rather than class warfare.(116) In rejoining the union, she and Ernest Pederson, a former employee of 'Langster' Jack Beasley who joined the union two months after Colbourne, were both listed in the union's books as being employed in the office of the Century.(117) After Lang was defeated as Party leader in August 1939, the Branch donated money for testimonials to the fallen leader and began subscribing to the Century.(118) When Lang formed his breakaway Australian Labor Party (Non-Communist) in Easter 1940, the Branch de facto disaffiliated from the official Labor Party when, upon failing to win a motion to have the union formally break away, Colbourne, Pederson and Fred Parker (all members of Lang's Party; the latter joining the union a couple of weeks after Colbourne's return) succeeded in having the Branch refuse to accept Labor Party correspondence.(119) The Lang connection is well established.

Less clear is the part played by Catholic mobilisation. From at least 1920, when the Catholic Democratic Party had disappeared, Catholics had been well represented in the New South Wales Labor Party, having gained a firm base in the trade union movement after the further organisation campaigns and making advances in the vacuum that followed the conscription split to the right of 1916 and the OBU split to the left of 1917. When Jack Lang was elected as New South Wales'

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116. Labor Daily, 13 October 1927, 6 February, 9 February 1934, 8 January, 13, 26 July 1937; Sun, 2 December 1948; NSWBM, 22 December 1936, ABL.
117. NSWBM, 13 July, 13 September 1938, ABL.
118. ibid., 11 July, 29 August, 10 October, 25 October 1939, 9 January 1940.
119. ibid., 27 April, 28 May, 27 August, 26 November 1940.

fifth Labor Premier in 1925, he was not just the first who was not a craftsman, he was also the first to be a Catholic. The issue of whether Catholic identification was used as one of the organising principles in 1938-39 is important. If it was used in Lang's rearguard campaign, it is here that answers lie to the ready formation of an Industrial Group in the FMWU's New South Wales Branch in 1945. It also helps to explain Bill Smith's role, for Smith was himself a Catholic and he had a career that ran parallel to Lang's, coming into the FMWU's leadership with the Communist Party in the same way that Lang had gained the leadership of the Labor Party (unlike Colbourne, Pederson and Parker, however, Smith did not join Lang's breakaway).[120] Moreover, it would account for the shadowy character of the Branch's Group. The Branch's anti-communist Labor Council 'Team' was formed in March 1945, but its first financial donation to the Industrial Group organisation was not entered in its books until August 1947 and regular explicit evidence of Group activity - apart from unrelentingly fanatical anti-communism - would not appear until 1952.[121] Beyond this, does not Lang's prior organisation campaign offer answers to the question as to why the New South Wales Labor Party was the first Party Branch in Australia to endorse the formation of the Industrial Groups and yet remained among the least affected by the subsequent split? If a significant section of the Industrial Groups formed in 1945 were simply former followers organised by Jack Lang, rather than B.A. Santamaria's cadres, than we can begin to see at once why this State's Groups were far more anti-communist than they were advocates of Catholic social policy, for Lang's Catholicism was essentially tribal or racial and could be more easily overridden by

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120. Labor Daily, 20 May 1940.
121. NSWBM, 10, 24 July 1945, 27 August 1947, FMWU Papers. This general area is detailed in the next chapter.

working class realities. It would also help to explain why the Movement's most celebrated success in New South Wales was spearheaded by Trotskyists not Catholics.[122]

In any event, once the change in the government of the New South Wales Branch had been secured, the new-found harmony in the Federal Council soon saw the union as a whole move to the right. Florence Anderson was the first to realise the benefits of the new Federal unity. When Victorian members began to question her immunity from election, to vote in support of Spanish Relief, to propose publicising Labor's socialist objective and, in 1941, to defeat some of her supporters in the annual ballot, Harry Harvey travelled to Melbourne, set the ballot aside and appointed a provisional administration which the Federal Council authorised to continue in office without recourse to election until 1943.[123] Harvey returned to conduct the 1943 ballot, which saw all the incumbents returned, but when the members continued to agitate - questioning Anderson's interpretation of the rules, promoting socialism, seeking to establish shop committees, blocking the appointment of the leading Victorian Grouper, Dinny Lovegrove - it was clear that the union's democracy was still out of hand.[124] At a Special General Meeting of only 60 members on a bitterly cold, windy and rainy night of 1 August 1945, open general meetings of the Victorian Branch were abolished by 46 votes to

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122. That is, in the Federated Ironworkers' Association in 1952. See R.A. Gollan (1975), op.cit., pp.136-36, 282-83.
123. VBM, 11 May, 12, 26 October, 23 November, 5 December 1938, 15 February, 15, 19 March, 3 May, 19 July, 2 August 1939, 14 February, 1940, 26 February - 19 March, 4, 9 June 1941; E.F. Walsh to H.J. Harvey, 28 April, F. Anderson to V. Stout, 27 March, J.B. Bell to H.J. Harvey 28 March, C.H. Ross to H.J. Harvey 27 March, F. Anderson to H.J. Harvey 28 March, J. Brennan and 70 others to J.V. Stout, 23 April, J.V. Stout to F. Anderson, 1 May, 1941; H.J. Harvey to F. Anderson, 20 December, H.J. Harvey to T.J. Bell, 20 December 1943; FMWU Papers.
124. VBM, 3 January, 2 February, 5, 29 April, 31 May, 6 September 1944.

twelve.[125] "The 'commo' element were the only members to vote against the proposal" wrote the Branch President to Harvey.[126].

"I am getting my share up here", wrote Harvey to Smith in April 1943, "the Organisation generally is being made a target for a particularly vicious attack by the alleged progressive section of the Union".[127] The Queensland and South Australian Branches were, however, the most lightly affected. Without open meetings, being immune from election himself, being allowed to suspend ballots altogether in 1942 and 1943 under the National Security Regulations, and with S.J. Bryan - now Secretary of the Queensland Labor Executive - still acting as Returning Officer for the State Council, Harvey had ample protection from his members.[128] S.J. Bryan would soon reinforce his support by the formation of the Queensland Industrial Groups. The tiny South Australian Branch experienced even less discontent, but in any event followed Queensland and abolished open general meetings in 1944 after its more left-leaning Secretary, Sidney O'Flaherty, went to the Australian Senate and passed his FMWU post to his election campaign manager, Stanley Bevan.[129]

The 'anti-communists' were most strongly resisted in New South Wales. "This is a Lang Union and a reactionary Catholic Union," declared one member at a Monthly General Meeting of the Branch in May 1943. "You are crooked, you are crooked to the core," he replied when President Fred Parker charged him with raising a "sectarian issue",

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125. ibid., 26 July - 1 August 1945; J.J. Bell to H.J. Harvey, 13 March, 1945; F. Anderson to H.J. Harvey, 15 March 1945, FMWU Papers.
126. J.J. Bell to H.J. Harvey, 2 August 1945, FMWU Papers.
127. H.J. Harvey to W.H. Smith, 28 April 1943, FMWU Papers.
128. QLDBM, 1942-43, FMWU Papers.
129. Sid O'Flaherty was another senior activist who had taken over an FMWU Branch after a defalcation (1935 in S.A.). A South Australian Parliamentarian in 1917-19 and former President of the South Australian Branch of the Amalgamated Carpenters' Union, he was also Secretary of the Coopers' Union and in 1943 he became President of the South Australian Labor Party.

thus earning himself a second charge. A month later, the Executive fined the truculent member and his young communist comrade, Jack Dwyer, the maximum penalty under the rules of £2 for "disruptive tactics" over protests that the proceedings were akin to a "Star Chamber".(130) There were numerous such incidents in the Branch between 1939 and 1945 and the struggle over the abolition of open meetings was the most protracted of anywhere. The gentle veteran socialist, Thomas Keniry, indefatigably opposed the direction of the FMWU. To Keniry, meetings were "the creative element", to remove them, he pleaded with Smith, went "to the very roots of the Governing and Control of the Union and it is vital to the general principle of Democratic control - we are at war (he reminded the Secretary) defending that principle".(131) At a Federal Meeting on 27 April 1943, Fred Parker declared the 81 year old Keniry's membership invalid, expelled him from the union and called in the police to remove him from the premises.(132) On 26 April 1945 a referendum of members voted "against bitter opposition" to introduce State Councils in place of open meetings by 648 to 454.(133)

So the FMWU's government closed itself up. Still, there were contradictions, contradictions heightened by the war. On 1 September 1939, two days after Lang had been deposed as New South Wales Labor leader by William McKell, the Nazis had swept into Poland and two days later Prime Minister Menzies had followed Britain in declaring Australia at war with Germany. The need to face up to the realities

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130. NSWBM, 29 June, 13 July 1943. Also see, for example: NSWBM, 12, 27 January, 27, 28, 31 March, 27, 31 April, 3 July 1943, ABL.
131. T.J. Keniry to W.H. Smith, 22 March and 11 September 1943, Dwyer Papers, SU. Also see: T.J. Keniry to W.H. smith, 12, 13 April, 14 September, 6, 26, 28 October 1939, T.J. Keniry to F.C. Parker, April 1943 (SU); NSWBM, 30 May, 27 June, 29 August, 31 October 1939, 9 January, 13, 27 February, 26 March 1940 (ABL).
132. NSWBM, 27 April 1943, ABL.
133. W.H. Smith to H.J. Harvey, 16 March 1945, FMWU Papers.

of international affairs and mobilise behind the war effort began to liberate Australian society from the suffocating drift of the 1930s, initially throwing all political parties into disarray. Menzies' government was riven with internal divisions and difficulties. The Communist Party, which Menzies declared illegal, was divided and disarmed when Stalin signed a treaty with Hitler in September 1939 and invaded Finland. The new Labor Executive led by Jack Hughes and Walter Evans in New South Wales supported the Soviet Union, provoking Lang to form a separate Party and the intervention of John Curtin's Federal Labor Party to dismiss them, Hughes and Evans in turn forming a third State Labor Party. In 1941, however, the movement came into line. Lang rejoined in March, McKell was elected New South Wales Premier in May, the far left conformed when Germany invaded Russia in June, the conservatives brought themselves down in October, making Curtin Prime Minister, and any lingering hesitations about Australia's commitment to the war were removed when Pearl Harbour was bombed by Japan in December.(134)

The war heightened two threats to the FMWU's government. First, it facilitated the advance of the political left, particularly the Communist Party which became a bastion of patriotism once the Soviet Union acquired the status of an ally and it regained its legal status, even changing its name to the Australian Communist Party to reflect its national emphasis. The Party also benefited from its period of illegality and the disruption of the war in that they made it impossible to retain the rigid structure of democratic centralism and its subordination to Comintern (which dissolved in 1943 in any case). This made it more independent and open to Australian liberal,

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134. L.F. Crisp, op.cit., pp.125-31; R.A. Gollan (1975), op.cit., Ch. 3; C. Johnston, "The Communist Party and Labor Unity", Labour History, No. 40, May 1981, pp.88-90.

radical-democratic and socialist traditions and thus more attractive to both workers and intellectuals. Whereas the Party had about 1,000 members when Menzies banned it in 1939, by the time it regained its legal status in December 1942 it had 4,000 members, in 1943 it reached 15,000 members and in 1944 it was replenished by a merger with the Hughes-Evans State Labor Party, which had lost its definition between the Communist and national Labor Parties in the war-time consensus. Membership peaked at around 23,000. The advance was felt at the ACTU's 1945 Congress where the left claimed a majority of about 90 votes - much to Santamaria and his Movement's distress. The result was, inter alia, the abolition of the veto power of the State trades and labour councils, a rule to allow half the ACTU Executive to be elected directly by the Congress and a decision to affiliate with the Soviet aligned World Federation of Trade Unions. Communist Party members from the Sheet Metal Workers, Waterside Workers and the Miners' Federation won positions on the new Executive and the Ironworkers Secretary, Ernie Thornton, was elected to the World Federation.(135) "The fact is," wrote the Movement's alarmist newspaper, Freedom, a week later, "the Communist Party is now in supreme control of the Australian trade union movement ... Australia stands one step from revolution."(136) Three weeks after this the FMWU's New South Wales Branch formed its Labour Council 'Team' and resolved to move its raft of anti-communist measures.

Second, immediately before and during the war widespread discontent became apparent within the FMWU's own membership. "There is considerable unrest right throughout the Union," understated Bill

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135. See: A. Davidson, op.cit., esp. pp.82-83, 92-129; R.A. Gollan (1975), op.cit., pp.128-33; L. Churchward, "An Early Alliance of the Left", Australian Left Review, No. 27, Oct-Nov 1972, pp.32-38.
136. Cited in P. Ormonde, The Movement, Melbourne, 1972, pp.13-14.

Smith in October 1941.[137] The main difficulty, as Smith saw it, was that the members could see other unions making gains. "Organising now is a much harder task than during the depression period," he wrote in November 1944, "Our Organisation is faced with the problem that ... other Organisations by taking strike action are being given conditions from time to time which is unfair to us."[138] How did a membership as historically fragmented, mobile and dependent on compulsory arbitration to gain advances as the FMWU's arrive at this position of 'unrest right throughout the union'? To answer this the pattern of the FMWU's growth and its membership generally need to be examined.

3.

At ten minutes before four in the early hours of Monday 22 February 1932 Francis Brophy set off from his Paddington home for his job as a cleaner and lift-attendant at the printing works of John Andrews and Co in the centre of Sydney's business district, where he had been employed for ten years. At work he finished cleaning the garbage out of the bottom of the lift-well and, as was his custom, to save time and energy carrying the refuse up several flights of stairs he leaned over the well to grasp the rope to haul the lift-car down. Apparently misjudging the distance the heavy hydraulic lift had to come, it descended suddenly, pinning him to the floor. The grim spectacle of the worker stretched out on his stomach with the lift resting on his crushed head was discovered by the foreman compositor when he arrived at work later in the morning.

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137. "Federal Conference 1941, New South Wales Branch Secretary's Report", FMWU Papers.
138. "New South Wales Branch Secretary's Report, 3 November 1944", FMWU Papers.

At a subsequent hearing to ascertain whether Brophy's dependent widow was entitled to any recompense for the loss of her husband's earnings under the Workers' Compensation Act introduced by Jack Lang's first government, John Andrews and Co denied all liability. The employer contended that the worker had met his death by an act of misconduct in operating the lift from a floor other than the one where the lift-car was stationed, which was in contravention of Regulation 43 of the Scaffolding and Lifts Act. The peril Brophy had been fatally exposed to did not, therefore, arise from the circumstances of his employment. Fortunately for Brophy's widow his Honor accepted the argument put on her behalf by Abram Landa, the Member for Bondi in Lang's government whose legal firm usually took such cases for the FMWU in New South Wales. Landa successfully contended that the removal of the garbage and the use of the lift to that end did relate to the company's business and Regulation 43 could not be interpreted to limit liability.(139)

Violent death, fatal accident, serious injury and terrible disease were everyday occupational hazards faced by the FMWU's members. The watchmen found dead in the morning near the blown safe, the caretaker assaulted for warding a hawker off his premises, the cleaner fallen from the outside ledge of a high building, the woman lying all night with a broken hip at the bottom of the stairs she slipped down, these are representative of numerous such incidents in the FMWU's records of these years.(140) These workers - often elderly, often working alone at night - were particularly exposed to burglars, thugs and accidents. Those employed as factory labourers

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139. Labor Daily, 23 July 1932.
140. See, for example: Evening News, 5 July 1926; Daily Guardian, 26 June 1928; Labor Daily, 12 July 1928, 14 May 1929, 2 September 1929, 5 May 1933, 31 July 1933; Sun, 21 January 1933; Daily Telegraph, 3 April 1941.

encountered other hazards: a hand lost in the plastic injection press, arms severely burned by an exploding kettle of linseed oil, the worker who died on the operating table after burning lead splashed into his ear and penetrated his brain.(141) There were also the 'gradual diseases': chronic bursitus on the cleaner's knees, lead poisoning, asbestosis and other 'dusted' conditions - and then there was the nightwatchman who admitted to the court that his job had made him "morose", causing him to "turn to himself" to the point that he had come to regard himself as a "hermit".(142) For those or the families of those who were killed or maimed by their work, Lang's Workers' Compensation Act and its implementation by unions like the FMWU achieved some degree of social justice. But what of the more general question this raises? To what extent was the FMWU able to directly improve the lot of its members over the years?

The question is more easily asked than answered. How much of any meaning does the undulating wages graph tell us about the experience of these workers compared with the more general upheavals that defined the reality of so many aspects of life during this time, such as the effects of two world wars in which over half-a-million Australians were killed or wounded, or the Great Depression that threw half-a-million and more out of work? These experiences fell heaviest on those at the bottom of the social scale where life was bleakest at the best of times. It is true, on the other hand, that many new working conditions were added to the FMWU's awards over this period. The FMWU's major award, the New South Wales Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Award, had a wide range of amendments made to it by 1945. Employers now had to provide hot water, bicycles, pistols, torches and

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141. See for example Labor Daily, 6 November 1929.
142. See for example Labor Daily, 14 July 1933, 1 January 1938.

other tools and materials if they were required in the performance of the members' duties. If uniforms had to be worn, a change area and a locker were to be provided and workers had to be allowed to dress during company time. If a cleaning woman had to work on late shopping nights twice in the one week she was to be paid overtime. Watchmen had to be granted time off without penalty if they were obliged to attend court. Lift-attendants were granted the right to have seats in their lift-cars. There were additional public holidays.(143) And so on. There is no difficulty in identifying new conditions of employment entered into the FMWU's awards over this time, the problem is to ascertain their meaning.

This problem of meaning bedevils trade union history. Do these new award provisions represent genuine advances in working conditions or do they register a broader deterioration of class relations in that earlier matters of custom and practice have become matters requiring enforcement? What kind of employer, for instance, would have to be forced to provide the hot water for his cleaner's labour? Moreover, were gains made on one front concessions for greater if less measurable losses on another? Can we regard an additional public holiday as a straightforward gain, or did it rectify a loss of, or act as a licence for the hardening of, other community arrangements governing time-off? How hard a society was this when the FMWU had to fight a long battle with employers for the right of lift-attendants - many of whom were returned soldiers, many of whom were disabled - to have a seat in their lift-cars? How do you tell if a union is winning new standards or just holding the line on some aspects of a more general decline when it has to take action to prevent an employer using a legal technicality to evade all obligation to the dependent

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143. NSW Industrial Gazette, Vol. 4, 31 August 1944, pp.444-461.

widow of an employee of ten years' standing who is tragically and accidentally killed serving his company?

Thus the problem remains. To what extent do the ever expanding regulations governing trade union members represent the creation of a new and better world of work and to what extent do they measure the greater need for regulations because of the deterioration of other standards, customs and practices that belonged to the old world? And if it is something of both, how can we tell if more is being won than lost? There are radiating complexities at every point. Even when we look at what might appear to be an unequivocal gain, such as the abolition of Saturday afternoon work for full-time cleaning women in 1938, the question turns out not to be clear cut. For the woman who said, when asked how she spent her new found freedom, "I just sit in the park opposite my house with my three young children and enjoy myself doing nothing", how many others were like the one who replied: "I just sit down and darn all the family socks"?(144) "Charwomen are like that," reflected Bill Smith, "slave themselves to the bone for somebody else."(145) What was worse, unpaid family or paid community domestic labour? All we can say in the absence of an investigation that would extend the bounds of this study is that without the trade union movement conditions would have been a good deal worse. As to the wider question of whether the conditions defined and enforced by trade unions measure a positive improvement in the quality of working class life or stand as monuments to the deterioration of the society that called them into being, and the question of their significance next to more general social experiences, satisfactory answers would require "an assessment of the total life-experience, the manifold

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144. Labor Daily, 17 June 1938.
145. ibid., 17 June 1938.

satisfactions or deprivations, cultural as well as material, of the people concerned".[146]

If an evaluation of the changing quality of the FMWU's members lives is too large and complex a question for this study, we may nevertheless examine and draw conclusions about the constitution-expanding, award-making and membership accumulating process itself over these years. We will, first, look at the changing size, composition and distribution of the members and, second, examine the implications of this for the union by 1945.

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During the Great Depression the union's membership had fallen to less than 4,000, but as the nadir of the crisis passed and production, employment and wages began to rise again, from 1933-34 the union had entered an almost uninterrupted period of increasing net annual recruitment which lasted up until 1945 when the membership reached a new peak of slightly over 14,000. There were some set-backs. In 1935 the South Australians had to begin over when "the Secretary decamped with the books", in 1943 the Victorian Branch established a Sub-Branch in Geelong only to see it fold after two meetings and in 1944 the first attempt to become established in Wollongong was aborted "due to it being impossible to get the [membership receipt] book back".[147] Nevertheless, as well as increasing the net membership nearly every year, from 1935 up to the end of this period the union was once again pressing at all geographic points. Resolutions, plans and trips to

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146. E.P. Thompson (1981), op.cit., p.486.
147. FCM, 20 May 1935, FMWU Papers; VBM, 23 May 1943, ABL. On Wollongong, see NSWBM, 27 June 1944, FMWU Papers.

organise in Tasmania and Western Australia were frequent, in 1938 renewed attention was given to Canberra, in 1940 the South Australian Branch undertook organising campaigns in the "Southern, South Eastern, River Murray Area, Port Augusta Area, Midlands Area and Barossa Area", in 1941 a Newcastle agency was re-established and by 1944 Harry Harvey had undertaken Queensland organising trips "as far north as Atherton and Cairns, to say nothing of Townsville, Rockhampton, Bowen and umpteen other places".(148)

This impulse for growth was central to the FMWU as resources had to be continually devoted to keeping the union together in the absence of being able to rest on any natural, informal or subaltern association. It would be difficult to imagine a harder constituency. "We appear to be covering the same ground again and again" explained one delegate to the Federal Council in 1938.(149) In the same year a Queensland official estimated half his members were unfinancial.(150) "You will note that we are one member down for this quarter," South Australian Branch Secretary, Stan Bevan, told the Federal Council in 1945, "but with the continual changeover I think we are lucky."(151) Florence Anderson's report for the same year registered 849 of her 2,174 members unfinancial and nine months later Bill Smith wrote that 40 percent of his members were similarly unfinancial and that about a

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148. On Canberra see: NSWBM, 18 January 1938, 11 July - 5 December 1939 (ABL). Also see: O. Bryant to W.H. Smith, 23 December 1940, W.H. Smith to H.J. Harvey, 10 January 1941, W.H. Smith to H.J. Harvey 3 August 1941, FMWU Papers. On South Australia see: S. O'Flaherty to H.J. Harvey, 5 December 1940, 12 December 1940, H.J. Harvey to S. O'Flaherty, 24 December 1940, FMWU Papers. On Newcastle see: NSWBM 25 November 1941, FMWU Papers. On Queensland see: H.J. Harvey to J.J. Bell, 29 August 1944, FMWU Papers.
149. SAB Secretary's Report, November 1938, FMWU Papers. Also see, for example: Statement of Receipts and Payments for Six Months Ending 31 December 1923, FMWU Papers; VBM, 19 February & 9 August 1928, ABL.
150. G.A. Urry to W.H. Smith, 4 July 1938, Dwyer Papers, SU.
151. S.C. Bevan to H.J. Harvey, 12 July 1945, FMWU Papers.

third of them had turned over during the prior six months.[152] Such evidence proliferates in the FMWU's records.

To maintain itself the union was dependent on its leaders being consciously, actively and continuously engaged in recruitment. It was never a matter of simply going out into the cities and towns and recruiting workers into the FMWU and that was that; it was always a continuous, heartbreaking grind of re-recruiting - perpetual cycles where ground had to be taken and then re-taken. The best answer to this problem of the continual 'natural' process of membership decay was determined, organised growth. It was a question of establishing 'virtuous circles' to combat the ever-present threat of 'vicious' ones wherein declining members would necessitate economies that reduced the union's recruiting power leading to new losses. More members meant more sophisticated research and advocacy before industrial tribunals and larger delegations and donations to the policy making instruments of the labour movement. Benefits derived by legislation or arbitration improved the union's ability to recruit, the more it recruited the more power it had to gain further benefits, the more stable its members would be and the more easily they could be retained. And so on, da capo. Growth meant everything to the FMWU. Without the capacity to act as an agency for free collective bargaining, growth was its major activity and purpose, the condition of its survival and the basis of all its achievements. Any theory of the FMWU, to turn A.D. Flanders' aphorism around, 'which disregards this fundamental fact is bound to go astray'.[153] If this much seems obvious enough, less apparent is the explanation for the extent and the actual composition of the members and the regional variations.

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152. VB Secretary's Report, 6 March 1946, NSWB Secretary's Report, 31 December 1946, FMWU Papers.
153. Cited in R. Hyman (1970) op.cit., p.174.

One simple reason for the union's rising number of members stemmed from its age, which improved its own management as each internal breakdown invariably provoked the introduction of new, stronger safeguards. The vulnerable period for the union was when Branches or Sub-Branches were first established. Because the union was generated in new areas by one person opening an office and selling subscriptions on the promise of the benefits and protection of an award, and not as a spontaneous collective response to sectional conditions, the original official enjoyed extraordinary control of all the Branch's business and therefore had to withstand the ever present temptation to make off with the money. Thus, it was the original Secretaries in Victoria and Queensland, the original Secretaries on both occasions the South Australian Branch was established, the first clerk in New South Wales and the first agent in Wollongong who all failed the union. The FMWU kept these scandals out of the newspapers, conducted exhaustive inquiries, exposed the methods by which they occurred and introduced more foolproof systems of security and accountability.(154) One only has to examine the increasing care and sophistication of the membership rolls and contribution books to witness the watershedding impact of the union's financial scandals.(155) In this way, over time the union modified this major threat to its growth. The more the FMWU was robbed, the more difficult it became to rob.

More profound were the opportunities for growth presented by Australia's economic development, the associated changes to society and the way in which the union was able to exploit the constitutional

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154. VBM, 27 April - 17 August 1918, NSWBM, 31 October - 24 May, 1924, 14 October 1930 - 23 August 1932, ABL.
155. These records were recovered from the Sydney Trades Hall strong rooms and are now with the FMWU Papers.

protection systems that were integral to arbitration. Throughout the first 30 years of the union's existence the most outstanding feature of the Australian economy was the growth of manufacturing industries, a process that began to escalate in the 1930s and entered its major phase during the Second World War. Whereas in 1915 the value added to national production by manufacturing had not equalled half the combined gross value of agricultural and mining production, by 1945 it exceeded these by almost a quarter.(156) Whereas employment in rural industries declined by some 50,000 over these 30 years (nearly all during 1940-45), the number of factories doubled to 30,000 and the number employed in them rose by almost 50 percent to over 750,000. Concomitant with this was substantial population growth. By 1945 the white population had increased by more than 50 percent from around five to seven-and-a-half-million. The country's three largest cities - Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane - had all practically doubled or more in size by 1945. In total, since the union's establishment there was an increase in the workforce of about one million and nearly all were engaged in the emergent manufacturing industries and the attendant transport, communications, administrative and maintenance activities needed to lubricate the burgeoning urban industrial complexes.

Two simple points need to be made about this new industrial landscape. First, the physical growth of Australian society carried with it a growth in the FMWU's original constituency. No-one except the census-taker included these workers within any statistical series,

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156. All statistics from Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia (relevant years). For the economic history of this period see: P. Cochrane, Industrialization and Dependence: Australia's Road to Economic Development, 1870-1939, St Lucia, 1980; W.A. Sinclair, The Process of Economic Development in Australia, Melbourne, 1976, Ch.6 & 7; N.J. Butlin, "Some Perspectives of Australian Economic Development 1890-1965", in C. Forster (ed.), Australian Economic Development in the Twentieth Century, London, 1970, pp.266-322.

but plainly the more the population became concentrated in the great urban industrial centres, the more cleaning and security were demanded for the new production, wholesaling, retailing, financial and administrative buildings and the attendant properties required for government, education, health, dwellings, entertainment and so on with their expanding floor areas, valuables and people. During the three decades since the FMWU's formation, which saw virtually no technical change in the activities beyond the more widespread introduction of the automatic vacuum for the cleaner and the turn-key for the watchman, the number of cleaners in Australia increased by about 600 percent from under 3,000 to over 20,000; the number of caretakers and watchmen by about 300 percent to over 12,000 and the number of porters and gatekeepers (according to the census) from around 100 to (an incredible?) 10,000.(157)

Second, these years produced not only many more of the workers the FMWU aimed to recruit, but also easier means to do so as each technological advance in communications and transport facilitated further and closer organisation. In 1928 the Queensland Branch had been able to buy a car and the New South Wales and Victorian Branches were both able to buy cars in the recovery from the Great Depression.(158) Whereas the Federation had been established by mail and rail in 1915 (the first Federal rules allowing "first class fares on steamers" for delegates to attend Councils), by 1931 entries were being made in the Federal balance sheet for intra and inter-State ('trunk') telephone calls and in 1945 the South Australian Branch

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157. Estimates from Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1911, pp.1344-5, 1462-3; Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1947, pp.1342-5, 1382-5.
158. NSWBM, 25 January 1921, 1 July 1933; VBM, 26 February 1936, ABL; Queensland Balance Sheet, 1928, CIR.

Secretary became the first delegate to return from a Federal Council by air.[159]

Critical to the great variety of categories of labour recruited and differences in size and composition in different regions, however, was the FMWU's ability to exploit the protection systems introduced as part of arbitration. The Commonwealth and all States except Victoria and Tasmania maintained systems of allotting monopoly rights to unions to represent 'industries' and 'callings' in their courts. To gain a monopoly, the workers the union proposed representing had to be employed in an industry within the meaning of the relevant arbitration act, which usually meant they had to be directly engaged in producing profit (but could also include state employees), and, although the various acts did not all use the same terms, the union had to be the one to which the workers could most 'conveniently belong'.[160]

The FMWU warrened the new industrial landscape by developing a system whereby an opening was gained in one jurisdiction and then followed through into all the others. To illustrate, the New South Wales Branch had recruited in the asbestos industry established in Australia during the Great War, had registered it in its constitution in 1921 and, after a long battle with employers, had won an award in 1926. The next year the Queensland Branch had gained registration, in 1929 Commonwealth registration was won, in 1934 the industry was organised in Victoria and soon after in South Australia. The FMWU thus became a national asbestos industry union.[161] Similarly, the

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159. FCM, 15 December 1915; Federal Council, Statement of Receipts and Expenditure from 1 May 1930 to 30 June 1931; Financial Statements - Federal Council, up to 1966, File No. 205; S.C. Bevan to H.J. Harvey, 20 December 1945, July 1945 to June 1945, FMWU Papers.
160. Texts dealing with these issues include: J.H. Portus, op.cit.; G.S. Sorrell, Law in Labour Relations: An Australian Essay, Sydney, 1979.
161. See: Industrial Arbitration Reports, New South Wales, Vol.XX, Part 6, 1921, pp.198-202; Labor Daily 18 August 1926; NSW Industrial Gazette, Vol.30, pp.1345-57; FMWU Files in respective registries.

paint industry had expanded in New South Wales during the Great War and in 1920 the New South Wales Branch had won a registration battle with the Storemen and Packers and gained an award. Paintmakers in Victoria applied to join the union and in 1925 registration was won in the Commonwealth Court. Two years later paintmakers were registered in Queensland and the FMWU had become a national paint industry union.(162) The extraordinary cumulative effect of this, repeated over and over, was to defeat the 'conveniently belong' provision. The more the FMWU threaded different categories through the various jurisdictions, the more varied the constitution became and the easier it became to find arguments as to the convenience of more categories to belong.

Through the monopoly system the union was able to break into divisions of labour 'above' as well as 'below' the traditional reach of trade unionism. In Queensland, where the borders of state protection were most easily extended, the signing up of dental assistants in 1922 had been immediately followed by dental mechanics, dentists' assistants and in 1936 the dentist himself. National rights had been won to organise dental mechanics in 1928, dental assistants in 1929 and dentists in 1945, allowing the union to begin organising the industry in South Australia and the other States. Such was the ricochet value of 'conveniently belong', having threaded the union's coverage up one profession, in 1937 the Queensland Branch won over librarians and in 1945 it was vying for chemists and making "an attempt on the lives of doctors".(163) At the other end of the scale, the union continued to define and recruit labour from among the

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162. A. Pratt, National Handbook of Australian Industries, Melbourne, 1934, pp.49-156; Miscellaneous Worker, July 1950; Federation News, Vol.2, No.5, March 1962; NSWBM, 21 July 1920, ABL.
163. For the FMWU's "attempt on the lives of doctors", see Daily Telegraph (Brisbane), 27 July 1944.

'undifferentiated mass', winning national rights to messengers and luggage porters, commissionaires and motor car greasers, spruikers and, in South Australia, parking station attendants.

The most dynamic aspect of the system was the way the union worked it in with the regional evolution of Australia's economic development. As Sydney and its environs became the major area for the location of new manufacturing during this period, the New South Wales Branch was able to continue to gain monopolies over many of Australia's new and import replacing industries. Having been the first part of the union to cover a range of new building products after the First World War, in 1940-45 it gained rights over many of the second wave of new industries, such as cork, sisalkraft, synthetic resins, duk-bak, plastics, engine packing and pytram aircraft and industrial components. Together with the ever growing number of cleaning and security workers and the more or less even balance of power within the New South Wales trade union movement, this broadly ensured its position as the largest Branch.

The balance of power within the trade union movement was important for it meant that neither the craftsmen nor the AWU could command the labour movement alone and the state could thus keep the ring. In addition to being able to freely compete for members in many of the new production areas, the Branch was free to compete for amalgamations - free, that is, depending on how this weighed in the political balance. The amalgamation of the Tent and Tarpaulin Makers and Machiners' Union in 1920, for example, had been explained away by the leather trades as the work of the Communist Party ("a few of Jock Garden's cobbers").[164] The Elliots and Australian Drug Ltd Chemical Workers' Employees' Union amalgamation in 1932, which gave the FMWU a

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164. Application for Constitutional Change, 14 July 1938, CIR.

useful constitutional break in this area, was arranged by the Lang aligned Labour Council to spite the AWU.(165) Repeatedly the New South Wales leadership jousted with craftsmen and the AWU with success in the Industrial Registry, holding the Branch's position as generally more than twice the size of all the other parts of the FMWU combined and claiming 8,000 of the union's 14,000 members in 1945.

The outlying States of Queensland and South Australia, on the other hand, had the opportunity of recruiting among older, manufacturing and service industries as they pressed out into the continent's hinterland. Often long organised in New South Wales and Victoria, in the outlying States they existed in insufficient numbers to form their own unions or to attract the attention (and funds) of unions of kindred workers in the south-east. In this way the FMWU was able to found itself at both ends, so to speak, of Australia's economic development: at the technical frontiers of production in New South Wales and at the geographic frontiers where it could pick up older technologies as they pressed out.

This was easiest in Queensland where manufacturing was a relatively small part of the State's economy, where no further organisation campaigns had been conducted and where the almost uninterrupted run of Labor governments led to compulsory unionism.(166) The 'conveniently belong' principle and amalgamation procedures were also more relaxed in this State, with the Registrar on occasions even writing to the union to point out areas where it could gain coverage.(167) The Branch was thus able to continue to recruit

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165. NSWBM, 9 March - 14 April 1932, 26 August 1941, ABL.
166. See D. Yerbury, "The Main Characteristics of Trade Union Law in the Australian Compulsory Arbitration Systems", and R.M. Martin, "Legal Enforcement of Union Security in Australia", in J.E. Isaac & G.W. Ford (eds), op.cit., pp.134-8, 167-81.
167. P.I. Wallace to H.J. Harvey, 27 July 1944, FMWU Files, Queensland Industrial Registry (QIR).

in a wide range of older, mainly urban, industries and crafts, such as ferry workers, toy makers, gardeners, greenkeepers, margarine makers, wireworkers, crematorium workers and, during the Second World War, a time when the Commonwealth assumed such stature that States - and therefore weak unions only registered at this level - were virtually cancelled, Harry Harvey's Executive membership of the ACTU facilitated amalgamations with the Queensland Photographic Employees' and the Hairdressers and Wigmakers Unions.

This variety of recruitment, however, was largely a function of the relative insignificance of these parts of the region's economy, with the AWU maintaining its hold on all the large areas. Whereas in the more traditionally craft-status-conscious Melbourne workers in the asbestos industry traded blows over whether they should join the FMWU or the AWU, in the 'wobbly giant's' Queensland heartland the FMWU just gave its asbestos coverage away under the giant's pressure.(168) "In Queensland the Miscellaneous Workers' Union operates only in the Southern portion of the State" said AWU General Secretary, Thomas Dougherty in 1945, "It is possibly on that account that the AWU and the Miscellaneous Workers' Union get on very well together."(169) It was the same with the Queensland apparatus at large where easy come also meant easy go. After recruiting and registering glass founders in 1918, for example, four years later the Registrar peremptorily informed the Branch Secretary that "as I have registered the Australian Glass Founders' Union of Employees ... I have ... amended the registration of your union by deleting glass founders".(170) Basically, the FMWU's Queensland Branch recruited what the AWU did not

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168. Interview with R. Cameron, Glen Iris, 23 February 1983.
169. Application for Constitutional Change, 6 September 1948, CIR.
170. Industrial Registrar to Queensland Branch Secretary, 3 July 1918; 6 April 1922, QIR.

want and this naturally included women and, in stark contrast to Victoria, small groups of urban craftsmen and professionals.

Similarly, in South Australia it was not until after the Great Depression that a deliberate State Government policy of promoting manufacturing was adopted and the union was therefore able to recruit in industries long organised in the two south-eastern States as they first emerged.(171) Between 1935 and 1940 it recruited in the rubber industry, in dairy factories and among bicycle makers. Still, it was not until 1942 when the National Security (Industrial Peace) Regulations facilitated the intervention of the Commonwealth Court in disputes confined to only one State that South Australia finally exceeded 1,000 members, relieving the need for subsidies from other Branches.(172)

Victoria was the weak link in the chain as it had no constitutional registry of its own, its economy had long been based on manufacturing and most of the older crafts and industries were well and truly organised into their own unions, making it more difficult to organise small numbers of workers in new industries and to compete with the big unions. In 1917 the Branch had lost ice-cream makers, in 1918 it had lost market garden workers to the AWU and it had taken "sixteen years of continuous fighting" to get a Wages Board for laundry workers.(173) In 1928 it had fully organised and then lost gramophone workers and even commercially employed caretakers could not gain a Wages Board until 1943.(174) With the craftsmen in the

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171. W.A. Sinclair, op.cit., p.202.
172. See, for example, Common Rule, Country Shop Assistants, South Australia and Judgement - Country Shop Assistants, (South Australia), The Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia and H.F. Adams and Others, National Security No.'s 148 of 1942 and 472 of 1942, Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration (Print No.'s 5201-8275 & 5110-6871.
173. VBM, 19 February, 9 August 1928, ABL.
174. See VBM (relevant years), ABL.

Victorian trade union movement keeping their labourers down, so they kept the need for arbitration and, hence, the FMWU at bay. The idea of classes based on traditional, exclusive social ranks maintained an ideological hegemony over the labourers. The Victorian Billposters' Union provides a good example of how deeply this field of force keeping the FMWU out could penetrate those subordinated to it. As the AWU covered billposters in South Australia and as the FMWU had organised them in Queensland and accomplished an amalgamation with them in New South Wales, we may safely conclude that there was nothing intrinsic to their work to set them far apart from other labourers. The Victorian Billposters Union, however, refused to register in the Commonwealth Court and refused to amalgamate with the FMWU. The union's 'aristocratic' Secretary explained to the Commonwealth Court:

> ... we went to the trouble of organising Victoria and except for a few snipers we have got them all in. The other people have a few members who are not skilled members. Victoria is the only State where bill posters are classified as skilled. In other States they are mostly men who go out in a haphazard way with a bucket of paste; the majority of them are not bill posters. My organisation consists of members who are wholly and solely employed in bill posting. We have never had any trouble with strikes and we do not want to start ... No less an authority than the Prince of Wales has recognised the Bill Posters' Union as he is a member ... No other Union has a member of the Royal family in its organisation. Here is a letter from the Prince of Wales [reads letter from St James Palace] ... We are the only body who caters for bill posters in Victoria. I have no objection to [the FMWU] organising in the other States as they are mostly rabble there ...(175)

Craftsmen and employers stood shoulder to shoulder against the rise of the FMWU in Victoria. We "make all classes of canvas goods, so that by no stretch of the imagination can the Miscellaneous Workers' Union have a rightful claim to organise that class of

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175. Application for commonwealth Constitutional Change, 17 June 1931, CIR.

worker ..." argued the Melbourne based Saddlery, Leather, Sail, Canvas, Tanning, Leather Dressing and Allied Workers Trades Employees' Federation in 1938 - the union's name itself registering the stubborn resistance of individual craftsmen to their subsumption in one union, "If they want to join up with the Miscellaneous Workers' Union that is their pigeon".(176) And then there was the apoplexy of the Victorian Employers' Federation:

> "This Union takes care of all classes of employees of a non-descript nature ... [A professional occupation] has no consonance with ordinary industrial labour ... This Union should not be allowed to commence to cater for this class of employee ... This Union covers dental mechanics and dental attendants, that is, girls who wait in the rooms, and it would be entirely wrong for the professional man to be incorporated into the same Union as those classes ... He is above those employees ...(177)

The Victorian Branch contributed to the overall build-up in being the first to recruit workers in places such as the photographic industry in 1937 and zoos in 1938, but it was not until the Commonwealth uprooted all of this local tradition when it gained virtually absolute power under the licence of war that the FMWU's Victorian Branch was able to grow. In 1942 Wages Boards were finally extended over the whole of Victoria and full-time trade union officials were allowed to sit on them, the Branch's membership immediately rising from 2,300 to 2,850, outstripping the Queensland Branch for the first time.(178)

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The FMWU thus disclosed itself gradually with each passing year, remaking itself on a larger scale with what had been produced by its

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176. ibid., 14 July 1938.
177. ibid., 30 August 1945.
178. VBM, 14 February - 9 September 1942, 23 May 1943, ABL.

previous activities. It exploited the authority that had fragmented the old Australian working class alignments by promoting a multitude of jurisdictions and small powers. Gradually it unified workers again as the activity on which they spent their energies changed. And the more it grew in this fashion, the more it was able to continue to grow.

Expansion into the new areas of the economy blocked the 'natural' growth paths of other unions and prepared the ground for amalgamations. By 1945 the FMWU had members covered by numerous other unions all over the place: undertakers' employees, for example, had their own union in Victoria and New South Wales; the Cold Storage Union covered margarine makers in Victoria and the Meat Preserving Union covered them in Tasmania; broom and brush makers were covered by the Australian Brushmakers' Union in South Australia, the Storemen and Packers in Victoria and the Brush Making Industry Employees' Union in New South Wales. Such were the possibilities for fragmentation, shop assistants in South Australia were covered by the Shop Assistants' Union in Adelaide and in the Gawler, Port Pirie, Peterborough, Jamestown, Gladstone, Whyalla and Kadina municipalities and townships, but outside a radius of five miles from the chief post offices in each of these areas the FMWU had them (except where, to make things more complicated, in specified places where the Hotel, Club, Restaurant and Caterers' Employees Union had rights).[179]

More than this, the pattern of the FMWU's recruitment meant that, in effect, it was also simultaneously undermining the older unions in the crowded States. The 'new' and 'import replacement' industries the

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179. See Common Rule, Country Shop Assistants, South Australia, The Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia and H.F. Adams and Others, N.S. No.'s 148 & 472 of 1942, Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration (Print No. 5201-8275).

New South Wales Branch gained coverage over were in reality substitutes for older products. Synthetic resins, for example, took the place of materials and products in the metals and electrical industries; plastic was substituted for rubber, metals, textiles and wood; asbestos, plaster of paris and fibrolite for wood, bricks and stone; canvas for leather - and so on. As these materials replaced the older, so the FMWU replaced the older unions. In just the same way as the new industries and materials undercut the older with their lower cost structures, so the FMWU's minimum wage labourers undercut the craftsman and his margins. The conditions for amalgamation were thus created by the acquisition of combinations of jurisdictional and technological territorial advantages. In 1922 the Female Office Cleaners' Union of Victoria had found itself blocked out of New South wales and the Commonwealth jurisdictions. The Billposters and the Tent and Tarpaulin Makers amalgamations in New South Wales in the early twenties had both been achieved within the central Branch after these workers had been recruited and registered by the Queensland Branch. The first attempt to recruit photographic workers by the Queensland Branch in 1918 had succeeded only in stimulating them to form their own union.(180) Almost 20 years later the Victorian and South Australian Branches recruited in the industry and in 1939 coverage was registered in the Commonwealth Court. With the FMWU on the way to becoming a national photographics union, in 1944 the Photographic Employees' Union it had provoked into existence in Queensland back in 1918 amalgamated. It was a game of legal and technical encirclement. As many different categories of labour were entered into the union's constitution in as many jurisdictions as possible and then, when one of the multitude of smaller State-based

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180. W.J. Schaefer to Industrial Registrar, 6 June 1918, QIR.

unions suddenly found themselves in a crisis, the FMWU was the union to which they could most 'naturally' amalgamate. By 1945 it was a union to which virtually any other union could 'conveniently belong'.

There were only two years in its first 30 that the FMWU did not add at least one new industry or calling to one of its constitutions. These were the crisis years of 1923 and 1930, years in which amalgamations were being accomplished. For the strongly self-defining unions, arbitration had impeded the natural paths of their development, building barriers and divisions along all the separate and overlapping jurisdictions and promoting a myriad of small and semi-autonomous powers around their feet. The FMWU had taken the system on its own terms and by 1945 had exploited its conservative, literally sectionalising, overlapping character so as to have almost defeated it. And, in turn, the union shaped the attitude of the state. Whereas in 1928 Registrar Alexander Stewart had sought to deny the FMWU's assault on the Commonwealth jurisdiction: "if it so happens that an organisation in one State happens to spread out its tentacles over a very wide field, I have never taken that as an argument why they should have Federal status"; by 1935 his successor and namesake, Murray Stewart, had accepted the FMWU as "an organisation comprising a heterogeneous collection of employees, mostly unskilled, in which the number would not support union organisation."[181]

Yet, by 1945 this constitution and award-making system by which the union reproduced and expanded itself had come to contain a profound internal contradiction. On the one hand, the system served to entrench arbitration and the terms within which it operated as the

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181. Applications for Commonwealth Constitutional Change, 8 May 1928 & 25 May 1939, CIR.

effective reality against which the limits and possibilities of the union's actions had to be measured and this had steadily increased the power of the officials and divided the members off from each other. On the other hand, the continued development of the economy had increased and concentrated the numbers of workers in the occupations and industries the union covered, creating the classic economic pre-conditions for trade union organisation and direct action. More than this, the growth and concentration of those industries was a part of the general process of economic development which occurred by marginalising older industries and occupations - older industries and occupations that had originally created the union and the arbitration, constitution and award-making system.

To illustrate the effects of the arbitration system, we may take the example of the original New South Wales Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners &c Award, which was amended 106 times or an average of more than three times annually over the union's first 30 years. By 1945 the award's original six pages in the Industrial Gazette had expanded to 14, its original 16 sections to 56, its 65 paragraphs to 147.(182) To place this complex document in perspective, although it covered the largest single section of the FMWU's membership, it represented only three categories of labour within one of four Branches in a union that now had coverage of more than 70 different categories, all of which had their working conditions fixed separately by each Branch and many of which were further subdivided into private and state employees and sometimes subdivided again by gender or even according to individual enterprises. The effect of this was that, as time went by, each category of labour acquired its own history within the system as case

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182. NSW Industrial Gazette, Vol.74, 31 August 1944, pp.444-461 (and more generally).

after case was heard and each new claim came to be measured against these documents and the body of precedents, principles and interpretations they contained. To have a chance of success in the courts, cases would have to be brought forward in a way that did not contradict these established doctrines. Under these conditions, what worker could gain a knowledge of the context within which his or her aspirations would be determined to equal that held by the full-time official, particularly in a union where the equivalent of the entire membership could turn over every two or three years and where, not only were the awards more often defined from 'above' than 'below' at the outset, but the very industries and occupations themselves were novel? Moreover, 30 years of a molecular process of categorical differentiation according to arbitration's rules destroyed the general character of the FMWU's members in these terms. If it was difficult for an 'ordinary' worker to determine her or his classification's chances in the arbitration system, how qualified were they to determine those of other classifications?

This was the terrain upon which the union's government moved to establish State Councils of elected sectional representatives in place of general meetings in the late 1940s. State Councils made sense within the arbitration system. "Each Section has entirely different wages and conditions," as one official pointed out to a dissenting membership.(183) Thirty years of defining, differentiating and organising the work of general labourers under arbitration had rendered democratic open general meetings redundant in these terms.

On the other hand, 'waifs and strays' also belong to history and by 1945 many had mushroomed into substantial production units in their

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183. VBM, 27 July - 1 August 1945, FMWU Papers.

own right. In the ten years 1935 to 1945 the number of paint factories in Australia, for example, rose by 50 percent to 122, the number of paint workers by more than 80 percent to 3,197 and the value of paint production by 100 percent to &2.5 million. Most of the factories, 68 percent of the producers and 67 percent of production belonged to New South Wales where each of the big British firms, B.A.L.M., Taubmans, Berger and British Paints, employed over 100 workers divided into up to five integrated departments through which were spread a hierarchy of some 38 classifications.(184) Similar development was apparent in the asbestos, linoleum, sisalkraft, and plastics industries. Moreover, even the service workers that the union had begun with were now much more capable of self-organisation, with their greater concentration in the larger city centres and innovations such as the telephone.

A similar course of development, if for different reasons, occurred on the waterfront where the FMWU covered the watchmen. Early in 1941 the shipping companies began advertising widely for watchmen and established the Sydney Waterfront Watchmen's Association to ensure an adequate war-time supply of the labour. The Sydney port could hire anywhere between 200 and 350 watchmen and about 30 gate-keepers daily. In the twelve months prior to February 1941 the FMWU had recruited six waterfront watchmen, over the following two months it recruited 178 and by January 1942 it had as many as 450. In August 1942 the Commonwealth Government listed the work as exempt from military service under the National Security Regulations and by 1943 the union had around 600 waterfront watchmen.(185)

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184. NSW Industrial Gazette, Vol.77, 1945, pp.756-762; Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No.37, 1946-7, p.1070.
185. NSWBM, 2 March, 9 March, 13 May, 12 June 1941, FMWU Papers. Also see: Judgement in the Application by the Federation Miscellaneous
(cont. over)

One simple measure of the changing character of the union's members brought by these changing circumstances was the growing success of the New South Wales Branch's annual picnic, which was attracting an attendance of 3-4,000 by the late 1930s.(186) Another was the increasing rate at which sections demanded meetings. Whereas the Branch had averaged less than ten sectional meetings a year between 1934 and 1940, in 1941 there were 30 and in 1942 there were 36. The most active sections were the Watchmen, who accounted for 20 of the 46 meetings. Next, in order, came the Paint and Varnish, Asbestos and Linoleum Sections which, together with the Watchmen, accounted for more than two-thirds of the meetings.(187)

More positively, whereas the only evidence of direct action in the Branch's history up until the war had been a half-a-day walkout by female bag and sack makers in 1920, in 1942 members of the Synthetic Resin Section left their work to protest over their wage rates and in 1943 women employed by the Commonwealth Moulding Co walked out over delays in attending to their award. Ominously for the officials, the most frequently recurring agitation was over closed shops. Between 1941 and 1943 the Waterfront Watchmen, Linoleum, Sisalkraft, Bag and Sack, Paint and Varnish, Cork and Chemicals Sections all threatened to stop work to bring about closed-shops and the Asbestos Section actually went out for a day in September 1941 over the issue.(188)

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185. (cont.)
Workers' Union of Australia for Alteration of Industries and Callings, No. 489 of 54, pp.8-9; "Register of Applications for Membership in Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union, NSW Branch, Opened 1st July 1935"; NSWB Secretary's Report, 31 December 1942, FMWU Papers.
186. See for example: Labor Daily, 15 March 1937; Century, 11 March 1940.
187. See NSWBM 1934-1942, ABL.
188. See NSWBM, 1 March 1941 - 7 March 1942 (ABL); "The Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia, NSW Branch Secretary's Report", 31 December 1942, "NSW Branch Report", 29 October 1943, FMWU Papers.

The FMWU was thus poised in a moment of acute contradiction in 1945. Just as the union had followed the logic of arbitration to its internal conclusion in beginning to close off avenues for its members to participate in their government, conditions were ripening to allow many of them to take their destinies into their own hands. How was this discontent to be managed by the FMWU's remote and narrowly focused government at war's end? Would it be able to dictate to a membership that had endured years of pegged wages and continuous patriotic appeals to work hard in defence of Thomas Keniry's 'general principle of Democratic control'? What would happen if this discontent keyed-in with Australia's radical advance? Would these workers not look to a peace where they too could share in Prime Minister Curtin's "New Social Order based on democracy and the rights of all men and women to enjoy the fruits of honest toil"?(189)

Beyond this, can we not see in the rising number and changing circumstances of the FMWU's membership evidence of a more general transformation occurring within this society? Did not the rise of the once 'miscellaneous' workers also necessarily signal the passing away of the social relations out of which this title had been originally made? While from the point of view of the nineteenth-century craftsmen, labourers engaged in small or emergent divisions of work could be placed under the general residual title 'miscellaneous', from the point of view of capital was it not the cost and control of the craftsman that should be remaindered? The general labourer could not be elevated without the decline of the craftsman for they only held their positions relative to each other.

This was the more profound yield of the Great Depression. The Australian economy did not just recover in the 1930s, it changed so as

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189. Curtin's promise cited in S.F. Macintyre (1985), op.cit., p.80.

to be able to develop on a larger scale, using new materials, different techniques and producing a greater range of products and those who made their lives out of the old economic activities found themselves being surrounded by a new world: a world with professional scientists, engineers and public servants and labourers working according to arts and mysteries issuing from universities and management colleges instead of the time-honoured precepts and examples; a world where the strategically placed technicians would be those in the professions and the new transport and communications facilities; a world were 'output per man' would soon be increasing, not at the one percent a year that it had between 1900 and 1930, but by four percent and more; a world where domestic servants and agricultural labourers would decline absolutely; a world where Margaret Colbourne's proud retirement boast of 1945 that each of her three sons had grown up to be tradesmen was losing its meaning as she spoke; where the former presser, Edward Kavanagh, who heard nearly all the Branch's cases as an arbitration judge over these years, and the furniture maker, Oscar Schrieber, who replaced Joe Coote as the union's advocate, would be pushed aside for professional lawyers; a world where the great banner painter, Edgar Whitbread, would have to close his workshop because his skills were redundant.

The old world was dying, the new one was being born. In the meantime we can see the basis for the appeal of Santamaria's call for a return to the "graded hierarchical order" and all the other morbid signs of these times. The old working class traditions, value systems, ideas and institutional forms were passing away, new ones were emerging. As Bill Smith noticed during the war, there was now unrest right throughout the FMWU. When the Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union had been formed its title had gone beyond its content. Its content was now about to go beyond its title.

PART TWO

THE REVOLUTION OF 1945-1955 AND THE SECOND THIRTY YEARS: 1955-1985

"A comparatively unnoticed and silent revolution has taken place in the Miscellaneous Workers' Union over the last twelve months."

- News Weekly (August 1955)

"Historians are often criticised for misusing the word revolution which, it is argued, ought to be used in the original sense, to refer only to violent and rapid change. But when one is talking about social phenomena, rapid and slow change are inseparable. For no society exists which is not constantly torn between the forces working to preserve it and the subversive forces - whether perceived as such or not - working to undermine it. Revolutionary explosions are but sudden and short-lived eruptions of this latent and long-term conflict".

- Fernand Braudel (1979)

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PROTEST TAKES OVER THE MEMBERS: 1945-1953

"Your union is what you make it."

- Leaders of the FMWU's rebel members, 1950

With the ending of the war, the discontent that had become apparent in sections of the FMWU's membership over the prior five or six years demanded satisfaction; conditions that gave the moment to radical and militant rank-and-file leaders. In response, the union's officials became more oligarchical, more bureaucratic and more aligned with conservative interests in the labour movement than they had ever been. With each passing post-war year the contradiction became more severe until, in 1954, the officials of the New South Wales Branch were found to have become so harsh, so tyrannical and so oppressive as to offend even the state. Indeed, the New South Wales officials became so differentiated and remote that when the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Court removed most of them from office in the spring of 1954 it only made legal what the officials had already accomplished by themselves in effect. The ensuing elections saw the members overwhelmingly endorse a new and radical government of the New South Wales Branch. More significantly, this set in train consequences that, for the first time in the Federation's history, brought the union as a whole under a radical working class leadership. These developments, which mark a sharp break in the history of the FMWU and set a new course for its next 30 years, are the subject of this and the next chapter.

Closely related to these events was the onset of the 'Cold War' (the term was first used in 1947). Aspirations for a better world had never been higher than at war's end. In no time the victorious allies had established the United Nations Organisation to provide a much stronger guarantee of global peace in place of the failed League of Nations, the old European empires began to be broken up by national revolutionary and independence movements and even the centres of world power found themselves awash with citizens who now looked to the good society based on the democracy and peace that so many had just sacrificed their lives for. The decline of the 1930s, it seemed, had been arrested. In Australia the current of opinion was unmistakable. It was now time to make that "mighty fellowship in which the happiness of each will be assured by the effort of all," as John Curtin had promised.[1] One historian later recalled:

> In 1945 it seemed inevitable that a new society must come into existence. The most inhuman social order known to history had finally expired in a bunker in Berlin. That the means by which Japan had been given its quietus were more barbaric than anything it had perpetrated had not yet sunk in. The old order with which a generation had lived had been destroyed. The building of a new world - that was the future. A new society, whether it was the one seen by communists, still bathing in the afterglow of the triumphs of the Red Army and not yet forced to face the facts of Stalin's Russia, or that seen by more modest reformers who fixed their hopes on Attlee or Chifley, seemed inevitable. Those who believed in life, in a world in which so recently twenty or thirty million people had died prematurely and violently, knew that life and a new society were an equation.[2]

None of these aspirations survived the shock of the Cold War. The polarisation of the world - militarily, politically, ideologically and culturally - into two competing spheres of influence with one centre in Moscow and the other in Washington was absolute. In 1947

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1. L. Ross, John Curtin, A Biography, South Melbourne, 1977, p.328.
2. R.A. Gollan (1975), op.cit., p.194.

the United States enunciated the Truman Doctrine of active global intervention to combat communism and backed it up with the Marshall Plan to finance the reconstruction of Europe. Before the year was out the Soviet Union had responded with the establishment of Cominform (Communist Information Bureau) in place of the old Comintern to co-ordinate international communist activity and in 1948 Stalin set about ruthlessly consolidating Soviet control of the 'people's democracies' in Eastern Europe and blockading Berlin. The notion of people living in peace within national social systems of their popular choice was lost in these events. The United Nations deteriorated into an arena for the two blocs to engage in verbal conflict, the independence movements in the 'undeveloped' world became theatres for the rivals to engage in bloody combat, agents and finance from the protagonists networked the world, communists were expelled from the political life of the West, liberals, social-democrats and communists too attached to democracy or too critical of Stalin were purged in the East. Dissidents in both spheres suffered show trials, imprisonment and execution. Armed conflicts and crises on the fringes of the two strongholds became a permanent feature of global life. The Cold War era had begun.

In Australia the Cold War was waged with gusto. It licensed communist witch-hunts that were almost as pervasive, as indiscriminate and as vicious as McCarthyism was in the United States. They were especially pernicious within the labour movement as all the agencies and voices of Australian conservatism were harnessed to the indigenous phenomenon of the clandestine society for Catholic Action - the Movement. On the one side, the Catholic Church, its anti-communist conspiracy, the conservative parties, the United States' Central Intelligence Agency and all of their ideological servants and

spokespeople terrorised the Australian labour movement virtually unrestrained for the whole decade, creating divisions and suspicions from which it could only recently be said to have fully recovered.[3] On the other side, toward the end of 1947 the CPA reverted to the authoritarian sectarianism of its notorious 'Third Period', expelling intellectuals and dissidents, 'exposing' the Labor Party, slavishly following the truth as revealed by the Soviet Union, leading the working class into some spectacularly unsuccessful conflicts and effectively destroying itself as a substantial force in the Australian labour movement. Within five years it was reduced from its peak wartime membership of around 23,000 to about 6,000 and at the 1949 ACTU Congress - with the United States Embassy Attache for Labor watching from the platform - all of the CPA's candidates for office were defeated by large margins and the peak council withdrew from the World Federation of Trade Unions.[4]

The demise of the CPA within the trade union movement was not matched by any diminution in its propaganda value to Australian conservatives in the Cold War context. Nor, for that matter, did it do much to diminish the rump party's reciprocal determination to fight on. The witch-hunts continued with CPA sectarianism continuing to heighten Cold War hysteria which reinforced Catholic Action and conservative alarums in a vicious circle. By 1950 compulsory military service had been re-introduced and Australian youth were back in battle-dress fighting the Cold War in Korea. By 1955 a number of trade unions with CPA members dominant or well represented in their governments had been infiltrated and taken over by the Movement - most notably the Federated Clerks in 1950 and the Federated Ironworkers in

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3. Reference to the CIA may be found in R. Murray, The Split: Australian Labor in the Fifties, Melbourne, 1970, p.51 (for example).
4. A Davidson, op.cit., Chapters V & Vi, esp. p.137.

1952. And, after three Royal Commissions, a series of criminal trials and imprisonments, a High Court case, a National Referendum and two national elections over communism, the Movement became so strong in the Labor Party as to precipitate its worst split since the Great Depression.(5)

Within the New South Wales Branch of the FMWU there were also many who had high aspirations for post-war society - for John Curtin's new social order based upon democracy and the rights of all men and women to enjoy the fruits of honest toil. They began to come to the fore toward the end of 1945, demanding improvements in their wages and working conditions and the right to participate freely in their union's government. Many were returned soldiers and all naturally assumed they had an inviolable right to their own political views, most being socialists of one form or another, some having become members of the CPA during the war or in the short 'interlude of hope' immediately after it. None anticipated the Cold War, but as they struggled to realise their aspirations they found themselves competing with both the CPA's and their officials' insistence on waging it. In these circumstances their struggle became as much about its meaning as it did about the union's practical policies. For the radicals it became, above all, a fight over the right of all workers to participate in their union's government. For the officials it was a fight against communism. The more time passed the more it became defined in these terms. The radical members became less and less connected with the CPA and more and more popular; the government

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5. See generally: R. Murray, op.cit.; A. Davidson, op.cit., Ch. VI; P. Ormonde, op.cit.; G. Henderson, op.cit., (contains extensive bibliography). For an analysis which places this history in an international context, see R.A. Gollan (1975), op.cit., Chapters 6 & 7. For the general social context see A. Curthoys and J. Merritt (eds.), Australia's First Cold War 1945-1953, Vol. 1, Society, Communism and Culture, Sydney, 1984.

became more and more anti-communist and less and less democratic. In short, the contest became one between radical-democrats and anti-communist oligarchs. It was decisively resolved in favour of the former in 1954 by a successful appeal to residual liberal democratic principles embodied in the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act.

Thus, in addition to ushering in new leaders who were, in turn, to realise the potential implicit in the FMWU, these developments represented a radical-democratic thaw in the ice of the Cold War. This and the next chapter centre on these two themes. They are analytical narratives of the contest within the union between 1945 and 1955: a study of the process of actions that resulted in the radical-democratic triumph that was to dramatically change the character of the FMWU and a study of the relationship between these events and the wider transition from the Second World War - the People's War - to the Cold War. This first chapter deals with the period from 1945 to 1953 which saw the basic lines of battle crystallise and affords an analysis of the strength of the rival forces. It also analyses the challenge as it developed and examines the events that precipitated the decisive appeal to the Commonwealth Court.

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The FMWU did not disaffiliate from the ACTU. The opposition of General Secretary Harvey limited the union to a protest about the radical 1945 Congress decisions. Nor was a rule introduced to prevent CPA members standing for office. "Under what rule," asked Taubman's paint maker, Harold Facer, at one of the last Monthly General Meetings of the New South Wales Branch in 1945, "were the recommendations with

regard to Communists made?" In his "opinion", said another member, "a man has a right to his political belief". "This had no right to be on the Agenda Paper," said a third member, "as it was interference with the right of the individual". The presumption of political freedom was strong in Australia in 1945 and, with this defence, Vice-President George Sharpe moved that the recommendation not be adopted. He was seconded, the motion was carried without dissent and there, for the time being, the matter rested.(6)

Prevented by the Federal Council from disaffiliating from the ACTU and prevented by its members from proscribing the CPA, in what was to anticipate the dynamics of much of the history of the next nine years, the officials decided to manipulate the rules to suit the ends they had thus been denied. The problem for the officials was that, although they had abolished General Monthly Meetings, there still remained a provision for Branches to hold Annual General Summonsed Meetings. To close off this avenue, without any further reference to the members, the 25th Federal Council held in Brisbane in December 1945 raised the quorum for the Annual Meetings from one to five percent.(7) The undemocratic effect of this is simply explained. The largest meeting ever held in the FMWU's history had been the December 1925 meeting of the New South Wales Branch when 260 members had turned out to remove the CPA from office. The second largest had been the September 1945 meeting - also in New South Wales - when 130 members had turned out to vote on an eleventh-hour bid to prevent the abolition of monthly meetings. As the financial membership of the New South Wales Branch stood at 4-6,000, the Federal Council's decision thus meant that Annual General Meetings would require 200 to 300

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6. NSWBM, 31 July 1945, FMWU Papers.
7. Delegates Report to Federal Conference, Brisbane, 3 December, 1945, NSWBM, FMWU Papers.

members to be in attendance before its resolutions were valid. Hence, except under the most extraordinary circumstances, the new quorum rule effectively withdrew the principal remaining right of ordinary workers to have any direct control over the union's government.

Because of the changes occurring within the union's membership as its non-residual character became more pronounced, and because of the general economic and political context of the immediate post-war years, the time was not propitious for such a sharp assumption of power by the FMWU's officials.

The Chifley Commonwealth Labor government was orientated to the process of national transition from war to peace and the introduction of the 'new order'. Haunted by memories of the Great Depression, Labor's policies were fixed around ensuring the smooth demobilisation of the returning soldiers, preventing a return to the boom and bust economy of the inter-war years and ensuring, above all, full employment - which, it was reasoned, would protect living standards by increasing production, thus facilitating national development and allowing for economic and social reform. National unemployment, sickness and hospital benefits were introduced on top of the widow, funeral and maternity benefits brought in during the war, a program to end tuberculosis began and the great Snowy Mountains Electricity and European immigration schemes commenced.(8)

Chifley's struggle for these objectives became increasingly unequal. The odds lengthened considerably when neither the High Court nor the citizenry would allow the Commonwealth the necessary economic powers at the outset and made further refusals at crucial times during the contest, which lasted until 1949. The main wartime gains for the

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8. See generally, L.F. Crisp. op.cit., esp. Ch XIX. Also see W.J. Walters, "Australian Labor's Full Employment Objective, 1942-1945", Australian Journal of Politics and History, Vol. XVI, April, 1970.

Commonwealth were control over income tax, bank interest rates, social security and aspects of the coal industry. Against the backdrop of strong inflationary pressures due to post-war shortages, rising export prices and the release of pent-up domestic demand, the principal lines of the government's attack were directed toward controlling credit (bringing it into battle with the banks), increasing social security (bringing it into battle with professionals) and improving conditions for coal production (threatening the Communist Party). These three opponents together with the Cold War, and the major post-war shifts in international capital that saw the ascendancy of the great oil companies and the American dollar, destabilised the government in the run-up to the 1949 election - an election at which Labor faced Menzies at the head of a new Liberal Party that was happy to win by setting new standards in extravagant promises and anti-communist rhetoric.(9)

The immediately important point for our purposes is that, while Chifley's government was implementing this program, it kept a general brake on wage rises and improvements in working conditions as part of its strategy to control inflation, increase employment and encourage overtime in order to expand production, preferring to introduce reforms gradually through the legislative and taxation systems. But as production, employment, overtime and prices all began to rise, and as work processes were intensified by the introduction of new speed-up and management techniques, so conditions ripened for direct trade union action. In the six years after the war the number of strikes in Australia reached its highest level since the period just before the Great Depression.(10)

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9. L.F. Crisp, op.cit., Ch. XXII.
10. Labour Reports, No. 38, 1949, p.124 & No. 46, 1945, p.132. Also see: L.F. Crisp, op.cit., Ch's XIX-XXI; W.H. Sinclair, op.cit., p.237; J.S. Hagan (1982), op.cit., pp.146-56; T. Sheridan, op.cit., (Cont. over)

Within the FMWU, the New South Wales Branch's waterfront watchmen, who received the lowest pay and endured the worst conditions on the waterfront, became the union's most militant section. In 1945 the casual waterfront watchmen were paid 3s 2 8/11d per hour compared with 3s 9 1/4d paid to casual wharf labourers and 4s 1 1/4d paid to tally clerks. This disparity was particularly unsettling because of differences in overtime conditions. Both 'wharfies' and 'tallies' had the 44-hour week with fixed hours from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Monday to Friday, and from 8 a.m. to noon on Saturday. Outside of these hours they received overtime rates ranging from one-and-a-half times their normal pay for evening work up to two-and-a-half times for working from midnight to dawn or on Sundays and public holidays. The watchmen also worked a nominal 44-hour week, but they had no fixed hours and just received the one flat overtime rate of one-and-a-half times after they had worked a 15-hour shift, exceeded 44 hours in the one week or worked more than six days straight. In other words, it did not necessarily make any difference to the watchman's earnings whether he worked at midday or midnight, on a weekday, weekend or public holiday. Moreover, rarely did he have a choice when he worked. Wharfies and tallies had eradicated the demeaning and divisive Bull System of hiring labour and introduced a rotating roster that prevented favouritism and discrimination by ensuring all union members an even share of the work. By 1945 only the watchmen still suffered the humiliation of having to beg favour with employers and compete with fellow unionists to get work under the system which employers liked to refer to as 'free selection'. To the regular casuals, 'free

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10. (Cont.)
pp.166-184; P. Cochrane, "Company Time: Management, Ideology and the Labour Process, 1940-60", Labour History, No. 48, May, 1985, pp.58-68.

selection' meant the shipowners were free to select the cheapest, least militant and most willingly sweated labour while they were free to starve ("It was a snake pit" recalled one member).[11] The wharfies and tallies also had Vigilance Officers to ensure everyone kept to award conditions and other benefits such as the automatic adjustment of their wages to movements in the price index, provisions for meals and smoke-ohs.[12]

But if militancy automatically arose from such easily calculated comparative inequalities, capitalism would have been long outmoded. To fully comprehend the new mood among the watchmen, the working class culture on the waterfront also has to be taken into account. The extreme inequality between the gargantuan wealth of the shipowners and the quality of the lives of the labourers who produced it had always been given to intense and sometimes spectacular conflict. Whereas the FMWU's members had won nearly all of their conditions through arbitration and politicians, wharfies, tallies and sailors had won most of theirs by direct action and they built up the resentment of the watchmen by despising them for not doing likewise.[13] As well, pillaging cargo was commonly not classified as theft by other workers. It was just another way of building wages. The millions of pounds the shipowners made from their energy was seen as the real theft and pillaging was just another way of getting a bit of their own back. "If there wasn't someone on the gate", went a piece of waterfront bravado, "the wharfies would take the bloody funnel off the

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11. Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.3, No.1, July 1964.
12. See: NSW Industrial Gazette, Vol. 1, 1937, pp.271-285; Vol. 67, 1942, p.104; Vol. 74, 1944, pp.444-463; Vol. 80, 1946, pp.90-107; Vol. 93, 1949, p.882-894. Rates have been calculated with reference to the basic wage in ibid., Vol. 1, 1946, p.43; Vol. 112, 1954, p.12. Also see T. Nelson, op.cit., pp.54-57, 74-79.
13. See Federation News, Vol.3, No.8 March 1973; Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.3, No.1, July 1964.

ship".[14] Again, this built the watchmen's resentment. Wharfies would taunt them, telling them they were paid less for protecting the cargo than other workers received for stealing it.[15] All the same, there were standards accepted by most workers. They generally restricted themselves to what they could carry concealed on their bodies and would compete in their cunning and discretion.[16] But even in enforcing these standards, the watchmen largely relied on maintaining good relations with the other unions. The most effective way of disciplining those who went beyond the pale was through their union delegate, which could lead to expulsion from the wharf if the deed was judged to be of such dimensions that it threatened to jeopardise the position of the other workers. If a watchman became overzealous and, without extraordinary reason, called in the police's 'Pillage Squad' (which most regarded as exactly that), he ran the risk of being 'blackballed' off the wharf.[17] The strength and discipline of the other unions inevitably contrasted badly with the FMWU. The source of recruitment into the watchmen's jobs was also important. Usually they were filled from two classes. On the one hand, because they were regarded as 'the lowest of the low', the jobs inevitably attracted the 'low' - drunks, thieves, thugs, unreliables and so on.[18] On the other hand, they were also traditionally regarded as occupations that enabled the other waterfront labourers to maintain a living should they become injured or when they were too old for arduous physical work. Hence, by the 1940s a number of the watchmen had come to the job after struggling throughout the twenties and thirties as wharfies or sailors to eradicate the very conditions they

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14. Cited in W. Lowenstein & T. Hills, op.cit., p.16.
15. Sun, 16 August 1941; Mirror, 16 August 1941.
16. W. Lowenstein & T. Hills, op.cit., pp.16-17, 36-7, 135-7.
17. T. Nelson, op.cit., pp.80-85.
18. Interview with D. Howitt, Grafton, 25 August 1982.

now found anew. One watchman, for example, was Jacob Johnson who had been gaoled and threatened with deportation by Prime Minister Bruce as one of the leaders of the Seamen's Union in the conflict over pick-up conditions in 1925.[19] Finally, because of the intractability of class conflict on the waterfront, the CPA had found it to be one of its best recruiting grounds. Jim Healey, Eliot V. Elliot and Jack Hughes - Secretaries of the Waterside Workers', Seamen's and Clerks' unions, respectively - were all in the CPA, as were many of their ordinary members and a number of the watchmen. The militancy of the CPA added ginger to the watchmen's sense of injustice.

A survey of the 550 odd watchmen taken between 1945 and 1947 showed a turnover in the order of 65 percent for the three years, but 100 percent became union members, nearly all were financial and a core of about 60 regular casuals were actively committed to doing something about their conditions.[20] The most active CPA member was James ('Jimmy') Reid, a radical tradesman who, as a former member of the Unemployed Workers' Movement and official with Jack Kilburn's Bricklayers' Union (now the Building Workers' Industrial Union) was known - sardonically - for "always giving everybody advice". Jacob Johnson was also active in the constitution of a radical current of opinion on the wharf in the early stages. Perhaps the most widely respected of the members, however, was Thomas G. ('Gerry') Saunders, a Freemason who once sat "at the pick-up each morning for four months without being offered a single shift".[21] Employed as a supervising watchman for the Macquarie Stevedoring Co. and a staunch opponent of the FMWU's officials on straightforward economic grounds, to Saunders militant insistence on action to improve conditions was just common

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19. B. Fitzpatrick & R. Cahill, op.cit., pp.9-67.
20. NSWBM, 5 September 1946, 11 September 1947, FMWU Papers.
21. Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.3, No.1, July 1964.

sense. Others at the centre of the discontent included Bill Dalton, an ANZAC veteran who had been active in the Marine Stewards and had played a part in Bob Heffron's 1939 challenge to Jack Lang, John Haig and Bill ('Slim' or the 'Count') Wills.

After the watchmen, the Paint Section became the strongest and most active part of the Branch. This section's rates, while by no means high, were perhaps reasonable measured against other 'unskilled' labourers, containing as they did margins of between six and 33 shillings above the living wage.(22) They were not so reasonable, however, when measured against the rapid advance of their industry.(23) Except for the six shillings war loading, the Paint and Varnish award had been pegged since 1942, yet from 1945 productivity began to rapidly climb, breaking all records. By 1952 - after the fall of Chifley, the release of American dollars and the easing of restrictions on oil imports - some factories began to achieve annual production increases in the order of 40 percent and single factories started earning annual profits as high as £1/2 million.(24) Some workers had been with the paint industry since its inception in Australia and as their wage levels began falling out of all proportion to profits they became increasingly intent on claiming their share: "Employers reap the cream and offer us nothing" pointed out one factory bulletin.(25) "All right we helped produce more. Now we want more" demanded another.(26)

Two other pressures increased the discontent. First, the industry was undergoing substantial technological change. Closed kettles, which improved heat control in paint's cooking stage but

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22. NSW Industrial Gazette, Vol. 77, 1945, pp.756-762.
23. Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No. 37, 1946-7, p.1070.
24. The Wild Cat Monthly, February 1952; The Good Oil, No. 30, July 1953.
25. The Good Oil, No. 30, July 1953.
26. "New Logue: Claims 1953", FMWU Papers.

reduced the amount of manual labour and the discretion and knowledge of the varnish maker, were replacing open varnish pots. More easily managed synthetic resins were replacing linseed oil based paints. Ball mills, which could mix and grind varnish mediums with pigment while spinning unattended, were replacing the more labour intensive cone, flat-stone, edge-runner and pan mills. Ball mills also eliminated pre-mixing with pigment, could be more easily filled by pipes from freshly constructed mezzanine floors and facilitated improved productivity by being able to be simply increased in size without adding to labour costs. Even the filling, lidding and titling of paint tins was changing with the introduction of automatic measuring devices for fillers, machines for lid presses and lithographed cans instead of labellers.(27) Second, while all these developments were increasing the extent to which the workers were becoming appendages to their machines and were making their lives more precarious by threatening employment and devouring skills in the long-term, in the short-term the growing demand for paint and varnish products was leading to high levels of overtime and speed-up management techniques. "Human beings are not race horses" protested an industry bulletin.(28)

Militants soon came to the fore in the major paint plants, demanding higher overtime payments, the elimination of speed-up, compensation for the new machines and a fair share of profits. Many were also active politically. Harry Preedy, whose political roots went back to the IWW, began agitating at BALM. Harold Facer, a

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27. See the outline history of technological change in the industry in "Statement by Mr J. O'Brien, Counsel Assisting the Commission" in the "Enquiry into Mechanisation and Other Technological Change in Industry Before Mr Justice Richards", N.S.W. Industrial Commission, No. 58/317, 25 July 1962.
28. The Good Oil, No. 30, July 1953.

radical Catholic and Labor Party member who had been active in the union during the grim war years, began organising support for a new award at Taubmans. Keith ('Snowy' or 'Blacky') Blackwell, who was also radical politically, began organising at Major Bros. The section had added tension within it due to the fact that the Berger's delegate, Owen Harley, was a conservative Catholic (his sister was a nun) and became the leader of the FMWU's 'Team' in the Labor Council.

While these leaders were emerging in the two strongest and most militant sections of the membership, years of pegged wages, fading appeals to patriotism, rising prices and the mounting pressure to speed up production spread discontent through other parts of the union. Over the seven immediate post-war years, plastics, linoleum, chemical, synthetic resin, bag and sack and asbestos makers all left their posts or placed bans on parts of their work at one time or another. Issues ranged from delays in processing claims through to new, harsher management practices, insufficient overtime payments, new machinery, bonus systems and new timing systems.(29) "When the clock came in", reported the Branch Secretary to his exasperated State Council on one occasion, "the men sat down".(30) Even cleaners and lift attendants employed with David Jones walked out of the department store in May 1947 when the cleaning Foreman was threatened with a transfer for refusing to clean a floor that had always taken seven hours in three-and-a-half.(31)

More often than not the union officials were among the last to hear that work had stopped and, when they did, if they failed to have the members return immediately, they invariably handed the trouble to

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29. NSWBM, 27 January, 24 July, 11 November, 19 December 1947; 11 May, 1 June 1948; 17 March, 21 March 1949; 27 March 1951; 17 March - 22 April 1952; 15 November 1952, FMWU Papers.
30. ibid., 4 August 1953.
31. ibid., 27 May 1947.

the Labour Council's Disputes Committee. Prominent opponents of the union's government who emerged in these other sections included Alfred ('Freddie') Swan, a one-armed lift attendant at Swane's Department Store and a CPA member who had won a position as one of the Branch's Labour Council delegates in the 1944 election; Sidney Smith, a returned soldier and Military Medal winner employed as a Special Constable by the police; John Murphy from the Synthetic Resin Section; Stan O'Shea from the Male Cleaners' Section; and Martha Kerr, Laura Archdeacon and Elizabeth McConnell from the Female Cleaners' Section.

Toward the end of 1945 the militants were also replenished by the return of earlier Branch activists from the war. As the struggle developed the most significant of these proved to be Jack Dwyer and Ray Gietzelt. Jack Dwyer had joined the union in 1941 when employed by the Police Department as a Special Constable to watch the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Like so many others of this generation, Dwyer had been deeply moulded by the Great Depression. Born in 1911, the Depression had cut through his life from his mid-teens to his early twenties and it had not been until 1939 when he won a job as an assistant undertaker that he gained his first steady employment. Married with four children, until this he had lived on casual and seasonal work, mostly in bottling factories around Sydney's Woollomooloo, Darling Harbour and Haymarket areas. "People don't realise how cruel it is", he would always say whenever the subject of unemployment arose, "there is nothing more destructive or destroying. If you can't get work in your country, then you have not got a country. You have no freedom when you are out of work".(32)

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32. Interview with J.J. Dwyer, Pagewood, 21 & 28 June, 1982. Also see the Dwyer Papers, SU.

Dwyer had been active in the Funeral and Allied Industries Union and had quickly become part of the left opposition when he joined the FMWU. He had assumed duties as union delegate for the Special Constables, developed a close friendship with Tom Keniry, become embroiled in conflict with the Police Department - which was under the stormy command of Commissioner Bill McKay - and joined the CPA. Quickly earning official displeasure, in thinly disguised victimisation he was transferred from the Harbour Bridge to guard powder magazines at Bantry Bay on the outskirts of Sydney's far northern suburbs and had his right to act as a union delegate withdrawn. "The first thing you would say in giving a description of Jack Dwyer would be that he is a big man and talks his head off" said his friend Lionel Murphy on one occasion.(33) A highly emotional and deeply moral man, he was an irrepressible agitator and had soon enrolled everyone at Bantry Bay into the union from where he began to deluge the Executive with petitions and claims over working conditions, only to be interrupted by his conscription into the air force. Demobbed in September 1945, he was re-employed as a Special Constable on shift work watching the back entrance to the New South Wales Parliament House and immediately renewed his activities in the FMWU.(34)

Ray Gietzelt (the surname was owed to his Bohemian grandfather) was less colourful but more disciplined. He had joined the FMWU on 18 July 1941 at the age of 18 while studying chemistry at Sydney Technical College and working as a junior industrial chemist at a Chippendale factory that made cosmetics, perfumes and hairdressing

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33. "Case of Jack Dwyer", RSL State Council Meeting, 5-6 February 1955. RSL File No.3553/A/6. Dwyer Papers, SU.
34. ibid., Also see NSWBM, 12 & 27 January, 29 March, 23 July, 1943, ABL.

requisites. From where did he derive his extraordinary strength and ability, which became more and more apparent as the struggle developed? We may cite the conjunction of two formative family experiences. First, from his father Ray seems to have inherited ways of thinking and acting that have been considered characteristic of the independent, autodidactic artisan.(35) Arthur Gietzelt was self-educated and a "genius with his hands" ("he could do anything with a lathe").(36) The only formal schooling he ever had was an electrician's course he completed by mail through the International Correspondence School. After, among other deeds, putting the first electrical wiring system into Toowoomba's meatworks, he invented a specially springed car-wheel and around 1920 had gone to the United States to obtain a world patent and his fortune. Unsuccessful, he returned to Australia with an agency for making a new kind of rubber tyre and opened a lucrative business in the inner-city Sydney suburb of Newtown. From the experience of his father, Ray appears to have derived the practical consciousness of the self-taught, craftsman-inventor for whom everything is solidly conceived and related to readily available experience and nothing is completely trusted that cannot be established in these terms: an independent, highly empirical, rationalism that was underpinned against its detractors by habits of moral earnestness and self-discipline. Second, such an independent practical consciousness forms a virtually incontrovertible base for radicalism once it is forced to personally face the human irrationalities, injustices and inequalities of

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35. See E.P. Thompson (1981), op.cit., esp. pp.811-823. On R. Gietzelt's membership see: NSWB Membership Register, FMWU Papers, and W.A. Hart To Whom it May Concern, 19 December 1941, Gietzelt Papers.
36. Interview with R. Gietzelt, Sylvania, 11 February 1985.

capitalism.[37] The self-taught, craftsmen-inventor relied too much on his own powers of observation and induction to be able to hold to mental ruts: when direct personal experience proved the world to be 'out of true', the problems had to be faced, followed through to their logical conclusions and corrected. Thus, when the family's Newtown business was ruined in the Great Depression and Arthur Gietzelt went from netting &100 a week (when the living wage was &4) to the dole, he and his wife went to the local Branch of the Labor Party and became active socialists. Mrs Gietzelt became the Branch Treasurer and the family's Kogarah home virtually a left-wing Labor Sub-Branch where political campaigns were worked out and Housie was played to raise funds to carry them out. Ray Gietzelt and his elder brother, Arthur jnr, would join in the excitement of the election trail, meeting politicians, listening to speeches and letter boxing. At the age of eight Ray was impressed with Mark Gosling, the chief secretary in Jack Lang's government. Jack Eldridge from the Scullin government was also an impressive family visitor. The strongest influence of all, however, was the Secretary of the Clerks' Union, Jack Hughes. A widely admired young socialist in the Sutherland area, with the axing of Lang in 1938-39 Hughes had become President of both the New South Wales Labor Council and Labor Party at the age of 24. From this experience Gietzelt was schooled in the meanings, values and beliefs of the New South Wales Labor Party left. As he later put it: "I was born into the work".[38]

Young Gietzelt had followed Jack Hughes and Walter Evans into the State Labor Party in the left wing split that followed Federal intervention in the New South Wales Branch in August 1940. The day

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37. See E.P. Thompson (1981), op.cit., esp. pp.258-296, 887-915.
38. Interviews with R. Gietzelt, Sylvania, 11 February, 26 March 1985.

after Pearl Harbour was bombed he enlisted and saw active service in South-East Asia. Discharged around the same time as Jack Dwyer in September 1945, he returned to the political culture of Sydney's southern and inner-city working class suburbs, squatting in protest at the housing shortage, joining Jack Hughes in the CPA and resuming his employment at the Chippendale factory.(39) In the meantime, his father had won a government contract with a formula for paint remover he had recalled seeing mixed when he was in San Francisco. His business had diversified during the war and was now making a range of paint and varnish specialist and by-products. Building his house and planning to marry, Gietzelt left his factory when refused a wage rise and went to work in his father's workshop - adding what would prove to be another useful skill by taking care of all the business's accounts. Two months after being demobbed, Gietzelt waited around at the end of the second last Monthly General Meeting of the FMWU's New South Wales Branch on 6 November 1945. With Dwyer and other discontented members he joined in the formation of a Progressive Committee to run an opposition ticket in the Branch's 1946 annual ballot.(40)

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As the year 1946 showed the basic field of the struggle it will be helpful to follow it in some detail. The introduction of the State Council meant the union's annual ballot would involve 40 positions

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39. ibid., Also see C.G. Williams to R. Gietzelt, 10 December & 20 April 1985, Gietzelt Papers. On Gietzelt's membership of the CPA see pp.354-5 below.
40. Interview with R. Gietzelt, Sylvania, 11 February, 26 March 1985. Also see "Gietzelt v. The Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia, New South Wales Branch and Others", Industrial Arbitration Reports, Vol. LII, 1953, pp.606-8 and NSWBM, 27 November 1945, FMWU Papers.

instead of the usual 20 or so. The only ones not to have to contest their positions were the salaried full-time officials - Secretary Bill Smith, organisers Thomas Doherty and Arthur Wincote and the Office/Minute Secretary, Beatrice ('Trix') Einfield. This left open eight of nine Executive positions and three Federal Council, four Labour Council, six Labor Party Conference, two Six-Hour Committee, two Trades Hall Association and the 14 new State Council positions (only 14 because sections with less than 50 members were not permitted representation). The third organiser's position was also vacant as Robert Webster had retired in 1945. The Progressives contested 26 positions.

Financial membership was declared to be 3,600 - 500 less than the previous year with 2,000 of the ballot papers going to the watchmen and cleaning women. There was a return of 1,400 or 40 percent - an increase of 350 or 13 percent on the previous year and the officials made a clean sweep, gaining an average of 1,094 votes to 236. Gietzelt only recorded 217 votes for the Executive compared with the incumbent Thomas Doherty's 1,109. Fred Parker defeated Stan O'Shea for the Presidency by a record 1,137 to 300. Jack Dwyer, Freddie Swan and Harold Facer were all defeated by similar margins of better than three-to-one. Even Robert Webster, who had joined the Progressive ticket now that he was no longer beholden to the officials, only managed 94 votes against 230 for the Male Cleaners' Section - and this was after 33 years as an active member, 15 years as a full-time organiser and a life time of trade union and party political election experience that dated from 1917. In addition to Webster's 94 male cleaners, the Progressives could count about 90 watchmen (almost certainly all from the waterfront or Special Constables), 50 cleaning

women and a maximum of 50 votes scattered elsewhere.[41] With the opposition ticket so utterly unsuccessful, at the inaugural meeting of the State Council on 5 March 1946 the officials now felt free to declare the policy of the union to be "a Non-Communist Policy".[42]

It would be twelve months before another election and the first opportunity to try to raise the new five percent quorum to hold an Annual General Summonsed Meeting. Until then the Progressives were left with only two ways to participate in the union: sectional meetings and a virtually unused provision to call Special General Meetings upon the petition of 50 members. The watchmen called five sectional meetings during the rest of 1946, but the problem was that the five percent quorum rule also applied at this level. Although it was possible to gather five percent of the waterfront watchmen, without the names and addresses of the land watchmen - who outnumbered those on the waterfront by about 700 to 550 - and the organising support of the officials, their widely scattered workplaces, shifts and patrols made five percent of all watchmen very difficult.[43] This left Special General Meetings. The first petition was forwarded in July, only to be ruled out of order on the pretext that 29 of the 77 signatures belonged to unfinancial members (leaving it two short of the required number).[44] This prompted Jack Dwyer to write to the Executive for a Rule Book. Instead of receiving the rules, however, he was charged under them and fined £2 2s for "Disruptive tactics in spreading discord and making mis-statements about the Organisation and its Officers".[45]

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41. For election results see E.E. Cupit to the Secretary, 25 February, 1946, NSWBM, FMWU Papers.
42. NSWBM, 5 March 1946, FMWU Papers.
43. ibid., 5 March, 27 June, 4 July, 5 August, 3 October 1946.
44. ibid., 23 July 1946.
45. ibid., 21 August 1946.

The Progressives retaliated. Dwyer appealed against his fine to a General Meeting and had a summons issued from Sydney Central Court for Secretary Smith to provide a Rule Book.(46) Simultaneously a second petition for a Special General Meeting was forwarded, asking that the agenda include demands for a £1 rise in the living wage, the 40-hour week, the retention of the 75 percent of male rates granted to women during the war and the return of the FMWU to democratic government. "The point is this", argued the Progressives:

> democracy means government by the majority and yet we find in our own trade union no opportunity to attend regular Monthly General Meetings to hear, discuss and decide democratically the vital issues confronting us all.(47)

Then, in October, some of the waterfront watchmen refused to leave their 'Bin' unless they were paid overtime for 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. shifts, thereby precipitating a spontaneous ban on all evening work.

The ban failed when the State Council refused to support it and the second petitioned Special General Meeting lapsed for want of a quorum.(48) Only Dwyer had any success. His fine was quashed because the officials would not summons a General Meeting to hear his appeal and he obtained a Rule Book. What he gained on the one side, however, he lost on the other. Dwyer was upbraided by the CPA for taking the union to court and, when he refused to submit to this ruling, was expelled. "The Party", concluded Jack, "didn't know everything."(49)

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46. ibid., 16 October 1946.
47. "To the Members of the Miscellaneous Workers' Union, NSW", Circular, FMWU Papers
48. NSWBM, 5 September, 3 october, 26 November 1946, FMWU Papers.
49. Interview with J.J. Dwyer, Pagewood, 28 June 1982. Also see "Case of Jack Dwyer", RSL State Council Meeting, 5-6 February, 1955, RSL File No. 3353/A/6, Dwyer Papers, SU.

This pattern was to be repeated and extended each year up until 1952, with the Progressive vote rising unevenly to a peak of 790; enough to have won the 1946 election and any prior election in the FMWU's history, but nowhere near enough to win in ballots where the total return and the official vote rose by an even greater number. In 1952 the total return of ballots peaked at 2,845 or 47 percent of financial members - more than twice the 1946 return with the officials receiving an apparently impregnable 2,041. The only section in which the Progressives were successful was the Paint Section, returning Harold Facer in 1947, Keith Blackwell in 1948 and 1949 and Ray Gietzelt - a reluctant candidate after 'Blacky' found he had enough - mid-way through 1949 and again in 1953.(50) Similarly with meetings, each year the Progressives sought to gain a quorum at a petitioned Special General Meeting and at the Annual General Summonsed Meeting only to be ruled short of the required number by the officials. By 1950 the meetings were becoming substantial affairs. At a petitioned Special General Meeting on 31 January 1950 resolutions were carried to permit members to form Branches, repeal all the union's rules and appoint shop delegates. The meeting's combined afternoon and evening attendance was 175, but the quorum was ruled at 250. At the General Summonsed Meeting a month later the attendance at the afternoon session was recorded as 161 and the evening as 158 - an increase of 134 and a combined total of 319. The Progressives claimed over 400 in attendance with more than 70 not voting. The officials argued many had attended and voted at both sessions and ruled that the combined

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50. NSWBM, 4 March 1952; The Block, No.17, April 1952. Also see NSWBM 25 & 28 February 1947, 25 February & 29 March 1949, FMWU Papers.

vote was irrelevant in any case as each session had separate status and needed a quorum of 280.[51]

Trix Einfield's minute of the following February 1951 General Summonsed Meeting conveys something of the atmosphere:

> Afternoon Session
>
> President and Secretary took their places at the meeting and waited in accordance with the Rules, but as the necessary quorum was not present, the President explained to those attending that there would be no meeting.
>
> At this juncture, Mr Gietzelt sprang to his feet and launched a tirade against the Officials of the Union stating that they had altered the Rules unknown to the rank and file. The Secretary then explained that the quorum rule was altered by direction of the Federal Council, brought back to the Executive and the Executive minutes were endorsed at a subsequent meeting of the rank and file. Organiser Pederson objected strongly to the remarks of Mr Gietzelt claiming that Mr Gietzelt's statements were a slur on the Organisation, and that the fact of the poor attendance at the meeting was an indication that the rank and file were satisfied with the administration.
>
> Evening Session
>
> As only 80 were present at the evening Session, this also lapsed ... Mr Gietzelt at this session, made another attack on the Officials of the Union on the same lines as the afternoon. President made [same] answer ...
>
> Mr Swan charged the Officials with not having sent notices of this meeting to the employees at Anthony Horderns ... Secretary challenged this ... President also refuted the statement of Mr Swan saying in his opinion it was an untruth, to which Mr Swan said he was taking objection on the grounds that the President had called him a "filthy liar" ...
>
> As a state of chaos was now being reached, the President and the Secretary left the room ...[52]

The Federal Council decision to raise the quorum to five percent had not been endorsed by a meeting of the rank-and-file, only by the State Council. But with just 20 members at the afternoon session and

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51. ibid., 8 & 29 March, 31 January 1950, 28 February 1951. Also see The Block, No. 6, March 1950 & No. 7 June 1950.
52. NSWBM, 25 February 1951, FMWU Papers.

80 at the evening the Progressives nevertheless fell well short of the supposed quorum. "No doubt the Commos put a lot of work into it" wrote Smith to the General Secretary, implicitly acknowledging the difficulty of organising the members.(53)

A turning-point was reached when a stop-work meeting of 220 waterfront watchmen on 26 February 1952 carried a motion of no confidence in Smith and the two State Councillors representing the Watchmen's Section. This was easily the largest sectional meeting in the FMWU's history, one of the largest meetings of the union ever and it came on top of no confidence motions carried by 240 members at a petitioned Special General Meeting three months earlier (where the quorum had been put at 300).(54) The officials felt they could not ignore it and hit back at the General Summonsed Meeting a week later. Organising vigorously for a meeting for the first time, a motion of confidence was proposed in Smith, the Executive, the State Council and the union's Returning Officer. The afternoon session carried the vote by 70 to 13, the evening defeated it 135 to 125. Outrageously, the officials now reversed their earlier ruling on the separate status of each session of the Annual General Summonsed Meeting and declared that the combined attendance of 342 constituted a quorum and that their motion had been carried by 194 votes to 148.(55)

With this ruling the contest now began to enter another phase in which battles in courtrooms would become as important as those in the ballot box, in the meeting rooms and on site.(56) Before considering this, however, we should first examine the terms in which it was being

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53. W.H. Smith to S.C. Bevan, 2 February 1951. FMWU Papers.
54. NSWBM, 23 April, 18 December 1951, FMWU Papers; The Block, No. 15, January 1952.
55. NSWBM, 4 March 1952, FMWU Papers; The Block, No. 17 April 1952.
56. For details on the final election see NSWBM, 17 June 1952, FMWU Papers.

conducted and, if there was widespread discontent among the members, also the extent to which the ballots and failures to raise quorums at meetings represented votes of confidence in the officials.

2.

The government's lines of defence at all times were to emphasise any gains made in wages and working conditions and promote the officials as members of the Labor Party fighting communism. To be sure, between 1945 and 1952 there were gains made by legislation and arbitration and no doubt these assisted the officials to organise their vote. The 40-hour week was introduced by the New South Wales Labor government in 1947, benefiting all members except waterfront watchmen (who nominally received it in April 1950) and female cleaners (who had a 36-hour week established in their original 1911 award). The Commonwealth Court's interim living wage increase of seven shillings in December 1946 and the &1 granted in October 1950 also flowed through and a number of new awards were made. The &1 increase may only have been half what the ACTU had asked for and much of its value might have been eroded by inflation, but nevertheless it was the largest money increase ever granted by the court and, along with every other increment, it was outlined in great detail in Bill Smith's "Secretary's Report" to the members, which began to be produced half-yearly to counter the Progressives' bulletins. "Our Organisation is affiliated to the Trades Hall and the ACTU and they in turn subscribe to the policy of Arbitration and Conciliation", Smith would typically write in defence of the union's no-strike policy.(57) A circular was more explicit:

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57. "Secretary's Report for Half-year ending 31 December, 1950", FMWU Papers.

> All these achievements have been obtained without your officials resorting to the strike weapon, with the resultant losses in work and wages ... Your present officials are all members of the Labor Movement. They support all Labor governments. They work and support their local Labor Members. They work to keep your Labor governments in office. They believe in Arbitration ... It was because officials of your union supported the decisions of the Labour Council and the Arbitration Policy of our Federal and State Labor governments that you are now being deluged with Commo-inspired pamphlets and circulars.[58]

The anti-communist line was pushed further and further as the militant campaign mounted. Prior to every election an official 'How to Vote' leaflet was posted to each member with the message on it in bold type: "Support Australian Labor Party Candidates". Below this, in smaller type: "Support the OFFICIALS who work for YOUR interests and are opposed to Communism ... record a Vote for members supporting the Australian LABOR PARTY and REAL PROGRESS in the MISCELLANEOUS UNION".[59] They sought to turn back the democratic attack:

> The character assassins responsible for ... these vile pamphlets and circulars ... are merely carrying out the instructions of Marx House conspirators who seek to get control of your union ... It is well known that when Communists gain control of a Union they set up a dictatorship ...[60]

In 1950 the officials began receiving the support of the press and headlines such as "Communists Bid for Key Posts" began appearing at election times, usually accompanied by details of the FMWU career of Lance Sharkey (who was notorious after being jailed for sedition in 1949).[61] They also made the most of CPA defector Cecil Sharpley's

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58. "Members of the Miscellaneous Workers' Union", Undated Circular, FMWU Papers.
59. See ballots in literature in NSWBM, FMWU Papers.
60. "Members of the Miscellaneous Workers' Union", Undated Circular, FMWU Papers.
61. See, for example, Sun, 6 February 1950.

sensational 1949 revelations as to how he had 'helped Communists rig Union ballots'.

No doubt anti-communism attracted votes in the enveloping Cold War context, especially from Catholics. At the afternoon session of the 1950 Annual General Summonsed Meeting, for example, the Progressives saw their support decline from 99 votes on one resolution to just eight when organiser Ernest Pederson moved that the Meeting -

> places on record its disgust at the attitude of the so-called Progressive underlap Communist faction inside this Union ... and calls upon the State Council of the Union to deal with these agents of a political party, and we furthermore pledge our support to the [officials] in their policy of Arbitration and place on record our complete confidence in them. We further declare that members of the Communist Party are not desired as officials of this Union ... Action such as theirs can only result in the weakening of the Union financially and morally.[62]

The lesson was not lost. At the evening session Gietzelt protected the Progressive leadership by successfully moving to have the same motion passed over because of the licence it would give the officials to conduct political inquisitions among the members.

The main reasons the officials were able to hold on by such a large margin, however, stemmed from the tractability and high turnover of the membership and the advantages they derived from simply holding office. The high turnover was particularly advantageous. Between at least a third and half of the members still turned over each year, undercutting the Progressives' campaign, depending as they did on being able to build from year to year as grievances multiplied and their case against the officials was substantiated. With full employment, the 'moving' portion of the membership, if anything, moved more. In 1946, for example, the New South Wales Branch of 7,000

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62. NSWBM, 28 February 1950, FMWU Papers.

enrolled 3,000 members for an overall end of year gain of a little over only 600.[63] "Never was so much work performed by so many people for such long hours for such a small result" observed General Secretary Harvey, paraphrasing Winston Churchill.[64] At the same time the officials could keep breaking new ground, conducting further organisation campaigns to recruit members in places where the arguments of the Progressives had not reached and the only knowledge of the FMWU was the Secretary's half-yearly reports, the anti-communist propaganda in the press and their private mail boxes and the organiser explaining progress on conditions through the courts, collecting subscriptions and asking for a vote. In total, the financial membership between 1945 and 1952 rose from slightly below 4,000 to 6,000 - 1,500 of whom were cleaners and watchmen (where the officials had to compete with the Progressives on the waterfront). The rise in the Branch membership "is really amazing", remarked Harry Harvey at the 1951 Federal Council, "it is beyond my comprehension".[65]

As well as the fact that the Progressives were all workers who generally had to agitate and organise on either side of their day or night's labour while the officials had three full-time organisers at their disposal, the Progressives had the great handicap of never having a firm knowledge of the size of the 'book' or the 'financial' membership, the vote required to win an election, the level of the quorums from year to year, or even where many of the members worked, let alone lived. In these circumstances the union's card system for recording members' names, addresses and financial status was

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63. Branch Secretary's Report, 28 October 1946, FMWU Papers.
64. General Secretary's Report for the Year ended 30 June 1947, FMWU Papers.
65. General Secretary's Report to Federal Conference, 5 November 1951, FMWU Papers.

all-important. Indeed, without general meetings, the fact of all the members having their names together in the one cabinet in the union office was the sole tangible common link between them. Because access to the cards was only available to officials, the Progressives had to leave their factories, the waterfront, their shops and department stores to scour the city for members after hours and distribute their 'How to Vote' tickets on a hit-or-miss basis, while the officials recruited, collected subscriptions from and sent their 'How to Vote' to every member. In short, the Progressives had the task of overcoming the union 'machine', the linchpin of which was the membership cards.

Furthermore, while no ballot 'rigging' by the officials was proved, the Progressives became increasingly suspicious of the size of the official vote as they grew more confident of the level of their own support. It was increasingly common for opponents in the trade union movement to accuse each other of ballot rigging during this time. The Groupers especially sowed this suspicion about CPA members, capitalising on Cecil Sharpley's 1949 revelations which were followed by the conviction of the CPA's Ernest Thornton for "forgery, fraud and irregularity on a grand scale" in the Federated Ironworkers.(66) There were many ways of doing it and in a union such as the FMWU, where there was such a large turnover, where there were always at least a third of the members unfinancial, and where the members were so scattered each could have little idea of where any of the others lined up, it was particularly easy.

The FMWU had some guard against rigging allegations as its New South Wales ballots had been conducted by a Returning Officer

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66. "Inquiries into Elections for Office in an Organisation - Federated Ironworkers' Association of Australia", Misc. No.'s 7 & 9 of 1950, Commonwealth Arbitration Reports, Vol. 73, 1951-52, p.29.

appointed by the Industrial Registry since 1938. All the same, the officials still had the great advantage of being able to exercise a large degree of discretion in deciding who was and was not 'financial' in preparing the roll. They also had access to the actual ballot papers, which the Progressives did not, and could therefore model their 'How to Vote' in the same style. The Progressives became suspicious of collusion between the officials and the Returning Officer in the 1951 by-election when his name appeared on the officials' 'How to Vote' ticket, conveying the impression they carried the imprimatur of the state. Subsequent inquiries by Dwyer and Gietzelt also revealed discrepancies between the Returning Officer's record of ballots sent out and the tally held by the Post Office. Further, 160 ballot papers which had arrived too late for the count had been opened, thus destroying their secrecy and leaving Progressive voters open to particularly close scrutiny and victimisation.(67) The Returning Officer professed to have no idea how his name appeared on the officials' 'How to Vote' or the reason for the other irregularities, declined to attend a subsequent petitioned General Meeting to defend a no-confidence motion passed against him and, after Gietzelt wrote to the Registrar listing the irregularities, he resigned his position.(68) Meanwhile, the 1952 by-election - the first ballot at which the Progressives had their own scrutineers and their best result - was watched closely. At the declaration of the poll, Dwyer, Gietzelt and Gerry Saunders protested over 15 points of

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67. See NSWBM, 2 May, 11 December 1951, FMWU Papers.
68. R. Gietzelt to J.A. Kelleher, 29 November, 3 & 10 December 1951, 14 January 1952; J.A. Kelleher to R. Gietzelt, 18 December 1951; W.H. Smith to R. Gietzelt, 13 December 1951; J.J. Dwyer to J.A. Kelleher, 16 March 1952; Inspection Notes of J.J. Dwyer, 19 July 1952, Dairy Notes of J.J. Dwyer, 19 July 1951, Dwyer Papers, SU. Also see The Block, No. 14, December 1951, No. 15, January 1952; No. 16, February 1952, No. 17, April 1952.

irregularity, only to have a Special Executive Meeting dismiss them all minutes later because they had not been made to the Returning Officer and were not in writing. The Progressives interviewed the Industrial Registrar with a view to a legal challenge, but by this time other events were overtaking.(69) The struggle was moving into the courts on a larger scale and the matter was not pursued. Nevertheless, given the other measures which we know the officials were prepared to adopt to retain office we might safely conclude that it is likely ballot rigging of some fashion went on.

The strength of the machine the Progressives were up against is illustrated by the split among the officials in 1949. The point of the division was the successor to Secretary Smith, who had reach 68 years of age and, as an old miner and heavy smoker suffering from silicosis and bronchitis, was regularly absent sick from the office. President Parker and organiser Doherty anticipated assuming control of the office and had the support of most of the Executive, which seems to have been the core of the Industrial Group. An official 'Old Guard' ticket, however, emerged around the Minute/Office Secretary, Trix Einfield. She was supported by the ailing Smith, Vice-President George Sharpe, who was a Freemason, and the majority of the State Councillors, including Joe Coote and the Progressive Keith Blackwell who argued from his short stint on the Council that "she knew more about the Union than any other person".(70)

As Einfield was an employee of the union, to stand for office she first had to be admitted as a member. When Bill Smith moved in this direction, however, Parker and Doherty instantly sprang to defend the integrity of the union's eligibility rules and obtained an opinion

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69. NSWBM, 30 June 1952, FMWU Papers.
70. ibid., 28 September 1948.

from the Industrial Registrar supporting the power of its Executive over the State Council.(71) So thwarted, Einfield, the mistress of the membership cards, suddenly discovered that Doherty was nine months unfinancial and therefore also ineligible to stand for the 1949 ballot. Now it was Smith and Einfield's turn to become principled defenders of the integrity of the eligibility rules, but Parker and Doherty obtained another opinion from the remarkably co-operative Industrial Registrar which again supported the greater power of the Executive and a new rule was introduced to allow the smaller body discretion to override the eligibility rules.(72) Smith and Einfield retaliated by dropping Parker, Doherty and the other opposing Executive members off their State Council/office ticket.

What had happened as tragedy within the Branch at large was now repeated as farce among the officials themselves. In a revealing exchange, all the words hurled in the contest between the officials and the militant members were now hurled anew in the contest between the Executive and the State Council. Two years before the Progressives were to become alert to the conduct of the annual ballots, Parker, Doherty and other Executives argued for the Criminal Investigation Bureau to be called in to find out why Smith's 'How to Vote' ticket was exactly the same as the Returning Officer's official ballot papers. The ballots had also been suspiciously printed at the Worker office and not the Government Printer, as was usual, and there were "discrepancies" discovered in the Secretary's Annual Report and Balance Sheet. Most revealingly, however, the Executive threatened to suspend Smith if he did not grant access to the membership cards. The

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71. ibid., 24 August 1948.
72. ibid., 14 December 1948.

one-sided access to the cards was "not in accordance with fair play" cried the Executive.(73)

Smith, Sharpe and the others against the Executive were now transformed into upholders of the democratic rights of the State Council and defenders of the weak against bureaucratic tyranny. Miss Einfield was being "crucified without rhyme or reason", Doherty's eligibility ruling had "created a privileged class", it was wrong for so many salaried officials to be on the Executive, the State Council was being made a "tool" and the rules should be changed to return power to the "majority".(74) The Progressives, who had six of their candidates ruled ineligible to stand for the election because they were found 'unfinancial', responded:

> ALL WAS WELL WITH THE PRESENT CLIQUE OF POWER-DRUNK OFFICIALS UNTIL RECENTLY. NOW THE "FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER" THEY ALL SO ENTHUSIASTICALLY INVENTED AND INTRODUCED NOW THREATENS TO DEVOUR THE WEAKEST ELEMENTS IN THEIR MIDST ... one of the Organisers, Mr Doherty, has been UNFINANCIAL FOR NINE MONTHS OF LAST YEAR ... WE SAY TO THEM NOW: WHO ARE THE DISRUPTERS?(75)

The Executive did not gain access to the membership records and the election highlighted their importance. Except for the delegates to the Labor Party and Labour Council, where the officials stayed solid, three tickets were run in the election. The Executive/Grouper and the State Council/Office tickets were both strongly anti-communist and comprised about equal numbers of incumbents. The State Council/Office ticket had the advantage of two full-time organisers over the Executive/Grouper ticket's one in organiser Doherty. Doherty

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73. ibid., 8 February, 4 March 1949.
74. ibid., 28 September 1948, 21 December 1948, 11 January, 22 February 1949.
75. Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union (NSW Branch), pamphlet, February 1949, FMWU Papers.

was, however, the most experienced organiser by more than 15 years. As it turned out, the State Council/Office ticket won handsomely and the Executive/Grouper faction actually received less votes than the Progressives. George Sharpe defeated Fred Parker for the Presidency by 1,400 to 533 and, although they did not win, Martha Kerr of the Progressives outpolled Thomas Doherty for the Executive by 837 to 569 and Gerry Saunders outpolled Fred Parker for the Federal Council by 518 to 458.(76) The following year Parker's vote for the Presidency declined further to 356, as against Saunders' 364 and Sharpe's 1,601. Parker and Doherty were re-admitted to the official ticket in the 1951 by-election, Parker instantly returning to 1,723 votes.(77) The machine made all the difference. Another lesson was not lost on the Progressives:

> Forced to run his campaign without the list of names and addresses ... Mr Parker and Co. could only poll 356 last year ... INCLUDED THIS YEAR ON THE SMITH TICKET MR PARKER MADE THE GRADE WITH 1,723 VOTES! NEED WE SAY MORE ... Only candidates on Smith's ticket get a "fair go". It is impossible for any other candidates to contact the 6,487 financial members ... THEY AND THEY ALONE had access to the names and addresses of members.(78)

Nor did the conditions under which Parker was accepted back into the fold go unappreciated when he promptly moved a motion to admit Miss Einfield as a member of the union ("Mr Parker's face was red!").(79)

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76. W.H. Smith to H.J. Harvey, 3 March 1949. FMWU Papers.
77. NSWBM, 8 March 1950, 23 March 1951, FMWU Papers.
78. "Squeals by Whom", leaflet issued by R. Gietzelt & J. Dwyer, Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union, NSW Branch.
79. NSWBM, 31 July, 1951. FMWU Papers. The Block, No. 14 December, 1951.

If the 1949 split among the officials illustrates the decisive advantage in having access to the union's office, the split which followed soon after among the waterfront members and developments in the paint and other sections illustrate the force behind the Progressives. The Progressive Committee's approach to the waterfront watchmen was directed at their whole condition. At one level they argued for an autonomous Branch because the casual watchmen were almost 600 strong and therefore larger than any other section except the male and female cleaners' and the land watchmen. Their conditions, they argued, were different and generally worse than both other waterfront labour and the land watchmen. But, because of their greater number, the land watchmen dominated the Watchmen's Section and waterfront claims were ignored. They constantly demanded their own Branch, their own award, separate representation on the State Council and their own representatives on their Conciliation Committee.(80) At another level the Progressives sought to instil self-respect among the watchmen. In addition to repeatedly emphasising the watchmen's inferior conditions, the Progressives published a bulletin with items about work and personalities on the wharf. The bulletin - The Waterfront - had sections titled 'JOB NEWS', 'BIN NEWS' and 'TIT TATS' wherein the good fortune, humorous incidents, illnesses and deaths of watchmen were reported, where they were defended against abuse and assault by wharfies, where drunk and dissolute watchmen were castigated and where disorderliness and bad language at union meetings was censured. After one incident in which a watchman - who was unfinancial to boot - "threatened to wrap a chair around the President's neck and again used bad language in the presence of our

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80. See, for example: NSWBM, 16 September, 28 November, 16 December, 1948, 24 March, 28 April, 26 May, 23 July, 1 August, 27 October 1949, FMWU Papers.

feminine minute secretary", the Progressives published an apology to Miss Einfield on behalf of all the waterfront.[81] At the same time, the Progressives were concerned not to have the watchmen narrowly develop their own sectionalism, distinct from the FMWU overall. Perhaps the clearest distinction between the CPA's campaign in the 1920s and this movement was that the Progressives granted integrity to the FMWU. It was always "our" union, the grievances of the watchmen were always linked to the demands of other members and ad infinitum, the message was repeated: "YOUR UNION IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT".[82]

Still, by 1949 the Progressives were becoming hard pressed to contain and direct the discontent. Between 1945 and 1949 some gains had been made through arbitration and the watchmen themselves had won two short strikes. Shifts had been reduced from 15 to 12 hours, fixed hours the same as wharfies and tally clerks had been introduced for the men who watched cargo when it was in movement, overtime rates of time-and-a-half on Sundays and public holidays had been granted, there was a meal allowance during overtime and a High Court battle had won annual leave.[83] Yet these improvements only fanned the fire. On the one hand, they implied recognition of the distinctiveness of waterfront conditions compared to those for land watchmen and, on the other, they still fell short of conditions for other waterfront labour where further gains had also been made. The most important of these had been the advent of appearance money for casual wharfies rostered on at times when no work was available, which redoubled the watchmen's demand for a rotary roster.[84] The situation had also been compounded when the officials raised union contributions without any

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81. The Waterfront Watchman, No. 22, August 1950; The Block, No.6, March 1950.
82. See, for example, The Block, No. 7, June 1950.
83. See Branch Secretary's Reports 1945-1950, FMWU Papers.
84. NSWBM, 1 August 1949, FMWU Papers.

consultation. The radical craftsman, Jimmy Reid, was almost driven to distraction, protesting:

> emphatically against the dictatorial attitude of our Union leadership for raising contributions without reference to the Members and ... our Union's Rafferty Rules which deprive the membership of any control of Union ballots, paid officials, finance, Rules and all the democratic rights of the Trade Union Movement.(85)

A flashpoint was reached in May 1949. Frustrated with both the officials and the efforts of the Progressives, a breakaway movement arose. Ten watchmen pooled £5 each, collected 441 signatures and hired the eminent Frank Louat, Doctor of Laws, to fight their way out of the FMWU completely. They "wanted something done and were going to see it done", they reasoned flatly; the officials had "never done anything" and "if they had their own organisation they could get their grievances ironed out".(86) The Progressives vehemently opposed breaking away from "our union", but, unlike the officials, they responded immediately, declaring the formation of a Waterfront Watchmen's Branch of the FMWU and electing their own officials, with Jimmy Reid as President, John Haig as Vice-President and Gerry Saunders as Secretary. They also wrote immediately to Bill Smith avowing their "loyalty to the Union" and "respectfully" requesting a room be made available at the Trades Hall for their meetings. A "hearty" invitation was extended to Smith to attend and it was trusted "that our parent Executive will co-operate fully and heartily so that the Branch may proceed in an efficient and amicable manner for the mutual welfare of our members".(87)

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85. NSWBM, 16 December 1948, FMWU Papers.
86. ibid., 16 November 1949.
87. T.G. Saunders to W.H. Smith, 31 May 1949, FMWU Papers.

In the face of two rival governments on the waterfront, one of which had extended the hand of reconciliation, the officials declined to act positively or sympathetically. Thomas Doherty considered the watchmen to be "wet-nursed" and "lucky to have a Bin", let alone anything else. Another Councillor thought the watchmen's complaints "ridiculous, and this Union shouldn't be held up to ridicule". So remote were the officials they could only see the two movements against them as part of one conspiracy, instead of arising from one common experience. The Progressives' new Branch was rationalised wildy as the "thin edge of the wedge for a breakaway union" and their elected delegates went unrecognised as Smith feared "it would help to build them up".(88)

The breakaway campaign ran for 14 months, finally failing on appeal before the Industrial Commission on 5 September 1950: "It is a well settled principle that the mere desire or craving or impulse of some Union to have a life of its own cannot be accepted as a reason for granting it registration" concluded the court. The marginal improvements in conditions were taken as sufficient evidence of the FMWU's capacity to effectively represent the watchmen and the no-strike record of the union won favourable consideration under registration conditions that had been inserted following the 1917 General Strike. There was no way through here, riddled as the law was with 'Catch-22s' that all worked in favour of the registered union. The "unhealed sore", as Dr Louat referred to the waterfront watchmen, was left to bleed.(89)

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88. NSWBM, 2 July, 27 October 1949, 23 November 1950, FMWU Papers.
89. "Appeal by Waterfront Watchmen's Union of New South Wales against order of Industrial Registrar dismissing application for registration as industrial union", No. 48 of 1950, 5 September 1950.

"In spite of all the Boast, the Bubble and fuss, the Breakaway Union Baby was still-born", crowed the Progressives, "Now we are back to where we were a year ago, securely tied up in the Miscellaneous Union straight-jacket with all of its faults and impositions". Jacob Johnson, as an old seamen, proposed that the leaders of the breakaway be given one more chance on pain of not being worked with should they try it again. Jimmy Reid advised that breakaways could never be countenanced as they only resulted in "weakening the working class". Gerry Saunders explained it in his commonsensical terms. Their behaviour was "foolish and regrettable", but "they were looking for better conditions". The officials, however, could only see the breakaway as a challenge to their own authority and expelled its leaders from the union, again refuelling the fire: "... the officials should be expelled and not these two Members", cursed Saunders, "the men had broken Trade Union principles, but they were more or less forced into it".(90)

The response of the officials to this irrefutable evidence of the extent of the 'rank and file revolt' they had on their hands continued to be counter productive. No effort was made to understand the real causes, no thought was given to accommodation, no attempt was made to incorporate the discontent. Everything was due to "disrupters" or "commos". They continued to refuse the watchmen's requests for a Vigilance Officer despite the willingness of the men to pay any additional cost incurred, refused all requests for a separate section or Branch, refused the establishment of shop committees and, straight after the breakaway failure, banned the holding of any watchmen's meetings altogether unless the full five percent quorum was present.

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90. The Waterfront Watchmen, No. 19, May 1950; NSWBM, 28 February 1950, FMWU Papers.

They insisted that watchmen's claims be processed like all other sections, discouraged appeals against court decisions and steadfastly resisted the roster system: "Employees have the right to refuse jobs and employers the right to refuse men," said Smith, "and I don't want that taken away".(91) "Employers and Watchmen have equal rights", shot back the Progressives, "PROVIDING the Watchman is NOT BROKE".(92)

This was the force behind the record sectional meeting of the watchmen on 26 February 1952 that sent the 205 to 15 vote of no confidence in Smith and the watchmen's State Council representatives which had prompted the outrageous reversal of the ruling on quorums to overturn the resolutions at the subsequent Annual General Meeting. Within another six months the waterfront watchmen were drawing up their own domestic union rules and taking up their claims to the ship owners without reference to the union's government.(93) Likewise, the officials had exhausted their capacity to penalise the watchmen any further. On hearing that they were beginning to negotiate for a roster, the Executive decided "the men had taken this up themselves and the union would not be involved".(94) By the end of 1952 it was only by dint of legal fiction that the waterfront watchmen and the FMWU officials could be said to have been still part of the one union.

To a lesser degree the same phenomenon was in evidence in other sections. Both Bergers and BALM paint makers struck for a week over an anomaly in their conditions in 1949.(95) After visiting British

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91. NSWBM, 26 October 1950, FMWU Papers.
92. The Waterfront Watchman, No. 19, May, 1950.
93. NSWBM, 9 September 1952, FMWU Papers.
94. ibid., 12 March 1953.
95. "Report of the New South Wales Branch", 30 September 1949, FMWU Papers.

Paints in May 1950, Owen Harley reported that "the attitude of the men [to the union] is that they want to pay up and get out" and it became impossible to get anyone to act as delegate.(96) In February 1951 Smith wrote to the General Secretary to alert him of the "hints" he was receiving that the Paint Section was also going to attempt to breakaway.(97) Likewise, in 1951 the Nally's plastic workers considered breaking away. The Progressives' attitude was consistent:

> Nally - Fine financial membership (thanks to delegate) but lack of official attention has caused section to desire transferring to the Ironworkers' Union ... It is only a fighting financial membership that will make our union 'look after its members'.
>
> JOIN THE UNION - STAY IN THE UNION.(98)

Over and above these sectional developments there were further general rights withdrawn from the members and most of the new leaders suffered some degree of persecution or victimisation. In 1946 a rule had been introduced to prevent any business being raised at Annual General Summonsed Meetings that had not been put on the agenda a month earlier - a measure freely used to filter out dissident motions.(99) In 1950 the 40-year practice of annual elections was abolished in favour of tri-ennial terms.(100) In 1951 an attempt was made to literally eliminate Monthly General Meetings, which, while not functioning, had nevertheless been left as an option in the Rule Book (Rule 22A). This was blocked by the Commonwealth Registrar and the General Secretary's subsequent letter to Smith on the matter gives an explicit insight into official thinking:

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97. W.H. Smith to S.L. Bevan, 2 February 1951, FMWU Papers.
98. The Block, No. 13, September, 1951.
99. See, for example NSWBM, 13 February 1951, FMWU Papers.
100. ibid., 8 March 1950.

> While in Melbourne I interviewed an Officer of the Federal Registrar ... on the Registrar refusing the deletion of Rule 22A. I was informed that if it was done, there would be no provision for the members to have a general meeting, which is contrary to the Arbitration Act. On having a quiet talk, I was informed that if I submitted a Rule in place of 22A providing for the members calling for a general meeting signed by a percentage of the whole of the financial members of the Branch this Rule would be accepted, as I suggested a petition signed by 25 percent of the members calling a general meeting. I was told this would comply with the Arbitration Act, and would be accepted. If this was done, a general meeting would never be held, as nobody would be able to get the necessary signatures ... I am hoping to do this as quick as possible.(101)

Rule 22A was not removed, but raised to a ten percent quorum instead, which added up to the same thing. Other new, harsher rules introduced included a confirmation of the supreme power of the Executive over the State Council, including the power to appoint organisers, the abolition of appeals against fines, suspensions or expulsions to General Meetings and a restraint on members inspecting the union's books at any time other than on the last Wednesday of each quarter. Bit by bit the relationship between the officials and the members was disappearing.

As for the new leaders, Harold Facer - who had to endure inquisitions over his political views in 1946 as the Paint State Councillor - was expelled in 1949 because he had also become a member of the Storemen and Packers after being promoted to a position where his duties were mixed between the coverages of the two unions.(102) In May 1950 Gietzelt, Saunders and Reid were tried and fined after being found guilty of conducting themselves -

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101. S.C. Bevan to W.H. Smith, 19 July 1951, FMWU Papers.
102. NSWBM, 13 December 1949, FMWU Papers.

> in a manner likely to bring the union into ridicule and contempt, defaming and maligning officials of the union in connection with the performance by them of their official duties and interfering with the proper conduct of union business.(103)

Three months later Freddie Swan was similarly fined and Bill Wills was taken to court on a spurious charge over his waterfront registration.(104)

These, then, were the essential elements of the conflict and the basic contours of its initial phase. As a result of long term economic development, at war's end the union contained islands of potentially independent, autonomous power amidst its moving sea of weak, fractionated unskilled labourers - classic economic conditions of pre-unionism. With the mood on these islands becoming increasingly militant under the weight of a complexity of pressures - comparative wage injustice, greater profit taking, the cultures and customs of the workplaces and developments within the wider ensemble of class relations - they gave new substance to the radical tendencies that had always been evident in the union, but which were now regenerate yet completely excluded from government. This contradicted the officials whose complete subordination to the assumptions of the state was exaggerated by the Industrial Group movement and Catholic Action. The result was they were blind to the changes within the membership and therefore incapable of interpreting the demands being made on them in any terms other than those of the wider ideological struggle - a struggle that had been the basis of their ascendancy in 1939, that had guided their actions thereafter and that was now being reinforced by the Cold War.

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103. ibid., 24 February, 14 March, 23 May 1950.
104. W.C. Wills to Secretary, 31 July 1950; Secretary to W.C. Wills, 14 August 1950, FMWU Papers.

There thus ensued the classical revolutionary pattern of an escalating sequence of conflicts that forced a much greater polarization and prepared the way for greater conflicts. The officials relied on the union machine and used all the techniques Michels identified as characteristic of organisational oligarchy.(105) They denounced the opposition as "vulgar intriguers", assumed the "auerole of legality" and deployed all the "mechanisms of power" at their disposal to maintain themselves. They used the time-honoured conservative defence of further organisation to dilute the radicals and to shore themselves up by incorporating hitherto untouched territories; they identified themselves with legitimizing slogans; they integrated themselves with the institutions of the Cold War offensive such as the press; they conceded partial economic claims and they manipulated the union's laws to cut down the new leaders and close off avenues of attack.

At the same time the Progressives rooted themselves more deeply in the experiences of the members at their workplaces, claimed any economic concessions as admissions of the baselessness of earlier resistance and inducements for further direct action, exploited divisions among the officials and enlisted every instance of victimisation and bureaucratic manipulation as fresh evidence of undemocratic oppression. In so doing they also became more and more familiar with the terrain of official power as they struggled to maintain the discontent within the FMWU 'straight-jacket'. As the leaders barricaded themselves up behind the rules and the moving portion of the membership, and as the Progressives grappled with this critique, so to speak, so the relationship between the union and the state came more and more into focus, corroding autonomous, democratic

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105. R. Michels, op.cit., esp. p.224.

conceptions of unionism among the militants and re-directing the struggle into this juncture. We may now return to the general course of events and those in particular which prompted entry into the decisive phase.

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By the time the officials brazenly reversed the practice of insisting on separate status for each session of Annual General Summonsed Meetings so they could claim a vote to rebut the no-confidence motion passed by the waterfront watchmen, the links between the members' new radical leaders and the CPA had markedly diminished, something which, ironically, led to a more explicitly political campaign. Soon there would be two further changes to hasten the resolution of the struggle. First, the radicals would extend their campaign into the courts. Second, Secretary Smith would retire in April 1952, clearing the way to complete Grouper control and greater rigging of the rules, which in turn would bring about defections within the ruling oligarchy. We shall deal with each of these changes in turn and then look at the meeting that immediately precipitated the crucial appeal to the court.

As with the Groupers, to this day there remain uncertainties and sensitivities associated with the question of the personal relationship between the members' new leaders and the CPA. Unlike the campaign of the Trades Hall Reds in the 1920s, the majority of the leading dissidents on this occasion were long-time members of the FMWU and their activities were founded on the conditions of their employment and, working out from there, the issue of democratic rights. The content of the struggle was thus primarily defined within

the terms of the special circumstances of the FMWU and it is difficult, and after 1950 impossible, to distinguish any aspect of the challenge that distinctly corresponded to the vicissitudes of official CPA policy (which returned to a united front line in any case in 1951-52). A further difficulty lies in the fact that both the CPA's policy and its standing in Australia changed so much in the course of these years that being a member in 1950 meant occupying a very different political position to that implied in being a member in 1945. In 1945 it meant being a member of a Party with a significant popular following and a democratic mode of operation that was aligned with one of Australia's 'allies' and pursuing socialist policies in co-operation with other working class parties in a general social context of radical optimism. In 1950 it effectively meant being a member of a thoroughly stigmatised, authoritarian, political rump aligned to the enemy of the Western World and being exploited by conservatives to divide the working class, suspend democratic rights and justify more war.(106) Because of the witch-hunt mentality that assumes guilt by association, in the interests of working class unity, civil liberties, peace and self-preservation, many who were CPA members in 1945 had lost their tickets and their memories by 1950.

Some who shifted their party political alignment can be noted. Jack Dwyer, as mentioned earlier, had been expelled from the CPA in 1946 for not conceding his error in taking the union to court to obtain a Rule Book. He had then been dropped off the Progressive ticket in the 1947 election and, after polling a very low vote as a non-aligned candidate, did not contest either the 1948 or 1949 elections. Similarly, Ray Gietzelt had not contested the 1947, 1948 or 1949 elections and around 1949-50 he had also parted ways with the

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106. See note 5 above for general references.

CPA. The direct reasons for Gietzelt leaving are not known, but like most of the 17-18,000 other Australians who had joined during the 'interlude of hope' and subsequently left, it was probably the combination of Cold War persecution and the self-defeating policies of the Party itself.

By 1949 both of these tendencies had begun to operate in tandem. Against the international backdrop of the communist purges beginning in the United States and the communist revolution in China, which escalated hysteria by joining the 'Red Scare' to the more traditional Australian xenophobic fear of Asian invasion, in February 1949 CPA General Secretary Sharkey wildly condemned the Labor Party leaders as:

> the definite allies of warmongers and imperialist aggressors, who were just as anti-labour as Hitler and Mussolini and the Japanese imperialists were. That is not only true of Chifley and Evatt, but of the remnants of the Socialist Parties in every country.(107)

On fire with sectarian excess, he proposed to "liquidate reformism as the decisive policy of the working class movement".(108) Despite Sharkey himself becoming Australia's first Cold War prisoner in March (at Jack Lang's urging), despite Cecil Sharpley publishing his 'revelations' about communist ballot-rigging in April, and despite the appointment of the first Royal Commission into communism in May, the CPA nevertheless went on to challenge the Labor Party on the coalfields in June. There was a complex of reasons why the miners gave their support to this famous seven-week strike, but its conduct

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107. Cited in R.A. Gollan (1963), op.cit., p.232. For the actual policies of Chifley and Evatt see M. Burgmann, "Dress Rehearsal for the Cold War" and "Hot and Cold: Dr Evatt and the Russians, 1945-1949", in A. Curthoys & J. Merritt (eds.), op.cit., pp.49-134.
108. R.A. Gollan (1963), op.cit., pp.232.

and results were different only in their scale from Sharkey's disastrous 1925-26 Trades Hall dispute in the FMWU. With the Labor Party facing an election inside six months, under unrelenting fire from conservative Australia and being compelled to place restrictions on petrol because of the shortage of American dollars, the strike stopped the railways, led to gas rations of one hour a day and caused over 500,000 workers to be stood down. When the miners refused to negotiate and it became apparent that the CPA was calling for complete Labor Party submission, Chifley unleashed the full power of the state and broke their stand. Having lost the strike, the CPA was routed at the ACTU Congress in September, the alarum generally contributed to the defeat of the Chifley government in December and it assisted in creating the political context for conservatives to launch the first sustained counter-attack on the trade union movement and democratic freedoms since the 1930s. By 1951 the CPA was even being out-voted on the central council of the Miner's Federation (for the first time since 1934) and that ally of 'warmongers and imperialist aggressors', Dr Evatt, was all that stood between it and extinction in the High Court. If anything is clear about this strike it is that: first, it was a disastrous misreading of the balance of forces and, second, it effectively marks the end of the Communist Party as a significant force in the Australian labour movement's history.(109)

If these general events were not sufficient, other developments closer to home may have also influenced Gietzelt's decision. After the coal strike Jack Dwyer had come under police suspicion when "House of Strikebreakers and Scabs" was painted on the front wall of

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109. ibid., pp.232-235. Also see: A. Davidson, op.cit., pp.134-137; L.F. Crisp, op.cit., pp.343-67. For a round-up of CPA opinion on the strike, which generally concedes the error, see T. O'Lincoln, Into the Mainstream: The Decline of Australian Communism, Sydney, 1985, pp.66-72.

Parliament House.[110] A little while later Ray's brother Arthur was expelled from the State Executive of the RSL after allegations that he was a communist.[111] The RSL had proscribed the CPA in 1948 and its solicitor, Vincent Brady, was among the most zealous Cold War warriors ("The Macarthy of the RSL" was Jack Dwyer's description). The faintest criticism of the League's policies on housing and pensions was enough to bring a member directly under Brady's suspicion.[112]

But, whatever his direct reasoning, one thing is certain and that is that Ray Gietzelt was determined to change the direction of his union and it was most probably this struggle that principally exercised his selection as to what measures had to be taken and which 'foes had to be laid low'. He was a protagonist, an agent, someone actively and practically identifying what had to be done to realise change within his own field of influence. Hence, the move might be best read as an index of the extent to which the CPA had become a fetter in this particular struggle. This was not time for theoretical refuge. He, Dwyer and the others had fixed their sights and the 'consequences of their own earlier deeds were driving them on'. Within this context, just as his father had found capitalism during the Great Depression, his CPA membership 'melted into the air' once Ray Gietzelt found in his own practice the Party had got it 'out of true'.

As they were moving away from the CPA, Gietzelt and Dwyer moved into the front line of the struggle within the union and, simultaneously, the character of the campaign began to change. This was not so much in its emphasis as its range. Whereas between 1945

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110. Interview with J.J. Dwyer, Pagewood, 21 & 28 June 1982.
111. See V.J. Brady to J.R. Lewis, 9 November 1953, Dwyer Papers SU.
112. ibid.

and 1950 the Progressives had been almost totally limited to trying to get action on the sectional grievances of the members and undemocratic practices, after 1950 these two principles were increasingly integrated with the wider political tensions. Starting from these two fundamental points of protest derived directly from their own experience, they proceeded to the national conflict for, while they were fighting for their rights as trade union members and just working conditions in the face of anti-communist oligarchy, wages and conditions of Australian workers generally came under attack and Prime Minister Menzies attempted to seize their rights as citizens under the same rubric of anti-communism.

Hence, while at one level the militants continued to argue that the FMWU's officials "deliberately introduced a set of rules to deprive members of trade union liberties and impose a dictatorship", at another they now also argued that "the Menzies government's proposed alteration to our Constitution can be described ... as an attempt to introduce a POLICE STATE".(113) While at the one level they recalled that the "Progressive Committee was elected ... on 6th November 1945" and claimed that its work since "... for union meetings and justice, is an indictment of the paid officials who force members to regain trade union rights ...," at another they raised the memory of Eureka, recalling that in "the 1850s our forefathers banded together to form Australia's first Trade Unions. The many struggles that followed ... are now 100 years later directly threatened as never before".(114) While at one level they argued that "Sec. Smith and Co are anxiously hoping the active members of the Union will eventually

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113. The Block, No. 10, February, 1951; The Good Oil, No. 25, September, 1951.
114. The Block, No. 13, September, 1951; The Good Oil, No. 25, September 1951.

give up trying to make the union function, enforce awards and conditions ...," at another they argued that the "employers of Australia have been and are waging an all-out struggle on the conditions and wages of workers ... at a time when Australian people should be reaping the fruits of victory".(115) Whereas in 1949 Jimmy Reid authored one of the few Progressive bulletins to stray from the direct circumstances of the FMWU's members into the CPA line, warning watchmen "to watch Chifley. Pig Iron Bob swears he pilfered his Union busting policy", by September 1951 they were quoting the late Prime Minister:

> The Govt. fails to see the spirit of Ben Chifley that lives in Aussie workers: 'But if I think a thing is worth fighting for, no matter what the penalty is I will fight for the right, and truth and justice will prevail.(116)

The clearest sign of the change was the dissolution of the Progressive Committee and the formation of the Protest Committee on 29 August 1951. The officials had a spy at the new Committee's first meetings, which were held at Federation House, the headquarters of the Teachers' Union. If we can accept this person's unsigned minutes, which were badly typed on the back of four-month-old May Day brochures and couched in all the melodrama and embellishments of popular spy caricatures, there were "about 50 present - certainly not more than 60 (No check. No identification asked for. Those present were asked to sign the book)". The elected Protest Committee comprised Ray Gietzelt, Sid Smith, Gerry Saunders, Jimmy Reid, Bill Wills, Freddie Swan and four others. Gietzelt was elected Secretary ("OF COURSE",

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115. The Waterfront Watchman, No. 29, April, 1951; The Block, No. 10, February, 1951; No. 20, December, 1952.
116. The Waterfront Watchman, No. 12, August, 1949; The Block, No. 13, September, 1951.

wrote the spy), Smith as President ("tall-fair-glasses about 50 or more") and Gerry Saunders the Vice-President ("CP have key positions from the start").[117] The Committee functioned as a fully-fledged alternate union government. It sought representatives from all of the union's sections, collected contributions, issued its own bulletins and circulars, conducted all its business in formal order according to union rules of debate and held open general meetings of the members ("NO QUORUM OBSTACLE" advertised the Committee).[118] Its first bulletin, issued in September 1951, carried the slogan "for 1% Quorum, Peace and Progress" and sought to disarm the official's main charge:

> To cover their conduct and hold their jobs the officials brand [the] committee as Communist and only concerned with gaining control of the union. 'Divide and rule' is the basis for these lies, but the sand is running low ...[119]

And in May 1952:

> This paper has told you before there would be no pulling of punches. We will expose as we have in the past the rotten undemocratic practices of the officials ... For too long our interests have been neglected and our elementary rights ignored. We are determined to see our Union progresses and gets on with the job of protecting and improving our wages and conditions ... and respect ... IN ANSWER TO THOSE LIES AND SLANDERS OUR MEMBERS' PROTEST COMMITTEE HAS ABSOLUTELY NO CONNECTION WITH ANY POLITICAL PARTY AND IS WHOLLY DIRECTED AND FINANCED BY OUR OWN UNION MEMBERS FREE FROM ANY OUTSIDE INFLUENCE.[120]

The officials could hardly accept this. Frozen in the Cold War and reinforced by a clandestine organisation at least as ideologically hidebound, uncompromising and authoritarian as the one Dwyer and

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117. Unsigned Protest Committee Minutes, 29 August, & 24 September 1951 (and others undated), FMWU Papers.
118. The Block, No. 15, January, 1951.
119. The Block, No. 13, September, 1951.
120. The Block, No. 18, May, 1952.

Gietzelt had left behind, they did not have the capacity to believe in the integrity of the members. They had originally come together as anti-communists and since 1945 they had manipulated so many rules and victimised so many members in the name of anti-communism it was the only rationale holding their government together. "From the manner of their speech and attitude it could be safely said MOST present were CP", wrote the spy.(121) The officials needed these impressions - to lose anti-communism would have meant losing everything.

By itself, the reversing of the quorum rules at the Annual General Meeting of March 1952 was sufficient ground to turn to the court. For the officials, as we have seen, the point of the meeting was to rebut the 215-to-5 vote of no-confidence carried by the waterfront watchmen the week before. In its lead up, the officials had forwarded an "emphatic protest" to the Trades Hall Association for allowing Dwyer to hire a room for the watchmen's earlier meeting; they had excluded the Protest Committee's follow-up motions of no-confidence from the Annual General Summonsed Meeting agenda ("legally constituted notices of motion!", wrote the Protesters); inquiries and correspondence about the motions were refused and ignored ("true to form"); Gietzelt and Dwyer were refused access to the union's books ("an extremely serious denial of our Union rules and the LAW"); and for the first time the officials had used their resources to organise for a meeting.(122) With four state police watching over what was described in the press as "one of the noisiest meetings ever held in the Trades Hall", when the officials overturned past practice to declare the quorum and the motion of confidence carried, the Protest Committee concluded it had to find some way to

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121. Unsigned Protest Committe Minutes, 24 September 1951, FMWU Papers.
122. NSWBM, 22 & 30 January, 12 February 1952, FMWU Papers. Also see The Block, No. 16, February, 1952, No. 18, May, 1952.

bring them to account.[123] "This is UNCONSTITUTIONAL, but in keeping with the rotten practices our Committee is fighting and exposing", declared the Protesters' next bulletin: "Space will not permit more to be said of this monstrosity. We will let the COURT and the members decide".[124]

The persistence of the couplet, "the COURT and the members", hints at the equivocation of the Committee about taking the path to the state. It was not just the shibboleths of the CPA that issued caution. The leaders of the militants had enough common sense to wonder what chance their cause would have in the hands of the mystification and pomp that attended the remote, formal and abstract character of the law with its margins for judicial discretion moulded by values and concepts usually derived from inherently conservative backgrounds. Already Jimmy Reid had failed with a legal challenge to the rules in 1950 and had not the country just witnessed much of the gratuitous anti-communist sideshow paraded through the nation's courts?[125] What chance a conservative union government being corrected by an institution even more bureaucratic, centralised and hierarchic during the Cold War? Indeed, the chief judge of the Commonwealth Court - Raymond Kelly - was himself a confidant of Santamaria and a member of the National Catholic Rural Movement.[126] Moreover, there was the traditional belief that there should be no outside interference with the autonomy of union affairs.

At least three considerations were important in pressing the Committee in this direction. First, when the court action started

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123. NSWBM, 4 March, 1952, FMWU Papers. Also see Daily Telegraph, 5 March 1952.
124. The Block, No. 17, April, 1952.
125. "Rules of an Organisation - Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia", Commonwealth Arbitration Reports, Vol. 69, 1950, p.427.
126. B. d'Alpuget, Robert J. Hawke: A Biography, Melbourne, 1982, p.73.

after the 1952 Meeting it was not as a means of breaking into the union's government, but as a way of holding the line on existing rights against what had effectively become arbitrary power. Second, no matter the extent to which they considered the courts remote and biased there was a belief that they should act as agencies of justice. As Jack Dwyer, who had been the first to take action, had put it: "Having got to the stage where it must stop, I am determined to exercise my rights as a member of the Miscellaneous Workers Union, a Citizen and a Man".(127) Third, there was the influence of the barrister, Lionel Murphy. According to Dwyer, Murphy was the son of an Irish labourer who had travelled to Australia with the union's former left-wing leader, Tom Keniry, in the 1880s.(128) A person of great intellectual capacity, human passion and unrivalled political courage, in 1949 Murphy had emerged from eight years of university study with honours degrees in science and law. He had joined the Labor Party in 1946, was a free thinking socialist and had pursued the law because of his interest in civil liberties. He became known to the Protest Committee through Jack Dwyer's friendship with Tom Keniry ("Jack brought Ray to see me") and he was instrumental in overcoming Gietzelt's fears about the chances of a fair court hearing.(129)

Some of the FMWU's members' rights were restored after Murphy's first case for the Committee in 1952. The officials were ordered to allow members to inspect all the union's books (other than those with the names addresses and financial status of the members), to place

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127. J.J. Dwyer to W.H. Smith, 4 August, 1947, Dwyer Papers, SU.
128. Interview with J.J. Dwyer, Pagewood, 21 & 28 June, 1982.
129. Gietzelt's hesitation about courts was a minor theme in a speech by Murphy at a dinner in honour of Gietzelt's retirement in Sydney on 19 July 1984. On L. Murphy see: W.J. Draper (ed.) Who's Who, Melbourne, 1985, p.627; Sydney Morning Herald, 6 October 1984; The Bulletin, 20 March 1984; A.R. Blackshield et al., (eds), The Judgements of Justice Lionel Murphy, Sydney 1986.

members' motions on the agenda for union meetings and to obey their own quorum rules - the high level of which mystified the court ("It is a peculiar constitution that the members have no control of their own affairs").[130] The result was a revelation to the Protest Committee. "Till then," Murphy later recalled, "Ray believed that the courts and the law were implacably attached to and in favour of the status quo."[131]

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When Bill Smith retired in 1952 and Fred Parker was elected as the new Secretary things got worse. Smith had been a moderating force in the union's government. He had been happy to work with the Groupers up until Parker and Doherty had challenged him for complete control in 1949, but had continued to support Labor Party policy, including Chifley's bank nationalisation legislation, and in 1951 he earned the praise of the Protest Committee when he defeated Parker to have the union donate &20 for Labor's campaign to oppose Menzies' referendum to outlaw the CPA.[132] A skilled union bureaucrat whose finest achievement was to steer the New South Wales Branch's office out of the Great Depression when he became Secretary in its darkest hour, he retired at the age of 72 as the 'strong man' of the union after 35 years as a member, 22 years as Federal President and 21 years as Branch Secretary. A former miner, AWU official, watchman and the Mayor of Waterloo, most members of the time remember Bill Smith as a

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130. "Dwyer & Another V. Smith & Others", Industrial Arbitration Reports, Vol. 51, 1952, pp.486-495. Also see The Block, No. 20, 13 December, 1920.
131. L.K. Murphy, "Speech", Randwick, 19 July 1984.
132. NSWBM, 28 August 1951, FMWU Papers; The Block, No. 8, August, 1950; The Good Oil, No. 25, September, 1951.

Freemason. However, twelve months after his retirement he passed away while his family "were all saying the Rosary by his bed".(133)

Fred Parker was fortunate in having had his chief rivals fall by the wayside in 1951. Thomas Doherty had suddenly died, Ernest Pederson had resigned as Organiser when he was elected as an alderman to the Sydney Council and Owen Harley had been discredited after being charged by police with molesting cleaning women.(134) After the internal struggle between the officials over the leadership in 1949, the Industrial Group seems to have been dissolved by Smith. Within six months of Parker's election, however, the Protest Committee was having to combat a Group recruitment campaign on the waterfront and all previous boundaries on Executive tyranny were being rapidly transgressed.(135)

The court's order to allow the members to inspect the union's books after Lionel Murphy's first case on their behalf was immediately qualified by a new rule preventing any notes being taken ("they could not understand the books anyway" laughed Parker).(136) Annual General Summonsed Meetings and petitioned Special General Meetings were then limited in a range of new ways. The practice of issuing summonses to members was abandoned in favour of placing two tiny advertisements in the Sydney Morning Herald.(137) Meeting rooms were hired that were far too small to even hold a quorum. The size of the petition required for Special General Meetings was increased from 50 financial

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133. A. Smith to S. Bevan, 16 July, 1953, FMWU Papers.
134. NSWBM, 9, 23 October 1951, FMWU Papers.
135. The Waterfront Watchman, No. 12, August, 1949. Explicit evidence of the operation of the FMWU's Industrial Group prior to 1954 (when the Protest Committee had a spy at meetings) are scattered. See NSWBM, 5 March 1946, 29 August, 1947 (for donations) 10 February & 23 March 1948.
136. FMWU Files, CIR. Also see The Block, No. 16, February, 1952.
137. NSWBM, 14 July 1953, FMWU Papers.

members to five percent, or approximately 300, and a new rule was introduced stipulating that anyone who signed a petition and did not attend the subsequent meeting would be fined five shillings (a rule designed to deter signatures, ironically it echoed an old craft practice and aided the organisation of attendance).(138) One meeting was scheduled for two days before Christmas - an impossible time for most workers to leave their families.(139) Again, fees were raised without any reference to the members ("What an affront to the members! What impudence!" wrote the Protesters), while at the same time the Executive co-opted employers to circularise members requesting them not to donate to the Protest Committee's Fighting Fund ("EMPLOYERS FAVOUR OFFICIALS" shot back the Protesters, circularising copies of a letter from the Metal Trades Association to the Plastic Section).(140)

Tricks were also used in the conduct of the ballots. Advertisements calling nominations for the 1952 by-election were lodged in the newspapers on the evening prior to the ANZAC Day long weekend ("not more than one in thousands would read this ... on such a weekend", replied the Protesters, "What disgraceful conduct!").(141) Bill Wills' candidature was subsequently ruled out on the complicated basis that half his 1948 contribution had been paid in 1949, thereby leaving him technically continuously six months in arrears from 1948 to 1952. "OK cards are not worth tuppence", said Secretary Parker when Wills presented the standard proof of financial status ("the

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138. The Block, No. 15, January 1952; NSWBM, 24 February, 12 August 1953, FMWU Papers.
139. The Block, No. 20, December, 1952.
140. On fees see: FMWU Files, CIR; NSWBM, 19 December 1951, 8 July 1952, FMWU Papers; The Block, No. 14, April, 1952. On contributions to the Protest Committee, see: "Employers Favour Officials", (undated circular); F.C. Parker to Members, 9 September 1952, FMWU Papers.
141. The Block, No. 18, May 1952.

ERROR was theirs", retorted the Protesters, "our officials simply cannot play the game").(142) When Ray Gietzelt was re-elected to the State Council in the 1953 triennial ballot ("the one thorn in the rose bush" wrote Parker) a motion was passed to prevent anyone taking notes at meetings.(143) Finally, so inflated did the Executive power become, in August 1953 a rule was introduced prohibiting Executive members and State Councillors from "divulging any business of the Union to any member ... or to have printed any documents ... which may be considered detrimental to the interests of the Union". For divulging the union's business to its members, a first offence was to be punished with a &2 fine, a second with "suspension during the pleasure of the Executive". Immediately the Executive began trials of Jack Dwyer and Freddie Swan over charges laid by one of the union's self-proclaimed leading Groupers, John Brooks from the Plaster of Paris Section.(144)

The union's own internal democratic processes had now been completely exhausted as a means of bringing about change. In 1945 the State Council had triumphed over popular government and now the Executive had completely triumphed over the State Council. Yet, in so doing the Executive had isolated itself, not only from democratic protest, but also support. By drawing all power into themselves to lock-out the dissent, they had also effectively locked themselves out from the members. Suspended in this democratic mid-air, they now forced the concentration of all the forces aimed at reform on their destruction.

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142. ibid.
143. S.C. Bevan to F.C. Parker, 25 March 1953; NSWBM, 24 March 1953, FMWU Papers.
144. FMWU Files, NSWIR; NSWBM, 28 July, 12 August 1953, FMWU Papers.

This magnified the remaining supporting relationships - the Labor Party's Industrial Group network, the state, the Federal Council and the internal union machine. The struggle therefore now threaded back along these lines. Having used up their internal capacity to repress the Protest, the Executive was unable to resist a particularly foolhardy temptation to manipulate their registration rules to effect a more thorough going purge. In September 1953 Gietzelt, Dwyer, Swan, Sid Smith and seven others had their memberships cancelled outright on the pretext that they did not do work covered by the union's constitution. The officials, using the tactics they had perfected within the union, argued Gietzelt had been admitted as a Chemical Worker at the Chippendale factory and, as the New South Wales Branch constitution only specified coverage of chemical workers at one particular factory (Elliot's), he was ineligible to be a member. This overlooked the fact that the union's Federal Constitution covered chemical workers without limitation and that both the Federal and the New South Wales Branch constitutions covered paint and varnish workers, which was Gietzelt's actual current occupation (as had already been recognised in his election to the State Council for the Paint Section). Dwyer's cancellation was a similarly thinly disguised attempt at victimisation, based on the fact that 'Special Constable' was not a literal entry in the union's constitution. Watchmen went under a myriad of local designations according to the purpose or desired image of the place they were guarding and Special Constables - despite attempts by the union itself to have their status upgraded - had always been officially classified as ordinary watchmen and worked under conditions prescribed by the union's award. The Industrial Commission was faithful to precedent in all but extraordinary circumstances and it refused to condone the cancellation of the 24

years' FMWU membership Gietzelt and Dwyer had between them.[145] "That's how martyrs are made," reflected Murphy.[146] "It looks as if we have got a flogging", wrote Fred Parker to the General Secretary, Stan Bevan, the South Australian Branch Secretary who had succeeded Harry Harvey in 1949.[147].

The isolation of the Executive also had the effect of setting it against itself. Some officials had already had their beliefs in some sense of democracy and fair play plainly offended. Joe Coote, although not an Executive member, had regularly argued against the imposition of harsh fines, as had others on the State Council. In April 1950 a Vice-President had resigned because he had not been advised of meetings, did not agree with the way elections were being conducted and had disagreed with the treatment of the breakaway waterfront watchmen.[148] With Parker as Secretary and Grouper-anti-communism becoming the sole watchword for an isolated Executive, there were two further splits.

First, George Sharpe suddenly found himself on the outside of the tiny Executive circle. The more the Executive headed in the direction of remote control by an inner circle of Catholic Groupers, the more the Freemason sought to reconnect with the members. Regularly he argued for a reduction in the quorum at Federal Councils, each time bringing accusations of guilt by association upon himself: "I do not support Communists, I hate them" he was forced to swear at the 1952

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145. NSWBM, 5 June, 12 August, 15 & 22 September, 1953; "Dwyer V. Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia, New South Wales Branch" & "Gietzelt V. Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union of Australia, New South Wales Branch", in Industrial Arbitration Reports, Vol. 52, 1953, pp.601-608. Also see: Sydney Morning Herald, 18 December, 1953; Daily Telegraph, 3 November, 1953.
146. L.K. Murphy, Speech, Randwick, 19 July 1984.
147. F.C. Parker, to S.C. Bevan, 26 November 1953, FMWU Papers.
148. NSWBM, 28 March, 21 April 1950, FMWU Papers.

Council.[149] Articles nevertheless began appearing about the FMWU's "absolute tyranny" and "untouchable dictatorship" in the Protestant anti-Catholic newspaper The Rock and Sharpe began collaborating with the Protest Committee and questioning the way in which the officials were arriving at their quorum totals.[150] The Protest Committee did not oppose Sharpe in the 1953 triennial elections, bringing him under more attack within the Executive ("we fully know he runs with the Coms" wrote Parker to Bevan in August 1953).[151]

The other split was in the hub of the office machine where Trix Einfield's power naturally increased in direct proportion to it being diminished among the members. Without the support of former Secretary Smith, her ambitions for the Secretary's job had faded. Nevertheless, her control of the union's membership cards and full-time presence meant she remained at the only site of power outside the Executive. In addition to being the office clerk and minute Secretary, she became known as the 'Assistant Secretary' of the union and became one of its delegates to the Six Hour Day Committee, the Labour Council and the ACTU. "I am going through hell here from her Ladyship", wrote Parker to the General Secretary Bevan in August 1953, "... the reason I have refrained from rows is because [of] the Coms". At the time of this letter, Parker estimated he had only a certain five and, at the most, six votes on the nine person Executive. "Keep your chin up Fred", replied Bevan "and the fist closed".[152]

With the officials' position crumbling from inside and the members becoming more aware and confident of their legal rights, during the spring of 1953 the Protesters prepared for another (and as

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149. FCM, 12 October 1953. Also see FCM, 5 October 1951, FMWU Papers.
150. The Rock, 17 January 1952; NSWBM, 8 September 1953, FMWU Papers. Also see diary notes in Dwyer Papers, SU.
151. F.C. Parker to S.C. Bevan, August 1953, FMWU Papers.
152. ibid., S.C. Bevan to F.C. Parker, August 1953, FMWU Papers.

it turned out) final contest. Having focused all the attention on himself, Fred Parker's stomach began to rot and on 10 November 1953 he admitted himself to hospital suffering from ulcers. A fortnight later two cleaning women visited him in his sick bed to present a petition from 578 members calling for a Special General Meeting on 8 December to dismiss him and nine of the other officials from office. To gain the slightest of advantages, Parker granted the meeting on the 7 December, which was a Monday when activity in the city could be expected to be at the lowest. "It is the most determined effort they have made yet", he wrote to the General Secretary, "It looks pretty dangerous to me ... I must have one or all of the Federal Executive here in case of an accident to take over".(153)

Federal Vice-Presidents John Shannon from Victoria and Ralph Bannister from South Australia travelled to Sydney and the Group began drawing heavy support from its patrons in the Labor Party. And to make doubly sure of their position the Executive was unable to resist the - by now, time-honoured - safeguard of further rigging the rules. On the morning before the petitioned meeting a new rule was rushed through the very co-operative New South Wales Industrial Registry stipulating that 20 percent, not five percent, of financial members would have to be present and all of them would have to vote in favour of the motion calling for the dismissal. This placed the quorum at around 1,200, not 300 as expected, and it would have to be 1,200 'yes' votes for the Committee. The number was more than twice the legal and three times the seating capacity of the room booked for the meeting - the largest room in the Sydney Trades Hall.(154)

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153. F.C. Parker to S.C. Bevan, 26 November 1953, FMWU Papers.
154. FMWU Files, NSWIR.

Only 48 members were present for the afternoon session and after 15 minutes President Sharpe declared it "no meeting". Parker then gave a routine Secretary's report and Gietzelt brought forward his dismissal motion to ensure it would be carried onto the agenda for the evening session. An argument ensued as to the right of the Federal Vice-Presidents to be present, Parker replying they were fully entitled as it was a meeting of the Federation's New South Wales Branch. Slips of paper announcing the new 20 percent quorum rule registered barely hours earlier were circulated.(155)

On Lionel Murphy's advice, all afternoon the Protest Committee continued to encourage members to attend the evening session. As Parker himself had said, it was a meeting of the FMWU's New South Wales Branch. The new 20 percent rule had only been filed in the New South Wales Registry. It was not registered in the Commonwealth Court and the Federal rules still stipulated five percent quorum.

The meeting was scheduled for 8 p.m. Gietzelt and one of the newer members of the Protest Committee, George Ford - a radical Catholic, returned soldier and Labor Party member from BALM ("the right hated his guts") - arrived at the Hall soon after the doors to the main room were opened at 7.30.(156) The organisers had set up a table across the doorway just inside the entrance to the room. The members filed in, showing their OK cards and signing an attendance book before passing into the body of the room through narrow spaces to

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155. This account is largely constructed from the evidence of the officials and members in the transcripts of the ensuing court cases: "George Thomas Ford V. The Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia", Misc. No. 33 of 1954; "George Thomas Ford V. The Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia - NSW Branch", Misc. No. 38 of 1954; "George Thomas Ford V. Frederick Charles Parker and Others", Misc. No. 39 of 1954, Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, Melbourne. Also see the relevant minutes in NSWBM, FMWU Papers.
156. Interview with R. Gietzelt, Sylvania, 11 February 1985 (for comment on G. Ford).

the left and right of the table. It was easy to judge the approximate attendance. The legal capacity of the rectangular room was 500 people and seating capacity was 355. Three hundred of the seats were divided into two blocks of 150 in fixed rows facing each other across a wide aisle running the length of the room (side-on to the stage at the front). Forty-seven seats were loosely arranged at the rear of the room, seven seats were on the stage and one seat was near the main entrance. Once the two blocks were filled everyone would know 300 were in attendance. When Bill Dalton arrived at 7.40 he quickly estimated that between 100 and 120 had already turned out. At 7.50 Gietzelt counted 235 members. The rear door to the room, which had been opened by the organisers to ease the congestion at the main entrance, was closed at 8 p.m. and Dalton commenced another count. At 8.03 Jack Dwyer, who was carrying an alarm clock around with him, began a count.

With the whole of one block of the fixed rows, nearly the whole of the other block and half the seats at the rear occupied, it was clear there had to be close to 300 present and Gietzelt demanded that the meeting be declared open. President Sharpe refused and announced the quorum was 1,200. Gietzelt insisted on Murphy's opinion that the quorum was 300 or five percent and strode off down the centre aisle to satisfy himself he had the numbers. Convinced there were 300, he demanded that Sharpe take an official count. The President called to the organisers at the doors who replied that there were 298 signatures in the attendance books. Gerry Saunders (or George Ford, nobody was ever quite sure) called 299 and Dwyer - whose own count was 315 and who had noticed that Parker had not signed a book - called that the Secretary's presence made it at least 300. It was easily the largest meeting of FMWU members in history and they were still coming in

through the main entrance. Gietzelt demanded the meeting be declared open and was refused a second time. Bill Dalton finished his count "dead-on" 8.12 and found 304 present. Gietzelt stepped up onto the stage to personally urge Sharpe to open the meeting. Upon being refused a third time he announced that the meeting could now elect its own officers. The members clapped and cheered.

Jack Dwyer moved forward to take the microphone, but the officials had disconnected it. Shouting above the uproar, he successfully moved and Bill Wills seconded that George Ford take the chair. Amid more cheering and clapping Ford stepped up onto the stage and called on Gietzelt to move his motion. The noise abated. With the microphone reconnected, Gietzelt moved for the dismissal of ten officials for incompetence and traversed the history of the struggle. Parker denied all of the charges and opposed the motion in a 20-minute reply. Pandemonium broke out when Mary Rohan, an Irish cleaner, rose to second Gietzelt's motion and it was discovered that Grouper John Brooks had disconnected the microphone again. With the plug and order restored, Rohan finished her part and Brooks then spoke for Parker, pillorying Gietzelt and the Protest Committee as communists and communist stooges intriguing to wreck the union. Gietzelt replied and the vote was called. A sea of hands went up in favour of the motion, only five were raised against. Again the members clapped and cheered. Federal Vice-President Bannister attempted to address the meeting. Parker disappeared up to the union's office with the attendance books. Sharpe stated that the proceedings would not be officially recognised. Ford declared the meeting closed and the members broke up "in disorder".(157)

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157. In addition to the sources in note 156 above, see: Sydney Morning Herald, 8 December 1953; Daily Telegraph, 8 December 1953.

The Executive did refuse to recognise the meeting, but when the events were widely reported in the press they quietly forgot their new 20 percent rule and, instead, claimed only 254 members had been in attendance, well below the 300 needed for a quorum.(158) They then set about increasing the level of anti-communist propaganda and devising new ways to get rid of the Protest Committee, being thrown into unrestrainable consternation at one point on hearing that they were the subject of numerous "rumours going around town to the effect that Communists have been thrown out of the Union but won't retire"!(159) With panic setting in more deeply by the moment, notices of motion put forward by the Protest Committee for the 1954 Annual General Summonsed Meeting were ignored, action began to transfer all Special Constables to the Public Service Association, the Executive refused to reveal the quorums required to convene sectional meetings and meetings of the union's Industrial Group began to be convened by the Labor Party's Assistant Secretary and national Grouper Chairman, Jack Kane.(160) Expensive circulars suddenly appeared signed by Parker on behalf of a mythical "State Executive Council" disclosing "THE FACTS behind the Smear Campaign against your Union officials". The whole protest was being conducted by "communists and hooligans" who, by using "a filthy smear campaign and a few stooges", were seeking to smash the union so as to get the funds "to buy first-class return tickets to Moscow and Pekin [sic]". Even the five percent quorum rule was now disavowed as having been imposed by the Federal Council, leaving the innocent officials with no choice but to unwillingly abide. The five shilling fine for not attending meetings was also disavowed and members were told not to sign petitions or

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158. Sydney Morning Herald, 8 December 1953.
159. NSWBM, 12 January 1953, EMWU Papers.
160. Interview with D. Howitt, Grafton, 25 August, 1982.

donate to the Fighting Fund. It is with irony that we can note as an aside that the officials also cited the fact that the union's books were audited by public accountants as evidence of their honesty and held up the rules regarding sectional meetings as evidence of the union's democracy. Both measures had been introduced in 1925 by the CPA.(161)

The officials, however, were beyond desperation. When Ray Gietzelt had a writ for &7,500 issued on Parker by the New South Wales Supreme Court for naming him as a communist in a circular, Parker wrote to Stan Bevan: "We are not concerned, we have had another "Facts" produced and he has promised us a further writ".(162) The second 'Facts', which was also signed by Parker on behalf of the imaginary "State Executive Council" asked: "Why have these disruptionists not challenged us before the court?"(163) This time the Protest Committee would answer in full.

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161. "Here are the Facts behind the Smear Campaign against your Union Officials", (n.d.), FMWU Papers.
162. F.C. Parker to S.C. Bevan, 18 February 1954, FMWU Papers.
163. "Miscellaneous Workers! Here are the Facts behind the Smear Campaign Against Your Union Officials", (n.d.), FMWU Papers.

VI

PROTEST TAKES OVER THE GOVERNMENT: 1954-1955

"The old question comes into my mind ... who is to guard the guardians?"

- Lionel Murphy arguing in favour of the FMWU's members, Commonwealth Court, 1954

With few exceptions, Australian trade union and labour historians have tended to ignore the law, or take it as given. The presumption that trade unions are continuous associations of workers for the purpose of improving their conditions of employment (or their working lives), the emphasis on explaining their history by reference to the relationship of their members to production and the specialisation of historical study itself have all been taken as limiting. Historians have concentrated on what has occurred in union meetings and at the places where the members worked. The law was not in these places, it was out there: in the police stations, the courts and the parliaments. Whether regarded as a mechanism of ruling class power, a secondary institution only reflecting or legitimising what was really sorted out in the primary economic sphere, an instrument tending toward impartiality in the public interest, or as a separate academic subject, the law has been something that trade union historians should not waste much time or ink on. Insofar as trade unions are concerned, it has been thus more or less implied, the law out there was something to be overthrown, circumvented or deferred to - or written about in a

more appropriate setting, such as Labor Party history or, better, industrial relations or legal history where one might use different sources, techniques, questions and other university departments. Trade union history resides in the records of workers at their points of production, the immediate and more general economic context of this and in correspondence, rules and minutes of meetings where decisions were taken in relation to these circumstances. Unions may have turned to politics and arbitration and been the recipients of decisions taken in these quarters. The quarters themselves, however, if they were not ideological reflections of primary economic forces, have been assumed to have had a life of their own, or in relation to other people, institutions and interests that all lie outside the orthodox field of trade union history. If the law cannot be ignored, it will therefore be taken as given.

It is true that there is a sense in which we can regard the law as having a life of its own. In the same way that we can follow the path of the FMWU's membership growth, which stemmed from a logic derived from the union's own 'internal' characteristics, the law has its own characteristics and processes of development that can be treated as an independent history. Yet neither the characteristics of the FMWU or the law were originally created in a vacuum. Initially they were products of a prior field of social relations and their creation can only be fully understood within the context of that time, a time about which they also constitute part of the evidence of change. It has already been argued that the FMWU was made out of the laws of arbitration, not by the workers it originally represented, and that this development had been a product of the general course of Australia's social development at that particular time. In turn, the union thus established engaged in a continuous process of recreating

itself on a larger and more varied scale by exploiting the nexus between labour and the state and, over time, this had the effect of re-shaping that nexus and imbricating the union's operations more and more deeply within its logic. The elimination of General Meetings in favour of State Councils representing all the union's different award categories signalled the triumph of this process. Thirty years of arbitration had leavened open general meetings of general urban labourers into closed councils of discrete sectional interests. In other words, it would be impossible to understand the development of the FMWU in isolation from the arbitration laws and, ultimately, impossible to understand these laws in isolation from the FMWU. They made each other out of each other through their reciprocal actions and together they defined and organised the experience of the union's members at their points of production. We cannot mark the law off as belonging to the ruling class, the shadowy superstructure, the public or another discipline while trade unions, on the other hand, can be treated as belonging to the working class, the economic base, particular members or a distinct body of scholarship. The union was impossible without this law, just as this law was impossible without unions such as the FMWU. This history would be incomplete without consideration of both.

Up until 1955 the limits and possibilities available within the terms of the law had defined the FMWU a good deal more than the obverse, of course, but just as we cannot understand the one without the other, nor can we understand either separate from the more general social context from which both originally arose and within which they formed fields of struggle. In the same way that we cannot understand the history of the FMWU's government separately from the interests of craft unionism, the impact of post-First World War radicalism, the

effects of the Great Depression, the united front against fascism, the more general course of Australia's economic development and other eventualities, so we cannot understand the more or less continuous changes to the arbitration laws since their origins separate from the more general field of social development, tension and conflict that gave rise to the judicial and political interventions that secured these changes.

Before we examine the course of the Protest Committee's attack on the government of the FMWU's New South Wales Branch in the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Court, it is therefore relevant to consider the historical context into which it was launched. The attack comprised three parts. First, an application was made for the court to order the Branch officials to observe the dismissal motion carried at the Special General Meeting of 7 December 1953 under a provision introduced into the Act by Stanley Bruce's Commonwealth Government in the 1928 counter-revolutionary offensive on trade unionism. Originally this provision had been interpreted as a measure which permitted the court to interfere with a union's rules only if they threatened production, if they impeded the court's own power or if there were allegations of fraud. B.A. Santamaria's Catholic colleague, Chief Justice Raymond Kelly, had changed all that in 1944, re-interpreting the measure to allow the court to interfere "in all cases where the action or inaction ... amounts to substantial failure to perform or observe the rules ..."[1] Thus, the state now had authority, carte blanche, to enforce a trade union's rules. Since 1944 the provision had been freely used by the Groupers against the

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1. J.H. Portus, The Development of Australian Trade Union Law, Carlton, 1958, p.193.

left in the Clerks', Seamen's, Waterside Workers' and Ironworkers' unions.

The second part of the attack was an application to disallow 20 of the Branch's rules for being tyrannical and oppressive, imposing unreasonable conditions on the members, or for being contrary to other parts of the Act or other laws. Legal limitations on union rules had been part of the Commonwealth Act since 1904 and were designed to protect the rights of individuals and the prerogatives of the state. Bruce's government had amended them in 1928 to make them easier to enforce.

The third part of the Protest Committee's case was an application to have the FMWU's registration cancelled altogether on the basis that its officials did not comply with the regulations attached to the Act that set out the general principles under which unions had to be governed. This was the heart of the attack for it was in these regulations that the question as to the interests unions served, those of the state or those of workers, was in the greatest tension.

The Commonwealth Act expressly encouraged the formation of bodies representing workers for the purpose of furthering and protecting their interests. Clearly, if the power to define the interests of workers was not left with workers themselves, then the whole game was up and the trade union movement needed only formally to become an officially declared department of the state.(2) In the original 1904 Act the regulations had been plain. Unions were to have management committees with a chairman, or a president and a secretary, and their rules were to specify how these officials were to be appointed, what their powers and duties were, the authority by which they could continue in the office and how they could be removed. The "control of

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2. ibid., pp.187-194.

the committee" had to be exercised by "general or special meetings". Between 1904 and 1954, however, these simple, liberal democratic rules had been brought to the edge of complete subversion. In the first place there was great concern about militant and radical groups of workers not being able to be controlled by their governments and hence there emerged a tendency to reduce and dilute the amount of control the members could exercise. In 1910 allowance had been made for elected 'parliaments' to exercise control instead of meetings, in 1928 Bruce had introduced provisions to allow voting rights for absent workers and in 1951-52 Menzies had provided for voting to be secret and compulsory. All these measures allowed workers who were not, or could not, be actively interested in their union's affairs to have some say over who represented them, but workers generally were allowed less direct control over the formulation and implementation of policies, their main remaining right being a periodic retrospective censure through changing their representatives at elections. In short, there emerged a tendency to reduce the control workers had over their unions to a level commensurate with that which citizens exercised over the state. This, however, contained its own dangers. What if these new more remote governments somehow came to be composed of malcontents? Who would be able to contain them and their militant or radical followers in the absence of the now diluted membership? Thus, simultaneously there had been moves to reduce the field within which these less directly representative 'parliaments' could operate; moves to bring them more directly under the heel of the state. In 1952 Chief Justice Kelly had decided that a union's parliament had an "obligation ... as soon as it gets to know of the breach [of a law] to assert all its powers under its rules, and even to adopt new rules if

necessary to bring the culprit branch or section or group into conformity".(3)

Yet the victory over trade union democracy had not been complete. Rules still had to provide for "the control of committees of organisations by the members of the organisations and the control of committees of branches by the members of the branches". There also had to be a provision for the "manner of summoning meetings of members and of the committees". Acting for the Protest Committee, Lionel Murphy set out to have the FMWU brought under more direct control by appealing to these residual regulations. Remaining vestiges of Australia's turn of the century liberalism were to be pitted against their subversion by Bruce in 1928 and Menzies working in tandem with Santamaria in 1950-52. It was not, then, just a struggle for democratic rights in the FMWU, it was also a time for the court to be tested on these principles.

We will follow the course of the court attack in the first section of this chapter and then turn to the consequences on the rest of the Federation. The final section will draw conclusions from the ten-year struggle as a whole.

1.

The composition of the bench convened to hear the Protest Committee's applications was significant. Presiding were Justices Alf Foster, Richard Kirby and Syd Wright. The absence of Chief Justice Kelly was fortuitous, leaving Alf Foster as the senior justice. Foster had once been a member of the Victorian Socialist Party, had been persecuted by

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3. ibid., p.189 n.31

Billy Hughes in the anti-conscription campaigns of the First World War, had once been President of the Victorian Branch of the Labor Party and Vice-President of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council and he was opposed to the direction in which Kelly was taking the bench.[4] Foster also held prejudices against Catholicism, was feeling the chill of the Cold War on his associations with old friends and comrades, had been stigmatised in the press as the 'Red Judge' and had been largely responsible for the £1 increase in the basic wage in 1950. In 1953 he had dramatically withdrawn from the basic wage hearing in protest at the way Kelly was determining its course. The notorious decision had granted no increase and abandoned the 30-year practice of automatically adjusting Commonwealth awards to price rises.[5] There was also some room to believe the other justices might listen with equanimity. Kirby (later Sir Richard) was a professional lawyer, but embodied sufficient liberal principles to impress Dr Evatt and had been elevated from the New South Wales Bar by the Chifley government in 1947. He was also uneasy with Kelly.[6] Wright was nominally the most conservative, having been appointed from the South Australian Bar by the Menzies government in 1951 after making his name fighting briefs against workers. He had not, however, proved to be all that employers had hoped, having also withdrawn from the punitive 1953 basic wage hearing (claiming inexperience). He had struck up a rapport with Foster.[7]

The principal obstacles to the Protest Committee were the official s' lawyers, John Kerr and Hal Wotton. There was a deep

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4. C. Larmour, Labor Judge: The Life and Times of Judge Alfred William Foster, Sydney, 1985, pp.27-86.
5. ibid., pp.203-220.
6. B. d'Alpuget, op.cit., p.75.
7. C. Larmour, op.cit., pp.211-213; B. d'Alpuget, op.cit., p.129.

cultural resonance in the contest between John Kerr and Lionel Murphy. Like Murphy, Kerr's father had been a worker - but a craftsman (boilermaker) of English parentage, not a labourer from Ireland. "Certainly there was no political animus directed toward those better off", wrote Kerr of his family background in his later autobiography, "no class feeling, no Marxist attitudes".(8) Whereas Murphy was an uncompromising leveller, Kerr possessed an exaggerated, one might say obsessive, consciousness of social ranking and, by an extraordinarily fortuitous conjunction of circumstances (including personal assistance by Dr Evatt), had managed to find a path through all the barriers to upward social mobility in Australia during the 1930s. He faced Murphy with almost a decade's more experience at the Bar, as a Queen's Counsel with a junior and with a number of victories on behalf of the Groupers under his belt. That the FMWU's future was to turn upon a contest between the radical son of a labourer and the conservative son of a craftsman was just a step removed from one of the most resilient tensions in the union's history: it was as though the old world was simply re-inventing itself in the content of the new.

The hearing began on 23 April 1954.(9) For its first two days Kerr obscured the proceedings by traversing the Protest Committee's applications in search of advantages to be gained for the officials within the legal maze that Australia's trade unions were surrounded

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8. J. Kerr, Matters for Judgement, p.29.
9. All the following detail on the hearing has been taken from the following transcripts to the cases, except where otherwise noted: "George Thomas Ford V. The Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia", Misc. No.33 of 154; "George Thomas Ford V. The Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia - NSW Branch", Misc. No.38 of 1954; George Thomas Ford V. Frederick Charles Parker and Others", Misc. No.39 of 1954, Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, Melbourne.

due to the overlapping Commonwealth and State jurisdictions. A 'Kafkaesque Castle' had been erected around the identity of Australia's Federal unions. At any one time three different sets of rules and laws might govern the FMWU's behaviour. Were the workers acting as members of the Federal union (known to the court as the 'Organisation'), the New South Wales Branch of the 'Organisation', or the State registered union (known as the 'Trade Union')? "Your Honors will notice that the Organisation and the New South Wales Branch of the Organisation have been joined as parties", Kerr opened, "... it is not usual to join the Organisation - as far as I know the Branch is never joined; and his Honor the Chief Judge [that is, Kelly] has indicated in other cases the Organisation should not be joined". He queried the jurisdictional standing of the Special General Meeting: "I will be later arguing [that the petition for the meeting] was a requisition for a meeting of the Trade Union and Industrial Union registered under the State Act and not of this branch of this body under this Act". And he questioned the first witness - George Ford, who had sworn the affidavits upon which the applications were based - from every conceivable angle as to what exactly it was that he was a member of. By the morning of the second day Kerr was building steam:

> ... the position is that in almost every union a position of incredible complexities and interweaving exists of the two organisations in the industrial union ... As Your Honors know there is a big issue in this State as to whether the individual union is part of the same legal entity as the trade union. That is a highly controversial question.

"Your Honor", he addressed a querulous Alf Foster,

> will have to imagine two organisations, registered in two places, but being in reality one ... There is a substratum to both the Federal and State organisation which starts off in the original voluntary organisation ... The voluntary association has two phases, aspects or qualities ...

He waved the abstractions over the proceedings as weapons he could, if provoked, introduce at will to increase the anti in the contest beyond everyone's expectations and control. "This part of the case could assume gigantic proportions ..." he warned Foster ("with respect").

Murphy argued that the distinction did not exist in reality, the members giving evidence were dumbfounded and wary and the justices, aware that Kerr was attempting to mystify the hearing, were not inclined to admit the line. "This is really the position," argued Murphy, who was well aware of the potential complexities:

> I think I can obtain evidence that the meetings and the affairs of the State Industrial Union and the New South Wales Branch of the Federal body - if there is a distinction - have been conducted simultaneously through the history of the union.

"I am a member of the union. That covers the lot", said George Ford flatly, "I took it that the New South Wales Union and the Federal Union were all one Union like father and son sort of thing". Their Honors were sympathetic. "Do you think that these ... members understand the intricacies of these rules?" asked Wright ("I am sure they do not", replied Kerr, unashamed of his advantage). "I am the unfortunate one who has gone through all of this before", said Kirby, "It would be very hard to persuade me that anyone who goes and pays his money into a certain named organisation is aware of the fact that he is joining three organisations at the time". "This duality," summarised Foster, "is almost as complicated as the trinity."

The tactic was brought unstuck when Kerr discovered with alarm that it might work against him. The defence of the officials against removal from office rested most substantially on the assertion that only 224 (further reduced from the 298 and 254 totals they conceded previously) of the names in the attendance books at the Special General Meeting belonged to financial members. They now conceded that the necessary quorum was not 300 but 265. Nevertheless, this still left the Protest Committee 41 names short of the number required to have the meeting declared lawful and the mass dismissal motion carried. It was discovered, however, that the membership fees in the Federal rules were some four shillings less than those in the New South Wales rules. If the distinction had been pressed all the way through, there was the chance, not only that many more members would be declared financial, but that most would actually be owed refunds. "Whatever Your Honors think", warned a withdrawing Kerr, foreshadowing the 'Moore v Doyle' decision which was to confirm this legal schizophrenia when it was to be brought down by himself as a member of the bench in 1969, "[this] is going to be definitely dealt with in some highly complicated case involving many of these organisations elsewhere".

The second tactic used to try to throw the applications off their democratic tracks was to attempt to reduce the Protest Committee to a minority of intriguers and stigmatise its leaders. "There is a big factional story behind it", Kerr announced to the justices mid-morning on the first day. "You were asked by Mr Gietzelt or Mr Dwyer to begin these proceedings were you?" he asked George Ford. "Mr Gietzelt is the Mr Gietzelt who put the notice of motion you have referred to", he continued, "and he was the one who drew up the notice of motion?" "We all know Mr Dwyer and where he stands ... You are one of the team -

the Dwyer-Gietzelt team - aren't you?' he asked Dwyer in cross-examination, "... You and Mr Gietzelt are the leaders of this group?"

The main thrust was directed at Ray Gietzelt himself, who stepped into the witness box mid-afternoon on the second day and gave evidence until shortly before lunch the day after. "There was a faction which was known as the ALP faction", Kerr put to Gietzelt, "and there was a faction, of which you were a member, which regarded itself as a more left wing faction?" Kerr check-listed every part Gietzelt had played in the Protest Committee and then returned to the personal attack. "You and [Dwyer] are the two well-known antagonists of the present officials aren't you?"; "And you regard yourself as a leader of a faction opposed to the present officials, don't you?"; "Don't be modest, that is the position, isn't it?"; "Coming back to the meeting, I do not want you to be modest about this, you were the one who organised it?"; "You are the dominant figure?"; "Your union coterie objects to [sections]?"; "You have a core of support you can muster at any time ...?"; "But you regard yourself as the leader of the militant wing in the union?" On it went, until the punchline: "Are you a member of the Communist Party?"

The Protest Committee had, of course, been weathering this kind of treatment since it had first become active. The purpose of the Committee was outlined, the leadership of Gietzelt was generally conceded, but all attempts to reduce and stigmatise them as a 'faction', 'personal antagonists' of the officials or a 'coterie' were turned aside: they were members seeking to exercise their democratic rights to ensure their union functioned properly. With the straightforward manner that was to become his hallmark, Gietzelt brushed aside Murphy's objections to Kerr's questions about the Communist Party and volunteered that he had been a member up until

four or five years earlier when he had "just dropped out". Kerr seized this as an opportunity to turn the hearing into a political trial. "No recriminations?"; "This was about the time your brother had some trouble ...?"; "You did not have any break with them on doctrine?"; "Did you have any discussion with the executive about questions of doctrine?"; "When you were a [communist] ... you believed .. it was proper ... to infiltrate into and obtain by any means control over the trade unions?"; "You say that is not part of the Communist teachings?"; "But you do not believe in [elections] do you?"; "You do not agree with the system do you?"; "You are at one with the Communist Party in its attitude to elections run by the Commonwealth Electoral Officer, aren't you?" In all, Gietzelt faced over 350 questions in cross-examination. This was three-and-a-half times the number Murphy asked in eliciting primary evidence and 100 of them related directly or indirectly to his past membership of the CPA. The ghosts of Hitler and Mussolini could not have seemed far from the courtroom for these returned Australian soldiers.

In the course of the inquisition Gietzelt's answers brought forward much of the story of the struggle and this disarmed Kerr and, again, won sympathy from the justices. After Gietzelt had rebutted Kerr's insinuations and outlined the raison d'être of the Protest Committee, the justices began to fall about. Alf Foster summarised:

> How can this Union have a meeting - that is what we want to get at? Mr Murphy, what has happened is that the fundamental basis of your people's claim has been exposed. Mr Kerr on the other hand indicates that there is a division between the two sides which may be considerable. I have not got that view after hearing what has been said and after hearing what you have said yourself.

At the conclusion of the third day the court adjourned the hearing indefinitely and sent the combatants away to explore the possibility of conciliation.

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Conciliation with the officials was not on. "You missed a good day", Parker wrote to Bevan with his typical disregard for veracity, "Kerr made goats of each witness they put in the box".(10) The union's Industrial Group continued to recruit members. At a State Council Gietzelt was refused a list of the members in his Paint Section and was removed from the paint industry's Conciliation Committee. Murphy had to intervene in a Conciliation Committee hearing to stop the union transferring Jack Dwyer and other Special Constables to the Public Service Association. A Grouper campaign was organised to prevent Dwyer and Gietzelt joining the Labor Party. Writs had to be taken out in both Commonwealth and New South Wales Courts to stop elections while the status of the officials remained unresolved. The officials continued to block access to the records where the Committee could have checked the financial status of the members for themselves.(11) And, as if this was not enough, a special Federal Executive Meeting was convened with Kerr to draw up new rules which Murphy concluded to be, "if anything, even more tyrannical and oppressive".(12) "Well", said Alf Foster when the hearing recommenced on 22 June 1954, "the prospect of rapprochement has only slipped off into the dim distance".

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10. F.C. Parker to S.C. Bevan, 13 May 1954, FMWU Papers.
11. NSWBM, 9 March, 27 April, 25 May, 8 & 22 June, 1954, FMWU Papers.
12. F.C. Parker to S.C. Bevan, 25 May, 1954; S.C. Bevan to F.C. Parker, 27 May 1954, FMWU Papers.

Because of the time taken up with questions about jurisdictional matters and political inquisitions Kerr was able to split the proceedings. The applications attacking the rules and seeking deregistration were now to be heard before that seeking to have the dismissal decision upheld. For the first two-and-a-half days of the resumed hearing Murphy took the three justices on a tour of the union's rule book, explaining the "many and diverse artistic ways the members have the means of control removed entirely from them". At the heart of the case was the fact that no General Meetings of the members had been held in Queensland for 20 years, in New South Wales for nine years or in South Australia for eight. It was not a question of this or that rule, stressed Murphy, but the whole set of rules. "It is a matter of degree, Your Honors", he argued "... the approach of the applicant is not unreasonable; he does not want to have a situation where a tiny group can enforce its will". "He is complaining", grasped Foster, "that a tiny group is enforcing its will".

"It is a fundamental part of our case", replied Kerr, "that there is no fundamental principal of democracy or union organisation which makes [Branch Meetings] desirable". He continued: "indeed, in the Federal Organisation the idea of Branch Meetings, of General Meetings, is quite impracticable". Kerr argued that 'control' did not mean direct control and that the members exercised their control over the union through their vote at the triennial election of their Federal Council, or "parliament" - just as "we have complete control, as a matter of simple democratic fact, over our government". Members did not need, deserve and could not be trusted with more control than that, and it was all to the good that their 'parliament' and its Federal Executive, or 'cabinet', had sweeping powers. As Mr Justice Raymond Kelly had said, they had to to be able "to discipline their

recalcitrant industrial rebels". The members could have control by voting for representatives, but their parliament needed power to act on behalf of the state to ... control the members! "Having the power" said Kerr (who was to prove this proposition in a somewhat larger setting in 1975) "means having it effectively without veto".

In effect, the burden of Kerr's case was that workers should have no more control over their union other than to now and again decide who controlled them on behalf of the state. There was, of course, a difficulty in that the regulations did actually "say that there is to be provisions for the summoning of Branch Meetings, but", pointed out the inventive barrister, "that does not carry the obligation that there must be Branch Meetings". Nor did workers warrant the introduction of any other controlling devices. That workers were able to "hamstring" the national parliament and cabinet of their union by passing resolutions at general meetings held by only two Branches was a weighty power and more than sufficient - so weighty in fact that it was all to the good that it was virtually impossible to use. Yes, it was true that the principles of referendum and recall had been supported by many for a long time "in political theory ... as an inherent and inevitable ingredient in democratic institutions", but this was false: "the British institutions have got on very well without the referendum and recall". Moreover, sighed Kerr, growing weary of explaining things to the justices that were "trite in the real world", the workers were apathetic and did not even want control over their union. Because this was an absolute truth this meant that Mr Murphy's clients, by definition, could not really be workers or even real members. They were - everyone knew - an "activist rump", a "coterie", a "faction", a "cadre", indeed, "rebels". The justices, of course, knew this far better than anyone else for, "although I would

want Your Honors to approach this case without any references to the other cases you will have to decide", it remained that "Your Honors have, from other proceedings, the knowledge that there is a bitter faction fight in this union". It was not for their court "to enter into the faction fight and say who is right and who is wrong" and to concede Mr Murphy's position would be to allow one faction to dominate the apathetic mass of genuine members. "In my submission that would be an entirely unwarranted and dangerous step to take". Furthermore, "to do so is to reverse the trend which the court has been taking ..." In any event, to have the policies of any of Australia's great political institutions determined by the direct democratic participation of their constituencies in this day and age was something "no one could dream of". For practical reasons alone, the days of "Athenian democracy" had "long since been impossible - the problem democratic institutions had faced up to over the centuries".

Two other central matters raised in Murphy's case, the arbitrary power of the Federal Council and Executive to change the rules and expel, discipline and fine members, and the preponderance of unelected, full-time, salaried officials in the union's government, were dealt with by Kerr in a similar vein. Before trade union rules were lawful they had to run the gauntlet of the Industrial Registrar and, if they were then used harshly and tyrannically, members could test them in the courts: "The citizens of the British community for time immemorial have had to wait until the judges tell them what to do". Indeed, "it would be a constructive and useful thing ... for the principles of unionism to be evolved in appropriate litigation". As for non-elected salaried officials dominating decision making, the justices had to realise that trade unions were now "in a very real sense big business". Trade union officials now conducted "very big

enterprises" which owned "a great deal of property". Some were involved in "profit making ventures", and professional managers left it open for "continuity of control" over these important functions, as well as aiding "the highly important and complex wage fixation" task. Finally, Kerr saw fit to complain to the court that Murphy's "clients have sought the de-registration of this union without any previous approach to anybody in the Federal office of the union".

This was, as it turned out, the most important contest in the FMWU's history. Beyond that it was also one of numerous contests fought out in tribunals ranking from the highest to the lowest in the land to defend democratic rights in Australia during this period. "In the total pattern", as John Kerr put it, the case was "a very serious matter and one of the greatest importance in this community". Apart from agreeing with Kerr that full-time salaried officials were practical in trade unions and conceding that some of the apparent failures in the rules were no more than drafting errors, the court decided in favour of Lionel Murphy and the Protest Committee. Some 15 of the rules were found to be harsh and tyrannical, to place unreasonable burdens on the members or to be contrary to law. The justices also found sufficient grounds to de-register the FMWU, but this was averted because the Protest Committee had made this application just to gain an additional measure to force reform, not as a genuine attempt to destroy the union.(13)

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13. "George Thomas Ford V. Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia", Misc. No.'s 33 and 38 of 1954, Commonwealth Arbitration Reports, Vol. 79, pp.147-164.

In view of the fact that Kerr's case was in effect an appeal to the power of the state over trade union self-determination, which bears on this study's general themes, we may briefly consider the reasons for his defeat. In the first place, Kerr was not helped by General Secretary Stan Bevan. Bevan was the only defence witness called in this part of the proceedings and he apparently decided that the best way to win the favour of the court was to tell whopping lies whenever he was confronted by awkward questions. After claiming he had no idea that General Meetings had not been held in New South Wales or any other Branches outside South Australia, Murphy produced correspondence and minutes of meetings where the situation had only recently been discussed with him. After then explaining how earnestly he had tried to hold general meetings only to be continually frustrated by the "apathy" of the members, Murphy produced evidence of his attempt to raise quorums to ten percent. ("What was the answer to that? To make it meaningless?", asked Foster, "Yes-No-as I say", replied an incoherent Bevan.) In the second place, much of the weight was lifted from Kerr's pompous contentions about the great responsibility of the union's 'national parliament' and 'cabinet' when it was pointed out that the FMWU had no Federal awards ("It may be possibly a somewhat useless appendage to the Federal system," observed Syd Wright). Thirdly, these three senior and powerful members of the 'state bourgeoisie' simply did not accept John Kerr's contention that, by voting for representatives in periodic elections, they, as Australian citizens, could in any way be said to have any control over their parliament. "I do not think the analogy is sound," replied Alf Foster. "And I do not think we have that control", corrected Richard

Ashburner.[14] "And I do not think there is any constitutional requirement that we should have", returned Foster - "not yet!", he added, giving his full democratic hand away. "It could easily become illusory, an annual election, could it not?", begged Syd Wright. There was, then, a consensus among these leading professionals in the law and senior state bureaucrats that Australia's citizens were neither constitutionally entitled to and nor did they in fact exercise control over their governments.

In a wider theoretical sense, the case also illustrates that the state cannot be simply reduced, by formula, to a monolith that always acts at the behest of capitalists or with relative autonomy on behalf of the national capitalist order. Nor is its only other modus operandi its own interest. The law itself is a field of combat. Alf Foster was opposed to Chief Justice Kelly's reactionary policies and the Protest Committee had provided him with the content to fight against the court's oppressive and conservative direction. When Kerr suggested that to go against his point of view would reverse the dominant trend in the court, Foster translated this into the terms of the conflict on the bench: "It would certainly reverse the point of view of Kelly C.J." Foster went after Kerr's arguments and was closely followed by Wright. How could the Protest Committee even compete in an election when it did not know how many financial members the union had? How could it hold an effective meeting without knowledge of the financial membership? The applicant "is not guaranteed that if he has 1,000 [at a meeting] he will get 300 [financial members] ... I should think that is the core of these

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14. Ashburner, later Sir Richard, was a former Rhodes scholar from a distinguished rural family who had just been elevated fresh from the NSW Bar where he had fought many briefs for employers. He had replaced Kirby because of a clash of timetables. See B. d'Alpuget, op.cit., pp.96-98.

proceedings". Kerr argued it was the officials' privilege to have the advantage of the union's "machine" and that, in any case, it was too large a task to let workers know how many financial members were in their union. "If that is an indication that it amounts to a practical impossibility to do it", replied Foster, "then the answer is, all your rules regarding meetings are so much humbug". Similarly, he took Kerr to task over his plea to let trade union officials do what they like with their rules because they can be tested by members in the court, allowing a jurisdiction to be established to determine the principles upon which trade unions should operate. "The important thing is not building up a jurisdiction", remonstrated Foster, "but using the Act to compel unions to provide a set of rules or laws for their members from which they can clearly or reasonably understand their obligations". He grew increasingly acerbic: "It makes the position of all trade unionists almost impossible under these penal rules. However can they find out what this court will ultimately hold?" In this way the democratic judge led the bench in turning the state away from the power John Kerr urged it to take up.

On 16 September 1954 the court handed down an 18 page judgement in which Foster, Wright and Ashburner all agreed to order the union to rewrite its rules to bring them into conformity with the Act and the regulations within 30 days. In a separate judgement, Foster found that under the rules there was no way the FMWU's members could:

> direct, command, restrain, check nor forbid, nor can they substitute their will and authority for that of the Committee of Management ... In my mind the control must be direct, must be real and not illusory; it must be reasonable and effective and the provisions for its exercise must be reasonably practicable. How this is to be achieved is to be determined by the members ...[15]

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15. "George Thomas Ford, etc ..." op.cit., p.153.

A new section was entered into the Conciliation and Arbitration Act to ensure unions allowed workers access to the names, addresses and financial status of their fellow unionists and the principles established in the case passed into legal textbooks.(16) John Kerr retired from the rest of the proceedings. An important part of the struggle within the FMWU had been won. A further barricade had been placed in the way of the complete incorporation of the Australian trade union movement by the state. One more radical-democratic thaw had been made in the ice of the Cold War.

The final part of the proceedings dealing with the dismissal of the officials was completed over three days from 24 September to 1 October 1954. The Protest Committee maintained that Jack Dwyer's count of 315 members was accurate. The officials now argued that only 245 or 250 were in attendance and, moreover, 26 of these were unfinancial. In the meantime the Protesters had been granted a court order giving them access to the union's membership records and the proceedings began spectacularly when Murphy demonstrated there had been "a patent and deliberate falsification of the records" to alter the financial status of many of the members after the meeting. Witnesses came forward who were present at the meeting, were financial members, had OK cards, but had not signed the attendance book; who were present, were financial and had signed the book, but did not have OK cards; and who were present, had OK cards had signed the book, but were not financial. They were then followed into the box by the officials who continued to be caught out lying, who contradicted each other's evidence and who, under cross-examination, contradicted themselves. Further unsuccessful attempts were made to discredit Ray

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16. J.H. Portus, op.cit., pp.190-191.

Gietzelt (it was, for instance, argued he was unfinancial because he had not paid a picnic levy of one shilling in 1945!). John Brooks arrogantly announced his position as President of the Anti-Communist Industrial Group in a last ditch bid to wring political advantage. Inordinate hours of pettifoggery turned around the definition of 'financial membership'.

It was found that no conclusion could ever be arrived at as to the total or the financial membership of the FMWU. Two things, however, were crystal clear. First, if the 20 percent quorum rule had not been invoked at the meeting it would have officially proceeded as everyone in the Hall at the time (including the officials) believed at least 300 members were in attendance. Second, the workers themselves had no way of knowing who among them were financial and unfinancial and nor did they have this obligation or responsibility under the union's rules or in law. The onus for ensuring that the meeting was properly attended and conducted was on the officials as the guardians of the union. It was this fundamental question of democratic accountability that the whole struggle came down to in the final analysis. As Lionel Murphy put it: "The old question comes into my mind ... who is to guard the guardians?"

Justices Foster, Wright and Ashburner unanimously found in favour of the members. The decision of the Special General Meeting was upheld, the officials were dismissed for incompetence, costs were awarded against them and the case concluded with the handing down of the judgement at 3.40 p.m. on Friday 1 October. Later in the same day Ray Gietzelt went to the FMWU's Sydney Trades Hall office, jumped the counter and took the keys.(17) The locks on the office doors were

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17. Interview with R. Gietzelt, Sylvania, 11 February, 1985.

changed and the official form of address within the union reverted to 'comrade'.

Nothing about the FMWU was to remain untouched by the 'revolution' in the New South Wales Branch. None of the relationships that constituted the union were to be strong enough to resist the impact of such a force. Every document, every artefact and every memory that has survived from this period bears witness to an institution that began to be remade in all its manifestations the moment the Commonwealth Court handed down its decision. We will, however, keep the question of change to the side for the moment for, while Gietzelt had the keys to the New South Wales Branch, it still remained to unlock the door to the rest of the Federation. Nothing about the victory was safe until the new leadership had removed the threat of the Federal Council's enormous reserve powers.

First the Protest Committee had to consolidate its position in New South Wales - in terms of the state and the members to block both avenues for counter-attack. Within three weeks, the caretaker government - comprising an executive of President Sharpe, two Trustees, Gietzelt and the remaining State Councillors - had asked the Commonwealth Electoral Office to conduct a ballot and it was set down for February 1955. In resources this was probably the most evenly balanced election ever held in the FMWU. True, the Protest Committee now had the full use of the union machine, but the advantages this always brought with it had been largely cancelled. An audit of the Branch's books revealed a deficit of &1,042, an audit of the membership revealed that just half the members were financial and, not only was the election the first to be officially conducted by the Commonwealth, there was also, as Gietzelt put it, "the special significance ... that for the first time ALL CANDIDATES had access to

the complete membership list of names and addresses ...".[18] It is true, as well, that the caretaker government immediately appointed three full-time organisers. But this was balanced by the knowledge of the membership still naturally held by some of the former officials, who also had a number of full-time activists among them and the resources of the Groupers (or "Gropers", as Jimmy Reid now never tired of calling them).[19] Additionally, they had the support of employers such as the Metal Trades and - some of the radicals believed - Australia's secret state security agencies.[20] Competition during the campaign was therefore intense on site and at meetings. Propaganda from both sides was voluminous and it was now the Groupers' turn to hold rebel meetings in Federation House and to promote breakaways on the waterfront.[21] The victory of the Protest Committee was, however, overwhelming.

In part the size of the victory was a measure of the sheer volume of energy expended by the Protest Committee in the course of the campaign. In part it registered the size of the groundswell of goodwill and support for the militants that had been built up over the prior nine years. And in part it was an acknowledgement of the popularity of the organisational reforms and wages and conditions campaigns that had been begun immediately. Two other features of the context in which the election was fought also told in the result. First, the court's damning indictment of the conduct of the former officials was well publicised. It was not just the authoritative aura of the indictment that so effectively undermined the former officials, coming as it did from a part of the state popularly misconceived as

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18. The Miscellaneous Workers' Union Review, December, 1954, & April, 1955.
19. The Waterfront Watchman, No. 4, Vol. 2, January, 1955 (for example).
20. Interview with D. Howitt, Grafton, 25 August, 1982.
21. NSWBM, 26 October 1954 - 22 February 1955.

neutral, but that it was received into a context that had already been favourably prepared by the Movement-Grouper-Menzies-Cold War opposition itself. Some of the political capital extracted through the courts by the conservatives over the prior eight years was now repaid as the former officials suffered ignominy in equal proportion to that endured by the Communist Party following the Sharpley-Sharkey-Ironworkers-Petrov and other incidents in which the state had been a legitimising instrument.

Less directly but still figuring in the constitution of the generally favourable climate was the public attack the Groupers were now under. While it was to remain a potent force for conservative politics, the high tide of Cold War hysteria had been effectively marked out when the citizenry declined Menzies' bid to give the state unqualified powers to exterminate communism, real or imagined, in the 1951 referendum. With this limit demarked, other developments had then begun to disarm Catholic Action. For one thing, the combination of Cold War persecution, the Movements' actual successes and the CPA's own adventurism had destroyed all the advances made by the Party during the war. Hence, not only were the Catholic cadres now of little use to non-communists in the labour movement, they were a nuisance and a threat. Further, the Catholic putsch had raised its own traditional enemies from the dead, "resulting in another movement of Masons, Presbyterians and Methodists ... [turning the Labor Party into] ... centres of sectarian struggle between Catholics and Masons".(22) But most importantly the implications of Catholic Action for traditional democratic and economic working class beliefs and practices had started to become apparent. Justice Kelly's punitive

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22. D. Blackmur, "The ALP Industrial Groups in Queensland", Labour History, No. 46, May, 1984, p.93.

1953 basic wage decision had been followed by a freeze on margins in February 1954 and some examples of the Movement's more fanciful policies and most ruthless tactics had come under wider notice, particularly in the craft heartland of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council where earlier supporters now found common cause with the left in freely condemning Santamaria's squads as fascists.(23) Critically, the wage cuts and the increasingly gratuitous and indiscriminate action of the Movement-Grouper forces had also turned the giant AWU against them. Indeed, in June 1954 even the ageing Jack Lang drew the line, accusing the Groupers of being "completely repugnant to the basic principles of Australian trade unionism" in seeking to introduce "the Mussolini pattern of the corporate state".(24) Simultaneously wiser heads began to prevail over Santamaria in the Catholic Church itself.(25)

Thus from 1954 the structure of social relationships that had made the Industrial Groups possible began to rapidly corrode and their end was heralded by the exasperated Dr Evatt's famous public statement exposing and attacking them for their totalitarian methods and subversion of Labor policies on 5 October. With the reactionary bloc beginning to break, Santamaria consulted his more conservative Bishops and resolved to fight it out. The Labor Party began to split and the word 'Grouper' commenced its transmogrification into a term of abuse even worse than 'communist'. Contrary to the title of his autobiography, it was only now that Santamaria began to go 'against the tide'.

This timing was important. Evatt's public statement had been made on Tuesday 5 October, just four days after the court decision in favour of the FMWU's members. Between the court's decision and the

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23. R. Murray, op.cit., pp.222-223.
24. ibid., p.140.
25. G. Henderson, op.cit., pp.103-104.

Branch election the pro-Evatt unions formed themselves into united organisations in New South Wales and Victoria, the Federal Executive of the Labor Party intervened in Victoria to prepare the way to isolate this State's Movement-dominated Executive and the whole conspiracy began to shrivel as it was brought out into public light. After nine years of an anti-Communist government in the FMWU, the Protest Committee rode into office as an anti-Grouper government.

The victory broke all of the FMWU's previous election records. The largest number (3,178) and the largest proportion (over 50 percent) of members ever to participate in one of the union's ballots endorsed the new leadership by the largest total vote (2,775) and the largest margin (2,172). With only 603 votes, the Groupers barely received one vote in every five cast and averaged less than the old Progressive Committee had in 1947. George Sharpe was elected Branch Secretary in place of Fred Parker and, of those who had been prominent on the Protest Committee, Ray Gietzelt was elected Branch President and Federal Councillor, Sid Smith became Vice-President, Keith Blackwell a Trustee, Bill Dalton a Trades and Labor Council delegate and Jack Dwyer - in addition to being appointed as an organiser - became a Labor Party and Labor Council delegate.[26] "Industrial Gropers Routed" headlined the jubilant Jimmy Reid in his effervescent waterfront newsletter.[27] Attention now turned to the Federal Council meeting scheduled for six months' time.

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The Queensland Branch presented New South Wales with the first opportunity to build its Federal support. Queensland had been a site

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26. Commonwealth Electoral Office to the President, the Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia, 23 February, 1955.
27. The Waterfront Watchman, No. 6, Vol. 2, March, 1955.

of spectacular class conflict after the war. In 1946 the first major strike in the region for 20 years had occurred in the meat industry. Involving 23,000 workers, it was precipitated by employers offending workplace seniority principles and lasted for over 14 weeks. This was followed up in 1948 by a twelve-week railway strike involving 16,500 workers triggered off by the Queensland Labor government's refusal to extend an increase in craft margins granted in other States following the stunning six-month strike by Victorian Engineers.(28) The role of communism was significant in both conflicts. Like everywhere in Australia during and immediately after the war, the CPA had experienced increasing popularity in Queensland. The more decentralised configuration of Queensland settlement, the predominance of rural labourers over whom the AWU still presided and the abuse of democratic practices, which was something of a State-wide political pastime in this backward a-liberal economy, meant, however, that the communist successes did not signal an integrated move to the left. Communist pockets in the deep north were owed in part to the aberrant presence of Italian cane cutters and anti-AWUism, while victories in the Trades and Labor Council were based in industry unions with long militant traditions and they also, it seems, owed something to the exceptional Queensland discount on democracy.(29) Successes such as the election of a North Queensland Rhodes Scholar as the only Australian communist parliamentarian ever thus sat cheek-by-jowl with some of the most extreme examples of redneck reactionary ignorance, prejudice and debauchery to be found anywhere in the land.(30)

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28. D. Blackmur, op.cit., pp.90-91; R. Fitzgerald, op.cit., 125-134; T. Sheridan, op.cit., pp.171-183.
29. D. Blackmur, op.cit., p.100; R. Fitzgerald, op.cit., pp.111-112, 119-123.
30. R. Fitzgerald, op.cit., pp.120-121.

The relatively small, isolated and sharply juxtaposed pockets of CPA influence made easy public targets and the Queensland Government seized the opportunity to exploit the communist bogey to legitimise unleashing the full panoply of state repression to crush the big strikes. While the CPA did organise some important support for the workers once they had left their posts, as historians have shown in exhaustive analyses, it had no role in fomenting the conflicts.(31) No matter, the Labor government was imbibed with the contempt for evidence and veracity so typical of this period in Australia and declared a State of Emergency during both strikes to save Queensland from communism. In the 1948 conflict it sacked hundreds of workers, passed draconian legislation, arrested union leaders, closed off union access to the media and allowed the police to commit vicious physical assaults with impunity.(32) A measure of the unprincipled brutality of this State's politics is afforded by the fate of its lone CPA parliamentarian at the ensuing 1950 election. Despite only receiving 46.8 percent of the vote, a fresh gerrymander increased the number of Labor seats. The parliamentarian, who had been nearly killed when a detective (who went uncharged) bashed his skull while he was taking notes at a demonstration in favour of the railway strike, simply had his seat gerrymandered out of existence.(33)

For our purpose, the importance of the conflicts, followed as they were by the defeat on the New South Wales coalfields in 1949, lay in the ascendancy they gave to the Movement in Queensland. By choosing to fight its workers exclusively in terms of anti-communism and ignoring the substantive issues of the strikes, the Hanlon State

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31. D. Blackmur, "The Meat Industry Strike, 1946" & "The Railway Strike, 1948", in D.J. Murphy (ed.), The Big Strikes: Queensland 1889-1965, St Lucia, 1983, pp.217-252.
32. D. Blackmur (1983), op.cit., pp.246-248.
33. R. Fitzgerald, op.cit., pp.131-132, 137.

Labor government fell straight into the Movement-Cold War trap. There were compelling reasons for the government to oppose the strikes on anti-communist grounds and thereby licence their brutal repression, especially the 1948 strike. Prevention of the higher craft margins from flowing on to Queensland's railways held out the prospect of lowering transport costs relative to New South Wales and Victoria and assisting the more decentralised State compete for capital investment to facilitate the government's more general policy of economic growth. It also appeased the Party's Catholic Actionists. But because this meant that the real issues in contention, which were far less tractable than rapidly declining allegiance to the CPA, were effectively masked, this correspondingly meant that the scale of the conflicts appeared to give substance to the government's rhetoric. In turn, this appeared to substantiate the Movement's alarmism, leading to its continuing promotion within the Party and the further advance of anti-communist totalitarianism. This demanded still more appeasement and locked the government further into a self-fulfilling spiral of ideological force comparable to that which the FMWU's New South Wales Branch government had trapped itself in. As the rift between Labor and the less tractable expressions of working class life became greater, so it became more a hostage to the Movement, so it set itself up for the great split and so it prepared itself for its eventual demise at the hands of its even more unscrupulous red-baiting, conservative successors.

The FMWU's Queensland Branch was something of an innocent victim of these circumstances. After the 1946 conflict in the meat industry the Movement had won the support of the Inner Executive of the Labor Party's Queensland Central Executive, where former FMWU warhorse S.J. Bryan was Secretary. In 1947 the Townsville Labor in Politics

Convention endorsed the formation of Industrial Groups and after the 1948 railway strike Bryan publicly announced that the Executive had established an Industrial Groups Committee to finish off communism in Queensland completely.[34] Simultaneously, FMWU General Secretary Harvey, who was also a Vice-President of the Labor Executive, announced his abandonment of the Presidency of the CPA-dominated Trades and Labor Council (the Courier-Mail reporting that it was this decision that had precipitated Bryan's Grouper announcement).[35] The Movement, so unbridled, now became difficult to hold. Aided and abetted by a regenerate, opportunistic AWU, it continued to make inroads into the Labor Executive, threatening the positions of the old right-wing officials such as Harvey and Bryan. In November 1949 Harvey was lifted out of the way when his friend, Premier Hanlon - who was suffering similar discomfiture from the rising new right in the figure of Vince Gair - appointed him to the Queensland Industrial Court (completing his trip "from the shithouse to the courthouse", as Harry liked to say, always adding, disarmingly, that he was unsure which way was up).[36] Three years later Hanlon died in office and was replaced by the Movement's Gair. S.J. Bryan retired around the same time for the AWU's Jack Schmella who was also, for the moment, allied to the Movement. It would not be long before the AWU would look back to the craftsmen and the left for support against the Movement's economic policies. By this time, however, the Party would be lost to Gair and so the scene was set for the great split.

Meanwhile the FMWU's Queensland Branch, which had always figured in the region's labour movement as part of the craft-labourer nexus that linked the AWU to the Trades and Labor Council through the agency

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34. Courier-Mail, 9 July 1948.
35. ibid., 9 July 1948.
36. My thanks to J. Slowegrove for this anecdote.

of the Labor Party and the mutual interest in the protection of the state, was left completely in the lurch. The abandonment of the Labour Council by the Labor Party also meant the abandonment of the FMWU. On 4 October 1949 Harvey resigned his position as Queensland Branch Secretary and at the Federal Council two weeks later he resigned as General Secretary in favour of the South Australian Secretary, Stan Bevan. Thereafter neither he nor Bryan paid the FMWU anything more than the scarcest attention and the Branch came under the leadership of Walter Costello who, when measured against his capacity to exercise the functions of a trade union chief executive, was, to be kind, a nincompoop.

As a trade union the Queensland Branch now became a huge farce. Since Bryan had taken over the union in 1920, and especially since open meetings were abolished in 1929, the Branch had not been a happy one. But at least the loss of control by the members had been compensated by the presence of two politically and juridically skilled officials in Bryan and Harvey. Their positions within the rest of the labour movement and their dominance of the FMWU at large also leant some status to the Branch, as well as inside information and a capacity for wire-pulling. Just as the dissident members feared to protest too much lest Bryan or Harvey had them sacked from their jobs, so, in times of crisis, they could find them jobs. With their departure, however, the Branch was completely disarmed. "I was book-keeper, Organiser, Arbitration advocate and God knows how many other things," wrote Harvey in 1946.[37] When he left so did the union's knowledge and skills in these areas and all of the weaknesses associated with the lack of collective control were suddenly visited on the Branch at once - an eventuation magnified by the fact that,

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37. H. Harvey to F. Newton, 18 August 1946, QIR.

having made the union foolproof from radical initiative, they apparently felt safe to trust a fool with the leadership.

Little is known of Walter Costello's pre-FMWU history. He had not been an Executive or State Council member prior to his election, which in typical Queensland fashion was achieved by eliminating six of his seven opponents on the pretext that they were not financial.(38) Presumably he was a safe anti-communist and he may have been a former AWU official as he would often boast of having had "six organisers underneath me thirty years ago".(39) But whatever the circumstances behind his promotion, the degeneration of the Branch because of his extraordinary incompetence was rapid. Frustrated over his apparent unlimited capacity to avoid any of his duties, the Executive and State Council grew progressively intemperate. Within a year of his election the government of the Branch was preoccupied with formulating resolutions to have him do his work or get out. Motions were passed ordering him to stay in his office and perform his duties, to reduce his salary, to have him formally admit his incompetence, to declare no confidence in him, to suspend him, to dismiss him and to change the rules to make these motions effective.(40) All the motions were carried, some even unanimously, but to no avail. Walter, thick-skinned, barefoot and half-drunk, simply sat pat in the fortress Bryan and Harvey had built for him and regaled the rest of the government as 'a mob of idiots, dingos, skunks, bastards, mongrels and dills who could all go to hell'.(41)

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38. QLDBM, 26 September 1949, FMWU Papers.
39. W. Costello to S.C. Bevan, 19 April 1951, FMWU Papers.
40. QLDBM, 8 & 31 July 1952, 12 May, 10 June 1953, 18 July & 12 April & 9 January 1954, FMWU Papers.
41. ibid., 13 April, 27 July, 26 October 1953, 11 January & 9 February 1954.

Regular motions were forwarded to the State Council to hold General Meetings and there were moves by sections to break away from the union, but unlike New South Wales there was no apparent political character to this struggle. There were no references to communists or Groupers, Harvey's name was abused by the belligerent Secretary as freely as anyone else's and, moreover, no impediments were placed in the way of the members taking direct action (beyond the Secretary's own inaction). Indeed, the Branch's waterfront watchmen were readily granted their own section upon their request in 1946.(42) The problem with the Branch was simply the Secretary's shortcomings. Two Branch Presidents, one of whom had been an Executive official since 1927 and the other since 1942, resigned out of frustration.(43) General Secretary Bevan considered Federal intervention as early as 1952.(44) A Federal Council inquiry into the Branch was conducted in 1953.(45) And to compensate for his incompetence, the State Council had voted the Secretary two organisers and additional office staff. Absolutely redoubtable, Walter maintained his torrent of abuse, severed all contact between the Branch and the rest of the Federation, drove one of the organisers out, locked the staff out of the office when the other officials attempted to go to them around him and began getting caught out over petty corruption, such as selling out-of-date rule books, removing the speedometer from the union car and, some suggested, collecting a 'Secretary's sling' from shipowners for favours on the waterfront.(46) "If we do not get rid of you soon we

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42. ibid., 10 June, 14 July, 6 October 1946; Also see the Truth, 18 June, 16 July 1950 (for Breakaway attempts)
43. ibid., 25 September 1952, 14 December 1954. Also see M. Kelly & 7 others to S.C. Bevan, 31 October 1952, FMWU Papers.
44. S.C. Bevan to A. MacPherson, 7 November 1952, FMWU Papers.
45. FCM, 14 October 1953, FMWU Papers.
46. QLDBM, 12 & 14 September 1954, FMWU Papers.

will have to do what they do in America," threatened one exasperated member, "we will have to blow your bloody brains out".[47]

The New South Wales Branch, with the help of Lionel Murphy and another young working class lawyer, Neville Wran, assisted the Queensland Branch to break the Secretary's hold. Ray Gietzelt had stressed the importance of gaining Queensland's support for the forthcoming Federal Council at the General Meeting at which the Protest Committee's election victory was announced on 1 March 1955.[48] He, Secretary Sharpe and Lionel Murphy then went to Brisbane to provide the Branch with advice as to how to give effect to the union's rules.[49] In the event, at the Annual Meeting of the Queensland State Council on 8 March, the Chairman - Branch Vice-President and Scottish undertaker, Malcolm Graham - declared Costello to have automatically lost his position as Branch Secretary for repeatedly failing to pay his fines for disorderly conduct and thereby having become unfinancial under the Federal rules. Graham declared the Secretary's position vacant. After three requests for Costello to leave the room and threatening to call in the police, leave the hapless official "finally did, hurling abusive remarks at members and finally stating as he went out the door - 'I will not pay my bloody fines as you had no right to fine me - you can go to hell'".[50] Costello further resisted attempts to dislodge him in the days immediately after, but was eventually locked out of the premises. On 14 March Murphy and Wran had the ruling upheld by a bench of the

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47. ibid., 12 October 1954.
48. NSWBM, 1 March 1955, FMWU Papers.
49. ibid., 1 & 8 March 1955.
50. QLDBM, 8 March 1955, FMWU Papers.

Commonwealth Court led by the conservative Chief Justice Kelly.(51) General Secretary Bevan, anxiously watching these events, wrote to the Victorian Branch full of alarm: "as far as I am concerned Queensland is out". He continued: "the line up [for the forthcoming Federal Council] looks like six all. The Victorian and South Australian Branches must now be firm to-gether, otherwise the whole Federation will go to the pack".(52)

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Bevan looked to Tasmania to gain an extra Federal Councillor. The FMWU had been unsuccessfully seeking to become established in Tasmania since Joe Coote made the first attempt in 1917, but all the conditions traditionally necessary for the formation of a union such as the FMWU had been too unfavourable. The small scale of urban Tasmania, the lack of protection offered by its Wages Board system, which tended to favour industry unions, and the overall weakness of the island's labour movement had always undermined the union's attempts to recruit a base among cleaners. Why did it succeed on this occasion? The answer lies in developments springing from tensions in the Tasmanian labour movement, tensions that can only be understood in the first instance by reference to the general character of the island society.

Occupying less than one percent of Australia's land area, and host to less than three percent of the population, Tasmania's political significance derived from its right to status as a sovereign

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51. ibid., 15 & 29 Marc, 16 August, 13 September 1955. Also see "Alistair Cameron MacColl & Walter Joseph Costello", No. 200 of 1955, Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration (judgement), FMWU Papers.
52. S.C. Bevan to J.N. Shannon, 28 March 1955, FMWU Papers.

State within the Commonwealth. Just like the larger States, Tasmania was entitled to its own full-scale, independent apparatus of government and public services and it could send the same number of Senators to the Commonwealth Parliament. Its apparent coherence in political and geographic terms, however, belied the fact that there was little else that integrated the tiny island society. Not only was it Australia's least urban State, but those urban dwellers whom there were did not crowd into the one metropolis as in most of the other States. Nor did the island have the benefit of either the rich mineral or agricultural resources that integrated the economies of the bigger regions. The population of 250,000 [1945] was scattered among relatively autonomous, small-scale, district farming, mining and processing economies which supported a small class of landed rural families.

The lack of economic concentration and integration was mirrored by the small and highly fragmented trade union movement. Only about one third of the island's 100,000 workers were union members and, despite the industry bias of the Wages Boards, they were divided into 71 different organisations along predominantly craft lines.(53) In 1945 the AWU was far and away the largest union with 4,460 members and only three other unions had 1,000 or more members: the Railway Workers (1,300), Zinc Miners (1,100) and the Engineers (1,008).(54) This left the remaining 67 unions with an average size of 280 members compared with the national union average of around 5,000. Corresponding to this extraordinary fragmentation, the union movement had no effective central body. Rather, there were four different,

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53. Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No. 36, 1946-47, p.507.
54. R. Davis, "Tasmanian Labor and the Trade Union Movement, 1920-1960", Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Vol. 28, No. 2, June, 1981, p.93.

independent, rival regional Councils, only one of which - the Hobart Council - was affiliated to the ACTU.

The mechanism which connected all these isolated economies was the state itself. The one common belief shared by many Tasmanians was the need for a strong government to bargain for advantages on their behalf within the Commonwealth. More than one in every four Tasmanian workers was a state employee and collectively they were more numerous than either factory workers or agricultural and mining labourers.(55) No State paid more per head of population to support its government.(56) The most extraordinary aspect of the apparatus, however, was its electoral system which at once secured the state as a conservative monolith while institutionalising and perpetuating the fragmented character of the labour movement. Its cornerstone was the parliamentary Upper House which had the power to dismiss the Lower House, but could not be dismissed itself and was comprised of 19 members exclusively elected by only 19,000 land owners in annual lots of three for six-year terms. Against this powerful, landed oligarchy was pitted a Lower House into which members were popularly elected according to the bizarre rules of the Hare-Clark system. Hare-Clark entailed the division of Tasmania into five regions, each of which was entitled to six Lower House members elected on a quota basis for five years (instead of three - the norm for the rest of Australia's governments - further outweighing popular control). The conservative beauty of this was that it conceded to the Labor Party the appearance of substantial success, while denying it hegemony and ensuring perennial public conflict and backsliding among its six candidates in each region prior to every election as they all battled to ensure

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55. Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No. 42, 1956, pp.200, 334, 896.
56. ibid., No. 36, 1946-47, p.88, No. 42, 1956, p.88.

their quota of votes. The fact that Labor enjoyed a majority in the Lower House from 1934 (to 1958) hid the reality that the working class barely got a look in under these conditions. As a socialist newspaper had put it in 1909: "the Hare system of voting was the great disintegrator of parties".(57)

Tasmanian labour history is replete with stories of working class movements developing and then being dissolved by individual, regional and parochial considerations under the effects of the electoral system. In 1945, as elsewhere, Tasmanian workers were hardening with discontent over the past and optimism for the future and there was renewed impetus to gain some influence on the Labor government. There were demands for the pre-election of parliamentary candidates to prevent public fighting and backsliding, for the restoration of three-year terms and for other measures to overcome the hurdles of Hare-Clark, as well as demands for action on fundamental concerns such as preference for union members and a shorter working week.(58) To strengthen this new movement a Tasmanian Trades Union Council was formed to allow the four Trades and Labour Councils to present a united front to the politicians and to conduct a further organisation campaign.(59)

In October 1945 the Hobart Council voted "to give consideration to the matter of creating funds for the appointment of organisers and for the purpose of giving consideration to the grouping and amalgamation of small unions". Two months later it was resolved that the Council take on responsibility for recruitment and that the Council Secretary become a full-time official with control over "the

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57. R. Davis, Eighty Years' Labor: The ALP in Tasmania, 1903-1983, Hobart, 1983, p.iii.
58. ibid., p.40; R. Davis (1981), op.cit., p.96.
59. R. Davis (1981), op.cit., p.87.

organising work for the affiliate unions". In January 1946 a "Union Organising Committee" was formed and it was not long before its energy showed results.(60) In 1945 Tasmania had 71 unions with 27,114 members. By 1954 this had almost doubled to 50,240 and there were 98 unions - including a Tasmanian Branch of the FMWU.(61)

Meanwhile, despite the promise of realising 30 years of failed endeavour, the FMWU had divided over the establishment of a Tasmanian Branch. The central figure in the Tasmanian trade union movement was Jack O'Neil, the former office assistant of former FMWU General Secretary, Fred Katz. The Secretary of the Hobart and the new Tasmanian Councils, he was also Secretary of the Electrical Trades Union, the Gas Employees, the Meat Industry Employees, the Confectioners, the Storemen and Packers, the Seamen's Union and various others from time to time.(62) He wrote to the FMWU's Victorian Branch on 18 September 1946 requesting the establishment of a Branch for Tasmania's waterfront watchmen and pointing out that there were "quite a number of occupations which I think would be covered by your Constitution". He was frank about his target:

> I am also of the opinion that the Australian Workers' Union is catering for a fairly large number of workers who actually would be covered by your Constitution and that they would be better off in your organisation.(63)

Such a candid opinion was indiscreet. Though winning enthusiastic endorsement from the Victorian Branch where no love was

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60. Hobart Trades Hall Council Minutes, 25 October, 6 December, 1945, 31 January, 14 February, 21 March 1946.
61. Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No. 42, 1956, p.208.
62. Walch's Tasmanian Almanac (The "Red Book"), 1941, pp.311-312 & 1946, pp.299-300.
63. J.H. O'Neil to The Secretary, Miscellaneous Workers' Union, Trades Hall, Melbourne, 18 September 1946.

lost for the AWU, it met only silence from Queensland and nothing happened until after Harry Harvey went to the bench in 1949. The fledgling Tasmanian organisation was at a complete loss over being ignored. Comprising about 50 members and calling itself the Wharf Watchmen's Union for local purposes, it elected its own Honorary Secretary in 1948, had 'Tasmanian Branch of the FMWU' letterhead printed and diligently forwarded all of its balance sheets and election results to the FMWU's Federal Office.(64) The Tasmanians received "no replies from or acknowledgements".(65) The first letter answered, which brought immediate recognition, was from Stan Bevan in 1950.(66) "All members are very pleased indeed", replied the Tasmanian Secretary and the Branch sent a delegate to the 1950 Federal Council, and was formally registered as part of the Federation in 1951.(67) "The foundation is now laid", Bevan told the Federal Council, "and there should be ample scope for building up of a solid Branch".(68)

This optimism was soon dispelled. Once the initial Determination for the watchmen had been made, interest waned along with easy possibilities for further advances. Moreover, the union was continuously undermined by the Bull System of waterfront hiring. One major shipping agent, wrote the Secretary to Bevan, openly boasted that "he will pick up Union or Non Union men as watchmen just as he pleases, and will take no notice of our Union".(69) Even some

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64. See: E. Warrington to J. Shannon, 2 February 1948; J.W. Shannon to H. Harvey, 6 February 1948; E. Warrington to H. Harvey, 27 February, 19 March 1948, 15 January, 19 March 1949; W.J. Grace, 3 October, 24 December 1949, FMWU Papers.
65. E. Warrington to H.J. Harvey, 10 April 1949, FMWU Papers.
66. S.C. Bevan to W.J. Grace, 5 January 1950; W.J. Grace to S.C. Bevan, 10 January 1950, FMWU Papers.
67. FCM, 6 November 1950, FMWU Papers.
68. ibid.
69. W.J. Grace to S.C. Bevan, 18 March 1950, FMWU Papers.

officials were discovered to be taking work outside the union's pick-up and to be holding monopolies on the better paid jobs.(70) What made the system all the worse was the refusal of the Labor government to grant preference of employment to the union. When the members held a stop work meeting an hour before the end of a shift as an act of defiance one afternoon, the government sent police to replace them and no unionists were selected for the following shift.(71) Nor did O'Neil's plans for expanding into new territories prove to be a simple task. A few land watchmen were enrolled, but, wrote the Secretary, "the employees in Banks, Insurance Offices & Etc, are covered by a State Wages Board Award, and that award covers all employees including cleaners".(72)

In January 1952 the third Secretary in the Branch's short history resigned and the job was taken on by the Secretary of the Clerk's Union, which had come under Grouper control.(73) While the Tasmanian Labor Party did not officially recognise the Industrial Groups, this was a rather meaningless technicality in this context. Labor Premier Cosgrove was a friend of the Movement, supported Menzies' proposals to ban the CPA and introduce military conscription, was an advocate of incentive payments, overturned Tasmanian Labor's 25-year opposition to public funding of private schools and secured the deposition of the sole radical Tasmanian representative in the Commonwealth Senate.(74) Little surprise that the Movement was soon able to claim a majority in the Hobart Trades Hall. Even Jack O'Neil leaned their way after a stunning putsch in 1950 and Hobart became the only Council of the Australian trade union movement not to oppose Menzies' ban on the

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70. W.J. Grace to S.C. Bevan, 18 March 1950, FMWU Papers.
71. C. Robertson to S.C. Bevan, 22 June 1952, FMWU Papers.
72. W.J. Grace to S.C. Bevan, 28 February 1950, FMWU Papers.
73. R. Davis (1981), op.cit., p.90.
74. ibid., p.97. Also see B.A. Santamaria, op.cit., pp.128, 129, 140.

CPA.[75] Under the part-time leadership of the Clerks, the FMWU's Branch went from bad to worse. So much worse that the Federal Council of December 1952 concluded "there was not much scope for improvement" and dissolved it altogether, joining up the remaining members to the Victorian Branch.[76]

The Tasmanian watchmen rallied behind a new leader, Doug Howitt, in 1953 and successfully petitioned to have their status as a full, autonomous Branch of the Federation restored, but did not bother sending a delegate to the Federal Council. Howitt was a unionist of ability and he secured preference arrangements and an employers' agreement for a roster system on a trial basis.[77] Because of family problems, however, he resigned in mid-1954 to move to Sydney and the job fell to Robert Stokes, who Bevan was sure would support him against the New South Wales advance.[78] "[If] the Federation brings up a Delegate from Tasmania," he wrote to the Victorian Branch on 28 March 1955, "he would have to be our way".[79] The line up for the Federal Council now looked to be 7-6 in Bevan's favour.

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But the preliminaries were not over yet. Fortuitously the New South Wales Branch was able to win eleventh-hour support from Western Australia. To understand how this occurred it is also important to appreciate some of the distinctive features of Western Australian society and how these impacted on the State's labour movement. An immense State, occupying over 30 percent of the Australian continent,

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75. ibid., p.90.
76. FCM, 8 December, 1952, FMWU Papers.
77. D.C. Howitt to S.C. Bevan, 13 February, 29 April 1954, FMWU Papers.
78. D.C. Howitt to S.C. Bevan, 29 April 1954, FMWU Papers.
79. S.C. Bevan to J.N. Shannon, 28 March 1955, FMWU Papers.

Western Australia's main city of Perth is the most geographically isolated capital in the world, the chief consequence of which was that the establishment of the Australian common market by the formation of the Commonwealth in 1901 had made it impossible for the West's manufacturing industries to compete with the East. Thus the State still bore hallmarks of the 19th century Australian economy. That is, it was based on agricultural and mining production for export to the East and overseas. The curiosity was that at the same time Perth was a city swollen out of all proportion by the lateness and longevity of its gold rushes. Over 50 percent of its 640,000 people lived in the urban centre. Hence, while it had an economy more akin to Queensland, it had a settlement pattern similar to New South Wales and Victoria on a smaller scale. What was missing was a factory proletariat. Nowhere in Australia was 'the intimate connection between industrial and agricultural production' so completely severed. In the 1950s the average Western Australian factory only employed 13 workers, by far the lowest of any State, including Tasmania.(80) Holding this economy together - providing, maintaining and administering the rural export and urban service infrastructures - were about 60,000 public servants: over a quarter of the workforce and, while not as proportionally expensive as Tasmania, it was slightly larger - indeed, it was the largest public service per head of population in the country.(81)

The trade union movement, the Labor Party - and consequently the society - that was constituted on this economy was possibly the most conservative in Australia. Western Australia and Tasmania had been the only States to vote in favour of conscription in both the famous

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80. Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No. 38, 1951, P.1094.
81. ibid., p.109.

1916-17 referenda and, along with Queensland, had been the only States to vote in favour of the extermination of the CPA in 1951. Like Tasmania, however, there was an appearance of Labor Party success as it had formed majorities in the Lower House of the State Parliament for all but three years between 1924 and 1947. But, also like Tasmania, West Australian democracy was a sham. Any legislation that threatened the interests of the ruling class was doomed by an Upper House that was gerrymandered to favour the sparsely populated countryside and restricted to land holders. The largest union in the State was the AWU. Covering agriculture, mining and construction workers, at around 11,000 members it was almost twice the size of its nearest rival, the Railway Workers. The aberration was that the two next largest unions, with a combined membership almost equal to the AWU, were the Clerks and the Shop Assistants. These four unions comprised almost half the State's union members and, the Railway Workers apart, were completely wedded to arbitration and formed the base of the Labor Party. Beyond these there were over 100 other unions of craftsmen, service workers, state employers and light manufacturing labourers with an average size of less than 400 members each.(82) Dispersed rural labourers presided over by the AWU oligarchy, on the one side, and the respectable working class on the other: this was not the stuff to seriously contradict Western Australian conservatism.

Yet, within this rarefied context, at a key point in the State's economy was the Coastal, Dock, Rivers and Harbour Works Union led by Patrick ('Paddy') Troy. One of Australia's most outstanding, most radical and most militant trade union leaders, Troy's name remains revered within the working class community in the port town of

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82. Western Australian Industrial Gazette, 1953, pp.383-386.

Fremantle at the mouth of the Swan River. Born in 1908, and the second eldest of ten children in an Irish Catholic family, Troy had left his church and the Labor Party to join the CPA when his father - an experienced senior seaman - had his employment, health and spirit destroyed by the Great Depression. With a deep sense of natural justice and courage and intelligence to match, Troy was a veteran of class warfare by the time he had become President of the tiny Western Australian Branch of the CPA and Vigilance Officer for the dockers' union in 1944.(83)

The union comprised about 1,000 workers divided into four broad classifications: those who manned the dredges, pilot boats and other harbour and river craft around the Fremantle Port; labourers who constructed and maintained the harbour facilities; ship repair workers - and waterfront watchmen. Twelve miles downstream from Perth, Fremantle was by far the most important port in Western Australia. Between 1944 and 1954 Troy's union was to become by far the most militant union in Western Australia - a course that ended in its destruction and yielded up the watchmen to provide a base for the formation of the sixth Branch of the FMWU.

At first sight, the Coastal, Dock, Rivers and Harbour Works Union would seem to have suffered a similar fate to other communist-led unions that launched themselves onto a militant and radical course on the strength of post-war working class optimism and then found they had pushed too far to retreat from the enclosing Cold War. There were, however, local differences. In the first place, Western Australia had no central, independent trade union council. Way back in 1908 the West Australian trade unions had abandoned their Trades

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83. S.F. Macintyre, Militant, The Life and Times of Paddy Troy, North Sydney, 1984, esp. pp. 1-10, 27-39, 86-92.

and Labour Council in favour of forming a province of the Australasian Labor Federation. At this time already defunct everywhere but Queensland, the West's Federation aimed at overcoming divisions between scattered rural, mining and metropolitan interests and facilitating the organisation of Federal election campaigns. Like in Queensland, however, it also facilitated the growth of the AWU through amalgamations.(84) The AWU, in coalition with the conservative, state-dependent city unions, was able to dominate the Labor Party through the Federation's six district councils and, because there was no independent body, this also mean domination of the trade union movement. In turn, this meant, inter alia, no affiliation to the ACTU and rabid anti-communism. As a CPA member, Paddy Troy had no access to his labour movement's central councils.

The conservatism of this bloc was only exceeded by the moderation of the Labor politicians themselves. The absence of an independent council meant that union policy was easily subverted by politicians demobilised by long periods in comfortable office, the baying of the most choleric press in the country and the intimidation of the landed oligarchy watching from the powerful Upper House. The oppressive force of this set-up was clearly demonstrated by the engine drivers' dispute in 1946. Unsure of the safety of new engines purchased by the government, the union refused to drive them despite fines and de-registration. The only facility available for appealing for support from other unions, however, was the Labor Party's Disputes Committee - where the strikers simply confronted the government anew. With the engine drivers refusing to work until the locomotives had been proved safe, and the Disputes Committee subservient to the

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84. H.J. Gibbney, "Western Australia", in D.J. Murphy (1975), op.cit, pp.361, 374-77.

prerogatives of a Labor government from which the last flicker of reforming zeal had long been extinguished, a rift opened up between the Party and the unions. On the one side, the government sought to rally popular support for its stand by condemning the concerns of the drivers as having been simulated by alien CPA fanatics. On the other side, the trade union movement established an independent Western Australian Council of Trade Unions, sought ACTU recognition and withdrew its support for the Party at the 1947 elections, an action that ensured the government's downfall.(85)

The upshot of this conflict was the second distinctive feature of the Western Australian labour movement at this time - no Industrial Groups. Although the Movement was active, the benefit of the 1946-47 stand was quickly apparent in a realignment within the Labor Party that saw a regenerate left-wing led by F.E. ('Joe') Chamberlain, a former official with the Tramways Union who became Party Secretary in 1949. Anti-Grouper, and just as anti-Communist, he attained an extraordinary level of control over the Party machine and effectively held the two rival ideological blocs at bay. The Industrial Groups were not endorsed in any way by the Party and Chamberlain was quickly into the frontline of the national offensive on them when the tide turned. At the same time, he recovered the Labor Party's position within the West Australian trade union movement and a Trade Union Industrial Council was established within the Party as a rival to the Western Australian Council. Although still under Labor Party control, Chamberlain's body appeared to be a concession and defeated its rival in obtaining ACTU affiliation at the 1949 Congress. The independent

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85. S.F. Macintyre, (1984), op.cit., p.98.

council folded and, thereafter, Chamberlain used his full authority to discipline any unions with CPA officials or connections.(86)

Beyond these developments, the defeat of the independent union council had been made easier by the rising shrill of Western Australian anti-communism. Paddy Troy, who had been a driving force behind the independents, had been elected Secretary of his union in 1948 - just as Australia's political culture was freezing in the Cold War. The Western Australian Branch of the CPA had reached a peak of only about 1,500 members at the end of the war, but this State's conservatism knew no sense of proportion. Newspapers published hysterical town-by-town guides to CPA infiltration, local governments banned the Party from their Halls, police interrogated suspects and raided homes to seize personal documents, immigrants were threatened with deportation, people were ostracised from their social circles and hounded from their jobs, 'Church, King and Country' mobs added physical terror. The RSL and other civic bodies called for a complete ban, loudspeakers were banned at public meetings, one union was denied a wage increase because its case had been presented by a CPA official, a judge banned CPA reporters from his court, the new conservative government banned them from the parliamentary press gallery.(87) The witch-hunt was all the more unremitting because the small size of the population denied any shelter of anonymity.

Troy's communism was well-known. During the period of the Party's illegality at the outbreak of the war he had spent three months in Fremantle Gaol on a trumped up charge and he was named by Menzies in the Commonwealth Parliament in 1950. Not that he ever hid

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86. ibid., pp.98-100, 128-29; Also see D.Mitchell, "Western Australia: The Struggle to Adapt", in A. Parkin & J. Warhurst (eds.), Machine Politics in the Australian Labor Party, Sydney, 1983, p.171.
87. S.F. Macintyre, (1984), op.cit., pp.106-109.

his convictions, being a frequent public speaker and a regular election candidate for the Party in Fremantle. In this, Troy was different to the vast majority of Australia's war and immediate post-war CPA members, such as Jack Dwyer and Ray Gietzelt. Read in Marx, familiar with the discipline of democratic centralism, older and no tyro to such public victimisation, the Party was returning to a position it had held for most of the time he had been a member. His house was graffitied and his children were beaten, but Troy was determined to exercise his political rights and held his ground.(88)

Two other developments, however, sealed the fate of his union. First, in 1952 the Liberal-Country government announced a deal to build an industrial complex worth over &40M on the Cockburn Sound adjacent to Fremantle harbour. The state was to build infrastructure valued at &12M and, as part of the inducement to investors, promised no labour problems. This meant that the Coastal, Dock, Rivers and Harbour Works and all the other maritime unions were to be kept out in favour of the AWU.(89) Second, the national CPA leadership took it upon themselves to conclude that their West Australian comrades were not quite up to the level of militancy being pursued in the other States. These 'wise men from the East' had no time for any considered reading of the limits and possibilities in this particular context and came over to correct Troy's alarming tendency to fight each battle with due regard to the balance of forces.(90)

Now Paddy Troy had never been backward in coming forward. His union, his biographer wrote, "was both the most active in arbitration proceedings and the most combative union in Western Australia".(91)

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88. ibid., pp.109-10.
89. ibid., p.142.
90. ibid., pp.137-141.
91. ibid., p.94.

By working through the arbitration system and making the seriousness of its intent unmistakable by well-timed stoppages, since the end of the war the union had won higher pay, shorter hours, allowances for particularly difficult, dangerous or dirty work and had abolished many abuses, including the notorious Bull System. Under Troy's guidance the union had also given support to more general struggles, including the Aboriginal strike in the far north-west in 1945 and the ban on Dutch shipping in favour of Indonesia's war of independence between 1945 and 1949.(92) But with the public mind enveloped in fear and loathing of communism, with the government looking to keep the union out of Kwinana and to promote the AWU, with the Arbitration Court having warned that no more strikes would be tolerated, with the Labor Party hostile about the unsettling influence of Fremantle radicalism and with the hardened comrades from the East pushing from the other side, in 1952 the dockers overplayed their hand when they led a stoppage of the entire harbour workforce in aid of five Fremantle families evicted under the government's housing policy. The Arbitration Court de-registered the union on 18 March 1952.(93)

Over the next three years Troy led a brave struggle to save the union before finally conceding defeat under the weight of continuing hostility from employers, the loss of 400 construction and maintenance workers to the AWU, the victimisation of loyal members and failing support from other unions. The re-election of a Labor government with a former AWU President as Minister for Labour did not help either. After repeated failure to regain registration, it was concluded that the only way to stop the AWU absorbing the union in toto was to break the members up and have them join other Federally registered unions.

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92. ibid., pp.94-95, 100-105, 114-119.
93. ibid., pp.140-141.

The crews of the harbour craft went to the Seamen's Union, the painters and dockers formed a Western Australian Branch of the Federated Painters and Dockers' Union and the watchmen went to the FMWU.(94)

The decision to break up the union was taken after the fourth failed attempt to regain registration on 1 March 1955, the same day as the Protest Committee's great election win in the New South Wales Branch of the FMWU. No doubt Troy knew of the leadership change in the New South Wales Branch, possibly through the CPA or, more likely, the waterfront grapevine. In any case, in April he travelled east to see for himself. Gietzelt quickly acquired a great deal of respect for Troy's dedication and capacity as a trade union leader, although the younger, more reserved, almost stoic man never ceased to be bemused by Paddy's open excitability and "the way he would always be jumping up and throwing his arms about".(95) Troy attended a Special Executive Meeting on 3 May where he won support for his intention to establish the Branch and three weeks later, on 22 May 1955, a meeting of 41 Fremantle watchmen endorsed the decision, adopted rules and elected their officials.(96) As Secretary, two days later Troy wrote to Stan Bevan who immediately commenced the paperwork to legally establish the Branch, apparently oblivious to the fact that the signature at the foot of the letter he had received belonged to one of Australia's most notorious communists. The registration was granted on 11 August 1955 - 38 days before the Federal Council was due to convene.(97) The new Branch was entitled to send one delegate and the numbers were now seven all.

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94. ibid., p.146.
95. Interview with R. Gietzelt, Sylvania, 11 February 1985.
96. NSWBM, 22 May, 1955; P. Troy to S.C. Bevan, 26 May 1955.
97. Registrar to S.C. Bevan, 1 August 1955, FMWU Papers.

The 35th Federal Council of the FMWU opened at 9.30 a.m. in Adelaide Trades Hall on Monday 19 September 1955. The New South Wales Branch was represented by Gietzelt, George Sharpe and Bill Scott, the latter a Mason and one of the older State Councillors who had broken with the Groupers in their last months. The Branch had submitted an extensive range of agenda items, including virtually a completely new set of rules and a motion to remove the General Secretary "from every office held by him".(98) The Western Australian Branch was represented by Troy, Queensland by its President, Malcolm Graham, its Treasurer, Harold Llewelyn and a State Councillor for the government cleaners, Arthur Sullivan. The deposed and pathetic Walter Costello had flown down from Queensland demanding to be admitted, but was barred with the support of even the South Australian delegates - who comprised General Secretary Bevan, Branch President Charles Hasse and Branch Secretary Ralph Bannister. The Victorian Branch was represented by its Secretary and Federal President, John Shannon, its organiser, John Betteridge and Assistant-Secretary, Roy Cameron. The Tasmanian delegate - John Wallace instead of Bob Stokes - was credentialled on his arrival a couple of hours after the Council opened.(99)

The first test of strength came during discussion of the General Secretary's report immediately after lunch on the first day when Gietzelt charged Bevan with registering three new Federal rules without obtaining the proper authority from the union. He moved a motion to this effect and it was carried with the support of Roy Cameron from the Victorian Branch. The rest of the afternoon, all of Tuesday and most of the morning of the third day then passed virtually without incident as each Branch presented its annual report to the

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98. FCM, 19 September 1955.
99. ibid.

Council. The only eruption was over the Queensland report. Convinced all the problems with Costello would have been rectified much earlier if Bevan had not taken such a "nonchalant attitude", the Branch criticised him so severely Gietzelt and Troy moved to have the report's most offensive paragraphs deleted.

The second real test came shortly before lunch on the third day when the South Australian Branch moved an amendment to weaken a motion condemning the Commonwealth Government's decision to send armed forces into Malaya. The motion had been moved by the Victorian Branch and, with Cameron's support, the amendment was rejected and the condemnation easily carried. The Victorian Branch had clearly found accommodation with the left and the numbers were up for all to see. First thing after lunch Bevan announced "that he desired to officially tender his resignation as Secretary of the Federation". The formality of electing a replacement was held over till the Council's last day when Ray Gietzelt, at age 33, defeated token resistance from the South Australian Branch Secretary to become, reputedly, the youngest General Secretary of an Australian Federal union.(100)

What made the difference? "I definitely resigned," Bevan was always to proudly maintain, explaining that his duties as a member of the South Australian Parliament prevented him from giving proper attention to the union(101). More revealing is another comment: "I was the bloke who was jammed in the middle. Sitting there I felt 'what can I do' I do not want to be accused of being in with the Groupers or being in with the left".(102) While Bevan had given every support and more to the New South Wales officials in their defence against the Protesters, he had never been really forced to define his

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100. ibid.
101. Interview with S.C. Bevan, Mile End, S.A., 27 July 1983.
102. ibid.

position in relation to the struggle splitting the Eastern States because of circumstances peculiar to South Australia. In the first place, the State had never received any large-scale Irish immigration and hence had a much small number of Catholics, giving the Movement a much weaker base to build support. In the second place, South Australia was 'fortunate', as Western Australia had been between 1947 and 1953, in not having a Labor government. Indeed, no Labor government had been elected in South Australia since 1933. Thus, the Party did not suffer the discontent that springs from the tensions between trade unions and Labor when it is in office and nor was it so open to the CPA's divisive policy. The Movement was active nevertheless, working through the Branches to win a majority on the Labor Executive and endorsement for establishing Industrial Groups at the 1946 Labor Convention. Groups were then set up in the Clerks, Ironworkers, Shop Assistants and a few other unions. A counter-attack, however, had been quickly led by rebel AWU State Secretary, Clyde Cameron, who engineered the introduction of a central system of voting that allowed unions a weighting according to the number of workers they represented. The Party Branches were swamped by the unions and the Movement was effectively checked. In 1951 the Groups were disavowed and thereafter conflicts were minimised by a philosophy of consensus and a practical system of power sharing.(103) There was no split in South Australia. Few had to pick sides.

Although he was always to be tickled by the fact that Bevan had secured his own downfall by registering Paddy Troy's Branch, Gietzelt, characteristically, was never to be drawn on the circumstances that

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103. J. Moss, Sound of Trumpets: History of the Labour Movement in South Australia, Netley, 1985, pp.358-361; G. Stokes, "South Australia: Consensus Politics", in A. Parkin & J. Warhurst, op.cit., pp.134-137.

led to his own elevation. One reason for this was his belief in neutralising, if not winning over, vanquished opponents. Once he had attained an objective, he was considerate to let the defeated retain their dignity and it was not long before Bevan was deeply touched by the gift of an engraved watch from the Federal Council in recognition of his services to the union.(104) He and Ray were soon able to find friendly terms for each other. Roy Cameron was to tell a different story, recalling the substance that had underpinned the New South Wales agenda item moving for Bevan's dismissal: "It was brought to our notice that he forged a legal document and took an oath that it was bona fide. We used that information to force him to relinquish his position".(105) Whatever the mechanism of the process, however, the more fundamental condition for the victory lay in the decision of the Victorian Branch to join the left bloc and here we may discern a deeper pattern of alignment.

Roy Angus Cameron, who led the Victorian switch, represented the socialist tradition that had been embodied in the Victorian Socialist Party started by Tom Mann (whose revolver was a family keepsake). Roy's father, Don, was a Commonwealth Labor Senator, had been a Minister in the Curtin and Chifley governments and, prior to this, had been one of Australia's leading socialists. A former Secretary of the Plumbers' Union, he had organised the 1916-17 anti-conscription campaigns in Western Australia and had been Secretary of the Victorian Socialist Party throughout the 1920s. Roy, who was 48 years old in 1955, had spent his life in the Victorian labour movement within his father's shadow. At the age of 17 he had become an organiser for the Tramways Union, he had stood - unsuccessfully - for parliament a

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104. S.C. Bevan to R. Gietzelt, undated correspondence (1956), FMWU Papers.
105. Interview with R.H. Cameron, Glen Iris, Vic, 23 February 1983.

couple of times and he had followed Fred Katz into the position of General Secretary of the Federated Clerks Union in 1942. Resigning to serve in the Merchant Navy, he had joined the Victorian Branch of the FMWU as an office clerk in 1946.(106)

Cameron's experience had soon told. Between 1946 and 1955 the Branch had grown from around 2,700 to 4,700 members and Cameron had been instrumental in absorbing the Jewellers and Dental Mechanics Union, which had been torn apart in Grouper/Communist internecine strife, and securing an agreement with the Cain Labor government to allow school cleaners to have their union contributions automatically deducted from their wages.(107) He had also played an important hand in fashioning a policy to accommodate the demands of Victorian waterfront watchmen, who had all been recruited into the union within the space of six months in 1945 and who had become active here as elsewhere in Australia after the war.(108) His experience was highly valued: "he is a very good 'outside man'" wrote the Branch President to Harry Harvey in 1947, "I have not got half the worry and anxiety I used to have prior to the present 'set-up'".(109) Within 12 months he had been elected Assistant Secretary and soon became the de facto chief executive, writing all the correspondence and reports for Secretary Jack Shannon to sign and giving general economic and political leadership.

Against this backdrop, three reasons account for his alignment with Gietzelt at the 1955 Federal Council. In the first place,

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106. See: H.J. Gibbney, op.cit., pp.366, 378; F. Farrell (1981), op.cit., p.203; R.A. Cameron, "Draft Biographical Notes", 8 July 1974, FMWU Papers.
107. Interview with R.A. Cameron, Glen Iris, Vic., 23 & 24 February 1983. Also see J.N. Shannon to W.H. Smith, 24 July 1950.
108. VBM, 4 & 22 April, 1949, 14 June 1950, 13 October 1952. Also see Victorian Branch Secretary's Report, 1946-1949, 1954, FMWU Papers.
109. J.J. Bell to H. Harvey, 14 July 1947, FMWU Papers.

Cameron shared the antipathy toward Stan Bevan and the union's Federal organisation as a whole. Harry Harvey had quickly become sensitive to Cameron's administrative ability and political background and would always refer to him woundingly as "that black bastard", an allusion to Roy's dark hair and olive complexion.(110) He would regularly press Shannon to get rid of him and, in turn, Cameron would snipe at Harvey when he drafted Shannon's Federal Council reports.(111) Bevan was less aggressive, but his inaction frustrated Cameron: "the Federal honorarium he received was just money for nothing".(112)

In the second place, as the split worked its way out through the labour movement in 1955 distinctions on the left were dulled with craftsmen, socialists, communists, liberals, democrats, Protestants and even many Catholics uniting to throw off Santamaria's dead hand. Cameron, like his father, who had despaired after the 'Third Period', was strongly anti-communist and harboured suspicion about the relationship between the New South Wales challenge and the CPA.(113) In 1955, however, he had become a member of the Movement-dominated Victorian State Labor Executive and his attitudes had been schooled in the front-line against the Groupers. Following Federal Labor intervention in the wake of Evatt's public exposure of the Movement, he, Premier Cain and six others had resigned from the Victorian Executive over its refusal to recognise Federal Labor's order to submit itself to a Special State Conference for re-election. There then followed a Party struggle that paralleled the Protest Committee's in New South Wales, except in that it was on a much larger scale. On the advice of John Kerr, Hal Wotton and Garfield Barwick, the Movement

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110. Interview with R.A. Cameron, Glen Iris, 23-24 February 1983.
111. See, for example FCM, 19 October 1949, FMWU Papers.
112. Interview with R.A. Cameron, Glen Iris, 23-24 February 1983.
113. See F. Farrell (1981) op.cit., p.203 (re Don Cameron).

had attempted to litigate the Victorian Party dispute and, failing that, its supporters had ignored the Labor Federal Executive and boycotted the famous Hobart Federal Conference. Upon the election of a new Victorian Branch Executive and with the left rallying, the division hardened and Santamaria's followers were expelled from the Party after which they crossed the floor in parliament to bring down the Cain government. In the vacuum, Cameron had been elected Vice-President of the new Victorian Executive and, hence, now shared great common cause with Gietzelt against the Groupers.(114)

Finally, Cameron was impressed by Gietzelt's personal qualities. "The whole union became much more serious when Ray came into it," he was later to recall, "we all gained a much greater appreciation of our responsibilities as union officials from the standards he set".(115) On the other side, Gietzelt admired Cameron's manner: "Roy was a very, very fine gentleman - too gentle at times".(116) Against the wider background, this emergent mutual personal respect, and a deal which saw Cameron forsake his own ambition to become FMWU General Secretary in favour of the Federal Presidency, removed any lingering hesitations. The accommodation resembled the 1954 court case where another anti-Grouper and former Victorian Socialist Party member from the Melbourne Trades Hall, Alf Foster, had also been impressed with Gietzelt and the democratic cause in the FMWU.

The individuals, the values they embodied, the spheres in which they formed their views of the world and interpreted their experience, and the ways they interrelated, are all important in explaining the leadership change in 1955. But the 35th Federal Council was more than just a palace revolt. By the time the Council had closed on Friday 23

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114. R. Murray, op.cit., pp.100, 137, 208, 214-216, 221-222.
115. Interview with R.A. Cameron, Glen Iris, Vic, 23-24 February 1983.
116. Interview with R. Gietzelt, Sylvania, 11 February 1985.

September the union's government had also undergone a wholesale restructure. The extent of the changes is indicated by the fact that the FMWU went into the Council with 37 rules and came out with 64. Most of this was due to the careful and extensive redefinition of all the powers and responsibilities of the union's governing councils and official positions, together with the introduction of provisions at every governing tier to allow the members to initiate or overturn business through meetings, petitions or referenda. The new emphasis was signalled by the vesting of "the supreme control of the Union" in the "members of the Union", rather than the Federal Council, which now only exercised power "on their behalf". Less symbolically, ordinary open general meetings were reintroduced and the quorum returned to the pre-1945 level of 20 members. Moreover, all Branch officials were now to be directly elected by the members, including, for the first time since 1914, Branch Secretaries. Most importantly, however, the 30-year-old demand by New South Wales to have Federal Council representation based on the total number of workers in each Branch was finally realised. Each Branch was now to be entitled to one delegate for 500 members, another if it had between 501 and 2,000 members and another for every 2,000 members thereafter. This gave New South Wales six Federal Councillors, double the next largest Branches of Victoria and Queensland, which were entitled to three each. South Australia was entitled to two and Tasmania and Western Australia to one apiece.(117)

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Ten years of continuous struggle had reached a conclusion. Insofar as the theoretical debates about trade unionism are concerned, we may

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117. FCM, 19 September 1955, FMWU Papers.

cite these events in the FMWU as evidence in support of the 'iron law of democracy'. Certainly it was a 'rank-and-file revolt' against, as Richard Hyman has put it, "a restrictive specification of the legitimate functions of trade unions".(118) The members refused to accept their official's conception of the union and their place in it. They rebelled against their working conditions, against the restrictions the officials placed on the extent of their claims, against the restrictions placed on the methods for pursuing them and against the restrictions on their position in the FMWU. They threw back the contention that their demands were out of order, that they were excessive and that it was not their right to decide all this for themselves. As the officials became more repressive in insisting on their way, so all the members' claims became generalised into the one claim for democratic rights. As the officials became more repressive and oligarchical in the name of anti-communism, so the democratic cry grew louder, so the government became more repressive and so it continued to seed its own demise. Oligarchy gave rise to democracy and democracy gave rise to oligarchy. Eventually the tyrants fell. The bureaucratism of the prior ten years was dissolved and the FMWU was reborn on a new, more radical set of assumptions as to the role of unionism in society. From this perspective the events in the FMWU between 1945 and 1955 re-enacted a theme as old and as universal as democratic movements.

But this is to simplify. Ten years of struggle had reached a conclusion, yet the struggle had not just been made out of the FMWU's existing relations, it was also a product of the history of these relations. Instead of 1945, does not the struggle really date from 1939 when the Lang-Catholics permeated the New South Wales Branch and

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118. R. Hyman, (1975), op.cit., p.85.

cast out Thomas Keniry and the rest of the left? For it was this that had allowed the FMWU's government to consolidate itself as a law only unto itself that had, in turn, allowed for such a polarisation of forces in the New South Wales Branch. Yet this at once takes us back to 1922-23 and the establishment of the "supreme power of the Federal Council" by S.J. Bryan and Fred Katz in reaction to post-First World War radicalism. Were not the excesses of 1945-54 only a realisation of what had been implicit in the union's rules for over 25 years? Shall we not then go back to the great further organisation campaigns between 1907 and 1913 when the craftsmen built the labourers' unions out of the arbitration apparatus which provided the legal field that would allow union governments such a strong alternative to popular support? These campaigns, too, we may recall, had been conducted partly in response to more radical working class movements in the form of the Australasian Labour Federation and the IWW. It is this perspective that makes the retrospective claims of present day factions to be the true representatives of 'traditional labour' appear so silly. The labour movement is as much a creation of relations within the working class as it is relations between workers and capitalists. For over 40 years conservative policies had carried the day in the FMWU, but these policies had not been formed in a vacuum. On the contrary, they had been defined in direct relation to more radical policies and the union had been created and developed from the interaction of this tension. It is also this perspective which affords an appreciation of the 'revolutionary' political character of the victory. The Federal Council of 1955 was a triumph over 45 years of reaction to working class radicalism.

And then there was that other, deeper and slower process of change to the organisation, scale and daily experience of the members'

labour. The critical difference between this and earlier attempts to radically redefine the FMWU was that this struggle was based among the waterfront watchmen and the paintmakers who had arrived at a much more concentrated, more powerful moment in their history. Unlike the post-First World War challenge, it was not a juxtaposed, theoretically inspired radicalism, but one that was organically connected with the 'living experiences of the shop floor'. Everything about the challenge was solidly conceived and related to readily available experience and nothing was brought forward that could not be verified in these terms. In this sense, it was a conflict between these more developed sections of the union and the FMWU's traditional, weak, floating and disparate constituency of 'waifs and strays' who still dominated in terms of overall numbers. This domination brought that crucial aspect of the FMWU - the union 'machine' - out into the open. With the assumptions upon which the union functioned 'strained to the breaking point', the machine became magnified to the extent that its operation became the central aspect of consideration by the justices of the Commonwealth Court. The traditional areas of the membership only existed by virtue of the union machine. They belonged to whoever controlled it. Thus, while the militants easily won the fight in the 'field', complete victory had to await the authority of the state which underwrote the machine's security. At least in the short run. The FMWU, then, was a précis of its past and the struggle had been made out of all its highly specific circumstances, as all revolutions must.

Still, neither general theory nor the actual conditions pertaining within the FMWU are adequate to the history we have traced. As Hobsbawm has put it, "we cannot isolate the phenomena of overt crisis from the wider context" and at every point we have also to see

the events in relation to the general ensemble of social relations.(119) In drawing conclusions at this level it is appropriate to consider them in relation to those put forward by R. Murray in his influential book: The Split: Australian Labor in the Fifties. "The great split of 1954-57," wrote Murray, "was about power and personalities rather than ideology ...".(120) On one reading this may be taken to mean that the general tensions of these years, which led to the split, conformed to the ideology that supposes politics to be about conflict between individuals bent on their own advancement, rather than other ideologies. On another reading it is a false dichotomy. All politics is about power in some sense and involves people who have more or less resilient characteristics which we may conceptualise as personalities. The question that nevertheless remains is why were these people (with their personalities) suddenly doing their best from one end of the country to the other to overpower each other? To suppose that the meanings, values and beliefs in contest over this period were somehow separate and alternative, or marginal, to the people who fought so hard to uphold them is to bestow a condescending reductionism of such proportions that it would have been rejected by all but the most simple-minded and "manipulated" of Murray's "zealots and idealogues" who had voiced their "empty socialist rhetoric" during his "dark Sydney ages that followed the First World War".(121) Closer is the contention that appears 22 pages later in the book. "Men felt they were fighting not only for jobs and power," conceded Murray "but for the very soul of the Australian Labor Movement".(122) This captures something of the sense of seriousness

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119. E.J. Hobsbawm, "From Social History to the History of Society", Daedalus, Vol. 100, Winter, 1974, p.39.
120. R. Murray, op.cit., p.5.
121. ibid., pp.6, 182.
122. ibid., p.29.

of the period. Yet it still avoids the question. In place of the reductionism that supposes all labour politics to be about power-mongering, job-hunting personalities, we have a grand mystification of the conflict. Instead of "wheeler-dealers", "backstairs intriguers", "searing hatreds" and "violent debates", we have "mysterious and awkward providence", "conspiring events", "swinging pendulums" and the great battle for the national labour movement's "soul".(123)

Murray, of course, wrote as a journalist and his contribution, which was to record the most outstanding incidents, the important meetings, the people in attendance and the decisions reached, has been marred by his determination to claim great significance for his story, on the one hand, while reducing the reality to a simplistic human melodrama, on the other. In this he exhibits the tendencies that were to vitiate post-war political journalism. Intellectual, philosophical and moral questions have been consigned to "the tense background" where they will not be able to interfere with hard-core close-ups on people's personalities during their moments of triumph and agony ('How does it feel?'). But if the issues are left aside at the beginning, they cannot be suddenly found at the end and there can be no surprise at encountering Murray's conclusion, after 254 pages, that it was "a split that was about - in tangible state political issues - nothing".(124) Less surprise that the book ends, after 357 pages, with a homily to "disinterestedness".(125)

Yet, as the FMWU's history illustrates, the split and the other developments of which it was a part were about many things. Above all, impinging on the labour movement at all points were the

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123. ibid., pp.3, 11, 27, 32 & 53 (for example).
124. ibid., p.254.
125. ibid., p.357.

contradictions entailed in the transition from a society oriented to fighting the People's War to one that had enlisted in the Cold War. It takes effort to appreciate the extent of the changes in the hegemony of socially acceptable assumptions that this brought about, living as we do in a world that has received the Cold War categories. In 1945, however, it was 'normal' to talk about social change and reconstruction on a large scale, 'good sense' dictated that 'average' people made 'plans' for their own and their family's futures, 'common sense' showed that full and productive employment was an unqualified social goal. The Soviet Union was an ally and, while being a communist may not have been a 'typical' or 'ordinary' thing to do, it was understandable and publicly defensible as a citizen's right at least. After all, 33,000 Australians had just fought fascism to their death to guarantee democratic and political freedoms. Over the ten post-war years the Movement and the Cold War effectively closed down the possibility of radical social change in Australia and all the other assumptions permitted during the 'interlude of hope' had been severely limited. We have outlined some of the unprincipled, indiscriminate viciousness used to bring this about and there is too little contrary evidence to discount the conclusion that, had not the labour movement hardened in its defence of workers' economic conditions and their democratic rights to throw off the Movement and limit encroaching state control, as occurred in the FMWU, the Melbourne Trades Hall, the AWU, numerous other unions and the Labor Party, Australia would have begun to approximate the political and economic configurations we can now see in southern hemisphere neighbours such as South Africa and Chile - or, indeed, Queensland where the defence came late and was least successful. It is all too easy to grow complacent in the subsequent knowledge that Australia did

not go in this direction and assume that this was inevitable - so inevitable that we may allow ourselves to conclude that the split was about "nothing" and sing praise to "disinterestedness".

Similarly, there is no place in Murray's book for that other cause and consequence of the split illustrated by the history of the FMWU - the survival of an independent, democratic, socialist movement in Australia. The occasional compliment sprinkled amongst the author's long lists of traits attaching to the personalities of protagonists on the left should not distract us from the book's persistent bias. The Australian left, in Murray's hands, is always "bellicose", "doctrinaire", "authoritarian", "pseudo-principled", "rhetorical and obscurantist" and representative of "hazy, far left attitudes", "folksey, quasi Marxism" or a "rhetorical form of socialism". Even Chifley had an alarming propensity "to revert to dogma" and Evatt's suggestion that there was an effective link between the policies of Menzies and Santamaria was "blatant, intrinsically meaningless propaganda". The Labor Party itself was a bastion of emotional stupidity. It "did not understand doctrines," had "little ability to absorb intellectuality" and was a Party "for the people, of words and passions, not careful thought". "There was," in fact, "no great ideological opposition to Movement social policies; their enemy was tradition, orthodoxy, inertia and apathy". Thus, while the left was "manipulated by Marxism and other set ideologies", and while the rest "tended to be manipulated by events", the Movement men "no doubt acted in the end in the way they felt to be honest and right". After all, Santamaria had been delivered by "Providence" and he exhibited "brilliant ideological clarity" and "extremely lucid thought". To enter Murray's world is to enter a world where "Capitalism" only exists in inverted commas, where socialism is always "musty" and where

too much time is always being wasted on "non-issues", such as "Rome versus Moscow", "conservatives versus radicals", "London versus Washington" and "nationalism and socialism versus imperialism in Asia".(126) Having evacuated the enemy, Murray's tendentious journalism concludes that the split was a "disastrous error" made by the hapless Evatt who, failing to heed his own earlier advice to maintain "a spirit of disinterestedness", in a state of ambitious, naive idealism and paranoid, mentally deranged, panic-stricken unscrupulousness, resorted to bullying and demagoguery to stand on the "pseudo-principled ground of the obscurantist left".(127)

As the history of the FMWU illustrates, no amount of scapegoating Dr Evatt can hide the extent to which panic-stricken unscrupulousness also accompanied the Movement's side. Further, there was far more to the opposition to the Movement than a confused left, a hopelessly vacuous, if affable, political Party, inertia, apathy and a wasteful propensity to concentrate on "non-issues". It is testimony to the effectiveness of the Cold War divisions that a democratic socialist tradition that had existed in Australia since the 1880s and had its masthead displayed openly and prominently in the objectives of the Australian Labor Party and the ACTU could be so roundly pilloried for obscurity in a book that was to enjoy such wide currency. Earlier pages have outlined something of the contribution of that tradition to the making of the labour movement and the FMWU. It remains here only to recall the importance of the beliefs in economic justice and democratic rights for workers that lay at the foundation of the struggle in the FMWU. After all else fades, it is this that remains. Economic values that enabled the Protest Committee to maintain an

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126. ibid., pp.4, 5, 11, 19, 59, 72, 77, 78, 101, 161, 162, 177, 234, 258, 270, 277, 282, 308, 333 (for example).
127. ibid., pp.181-184.

effective presence as the the Cold War began to strike. Democratic meanings that connected the struggle with the radical lawyer in Lionel Murphy, with the radical judge in Alf Foster, with the dedicated tribune in Paddy Troy, with the son of the Victorian Socialist Party leader in Roy Cameron. It was this ideology that hardened around the country as the working class threw back Santamaria's presumptuous, self-important, medieval fantasies. It is this ideology to which we owe a great deal for the liberal inheritance enjoyed by our society as a whole.

As well as restructuring the government of the FMWU at the 1955 Federal Council, motions were passed dealing with national foreign policy, the care of the country's aged, infirm and widowed, the specific condition of women, the policies of the Labor Party, the method of organising unions on the waterfront, divisions between city and country and prices, wages and working conditions.(128) The FMWU had passed through the iron curtains on both sides of the Cold War. Ten years of struggle had reached a conclusion, another 30 years were about to begin.

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128. FCM, 19 September, 1955, FMWU Papers.

VII

CONCLUSION

ORGANISATION UNLIMITED

"The policy of the ACTU and the ALP is for the socialisation of industry, distribution and exchange and, as an affiliated Union, it is a fundamental responsibility that this Organisation play its part to publicise and popularise the socialist objective of the Australian Labor Movement. It is a historical fact that whenever the trade union movement and the Labor Movement as a whole is united on any given question they are invincible."

- Ray Gietzelt, General Secretary's Report, 1956

"[We are] not the 'bits and pieces' collection without guts we used to be."

- FMWU member, Miscellaneous Worker, 1956

The year 1955 marks a sharp break in the history of the FMWU. From 1955 the union as a whole - and it is only from this time that we can think of the FMWU as an integrated whole in a policy sense, unless we count anti-communism - was characterised by its militancy, its socialist aspirations and its great commitment to the labour movement at large, features that were combined with a more dedicated approach to the priority the union had always placed on making the most of the arbitration system, advances in organising and accounting technologies and opportunities to expand its activities. From 1955 the history of the FMWU is no longer the history of a union that lived in a world created by others, it is also the history of a union that was at least as active in seeking to change that world.

For the historian or student of the FMWU, the period of its history that began in 1955 is not, therefore, just different in the

obvious senses of being about different people dealing with different issues in a still changing social context. It is also different in the fundamental sense that a good deal of the explanation for the union's growth and character over these years lies within the self-determining processes of the union itself. Moreover, it is also in the FMWU's activities from this time that we can find a significant part of the explanation for the course of development taken by those sections of the economy constituted by its members, for changes to those parts of the law the FMWU was concerned with and for many of the directions taken by the labour movement at large, which was subject to a number of decisive interventions by the union. And, insofar as these sections of the economy, parts of the law and directions taken by the labour movement comprise not just discrete histories but aspects of our general social history, the FMWU is part of the explanation for the history of our society over this period. If the previous history of the FMWU could only be understood through a general knowledge of our social history, after 1955 the history of our society can only be fully understood with some knowledge of the FMWU. From the moment the FMWU's own members and their Protest Committee loomed into view, like those national liberation armies that suddenly appeared after the war to claim the colonies of the European empires, the FMWU's history ceased to be a phenomenon created and sustained by others and within which the concerns of others played themselves out. After 1955 the FMWU was not just a product of wider social relations, it was also instrumental in shaping those relations in its own right.

This concluding chapter does not look so much toward a comprehensive account of the FMWU's growth and character, as revealed in its extremely wide-ranging and more positive activity over this time, as it does to problems that would have to be dealt with in such

an account. The first section of the chapter outlines and offers some analysis of the changes introduced into the union as a consequence of its new leadership. The second section sketches the organisation's growth over the 15 years 1955 to 1970; 15 years during which it went from strength to strength to emerge - there can be little doubt - as the leading union in Australia. The final section reflects on this development and addresses some of the difficulties that would be involved in a full exposition.

1.

The essential changes that occurred within the union as a result of its new leadership were apparent by the time Ray Gietzelt rose to deliver his first report as General Secretary to the FMWU's 36th Federal Council in the Brisbane Trades Hall in October 1956. The most obvious change - particularly to employers - was the willingness of the union to use the economic power of its members. Arbitration, Ray Gietzelt told the 36th Federal Council, "was an antiquated system".(1) The new militant policy had been implemented - or unleashed - almost immediately upon the change of government in the New South Wales Branch in 1954. When a disappointing draft award was handed down for paint and varnish workers in July 1955, the break with the past was clear when a meeting of 550 members rejected it in favour of a 24-hour strike, overtime bans and a campaign of rolling stoppages.(2) Lift attendants in some of the large Sydney department stores held a stop-work meeting and carried militant resolutions in December 1955 to block an attempt to replace old and disabled

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1. General Secretary's Report, Brisbane, 1956, FMWU Papers.
2. NSWBM, 22 June, 6, 7, 19, 22, 27 July, 18 August 1955; The Miscellaneous Workers' Union Review, December 1954, July, October 1955; NSW Branch Secretary's Report to Federal Conference, Adelaide, 1955, FMWU Papers.

attendants with "glamour women" to attract customers during the Christmas shopping period, and again in March 1956 to force store owners to relax their strict uniform standards in the humid Sydney autumn ("the battle of the top button").[3] School cleaners held large and widely publicised meetings in June 1955 and August 1956.[4] In July 1956 a three-and-a-half-hour stoppage by 30 members at the Camellia works of Australia Plaster Industries was enough to win a 15 shilling increase and the rectification of all ten grievances raised about working conditions. When a worker was dismissed at one of the union's plastics factories for refusing to lift a heavy weight, a meeting of the members issued a threat to stop work at noon unless the woman was reinstated and she was back on the job at seven minutes before twelve.[5] After Jack Dwyer found all the workers on strike at another plastics factory which had ten "home made" welding machines crammed into a twelve-by-twenty-foot room with electrical wires running everywhere, only one exit and no facilities for washing-up or first aid, he shut the place down.[6]

Other conflicts were larger in scale and more protracted. One unplanned victory occurred in January 1956 following a strike by 27 members of the Amalgamated Engineers at Michael Nairn & Co.'s Auburn linoleum factory in protest at the dismissal of their shop steward. Nairn's action was ill-timed as the factory was in its Christmas shut-down and the fitters had only just completed dismantling the

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3. Daily Telegraph, 15 December 1955; Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1, No.1, February 1956; Sun, 9 March 1956; NSWBM, 6 December 1955, FMWU Papers.
4. Sun, 31 May, 1 June 1955; Sydney Morning Herald, 15 16, 21, 22 August 1956; Sun, 20 August 1956; Daily Telegraph, 21 August 1956; The Miscellaneous Workers' Union Review, October 1955; Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1, No.3, July 1956, Vol.1, No.4, October 1956.
5. Sun-Herald, 22 July 1956; NSW Branch Secretary's Report to Federal Conference, Brisbane, 1956, FMWU Papers; Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1, No.2, April 1956.
6. Truth, 15 April 1956.

plant for overhaul. With no work possible until the men returned, the company sought to pressure them back by issuing stand-down notices to 200 FMWU members shortly due to restart after the holiday break. The FMWU declared a strike in sympathy and took the opportunity to press its own members' grievances forward. As well as the reinstatement of the Engineers' delegate, a two-and-a-half-week stay-out produced increases ranging from 12/6 to 37/6, an additional 2/- for shift work, the provision of overalls and boots, a picnic day, back pay for the public holidays that had been missed, renovations to the male amenities and a promise to build an amenity block for women that would include dining, locker, rest and shower rooms plus a refrigerator.(7)

The main theatre, however, was on the waterfront where the watchmen were in the midst of a full scale campaign as the 36th Federal Council was assembling in Brisbane. As well as abolishing the Bull System of "bribery, corruption, long hours and unequal earnings", the union demanded satisfaction for all the grievances that had been building up over the previous 15 years or so - a five-day week, shift penalty rates, increased margins, public holidays, six hours minimum payment for a pick up and, for casuals, appearance money, annual leave and sick pay. Already one 24-hour and another five-day strike had been organised to soften up the employers. The strikes, which involved over 800 members, had attracted saturation press coverage: the "shipowners and the general public are being held to ransom", went the familiar battle cry as editors bid against each other to place a value on the goods pillaged from the docks in the watchmen's absence; one estimating the theft to be as high as £30,000 (an "international scandal"). Despite the public calumny, a court order to return to work

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7. Daily Telegraph, 11 January 1956; Sydney Morning Herald, 21 January 1956; Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1, No.2, April 1956.

and daily applications from the shipowners to have the union fined &500, the men stood firm up until the pre-arranged times for the actions to end.(8) "The shipowners have been told quite bluntly", the former Tasmanian and now New South Wales Branch Secretary, Doug Howitt, reported to the 36th Federal Council, "that the award, whether they liked it or not, will have to be negotiated by consent or fought to a finish on the job".(9) Six months later the union resolved the impasse over the Bull System by simply introducing a roster themselves and refusing to work on any other conditions. For twelve days the men turned up at the docks and allocated work according to their roster. The shipowners refused to accept labour under the system, calling it a strike. The union insisted it was a lock-out. The court found in the FMWU's favour. It would not be long before the watchmen would progress from the lowest to the highest paid workers on the waterfront.

Strikes were not confined to pushing the union's own sectional claims forward. As well as supporting the Engineers at Nairn - which was repaid with a pledge "that in future the AEU would at all times assist the Miscellaneous Workers in any dispute" - in the first 22 months of the new government the members stood by the Storemen and Packers, the Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen, the AWU, the Waterside Workers, the Hospital Employees, the Tally Clerks, the Ironworkers, the Sheet Metal Workers and many others.(10) Some were major conflicts, such as the national three-week waterfront strike

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8. Sydney Morning Herald, 23-25 August, 13-23 October 1956; Sun, 25 July, 23-24 August, 12-18 October 1956; Daily Mirror, 24 August, 12-19 October 1956; Daily Telegraph, 24-25 August, 12-19 October 1956; Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate, 16-18 October 1956; Tribune, 29 August, 17 October 1956; Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1, No.1, February 1956, Vol.1, No.4, October 1956.
9. NSW Branch Secretary's Report to Federal Council, Brisbane, 1956, FMWU Papers.
10. For the Engineer's pledge, see NSWBM, 31 January 1956, FMWU Papers.

over margins early in 1956 and the ten-month strike by Queensland's shearers over a wage cut (that was to join with the demand for three weeks' leave to complete the Labor Split in Queensland). Support was also given to the three-month dispute involving 24 unions and 4,000 navy dockyard workers over anomalies between Commonwealth and State awards. Other action was more localised. The union, for example, joined in 14 stoppages involving seven unions spread over eight months on the construction site of the $32M Utah munitions project at St Marys.(11)

The policy was also carried through to ACTU level. At a Special Congress in May 1955 the union's eight delegates voted in favour of a nation-wide general strike over the Commonwealth Court's refusal to reintroduce the automatic cost-of-living wage adjustments that Justice Kelly had abolished in 1953. Although the State trades and labour councils failed to follow through, the importance of the FMWU's vote in the overall balance between the forces of the trade union movement's moderates and militants is revealed by the fact that the motion was only carried by six votes.(12)

"The experience of the New South Wales Branch", Ray Gietzelt told the 36th Federal Council in reviewing these battles, "has proved conclusively that the principles of Conciliation and Arbitration are no longer of benefit to the trade union movement and the workers generally."(13) Although not so militant in practice, the other Branches concurred in principle. "Economic power on the job and political power are the same in substance" said the Victorians.(14)

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11. See NSW Branch Secretary's Report to Federal Council, Brisbane, 1956, FMWU Papers.
12. General Secretary's Report, Brisbane, 1956, FMWU Papers. Also see J.S. Hagan (1981), op.cit., pp.293-294.
13. General Secretary's Report, Brisbane, 1956, FMWU Papers.
14. Victorian Branch Secretary's Report to Federal Council, Brisbane, 1956, FMWU Papers.

"It is becoming increasingly obvious that more positive measures must be accepted in which the general membership itself must become active agents" concluded the South Australians.[15] In a resolution prominently reported in the following day's newspapers, the Council unanimously endorsed a motion instructing "all Branches of the Federation to have recourse to Arbitration only when all other measures failed".[16]

The preparedness of the union to take direct action was underpinned by the second major change to the FMWU's policies: that is, the new leadership's commitment to the full participation of the members in the union's affairs. "The last Federal Council Meeting held in South Australia", Gietzelt told the Brisbane delegates, "adopted a new policy and, amongst other things, adopted a new set of Rules which extended to the members the right to hold Union meetings and to democratically decide matters affecting their welfare".[17] The distribution of 6,000 copies of the new rules throughout the Branches in July 1956 was a dazzling expression of a changed attitude in a union where these documents had always been virtually the exclusive possession of Branch Secretaries and their trusted circles.[18] In February 1958 a bi-monthly New South Wales newspaper, the Miscellaneous Worker, was introduced to "keep members well informed on up-to-date Industrial and Political developments".[19] Mailed free to all financial members, as well as general economic and political comment, the paper carried news on claims and gains, basic

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15. South Australian Branch Secretary's Report to Federal Council, Brisbane, 1956, FMWU Papers.
16. FCM, 24 September 1956, FMWU Papers. Also see Telegraph (Brisbane), 26 September 1956.
17. General Secretary's Report, Brisbane, 1956, FMWU Papers (Gietzelt's emphasis)
18. ibid.
19. Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1, No.1, February 1956.

information on workers' rights, reports on organisational matters and advertisements for meetings. "Militancy the Key to Bigger Pay Packets", sounded the paper's first editorial. "Militancy means a bold, positive policy of using industrial strength to win the best possible conditions", it continued, rebutting a Sydney Morning Herald editorial deploring the "trouble" on the waterfront.(20) "Militancy does pay, and in the final analysis, it is the only thing that does pay. What the newspapers refer to as 'sane and moderate leadership' means defeat and disaster on the industrial front".(21) In 1957 a national union newspaper, Federation News, was commenced and, in time, all Branches were to establish journals or regular news bulletins.

Supplementing the paper, a series of booklets outlining award, long service leave and workers' compensation conditions were issued free to financial members and, more directly, a network of shop delegates was established, codes of behaviour began to be evolved for dealing with the members and rounds of social occasions were introduced. By the 36th Federal Council the New South Wales Branch had already accredited almost 200 shop delegates and introduced an annual meeting and social occasion to weld them together.(22) "The real strength of a Union," wrote Gietzelt in 1954, "is measured by the number of active members it has who act as ambassadors wherever they go."(23) "We Need Your Help," advertised the first edition of the Miscellaneous Worker, "Help us to help you by becoming a delegate on your job".(24) The delegates had their position reinforced from both sides. "Union officials must first contact Union delegates upon

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20. ibid.
21. ibid.
22. NSW Branch Secretary's Report to Federal Council, Brisbane, 1956, FMWU Papers.
23. The Miscellaneous Workers' Union Review, December 1954.
24. Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1, No.1, February 1956.

arriving at a factory, building or workplace", instructed the leadership, ending the practice whereby the members would see their union representatives talking to the boss before them.[25] On the other side, members were instructed to report all of their complaints, grievances, accidents and claims to their delegate: "do not go over his head" warned the union's newspaper (in bold type).[26] And then there were the "monster picnics" for the members and their families, featuring sporting contests, games, pipe bands, clowns, Punch and Judy shows and free ginger beer, ice-cream and lollies ("no intoxicating liquor allowed" instructed this straight-laced leadership).[27] Almost 1,500 members attended the FMWU's 1956 Annual General Picnic and happy photographs of laughing and playing children daubed the issues of the Miscellaneous Worker.[28]

At the heart of the new militancy and democracy was the exercise of the long-struggled-for meetings of the members. As well as Branch Executive and State Council Meetings, which were usually held more often than the obligatory once a month, during its first 22 months the new government convened eight general and 106 sectional meetings in New South Wales. The largest was the 550 strong stop-work of the Paint and Varnish Section to launch the campaign of rolling strikes, but many were attended by over 100 members and the average size was 64.[29] Total attendance at all meetings over this time was 7,283 and, shortly before the 1956 Council, Gietzelt estimated that 30 per cent of the 14,000 Branch members had come along to at least one.[30]

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25. The Miscellaneous Workers' Union Review, December 1956.
26. Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1, No.2, April 1956.
27. ibid., Vol. No.2 April 1956 (for example).
28. NSWBM, 1954-56, FMWU Papers.
29. NSW Branch Secretary's Report to Federal Council, Adelaide, 1955; NSW Branch Secretary's Report to Federal Council, Brisbane, 1956, FMWU Papers.
30. ibid. For Gietzelt's comment, see NSWBM, 13 September 1956, FMWU Papers.

The total number of sectional meetings was not too far short of the number held over the Branch's entire prior history and the total attendance was possibly greater. "It's up to you," the government repeated incessantly, "to give us the co-operation necessary to make the union capable of handling your problems."(31) "The policy of this Union," announced the Miscellaneous Worker, "is that the members must be given an effective say in the government of the Union."(32) "Come along and let us know your opinions," the paper begged.(33) "An active membership," went the closing words of the new rule book, "means a strong union."(34)

The meetings were generally strict, sober rituals, punctuated only by rounds of applause for speakers if feelings were on the rise. Typically, a section would build up to a strike over the course of a number of meetings where claims were defined and followed to the point at which they were impeded. Perhaps a typical meeting at which a decision for direct action ensued would begin with a statement of the current position by the Branch Secretary, followed by a brief history of the dispute from Gietzelt. Reports might then be tendered by the relevant organiser, State Councillors, Conciliation Committee members or shop delegates. If the logic pointed in the direction of a strike, someone, often one of the more active members rather than an official, would move for a stoppage and speakers would be heard for and against. Once a vote to strike was carried, and it always was if the leadership supported it, the meeting would proceed to practicalities. To ensure their efficient conduct (and secrecy from employers), logistics were left to the officials and small elected

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31. The Miscellaneous Workers' Union Review, December 1954 (for example).
32. Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1 No.1, February 1956.
33. ibid., Vol.1, No.2, April 1956.
34. The Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union of Australia, Rules, Sydney, 1956.

strike committees. Further supporting apparatus such as welfare, raffle, car and labour support committees would then be evolved as needs required. The officials were always concerned to ensure a judicious use of the union's power and, as the members moved to the point of direct action, ironically they found themselves having to make their most forceful interventions on the side of caution. More than once Gietzelt found himself leaving the chair to argue the case for the "futility of prolonged strike action".(35) With the exception of the waterfront watchmen, who would soon taste victory, up to the sitting of the 36th Federal Council every strike had been successful.

Philosophically integrating the new militant and democratic practices was the union's openly socialist conception of the world and its place in it: the third major new element brought into the FMWU from the Protest Committee. "We can never be satisfied," went an editorial in the Miscellaneous Worker, "until the decisive parts of the means of production have passed into some form of social ownership." This was the "sole practical basis in an industrial society for a sane distribution of wealth ... in which every man and woman is paid as near as may be the value of his [sic] work". Only thus, "and thus alone, can that most pernicious of social phenomena, class, in the strict sense of that word, be eliminated and the basis laid for the classless society of the future which is the aim of every socialist". It was not a revolutionary socialism, at least not in the ancient insurrectionary form. Nor did it add up to so much as a wholesale critique of bourgeois society, its mode of production, its laws and its morality. Specifically, it eschewed the charge of dogmatism and rejected any hint of adventurism. The welfare state, progressive taxation and the surprising phenomenon of full employment

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35. NSWBM, 19 July 1955 (for example), FMWU Papers.

that visited Australia during the 1950s showed, said the Miscellaneous Worker, that "capitalism had changed ... since the basic socialist attack upon it was formulated, not only by Marx and Engels, but also by such British socialists as Morris, Hardy, Shaw, the Webbs, Tawney, Cole, Batchelor and others". The long list of theorists signalled the broad left position which was the FMWU's aim. It emphasised that "social and economic questions particularly in Australia, are seldom clear-cut and the most frightful errors and disasters result if we attempt to pretend they are".(36) In immediate practical terms, it meant state ownership. "Public ownership is the fundamental ownership of socialism", sounded an editorial in the Miscellaneous Worker that followed up on the 36th Federal Council which had called for public service departments to trade only with state banks, for more state insurance, for nationalisation of Australian Coastal Shipping and for cuts in defence spending to allow for essential public works such as housing.(37)

Most of all, however, the union's socialism meant loyalty and positive commitment to the working class, to the trade union movement and to the Labor Party as the representative bodies of that class. It also meant an internationally conscious Australian nationalism and a conviction that, as the world turned, history would prove to be on its side. "The Australian Trade Union Movement is a powerful industrial, political and social force", Gietzelt told the 36th Federal Council, outlining the field within which the FMWU now saw itself as operating:

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36. Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1, No.5, December 1956.
37. ibid., Vol.1, No.2, June 1957; FCM, 24-28 September 1956, FMWU Papers.

> and there is little doubt that the future of our society will be moulded and influenced by [it]. The difficulties which now confront the Nation can be readily solved by the implementation of a working class policy and, as our Organisation is numerically among the largest unions in Australia, a great share of the responsibility of propagating working class policy rests with this Federal Council.[38]

The new rule book characteristically alluded to the sense of destiny associated with the union's activities in welcoming new members, not just into the FMWU, but into the trade union movement at large:

> History declares that no worthwhile improvement in the living conditions of the Australian people have been achieved without the driving force of the Australian Trade Union Movement, the greatest single Organisation working for the common good of the Australian community. We expect you as a member of this great national movement to carry the torch onwards.[39]

"In a socialist sense," wrote the Miscellaneous Worker in a similar appeal to the essential unity of labour and faith in the course of historical development, "the Australian Labor Movement is a very youthful movement. There is much to be done."[40] "We live in a world of great change," Gietzelt told the Federal Council in his 1960 annual report, capturing the highminded seriousness and the brimming optimism with which the union now looked into the future:

> Tremendous new forces are being unleashed by science. The social consequences are our responsibility and the trade union movement must play its part to ensure the great achievements of mankind are used for the betterment of the people.[41]

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38. General Secretary's Report, Brisbane, 1956.
39. The Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia, Rules, Sydney, 1956.
40. Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1, No.5, December 1956.
41. General Secretary's Report, Fremantle, 1960.

Thus the union knew no boundaries, the political and the economic struggle were one. Against strong Grouper opposition, Ray Gietzelt and Jack Dwyer rejoined the Labor Party and the New South Wales Branch threw its weight behind the Combined Unions Steering Committee, which had been formed in January 1955 to organise support for Dr Evatt against the Groupers.(42) The union was represented on the Committee by Jim Ormonde, a Catholic and former supporter of the Lang Machine fervently opposed to the Movement and the Groupers. He was admitted as a member of the FMWU and attended all of its General Meetings (where rounds of applause greeted all of his reports).(43) Although, unlike in Victoria and Queensland, the Split was not completed at the Party level in New South Wales, the union - and Ormonde in particular - contributed to the thrust that destroyed B.A. Santamaria's position in Sydney and allowed the Federal Labor Executive to dismiss (or "purge", as the Miscellaneous Worker put it) the Party's New South Wales Executive to install a more ideologically representative cross-section of officials (who included Ormonde).(44) The Branch also placed "the whole machinery of the Miscellaneous Workers' Union, financially and physically" in support of the Party in the (unsuccessful) national election of December 1955 and the (successful) New South Wales election of March 1956.(45) Dr Evatt and Senator Don Cameron contributed political articles to the Miscellaneous Worker, over $1,000 was donated to the campaigns, numerous factory meetings were convened, union teams canvassed support in marginal seats, telegrams of support were sent to all official Party occasions,

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42. R.A. Murray, op.cit., p.281 (actually, the first meeting of the Steering Committee mentioned in the NSWBM is in December 1954).
43. See: NSWBM, 1955-1956, passim; R.A. Murray, op.cit., pp.280-306; B.A. Santamaria, op.cit., pp.155-157.
44. Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1 No.3 July 1956.
45. ibid., Vol.1, No.1, February 1956.

thousands of pamphlets were distributed, all of the union's cars were made available on polling days and, in the wake of the national loss, the union's Federal Executive was charged with formulating a program to mobilise the members to assist in bringing about the defeat of the Menzies government.(46)

On specific issues, emphasis was given to defending Labor's socialist objective, publicising socialist answers to the questions of the day and propagating the Hobart Labor Conference decisions in favour of anti-Colonialism in Asia and against nuclear arms. Above all, however, there was the need to forge links with as many workers and parts of the labour movement as possible to wage an all-out attack on the Groupers and the Movement, which epitomised all the forces of conservatism and reaction the leadership of the FMWU now opposed. Building on the efforts in New South Wales, all Branches were urged to take up the fight in their State Labor Party. At the 36th Federal Council Gietzelt praised Victorian and Federal President, Roy Cameron, for contributing "in no small way ... to the eradication of this Grouper cancer" as Senior Vice-President of the Victorian Labor Party.(47) South Australian Branch Secretary, Ralph Bannister, was commended for his election as Senior Vice-President of his State's Labor Party.(48) Support was pledged for the Queenslanders who had been active participants at the McKay Conference of their Party that had been the site of the decisive re-alignment in that State's trade union movement against Vince Gair's Grouper government.(49) In the aftermath of "Ten Years of Groupism" and continuing Cold War enthusiasm to stigmatise all radicals as communists, the union sought

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46. NSWBM, 9 August, 26 October, 15, 27 November 1955, 8 March 1956, FMWU Papers.
47. General Secretary's Report, Brisbane, 1956.
48. ibid.
49. ibid.

to reclaim the Australian democratic socialist tradition within the Labor Party:

> Unnecessary and misguided preoccupation with Communism and Communists at home and abroad to the exclusion of other working class policies had seen Labor generally recede from its position as the traditional fountain of democratic socialism ... the Labor Party will die the day the word 'socialism' passes from its language.[50]

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It is against this general background that we must see the fourth major change to the FMWU's government: the extraordinary commitment to building the union's membership. "One of the major weaknesses," Gietzelt told the 36th Federal Council referring to the union's past, "has been the obvious reticence to strike out boldly to expand the activities of the Branches of the Federation." Gietzelt was fully seized of the possibilities that lay within the general character of the union. "If you look at the Constitutional coverage of our Organisation ... it is not difficult to comprehend that this Organisation could be made stronger than the AWU and, with capable guidance, this can be realised". In this first annual report, which was some 40 pages long instead of the half-a-dozen that had been the standard fare of the past General Secretaries, Gietzelt analysed the organisational problems and opportunities facing the union, castigating any evidence of "reticence", "lethargy" or a "short-sighted policy" and, for his part, outlining a two-year, ten-point plan to "take effective and immediate steps to increase the membership of the Federation from 26,000 to 52,000". The plan was not

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50. Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1, No.7, June 1957.

so much a coherent theory of union growth as a list of practical activities and emphases: providing more services to members; encouraging them to participate actively in the union; developing a militant rank-and-file movement; encouraging younger people to stand for official positions; engaging more organisers, preferably younger men and women; establishing Branches and Sub-Branches in new territories; producing regular and attractive journals; implementing new, more efficient methods of organisation and administration; raising contributions to the level recommended by the ACTU; and pursuing amalgamations with other unions - 39 of which were named in Gietzelt's initial report for immediate action.(51)

What was important about this plan was not so much its content, which did not include all the measures taken to determine the union's growth, but that the union had a plan, for it both reflected and further entrenched the prevailing new assumption within the FMWU's government that the question of membership growth lay within its own grasp. In addition to convening meetings of all the union's members, commencing campaigns for improving their economic circumstances, introducing a host of measures to further engage and inform and generally rallying them under a working class banner, by the time of this first Federal Council the new government had also implemented a number of other overarching policies explicitly recognising the changing character of the workforce. The most prominent of these were those that recognised the increasing number of women and migrant workers. Mary Rohan, the cleaner who had supported Gietzelt's motion to expel the old leadership in New South Wales in 1954, had already become the first female organiser in the Branch's history, an equal pay committee had been established, an application had been lodged for

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51. General Secretary's Report, Brisbane, 1956.

a &1.0.0 increase for all adult women in a test case before the full bench of the State's Industrial Commission and a point had been made of highlighting the presence of women in many of the strikes. "A greater number of female members should be encouraged to participate in the daily affairs of the Union", Gietzelt told the 36th Council:

> it is clear that insufficient attention has been paid to the encouragement of female members to accept the responsibility of office ... I feel Branches could emulate the work of the New South Wales Branch in this regard.(52)

For migrants, the Miscellaneous Worker introduced a "New Australian Section" in various southern European languages, translations were made at important meetings where there was a migrant presence and political pamphlets were also produced in translation. "The Australian Trade Union Movement is wide and democratic enough for all, new and old Australians", went one of the union's early editorials, which characteristically was not so much intended to state the truth as to create it, "the Australian Trade Unions know no such thing as racial barriers or restrictions".(53)

The willingness of the union to set about organising women and immigrants was symptomatic of the wider willingness to recognise, invade and contest the society within which it was operating within its own changing terms. Thus, while one issue of the Miscellaneous Worker reported the latest State Council resolution calling on the Labor Party to "declare itself forthrightly in support of the socialist objective" to show the way to the "New Life", another issue advertised businesses offering discounts negotiated for members

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52. ibid.
53. Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1, No.4, October 1956.

needing treatment for their eyes and teeth.[54] Capitalism may have been "deadly", as the Miscellaneous Worker explained, but becoming a member of the FMWU was, it also pointed out, "your cheapest and best investment".[55] An editorial in the Miscellaneous Worker may have called for the elimination of "property derived incomes", but the union itself was, every member was assured on the last page of the new Rule Book, "your property".[56] The press may have been "anti-Labor", but in the Miscellaneous Worker the union wasted no time in stealing all of its techniques to publish, as Gietzelt put it, "a bright and informative newspaper, attractively produced in modern journalistic style".[57] Equal pay for women was "morally right" and a "basic human necessity", and wage increases per se were just and equitable as they only reclaimed the wealth that workers produced in the first place, but militancy also paid "dividends" and the union insisted on "market rates" for its strongly placed members.[58]

The union was both a product and a protagonist of its society, committed to the just society of the future, but determined to make it out of the present. While the union decried the Public Service Board's "'economy' drive" to defend its cleaners, it went about purchasing an electric typewriter, duplicator, addressograph and a new membership filing system to create its own "savings in time and labour".[59] It successfully campaigned to have cleaners compensated for rises in public transport fares while raising its own contributions and eliminating quarterly collections in favour of

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54. ibid., Vol.1, No.3, July 1956, Vol.1, No.4, October 1956.
55. ibid., Vol.1, No.1, February 1956, Vol.1, No.5, December 1956.
56. ibid., Vol.1, No.5, December 1956; Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia, Rules, Sydney, 1956.
57. Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1, No.1, February 1956.
58. ibid., Vol.1, No.2, April 1956, Vol.1, No.3, July 1956.
59. ibid., Vol.1, No.4, October 1956; NSW Branch Secretary's Report to Federal Council, Brisbane, 1956, FMWU Papers.

half-yearly and annual payments.[60] It "waged a bitter fight against the introduction of incentive schemes in the Paint Industry" to call a halt to, among other things, the callous way in which such schemes ensure the "older member is discarded to make way for the younger and more efficient worker", but specifically sought to engage "younger men and women" as organisers itself.[61] It fought successfully to relax the dress standards of its members at work during Sydney's autumn, but not one delegate turned up to the 36th Federal Council during Brisbane's spring without wearing a suit and tie. Arbitration may have been "antiquated" and state compelled unionism might have been obnoxious (with the FMWU successfully moving for its abandonment as ACTU policy in 1958), but for the scattered, transitory and vulnerable members of the union, the extension of gains through the courts was crucial, preference of employment to prevent victimisation was vital and the whole award and constitutional framework out of which the union had been made depended on the state's custodianship. Thus, in Jack Sweeny, Lionel Murphy and Neville Wran, the union had three of the most able Queen's Counsel ever to work for the trade union movement.

The pamphlet, the picket and the picnic were to be no more characteristic of the union than the latest accounting, communications and transport technology, or an appeal to the High Court or even the Privy Council. Improvements in social welfare were as eagerly promoted as socialism. The union was as dedicated to promoting the new social order as it was to getting on with the job of defending or improving the position of workers within the existing one. Either

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60. Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1, No.2, April 1956; Vol.1 No.3, July 1956; Vol.1, No.5, December 1956.
61. ibid., Vol.1, No.1, February 1956; General Secretary's Report, Brisbane, 1956.

way, the point was to make recognisable, measurable, practical gains - and the way to make more gains, and more significant gains, was to increase the capacity of the union to bring more force to bear. Symbolic of the leadership's preparedness to subordinate every consideration to the best practical interests of the union was the re-hiring of Trix Einfield, the Office/Minute Secretary who had been among those the Protest Committee had dismissed.

Yet, if the union was prepared to take whatever measures that were dictated by the terms of the struggles it was involved in at any one time and to use any means available to strengthen itself, like Gietzelt's own personality, it was to be underpinned by absolute probity within those terms. The difficulties of administering such a complex organisation may have made it good sense to re-hire the former Office/Minute Secretary who the Protest Committee had dismissed, but, stressed a union newsletter, "Miss Einfield was reinstated as an EMPLOYEE only and is now engaged as the Union bookkeeper".(62) The cartoon in the first issue of the Miscellaneous Worker may have drawn the boss as a fat, cigar smoking exploiter, but when some of his money was pocketed by George Sharpe in soliciting advertisements for the union's award booklets, Gietzelt insisted he immediately tender his resignation to the State Council.(63) When Jack Dwyer hit the headlines after taking it upon himself to send a 992-word urgent telegram to rebut an attack made on him by the conservative Speaker of the Commonwealth House of Representatives for recruiting a cleaner while on a deputation, he insisted on paying the cost of the telegram himself.(64) The leadership may have felt justified in raising the

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62. The Miscellaneous Workers' Union Review, December 1954.
63. Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1, No.1, February 1959, NSWBM, 2 December 1955, FMWU Papers.
64. Daily Telegraph, 1 September 1955; NSWBM, 11 October 1955, FMWU Papers.

membership fees and introducing longer, more efficient periods of payment in view of the improvements in wages and the greater level of service being providing, but it ensured it won assent at its Annual General Meeting and announced and explained the rise as the lead story on the front page of its newspaper.(65) The union had to be beyond reproach in the conduct of all its affairs. Any failings would open avenues for attack from its opponents, who were suddenly growing in proportion with its power. The leaders had to be meticulous in their adherence to correct procedures, they had to be honourable in all their dealings, every official's word had to be their bond. The FMWU was precious.

And so the Branch grew by dint of the conscious policies and boundless energy of the union itself. It would be difficult to exaggerate the dedication with which the officials went about their work. Every manifestation of the union now had more attention devoted to it. Every aspect was considered with a view to being improved and extended. Every object and activity was tested to find the extent to which it could expand the union's presence and enhance its effectiveness. Policies were adopted on every conceivable issue that could be related to the general well-being of its members, the working class, the trade union movement, the Labor Party and the society at large. Positions were developed on wages, on all working conditions, on leisure, on health and safety, on housing, education, tax, foreign affairs, Aboriginals and, most of all, world peace. It campaigned relentlessly against South African apartheid and took stands against Menzies' telephone tapping and crimes bills, over the Gluckman Case, against the privatisation of the Commonwealth Bank, against a United States communications base being established on Australia's North-West

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65. Miscellaneous Worker, Vol.1, No.8, December 1957.

Cape and, of course, against armed intervention in Malaysia and Vietnam. The newspaper explained the importance of socialism, the difference between socialisation and nationalisation, the history of civil liberties and arbitration. It reported on the international labour movement, the profits of business, price rises, the policies of the Labor Party and every sectional and administrative development within the union. It distributed special election issues, Christmas issues and the journals of the New South Wales Peace Committee and Steering Committee. It participated in all the general occasions and demonstrations of the labour movement, it established a reference library, computerised its records and started a building society. Already by the time of the 36th Federal Council, the Branch had re-established the Newcastle Sub-Branch, engaged additional organisers, equipped them all with motor vehicles and divided the metropolis up into beats. It had also adopted a policy of making awards with a currency of one year instead of three, engaged its own lawyers for workers' compensation cases instead of depending on the Labour Council and simply increased the number of telephone lines for the members to call in on. As the union grew it turned all its additional income, experience and external network of relationships back into growing more. Soon it became necessary to divide the whole State up into organising beats, further Sub-Branches were established in Wollongong in 1960 and in Wagga Wagga in 1964 and by 1967 it was engaging specialist research officers.

Everywhere the Branch was bursting with initiative, innovation and energy. The purpose of all the activity and the assumption upon which it was based were plainly stated in Gietzelt's initial report to the 1956 Federal Council:

> Viewed in retrospect, delegates will appreciate the stagnation which characterised the work of the Union over recent years. A review of the decisions of Federal Council Meetings reveals little was done to expand the activities of the Organisation and build the Union into the powerful force which, I feel, can be done ... In my view not a moment should be lost if we are to make up the leeway caused by our inaction in the past ... the potentiality so far as our Organisation is concerned is almost unlimited. There is little doubt that we can build our Organisation into one of the most powerful and influential unions, industrially and politically in the Commonwealth. Our problem is organisational.(66)

'The potentiality so far as our Organisation is concerned is almost unlimited.' Upon the assumptions that such a statement depended, the history of the FMWU now turned. It signalled an end to any notion that the FMWU had a residual role to play. It looked away from 150 years of tension, conflict and division stemming from the inheritance of exclusiveness that the craftsmen had always at least in part sought to uphold. It paid no heed to the idea that union power would be consummate if only workers would organise in conformity with production divisions. It turned its back on the local focus of the pastoral, waterfront and mining unions. It trusted nothing to the techniques, units or locations or production. It trusted everything to the self-activating, self organising processes of the union itself. When Ray Gietzelt said that the problem was 'organisational' he uttered what was to become the most common refrain of the FMWU's next 30 years. What he really meant, of course, was that further, closer and stronger organisation was the solution.

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What of the rest of the union? The foundation for the growth of the Federation at large was laid in New South Wales during the first 15

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66. General Secretary's Report, Brisbane, 1956.

years of the new government. The membership was increased by 5,000 to over 14,000 within the first 22 months of the new leadership, despite the persistence of a 100 percent turnover every two-to-three years. By 1958 the Branch had more than 20,000 members, by 1966 over 25,000 and in 1970 over 30,000. Although most recruitment was in the union's traditional service areas, in 1967 a Federal amalgamation with the Australian Leather and Allied Trades Federation accounted for 2-3,000 members, in 1970 it amalgamated with the 600 strong New South Wales Sugar Employees and there was continuous diversification. New areas of coverage included makers of building materials, insulation products, pyrotechnics, and dance instructors, artist's models, animal welfare workers, health instructors, tea-attendants, child care workers and numerous other varieties of assistants and attendants. Indeed, in 1959-60 Jack Dwyer created a media storm felt in newspaper cartoons as far away as London when he recruited Father Christmas. By 1970 the number of awards and agreements the Branch administered had increased from less than 50 to nearly 100, the number of organisers from four to 20, receipts from around &3,500 to well over &300,000. It was convening more than 100 meetings a year and had 455 active delegates. In addition to its affiliation to the Labour Council and the three Councils where its Sub-Branches were established, it was affiliated to the provincial trades and labour councils in Goulburn, Orange, Leeton, the Central Coast, Grafton and Tweed Heads. It was a member of the Trade Union Education and Research Centre, the Workers' Education Association and the Association for International Co-operation and Disarmament. Its delegation to the Annual Conference of the Labor Party, which had been dominated by the trade union movement since the conscription split and where - unlike the Labour

Council - representation was based on the number of workers each union represented, rose from five to 20.[67]

Victoria was the next most significant Branch. The merger with the Leather Trades added almost 3,000 new members in Victoria and in 1962, with the assistance of Lionel Murphy and Neville Wran, the Branch had finally consummated an amalgamation with the Federated Lift Attendants' Union. Unlike New South Wales, the main focus in Victoria in the early stages of the build-up was in the new manufacturing industries rather than the more difficult to organise if more rapidly expanding services. Determined recruitment campaigns in the building and photographics industries particularly, reversed the trend in the larger Branch in that they consigned both women and cleaners to a minority position in 1961 for the first time since the amalgamation with Florence Anderson's Female Office Cleaners Union in 1922. The Victorian Branch was nevertheless marked by the same dedication to expanding its organisational capacity. In 1959 a monthly newsletter What the Union is Doing, had been introduced and it was followed by specialist Italian (Il Progresso), Greek (Syndikalistis) and , later, Turkish publications. In 1962 the Branch organised its first quarterly meeting of shop delegates, in 1966 an organiser was engaged to cover Geelong, Ballarat, the Western District and a portion of Wimmera, making it "possible for the first time in the history of the Victorian Branch to extend representation to country members". From under 5,000 in 1955, by 1963 the Branch had increased its membership to over 10,000 and the amalgamation with the Leather Trades took it to over 15,000 in 1968. Following some successful conflicts - or, as Roy Cameron put it, "a wearing down process" - inroads also began to be

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67. NSW Branch Secretary's Reports to Federal Council, 1956-1971, FMWU Papers.

made into the contract cleaning industry and by 1970 the Branch boasted over 17,000 members.(68)

If circumstances were more difficult in Victoria, they were disastrous in Queensland where all the power surrendered to the state during almost 40 years of continuous Labor government was now turned against the movement in the Split's aftermath. For the FMWU, the first serious blow was struck with the removal of the absolute preference clauses that had been virtually standard fare in Queensland awards since 1917. The immediate background to this began in 1965 when Ray Gietzelt commenced a major thrust to improve the conditions of the Queensland members following one of those 'clean-ups' that seemed to be required with alarming regularity in this Branch. Working with Fred Whitby, the former Secretary of the Queensland Hospital Employees' Union, he soon won substantial advances in the FMWU's two main State awards. Appeals to the Queensland Industrial Court by the union and the employers followed and, among wins and losses on both sides, the appropriately named Justice Hanger came to the conclusion that there was no power under the new State Industrial Act to compel workers to become or to remain union members and so quashed the offending absolute preference clause, thereby effectively ending the practice State-wide. The decision devastated the State's large unions, particularly the AWU which officially declined from 70,000 to 58,000 members between 1965 and 1969. At least 25,000 workers deserted the Queensland movement with most of the others leaving the Grouper-led Clerks and Shop Assistants which, along with the AWU, comprised the three largest unions in the State. The FMWU, which was Queensland's fourth largest union, also suffered, the Branch

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68. Victorian Branch Secretary's report to Federal Council, 1956-1971, FMWU Papers.

office being immediately "inundated with notices of resignation coming in the main from Dentists, Pharmacists, Dental Attendants and Garage Attendants". "Like a bird released from a cage or a dog from a chain", Secretary Whitby told the 1967 Federal Council, "many workers are indulging in what they also regard as a new-found freedom". The situation was compounded when, despite the better judgement of many in the union including Whitby himself, the Trades and Labour Council voted to appeal Hanger's decision to the Supreme Court. Dutifully, the FMWU took its award up again, only to have the lower court's decision confirmed amid another round of public "bally-hoo" that ended with the Branch office receiving "several hundred more notices of resignation".

Nevertheless, the FMWU did well in the circumstances. Between 1965 and 1969 its membership dropped from 11,000 to 8,600, a loss of 2,400 who were immediately offset by a sequence of amalgamations partly triggered off by the state's offensive. In 1967 the amalgamation with the Leather Trades brought in 800 new members, in 1969 a major union, the Amalgamated Foodstuffs and Allied Industries Union of Queensland, joined up, bringing in 6,500 members, and in 1970 the 500 members of the Queensland Ambulance Employees Union came in. Financially the Branch was weak and required large loans from New South Wales and Victoria, but its presence was hardly diminished. Indeed, in 1970 the Branch had 16,000 members and was larger than it had ever been, despite Justice Hanger.(69)

If its membership growth was much less, South Australia still evinced the same constitutional extension and organisational sophistication that characteristised the FMWU. With a relatively

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69. Queensland Branch Secretary's Reports to Federal Council, 1956-1971, FMWU Papers

stable base in the milk and rubber industries, the South Australians bought a car, engaged an organiser and, underneath the shelter of the ever-widening Federal constitutional umbrella, recruited new members in paint works and other manufacturing and service industries on sites that stretched from Port Lincoln to Mount Gambier. Underwritten by loans, subsidies and direct assistance from the Federal Council, in 1958 it amalgamated with the South Australian Lift Drivers, in 1960 it commenced a journal and in 1962 the Operative Stonemasons' Union joined in. While still small in comparison with the three east coast Branches, by 1970 the number of South Australian members had been more than doubled from around 2,000 to 4,500.(70)

The Branch that had been formed by Paddy Troy's 41 Fremantle watchmen in Western Australia in 1955 was the scene of most amalgamations. In 1957 Roy Cameron and Ray Gietzelt visited the West, Gietzelt making two trips to back up Troy in securing registration in the Western Australian Court and to help recruit among the paint and varnish, plastics and felt making industries.(71) During these visits it was decided that the build-up required the attention of a full-time Secretary and Troy, who was also Secretary of the Western Australian Branch of the Federated Ship Painters' and Dockers' and the Coastal Shipwrights and Boatbuilders' Unions, stood aside for Don Lippiatt, another returned serviceman, an activist with the Waterside Workers and a nephew of Roy Cameron. Paddy continued to give a great deal of his time to the fledgling Branch and in May 1957 he and his young "understudy" travelled down to the south-west coastal town of Bunbury where, following a "very lengthy and illuminating review ... by the two gentlemen", the Western Australian Dairy Factory Employees' Union

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70. South Australian Branch Secretary's Reports to Federal Council, 1956-1971, FMWU Papers.
71. W.A. Branch Secretary's Report, 1957, FMWU Papers.

voted to become the first of what would be many unions in this region to amalgamate with the FMWU.[72]

The key development in facilitating the concentration of the Western Australian trade union movement was the dissolution of the old AWU dominated Australasian Labor Federation structure and the establishment of an urban based, independent, democratic trade union council. One move that helped facilitate both objects was the election of Lippiatt as Secretary of the Fremantle District Council of the Labor Party in 1958.[73] Under the organisational relics of the Australasian Labor Federation the District Council job also carried with it the position of Secretary of the Fremantle and District Trades Hall Association of Workers which had responsibility for four small light manufacturing unions: the Rope and Twine Makers, the United Broom and Brushmakers, the Wool Scouring and Fellmongery Employees and the Soap and Candlemakers. Over the next six years they were all brought into the FMWU, along with six other small or practically defunct unions: the Bag, Sack and Textile Workers, the Undertakers and Cemetery Employees, the Tobacco, Cigar and Cigarette Makers, the Photographic Employees, the Collectors of Marine Stores and, in 1961, as a forerunner to the big 1967 Federal amalgamation, the Saddlery and Leather Union of Western Australia.[74] Although some of these

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72. Dairy Factories' Employees' Industrial Union of Workers, South West Land Division, Bunbury, Minutes, 13 January 1957. Battye Library, Perth, Western Australia (BL).
73. Western Australian, 31 January 1958, Daily News, 6 February 1958. Interview with B. Wood and R. Bryant, Fremantle, 14 July 1983.
74. See: Metropolitan Soap and Candle Manufacturers' Employees' Industrial Union of Workers, Minutes 31 July, 5, 12 & 26 November, 1954, 1 December 1954; United Broom and Brushmakers' Industrial Union of Workers, Fremantle, Minutes, 12 & 27 March, 30 July, 14 August, 30 October 1958, 9 April, 7 & 14 May, 1959; The Metropolitan Wool Scouring and Fellmongery Employees' Industrial Union of Workers, Minutes, 23 February, 9 & 30 March, 27 April, 2 & 30 November, 14 December 1958, 18 January, 23 July, 20 May, 25 June, 1959; Metropolitan Rope and Twine Manufacturers' Employees' Industrial
(Cont. over)

amalgamations were with little more than names in the Arbitration Court's registry, by 1963 the Branch boasted almost 1,500 members located in 150 establishments spread throughout the 500 miles between Geraldton and Albany. As well as Lippiatt, the Branch had a full-time organiser (who was also Secretary of the Fire Brigade Employees' Union) an office assistant, new premises, twelve awards and a surplus on the balance sheet for the first time.(75) It was self-sustaining, so much so that, as if to laugh at sectionalism, in 1965 the original waterfront watchmen were returned to Paddy Troy who, with his other men being steadily replaced by machines, had formed the Maritime Services Union to pursue his dream of creating one union inside the wharf gates. The Branch itself was further enhanced by acquiring its first research officer, Bill Latter, an intelligent and erudite socialist who had been full-time President of the militant Collie Miners' Union for a decade before joining the FMWU. Soon Latter was acting as advocate for up to 15 other unions, helping to prepare the path for more amalgamations as well as adding another useful source of income for the union. Latter was to have no hesitation in recalling the FMWU in these years as the "most vital force for change" in the Western Australian trade union movement, citing in particular the foundation of the credit union ("United") that was to become the largest in the State, countless breakthroughs in the regional arbitration system (equal pay, junior rates, preference for unionists,

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74. (cont.)
Union of Workers, Minutes, 28 August 1958, 27 January 1959, 26 January, 31 May 1960, 25 May, 15 December 1961, 20 January, 12 & 15 March, 28 November 1962 (including correspondence, D. Lippiatt to the Secretary, Rope and Twine Workers' Union, 18 July 1957); Western Australian Saddlery and Leather Trades Employees' Industrial Employees' Union of Workers, Perth, Minutes, 18 July 1961, BL. Also see W.A. Branch Secretary's Reports for these years, FMWU Papers, and the official public record in the Western Australian Industrial Gazette.

75. W.A. Branch Secretary's Report, 1963, FMWU Papers.

casual rates, State Wage cases) and its effectiveness in delivering positions in the labour movement for working class activists and sympathisers.(76) As a consequence, other unions continued to be drawn in. In 1968 the Ambulance Services and, with Lionel Murphy's help, the Chemical and Allied Workers joined. Having begun with 41 members, in 1970 the Branch had almost 3,000.(77) More importantly, as in South Australia, the constitutional framework and organisational basis of a general union to more than match the AWU had been created.

In Tasmania, determined efforts by Gietzelt, Dwyer and others in 1957 and 1958 extended the union out from the waterfront, recruiting in ice-cream and milk factories, on ferries and in boarding schools as well as in traditional FMWU areas such as laundries, paint works and among cleaners. As with all the Branches, the emphasis was placed on building up the organisational capacity with funds and assistance from the stronger States and the key event was the installation of a full-time Secretary. On the recommendation of Tassie Bull from the Waterside Workers, in 1958 Gietzelt approached Leo Brown to take on the job. Another returned soldier and a tailor by trade, Brown had been working on the waterfront where he had come under notice through his involvement in the 'Hursey Case'.(78) Still celebrated in the trade union movement, the Hursey case extended from 1956 to 1959 (setting "a record as Tasmania's longest civil case") and ended with the High Court confirming the democratic right of Australian unions to vote funds in favour of political parties of their choice. With the

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76. Interview with B. Latter, Perth, 15 July 1983.
77. See W.A. Branch Secretary's Reports and Western Australian Industrial Gazette (relevant years). Also see Minutes of the West Australian Chemical and Allied Trades Industrial Union of Workers and the Coastal Aerated Water and Cordial Manufacturers' Employees' Industrial Union of Workers, FMWU Papers.
78. On the Hursey case see T. Bull, Politics in a Union: The Hursey Case, Sydney, 1977; A. Lohrey, The Morality of Gentlemen, Chippendale, 1984.

Liberal Party representing the Hursey's and the ubiquitous John Kerr representing the employers, it was a major victory over Santamaria and owed everything to the solidarity of the Hobart Waterside Workers. Leo Brown had been Secretary of the wharfies' Campaign Committee and he brought a good deal of local industrial and political experience into the FMWU.

With Brown's election the union gradually consolidated its presence on the island, drawing on subsidies from the Federal Council, receiving fees from the Clothing Trades and Gas Employees' Unions for managing their Tasmanian affairs and continuing to receive direct assistance from Gietzelt, the Assistant Secretary of the Victorian Branch, Ray Hogan, and from Tasmanian Labor Ministers. In 1962 a State Council was established, in 1964 a full-time organiser and a journal (Tassie News) commenced, in 1965 the Branch absorbed the virtually defunct Hairdressers Union of Tasmania and in 1966 its foothold among cleaners in state education, public works and electricity departments was recognised by the creation of a Cleaners' Wages Board. After 15 years the Branch could count 1,000 members. With its 'machine' now fully established, by 1970 it had almost 2,000.[79]

Finally, there was the Australian Capital Territory where Federal President Roy Cameron presided over the first meeting of a new Branch on 12 April 1960. The meeting adopted rules, endorsed a log of claims and within five weeks recruited 200 watchmen, cleaners, caretakers and lift attendants. A dispute was filed under the Commonwealth Act, the first elections returned former AWU official Les McVeigh as Branch Secretary and Treasurer and there then began a ten-month struggle with

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79. Tasmanian Branch Secretary's Report to Federal Council, 1956-1971, FMWU Papers.

the AWU for the right to become legally established in the Territory. Lionel Murphy took the case, the AWU was ruled out in November 1961, the first Australian Capital Territory award soon followed and in 1963 McVeigh became Secretary full-time. In 1968 a full time organiser was engaged and by 1970 the Branch had almost 1,000 members.(80)

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All this activity meant that by 1970 the national membership of the FMWU had trebled to 75,000. Within the space of just 15 years the union had been built up from relative obscurity to the country's second largest union. Only the AWU had more members. Its full-time staff and officials now numbered over 100 - the largest of any union. Gietzelt, who had resisted attempts to install him as General Secretary on a full-time basis since 1955, had taken the position in 1962 and the union's Federal Office now had seven full-time staff. It also had a fleet of some 50 motor vehicles, all of its Branches were computerising their records, its annual income was in excess of $800,000 and the national circulation of the newspaper, Federation News, was larger than the Australian and the Financial Review. It had officials on the Labor Party's Executive in every State and as a matter of course its annual Federal Councils were now opened by the host State's Labor Premier or Opposition Leader. The number of delegates it sent to the ACTU which - within its industry divisions - was a fully democratic body, had risen from around six to about 30 and Ray Gietzelt had been elected to its executive in 1967. Internationally, it had affiliated to the International Federation of Chemical and General Workers' Unions in 1964 and the International

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80. ACT Branch Secretary's Reports, 1960-1971.

Shoe and Leather Association in 1968. It had also investigated the possibility of establishing a Branch in Papua and New Guinea, sponsored visits by representatives of the Fijian trade union movement to Australia and established contact with all manner of kindred unions, ranging from the Local Industry and Municipal Workers' Union in the Soviet Union to the giant British Transport and General Workers' Union.

At 75,000 members it was larger than the Amalgamated Engineers, the Ironworkers, the Electrical Trades, the Railway workers the Transport Workers, the Clerks, the Meatworkers, the Liquor and Allied Trades and the Printers. It constituted around 20 percent of the members of the ACTU's Services Group - the Peak Council's largest industry division - it was more than three times larger than the aggregate membership of all the affiliates to the Australian Council of Professional Associations put together and not much smaller than the combined membership of the Council of Australian Government Employee Organisations. And clearly, it was still growing rapidly. In total, 22 unions had joined the Federation since 1955 and negotiations were continuing with the Queensland Hospital Employees, the Gas Employees, the Victorian Sugar Workers and the Jewellers, Watchmakers, Optical Technicians and Cleaners in Western Australia. Nationally, negotiations had begun with the 30,000 strong Storemen and Packers and it was in the last stages of a merger with the North Australian Workers' Union (NAWU). The prospect of the amalgamation with the NAWU was particularly significant, not so much because of its actual membership which, although it was to be quickly built up from 800 to around 4,000, was relatively small in national terms. Nor was it a financial gain, being some "nineteen odd thousand in the red" when a serious approach was made to the FMWU in 1968. Rather, it was

a tremendous geographical and constitutional achievement. The NAWU had a membership as general as the AWU spread over 20 percent of the continent and it would bring railway, pastoral, construction and mining workers into the union. In February 1969 the NAWU's members voted ten to one in a postal ballot to amalgamate. Legal consummation was all that remained to complete the FMWU's penetration into virtually all 'grades' of workers and all corners of the continent.(81)

The union was administering over 300 awards, agreements and determinations and was a national pace-setter in a number of areas. Among its more spectacular victories, in May 1966 it had lead 5,000 of its cleaners out in their first full-scale, State-wide strike as part of a successful seven-month struggle with the New South Wales Government to defend their positions against contractors. The conflict followed a long campaign featuring mass meetings and sporadic direct action to improve the cleaners' conditions. The amount of floor space each worker had to clean had been cut down, new pay increments, a wide range of new allowances and better provision of improved cleaning materials had been won, as had been - popularly - a ten-minute tea break. The stage was set for conflict when Neville Wran and Jack Sweeney won a new award in July 1965 that granted increases in margins and allowances that set new national standards. The new award was delivered into a context where, two months earlier, the State Labor government had been defeated in an election, bringing to an end 24 consecutive years in office that had begun after the sacking of Jack Lang. Without warning advertisements appeared in the press just before Christmas 1965 calling for tenders from private contractors to clean 14 new schools opening at the start of the 1966

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81. General Secretary's Reports, 1956-1971.

year. The gains of the long campaign and the job security of 5-6,000 school cleaners were in the new conservative Askin government's sights. Led by former Protest Committee members Gietzelt, Dwyer, Howitt, Blackwell and Forde, the union swung into action. Seven months of systematic pickets, protest demonstrations, deputations, pamphleting and rolling strikes that culminated in the State-wide walk-out ended with the deeper entrenchment of the members' terms of employment and job security in a humiliating backdown by the government. The campaign had been fought directly on site, through the media, in the courts and in parliament. It had been taken to regional and country towns as well as the city and had featured the gradual build-up of a united front against the government composed of community groups as well as other unions and politicians. Illustrating the benefits of its expansionary program, at one critical moment the union was able to brief every member with a printed four-page pamphlet sent to their homes. Illustrating the benefits of its militant solidarity with other unions, at another flash-point the government faced the prospect of all construction and maintenance labour being withdrawn from its schools. And, of course, the union's political activism meant that the hustings at all its mass meetings were crowded with politicians as well as the officials. It was a celebrated victory. Jack Dwyer re-captured the spirit of the conflict.

> When the Union declared open war on the Askin government, it was my responsibility to set up battle stations at selected schools such as Randwick Girls' High. The flag which the Cleaners carried to victory on that occasion, and it was never lowered, was their brooms turned upside down. Their broom was the symbol of war against a ruthless employer, the Askin government. I sincerely hope this will always be the battle symbol for our Cleaners' Section.(82)

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82. J.J. Dwyer to FMWU, Dwyer Papers.

Further, the union had made a number of decisive interventions within the wider movement. In 1961 it had been instrumental in the pre-selection of Lionel Murphy for the Senate, where he performed with such distinction that he was elected Senate Opposition Leader in 1966. Murphy plunged the House into debate on all the vital issues of the time, ranging from the Vietnam War, Aboriginal land rights, Apartheid and State aid through to the environment, health and the future of Australian manufacturing industry.(83)

More spectacularly, in 1969 it had been the force behind the election of Bob Hawke as ACTU President in place of the retiring Albert Monk. "It was more than anything else," recalled Hawke later, "Ray Gietzelt's intense support and his tireless work on my behalf that got me up."(84) Like Murphy, Hawke had a working class family background and an outstanding education and he came to the union's notice following his success in overturning Raymond Kelly's national wage freeze in the 1959 and 1961 hearings where he presented the movement's arguments as the ACTU's research officer.(85) "Bob was a fire-eater", Gietzelt recalled later, "he was lifting the quality of the work".(86) For the first time since 1945-47, in October 1968 the ACTU's Executive had swung to the left by a narrow majority and in May 1969 it got behind a successful national strike by over a million workers against the gaoling of a union official by (the now Justice) John Kerr. The strike ensured that the Arbitration Court's penal clauses would thereafter remain a dead letter. Following Hawke's election later in 1969, ACTU policy and action rapidly came to embrace opposition to the Vietnam War, land rights for Aboriginals, a social

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83. L. Murphy, "Speech", Randwick, 19 July 1984.
84. B. Hawke, "Speech", Randwick, 19 July 1984.
85. B. d'Alpuget, op.cit., passim.
86. Interview with R. Gietzelt, Sylvania, 26 March 1985.

welfare policy, opposition to French Nuclear Testing in the Pacific, anti-Apartheid, greater emphasis on collective bargaining, environmental policies, trade union enterprises and closer relations with white collar unions.

Among numerous other less critical interventions, in 1970 Gietzelt also led a movement backed by 14 Federal and 16 State unions, 12 parliamentarians and over 150 electorate and local Branch officials to bring some order and accountability into the operation of the New South Wales Branch of the Labor Party. The ensuing intervention by Labor's Federal Executive resulted in a range of procedural and electoral changes, the most significant being the institution of proportional representation for the left in the offices of the Party 'machine'.(87)

Against this background, it is reasonable to suggest that by 1970 the FMWU was Australia's leading union. No other union could match the all-round effectiveness with which the FMWU used its economic and political power, or its utilisation of the arbitration system and modern organising and accounting technologies. Both in a policy and a personal sense it was changing the face of the labour movement. Its achievements were even more remarkable against the fact that this was a period of major national and, indeed, international decline in union organisation. In 1955 some 59 percent of Australia's workers had been unionists, a decline from the all-time peak of 63 percent reached immediately prior to the Great Split and a decline that continued unabated until 1969 when the figure reached 49 percent - the lowest

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87. T.J. Burns, "A Selection of Submissions Received by the Federal Executive When Investigating Complaints Re the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Labour Party", 1920, Gietzelt Papers. Also see T. Wheelwright, "New South Wales: The Dominant Right", in A. Parkins & J. Warhurst (eds) Machine Politics in the Australian Labor Party, Sydney, 1983, pp.32-34.

point in Australian unionism since 1940 and a depth to which it was never to subsequently return. Internationally, the decline was even more marked, particularly in the United States where the losses were so great as to prompt the eminent American liberal economist, Professor J.K. Galbraith, to conclude that the demise of trade unionism was permanent.(88) While the rest of the trade union world suffered losses, the FMWU thrived.

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The scale of all this activity is too vast to be fully investigated and recounted here. Moreover, we cannot treat these events in the same way that we examined earlier periods, for our relationship to this history is different. It is no longer a remote history that we come to as strangers and outsiders through investigations of the relics of the dead. Rather, it is a history that is still with us. This is not just in the obvious senses that the current leadership of the FMWU traces its roots to these years and that many of the people who were part of these events, if no longer active in the union, are still very much alive. It is also a history that is still current in the sense that most of us have our own personal memories of this time and therefore there is a way in which the social context may be assumed. On the other hand, history as it is remembered, while often invaluable to our understanding, is not only rarely accurate as anyone who goes back to 'look up the facts' will testify to, it is also inevitably too partial and there is not yet sufficient scholarship on the period as a whole to hazard a broad interpretation. We come to

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88. J.K. Galbraith, The New Industrial State, Harmondsworth, 1967, pp.21, 266-67; D.W. Rawson (1979), op.cit., p.28.

this history, therefore, in the uncomfortable position of being both personal witnesses and scholars, with the sense of it being very close to us through our abundance of private and popular experience and knowledge, but also with the reality that it still remains quite remote in a public and learned sense.

The dilemma sharpens as we close in on the present. It is not to pretend to an absolute notion of historical objectivity to acknowledge that the task of holding a subject at a distance that allows us to examine it in its own terms and within its own complex of social relations becomes more difficult as we approach our own time and find ourselves within those relations. As we close in on the present and come to deal with more and more that still remains unresolved, the task of recovering past subjectivities becomes commingled with our present ones and it inevitably becomes more difficult to keep our consideration of what did happen separate from what we believe should happen. A full historical examination of this period is therefore best left over to a present within which its results have not been so freshly transmitted and wherein there has been more general scholarship submitted. Suffice to conclude the study with some observations that reiterate the thesis generally and which may offer some guidance on problems that would need to be approached in a larger work.

The central point to make is that it would be wrong to assume that the FMWU's post-1955 history can be adequately understood and explained solely in its own internal terms. In the same way that it was impossible to understand the growth and character of the FMWU before 1955 without an understanding of the state and the labour movement out of which it was made, and the world which these institutions presupposed, so after 1955 it is not possible to fully

understand the course and character of the union in isolation from the more general direction and character of social relations. Neither the FMWU nor any other trade union or institution can ever be considered solely as agents in society, they are also indexes of that society and it is only through a full consideration of both these aspects or roles that an assessment of their significance can be arrived at.

We may illustrate this with a consideration of the FMWU's prodigious growth over this period, which cannot be seen just in the union's terms, but must also be taken as a part of the wider story of the continuing breakdown of sectional barriers between workers and, in turn, the disappearance of the worlds out of which these sectionalisms had been originally constructed: local communities, regional barriers, gender divisions, state and private employment, crafts, industry distinctions and so on. The growth of the FMWU does not just evidence the determination of the union's leadership, it also instances this wider process: the emergence of a union capable of shaping the world on the one hand, but also the emergence of a world more amenable to the union's efforts on the other.

Most of the FMWU's amalgamations, for example, were residual in that they were accomplished with unions that had become trapped in a separate existence founded on reasons whose time had gone. Nothing exemplifies this better than the merger with the Operative Stonemasons Society of South Australia. The Stonemasons had been the first trade union Australia, and therefore the world, to claim the eight-hour day, the first to send a working man to an Australian parliament, the catalyst for the formation of the Melbourne Trades Hall and, indeed, stonemasons had built the great Hall itself. One-hundred-and-six years after leading the working class in claiming the shorter working day, the Stonemasons' Society of Australia assembled at its Federal

Conference in Sydney granted its South Australian and Victorian Branches permission "to withdraw from their Federation on account of the impracticable position in which [they] found themselves".(89) As New South Wales was the only other Branch, this marked the end of the national union in all but name. Frank Walsh, Leader of the Labor Opposition in the South Australian Parliament and for 41 years an executive member of the Stonemasons, wrote to the FMWU in 1962:

> One must admit the opportunities for a small craft union to operate have become most difficult as a result of the challenge of the machine and substitute materials - the latter will undoubtedly continue to be the greatest challenge of all.(90)

Thus the once pre-eminent strength of this ancient craft was swept away by the continuous revolution in the techniques and materials of production. The same fate lay behind the amalgamation with the Australian Leather and Allied Trades Federation, which had experienced a history of dissolving bonds of exclusiveness ever since the formation of the United Society of Journeymen Curriers of Melbourne in 1848. For 119 years the 'fair and honourable' craft of currier had resisted embracing the noxious trades and labourers in its connecting industries and other regions, inevitably giving way bit by bit to finish with the Miscellaneous Workers.(91) Similar internal experiences lay behind the amalgamation of most of the other trades and industries into the FMWU.

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89. Federation News, Vol.2, No.8, December 1962.
90. ibid.
91. L.R. Brookman, "Unionism in the Tanning Trade: Its Start and Development", 29 September 1952, FMWU Papers. Interview with D. Allen, Melbourne, February, 1986. For an outline of the craft of currier and related work, see E.P. Thompson & E. Yeo (eds), The Unknown Mayhew: Selections from the Morning Chronicle, Harmondsworth, 1971, pp.547-561

But more than simply the gutting of the old crafts, from the mid-1950s we can also begin to feel the full weight of the society that had been gradually superseding the craftsman's world - a society in which most vestiges of the intelligence, challenges, intricacies, discretion and aesthetics of craftsmanship have been expunged from the forms of labour sustaining it. Scientific technology so revolutionised the materials, methods and range of production during this time that the old ways and means were banished from workplaces practically everywhere, to survive on only in the sprawling residential (mainly older) suburbs and among ageing hobbyists. In mining and agriculture, production volumes and profits rose massively as the number of owners, holdings and workers dwindled. In manufacturing, capital equipment and production and managerial 'know how' from the most advanced capitalist economies met with hundreds of thousands of labourers from the largely pre-industrial civilisations around the Mediterranean Sea in Australian factories that kept reducing in number as fast as they expanded in size, production and profits. While these major commodity producing industries expanded their production and reduced their workforces (manufacturing employment would begin to decline in the 1970s), the overall number of workers in Australia continued to expand rapidly, with large businesses being established in the different segments of the increasingly differentiated supporting social infrastructure: moving the commodities around, packing and unpacking them, perpetually counting all the stock and money, communicating all the necessary information, providing personal services and, of course, continuously cleaning and maintaining security.(92) Far from being a room for

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92. Statistics of the changes may be gathered in the Commonwealth Year Book (relevant volumes).

human development, these activities retarded people at the level they acquired in the home and school, demanding nothing but the absorption of the simplest instructions from a superior and the disciplined application of socially engendered skills.

The question of the FMWU's amalgamations must take these wider changes into account. The society ushered in during this time was increasingly one where the specificity of work mattered little - to either employers or workers. Most profit went to transnational corporations which could virtually chop and change their countries as they pleased, but even the Australian rich accumulated assets at a tremendous rate, while remaining unceasing in their bald exhortations to workers to give them more and governments to take less. The biggest of the magnates who emerged at this time acquired interests stretching across numerous local and international industries, ranging from perhaps a string of breweries or mass media outlets to provide ready cash flows through to large scale property holdings: a gargantuan mansion stocked with art treasures or perhaps a pastoral run in the Northern Territory larger than Belgium. Certainly fewer and fewer cared whether their wealth was extracted from stone or asbestos, leather or plastic, art or arsenic. How it was made no longer mattered - only how much.

For workers, the continuous dilution of adult life in labour and its transition into an inhuman extension of child's play was accompanied by a wide range of consequences. How many workers in this society owned their own tools, how many could aspire to be the boss, how many would even know, let alone see the ultimate controllers of their economic destinies? And just as few businessmen could care any longer about the content from which they extracted their wealth, so neither could an increasing number of workers care how they spent their energy. Less and less did work define workers' lives. It

became the last thing on any worker's mind - except perhaps as something to be avoided if at all possible. Work was endured only as a matter of survival and to obtain money to spend on life outside working hours. For some, especially the older Australians, there was compensation in the search for security and satisfaction in the community of home life. But beneath the phenomenally large and absolutely unprecedented number of workers who managed to achieve some approximation of the 'Australian dream' during this 'super boom', the picture was less rosy. Between the traditional Aboriginal communities, that were largely confined to the far north of the continent, and the traditional Mediterranean communities, that were largely confined to the inner-city ghettos where Irish-Catholic labourers used to be, a new generation of workers emerged who were strongly culturally differentiated from their forebears. They were distinctly unlike the Stonemasons who, 150 years earlier, had professed to want their shorter working week out of "their desire for mental improvement".(93) Nor were they so much inclined to unwind from a day's labour by sharing a convivial 'beer with their mates'. Aspiring neither for the community of their betters or that of their fathers, they formed 'sub' or 'counter-cultures', ('mods', 'bikies', 'surfies', 'hippies') and were more likely to prefer marijuana and other hallucinatory drugs for stimulus, or opiates to fill emotional voids. The mass scale of this youth culture alone prevents us from seeing it in the same terms as bourgeois entertainment, or either the avant garde or plebian cultures of earlier generations, although all three precursed and influenced it in different ways. One historian has estimated there were almost half-a-million heroin and cannabis consumers in Australia by the late 1970s, almost certainly an

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93. For the Stonemasons, see: R.N. Ebbels, op.cit., p.60.

underestimate if the size and frequency of the much publicised police 'busts' is any measure, although no reliable figures exist.(94) Still, even this number was over half the country's full-time male workers aged between 15 and 24.

Needless to say, these workers did not have Henry George, Edward Bellamy, Karl Marx or any other philosophers of dull work on their shelves. Rather, they united with other young workers around the rest of the Western world in a culture centred on music derived from the slave culture of America's deep south. Using the new technology, the music was electrified, amplified and played by small groups of highly skilled artists before huge audiences crowded into the race-courses and sportsgrounds of older working class cultures. Just as working class history was beginning to be read in universities and the first histories of coalminers, printers and other once strong unions were beginning to be written, 'sex, drugs and rock'n'roll' were becoming the watchwords of the young. Instead of reading they followed the 'stars' who were more immediately in tune with their experience, such as Elvis Presley ("That's All Right Mama"), the Beatles ("All You Need is Love"), the Rolling Stones ("I Can't Get No Satisfaction") and Bob Dylan ("The Times They Are A-Changing"). In Australia, perhaps the most successful local bands in the working class suburbs were the Easybeats ("Monday I have Friday on my Mind") and AC/DC ("I am on the Highway to Hell").(95)

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94. A.W. McCoy, Drug Traffic: Narcotics and Organised Crime in Australia, Sydney, 1980, pp.24-25. Note also the figures for alcoholism, pharmaceutical benefit prescriptions on the same pages.
95. J. Pareles & P. Romanowski (eds), The Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock and Roll, London, 1983, pp.1, 170. More generally, see: J. Miller (ed), The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock & Roll, New York, 1976; M. Leadbitter (ed), Nothing But the Blues, London, 1971; P. Brown & S. Gaines, The Love You Make: An Insider's Story of the Beatles, London, 1983.

These are just some aspects of changing social relations during these years and they have been selected, not to directly explain the FMWU's history, but to give some idea of the full complexity that would be entailed in such an explanation, which is beyond the scale of this study. If we are to consider the FMWU's amalgamations, for example, we must consider them in the full context of a society in which private wealth creation came not to rely principally on conquering methods and materials of production that pre-dated capitalism, but where capitalism reproduced itself on its own terms. It was a time when the 'challenge of the machine and substitute materials', as the Stonemasons' leader wrote to the FMWU, finished off the ancient craft basis for organisation and facilitated massive production and the accumulation, amalgamation and concentration of capital, which became increasingly fluid and indiscriminate, rendering the old lines of trade union organisation ever less correspondent, ever less relevant and therefore ever less effective and, indeed, counter-productively, ever more suitable for businessmen to play one union off against another. As each year passed, more and more unions had more and more corporations to deal with in common and amalgamations meant that information about profits, corporate strategies and management policies could be more easily shared, that campaigns could be more thoroughly prepared and co-ordinated, that more resources could be brought to bear at any given time and that different agglomerations of capital instead of different unions could be played off against each other. And if craft unionism was clearly an anachronism, how much less so was industry unionism when single corporations, after spreading vertically through every stage in the production process, were undertaking substantial horizontal integration within stages? In any case, workers were increasingly

concentrated in ancillary activities where traditions of identifying status with work had never been established, where the trade union official who could comprehend the practical aspects of one form of labour could, with little extra effort, comprehend the practical aspects of all forms and where, to support ways of life outside work, minds were focused - like employers - on the straightforward claim for more money. Of course, amalgamations also meant huge savings in organisation and administration for the institutions themselves, whether that be in managing traditional systems of benefits, publishing newspapers and journals, increasing the number or organisers, research officers, advocates and facilities, or acquiring buildings and office, accounting and organising technology.

Whether it is expressed in terms of the developments within capital and labour over this period, or simply elaborated with respect to the practical aspects of trade union organisation and administration, the case for the rationalisation of most of Australia's trade unions by amalgamation thus grew stronger by the year. The FMWU may have accomplished more amalgamations than any other union, but so practical were they that the question that really needs to be asked here is not how did this union achieve so many, but why did the rest of the trade union movement manage so few?

A full account of the union's growth would thus need to address the question of the relative importance of the general social conditions increasingly favouring amalgamations over the more immediate, short-term, sectional, financial, ideological and personal elements that led to their final accomplishment. A history written in the union's own internal terms could easily exaggerate the importance of the latter. It would also need to examine the history of the residual craft-based representative structures that persisted in the

trades and labour councils of Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales, and the webs of social and political relations which supported them for so long after their economic time had gone; for these central structures placed the whole emphasis on the proliferation of separate union organisations rather than union members, on the preservation of sectional differences rather than the realisation of common interests. These structures of central government largely explain why the FMWU achieved less amalgamations in these three eastern States than in those with more democratic peak bodies. Related to this, one would also need to disinter the history of the 'aristocracy' of older male trade unionists, whose prejudice to a large extent still excluded the new Mediterranean workforce ('greasy wogs') and working women ('a menace to society'). The state, too, persisted in defining large areas of the terrain upon which amalgamations continued to be conducted. The FMWU was more successful than any other union in overcoming these barriers, but a full explanation of its growth would not only entail the question of why it went here, it would also imply the question of why it did not go there if the full meaning is to be appreciated.

But this is only to say, as I have sought to show throughout the thesis, that one cannot satisfactorily account for the growth and character of the FMWU, or any other trade union, without a complex portrayal of the totality of the society within which they operate, often with international aspects. It is only in this way that we are able to determine a union's significance, both in the senses of that which it was decisive in bringing about and that which it contributed to ensuring did not occur. There is a necessary unity between a union and society and success in their representation depends on the historian's ability to hold the two in their complex and delicate

balance, so that the qualities of one may be rendered visible in the other. To write a trade union's history, in short, means to write a general social history and highlighting a particular aspect of it.

At the conclusion of this study it is therefore necessary to reject any a priori definition of a trade union's totality as firmly as was necessary following the survey of the intellectual history of the debate over the character of trade unions that we commenced with in the study's introduction. Neither trade unions nor society can be reduced to fixed forms. This is to mistake terms which must be analysed for ones of substance. Neither a trade union nor a society is formed, they are forming and formative; not constituted, but constituting and constituative; not produced, but producing and productive. A trade union is the complex of the relations that produce and are produced by the union; not relations that we may abstract, dehumanise and immobilise into a system, but active relations embodied within and defined by people constituting and constituted by their society as they live their lives in history. It is this definition of a trade union that, I have argued, we must finally see, 'and, in the end, this is the only definition'.

VIII

EPILOGUE

THE FMWU: 1970-1985

"In my life I've met few giants. Indeed, I think they are few and far between. Maybe with the passage of years, the image of those we know looms larger than it was in fact - in life or in fact - but Ray Gietzelt in my mind is a giant."

- Neville Wran, Premier of New South Wales,
President of the Australian Labor Party, 1984

Between 1970 and 1975 - it is impossible to date it precisely - the heroic period in the FMWU's history passed away. The union remained faithful to the objective of a democratic socialist future, although it was to be more implied in its position on specific issues than writ large on an overarching banner. It also held its own as one of the movement's largest and most effective unions, but was never again to reach the position it held in 1969 when - there is little room to doubt - it suddenly emerged as Australia's leading union. The reasons for this are complex and many of them, imbricated as they are within the larger question of the direction of contemporary society, are neither practically nor appropriately able to be addressed here. What follows should not be regarded so much as an historical account as a partial map of some of the territory that future scholars may find of some use as a starting point for a full exploration. It is also a place where we may briefly round off, as it were, some of the narrative aspects of the thesis by way of an epilogue.

What slowed the prodigious growth and activism of the FMWU after 1970? In the first place, there was a strong challenge to the union's leadership between 1970 and 1974. All of the FMWU's interventions in the labour movement had been strongly contested by the trade unions aligned with B.A. Santamaria's philosophies and a substantial number of the older and other conservative organisations which comprised the movement's right wing. The fantasy of an Australia settled by small, patriarchal, decentralised, Catholic, family-based rural communities may have been becoming more fantastic by the year, the Movement may have been banned by the the Labor Party and the Pope, and the CPA may have been misrepresented, thoroughly disabled and, what was left of it, undergoing a terminal sequence of sectarian splits (a pattern duplicated on a larger scale at a slower pace by the country's religions), but none of this impressed Santamaria. In 1957 he had reconstituted his ideological guerillas as the National Civic Council (NCC) and devoted the rest of his life to hounding CPA die-hards and trying to transfer as much public odium as possible onto even the most mild-mannered socialist. Although his appeal to self-righteous moral absolutism, ignorance and insecurity could not gather as much as ten percent of the vote at national elections, this was enough to sabotage the Labor Party's chances until 1972 and he continued to exercise considerable influence on the labour movement's policies and elections through the leaderships of the Clerks, the Shop-Assistants and the Ironworkers Unions. At every point, this extreme right sought to drive the Cold War divisions through the labour movement, break the nexus between the trade union movement and the Labor Party, abolish the right to strike and make the working class come to heel behind the foreign policy of the United States and the economic interests of employers. More generally, it sought to keep alive the idea that

every man and woman in Australia lived as daily prey to sinister, compulsive, omnipresent communist parties composed of deviant, conspiring individuals who wished nothing more than to grab control of their minds, seize their houses and personal belongings and slaughter all their children. The more respectable right-wing - 'left' and 'right' becoming universally applied political descriptions during this time - was defined principally by its insistence on preserving the traditional craft distinction between 'industrial' and 'political' activities. While trade unions might pursue their own sectional economic interests, broader issues were properly left to the Labor Party - a position anathema to the all encompassing approach to working class interests taken by the FMWU.

The growth of the FMWU and the success of its political interventions alarmed its right-wing opponents and in 1970 it became clear that a decision had been taken to stop its advance. The right had kept the FMWU off the ACTU Executive in the 1963 and 1965 Congress elections. In 1967 - the year Gietzelt won through in the ACTU - the FMWU had to mount a major defence to thwart an attempt to unseat Lionel Murphy on the New South Wales Senate ticket, despite the fact that by this time he had become Labor's national leader in the Upper House. In the same year, Gietzelt had to appeal to the Party's Federal Executive to overturn the proscription of the Association of International Co-operation and Disarmament, a ruling that would have licensed the expulsion of Ray's brother, Arthur, and many other left-wing members of the New South Wales Labor Party.(1) These fights, however, paled next to the contest over the ACTU Presidency in 1969. The campaign had been on a full national scale with Gietzelt

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1. J. Anderson and 201 others to M.V. Young, 23 July 1970, Gietzelt Papers.

and the FMWU at large marshalling all the left and a substantial number of other unionists not usually considered to be progressive behind Bob Hawke to defeat the ACTU Secretary, Harold Souter. Souter was a former official with the Engineers and was supported by the NCC, the Democratic Labor Party (or 'DLP' - the public, political arm of the NCC), the AWU (which was finally provoked to join the ACTU in 1965, bringing in a battalion of 63 delegates) and other supporters of the trade union movement's establishment.(2) It is, perhaps, indicative of the intensity of the conflict that the Secretaries of the Tasmanian, Victorian, South Australian, New South Wales and Queensland Labour Councils all changed during the two years during which the campaign peaked. In four of the Councils the Secretary suddenly died and in the other - Tasmania - the politically ambiguous veteran, Jack O'Neil, was dislodged into retirement by the NCC's Brian Harridine. In a striking political campaign on the island, Harridine had become Secretary of the Clerks, the Shop Assistants, the Marine and Harbour Trust Employees and, after taking over O'Neil's position, a host of other small unions.(3) At critical stages Gietzelt was even drawn into rare appearances in the mass media, where the conflict spilled. Once he was prompted to contradict Souter's attempt to attribute the successful mass strike over the penal clauses to "rump organisations controlled by communists and fellow travellers" acting outside the auspices of the ACTU, and on another occasion he was forced to counter the suggestion by Harridine that the deaths of the New South Wales and South Australian Labour Council Secretaries had been "psychological murder".(4) Needless to say, Harridine made no

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2. B. d'Alpuget, op.cit., pp.154-171.
3. R. Davis (1983) op.cit., pp.70-74.
4. Age, 4 Jun 1969; Australian, 4 June 1969; Sydney Morning Herald, 5 June 1969; B. d'Alpuget, op.cit., pp.162-163.

such suggestion about the Queensland Council's Secretary, Alex McDonald, who died a week before the vote. McDonald was one of the most respected and, indeed, loved communist trade union leaders in Australia's history.(5)

Probably what most impressed the labour establishment with the danger represented by the rapid growth of the FMWU, however, was its attack on 'city-hall' - the New South Wales Labor Party machine. Given the rigorous standards that Gietzelt insisted on in his own union, there was an inevitability about this conflict, which arose as a result of the General Secretary's position on the New South Wales Labor Party's Executive Finance Committee - a body charged with exercising "proper control and supervision" over the disbursement of the Party's funds. Given the background of almost continuous factional warfare with the right-wing machine, frustration soon turned into suspicion and then open conflict when Gietzelt was repeatedly refused access to documents or given explanations that would allow him to satisfy his own meticulous standards that the Party was operating efficiently and honestly. The contrast between the operations of the FMWU and the Labor Party Branch mounted problems in Gietzelt's mind as the Committee endorsed payments without any prior approval to incur the expenditure, appointed staff and raised salaries without sighting the Executive's authority and when he was refused access to records on affiliation payments, donations, interest and dividends. His concern came to a head at the 1970 Annual Conference of the Branch when he submitted a dissident minority report on the Finance Committee following months of frustrated attempts to gain answers to questions he had about family ties between the officials and the Party's public relations firm. For his effort he was generally condemned by the Party officials, branded a liar and dumped from the Executive. When

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5. B. d'Alpuget, op.cit., p.168.

the subsequent Federal intervention in the Party Branch roundly criticised the operation of the Finance Committee, brought forward a mass of evidence on the many artistic ways and means by which the right-wing machine held its position, reprimanded the officials, commended Gietzelt - who was returned to the Executive as one of the Branch's Trustees - and introduced proportional representation for the left in the Party's structures, the right clearly decided to stop the FMWU.(6)

The battle for the leadership of the FMWU between 1970 and 1974 assumed epic proportions and has since been accorded a special status within trade union circles where accounts still circulate periodically as a reminder of the dangers left-wing leaderships can face.(7) In its scale, it far outreached the struggle of 1945-1955. On that occasion a very much smaller union was challenged by what was essentially a rank-and-file committee with immeasurably less resources than the incumbent leadership. This time the leadership of the country's second largest union was challenged by forces with apparently unlimited resources. A separate volume would be required to trace all of the contest's elements and consider the masses of paper and other evidence it unleashed.

Ostensibly, the conflict turned around a challenge for the leadership by four disaffected organisers - Lloyd Grove, Frank Shanahan, Mark Bray and Peter Moxham - who received the full support of the NCC. Since its victory in 1955, the FMWU's New South Wales Branch leadership had faced five elections, three of which returned

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6. Sydney Morning Herald, 28 November 1970; Daily Telegraph, 28 November 1970; Age, 28 November 1970; T. Wheelwright, op.cit., pp.33-34.
7. See, for example: Committee to Defend the Victorian ALP, Pattern of Deceit: The NCC and the Labor Movement, Melbourne, 1983, pp.31-41; Union Printing Co-operative, The National Civic Council Conspiracy, Abbotsford, 1984, p.3.

the incumbents unopposed, one of which was won by a six-to-one majority vote and the other by five to one. Suddenly, in November 1970, while Labor's Federal Executive was conducting the investigation into the Party's New South Wales Branch that Gietzelt had provoked, a 'Committee for Membership Control' announced its candidature for the 1971 election, accusing the FMWU's leadership of doing 'sweetheart' deals with employers, criticising the fund which the officials maintained from their wages in the event of a contest and generally casting the conflict in Cold War rhetoric.(8) The election, which was to be conducted by the Commonwealth Electoral Office at the union's request, was scheduled for March 1971. Gietzelt's household became plagued with threatening phone calls and ten days before the ballot, at 2.30 in the morning of 7 March, "enough dynamite to blast the side of a cliff" (as the Sun put it) ignited outside the bedroom of Ray's brother, Arthur. The explosion destroyed a large part of the house's front wall and could be heard over three miles away. Arthur and his wife Lee, who were sleeping three foot six inches from the blast, owed their lives to the fact that the house was double brick.(9) Arthur had continued to be politically active on the left. He was a former campaign manager for Labor's new national leader, Gough Whitlam, a leading activist on the New South Wales Labor left's Steering Committee and a Commonwealth Senator-elect after having served nine terms as President of the Sutherland Shire Council. Inevitably he had accumulated opponents. No-one, however, believed the bomb had been aimed at Arthur. The FMWU's enemies had confused the identity of its General Secretary. Ten days later the union received another shock. Its New South Wales leadership was returned at the election with only

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8. The Worker, 30 November 1970; The Sunday Review, 28 February 1971.
9. Sun, 8 March 1971; Sydney Morning Herald, 8 March 1971.

52 percent of the vote.(10) The right had come within a whisker of taking the FMWU's strongest Branch.

Perhaps only the opposition had been more surprised than the union itself at how close they came to toppling the leadership. It was three years before another election; three years that consisted of almost non-stop litigation and constant campaigning as the right looked toward victory in 1974. The scale of the opposition escalated. Whereas the 1971 campaign had been mainly supported by right-wing New South Wales Labor Party and trade union officials with fringe NCC support, now that the chance of defeating Gietzelt appeared to be a serious proposition these proportions were reversed. Opposition activity suddenly broke out in the union's other Branches. On 10 October 1972, exactly one month before the qualifying deadline for candidates who wished to stand in 1974, the opposition - now known as the 'Better Deal Labor Team' - was strengthened when six new activists, some of whom were well known DLP members or supporters, enrolled in the union. The NCC detailed two of its operatives to co-ordinate the campaign on a full-time basis and, as polling date approached, over 100 additional activists were brought into the battle, some coming in carloads from Victoria. The list of members eligible to vote provided by the Commonwealth Electoral Office as a consequence of the old Protest Committee's precedent was run through a computer by the opposition to aggregate the names into geographic areas that could be systematically canvassed by pairs of door-knockers. Twenty opposition publications were produced, some in colour. Ten full membership mailouts were made, one in three languages. The computer, postage and printing

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10. R.F. Mallon, Commonwealth Electoral Officer, to K.C. Blackwell, 17 March 1971, Gietzelt Papers.

costs alone were conservatively estimated to be in the vicinity of $50,000.(11)

Cold War anti-communist rhetoric aside, on issues the Better Deal Labor Team's campaign largely mirrored the FMWU's own policies in that it highlighted the importance of job security, 100 percent union membership, greater democratic participation, higher wage levels and so on, the implication being that it could do better on all fronts. On one issue - lower union fees - it was outrageously opportunist, in contravention of ACTU policy and undermining of all the positive work that had been done to raise the value of unionism in the members' eyes over the prior 15 years. It would also have been impossible to implement without seriously reducing the union's activities and made a mockery of the Team's other policies, which included introducing a mortality fund, pension scheme, superannuation fund, credit union, more newspapers and 'Handy-Man-Hire' and Employment Services. Gietzelt was infuriated. This was not just a challenge to the FMWU it was treachery toward the movement at large. On other issues, like promising to introduce a 24-hour-seven-day operation and obtaining every FMWU member - huge numbers of whom were part-time, casual or seasonal workers - 52 weeks continuous employment a year, the opposition threw any attachment it had to veracity to the wind. On still other issues, like the complex question of whether organisers in a large, heterogenous union such as the FMWU would be better elected and, despite everything, the continuing lack of female officials in the union, the leadership was exposed.(12)

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11. As well as the sources in Note 7 above, see: "Information and Documentary Material Relating to Union Elections - The Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia", in K.C. Blackwell to J.R. McClelland, Minister for Labour and Immigration, 13 August 1975; "Edited Transcript of Evidence Taken by the ALP National Executive on Friday April 18, in Interviewing Mr F. Shanahan and Mr B. Egan" (1975), Gietzelt Papers.
12. ibid. Also see "Elections - 1974 - Leaflet", Gietzelt Papers.

In the event, the incumbent officials were re-elected by a three-to-one majority vote in a poll that saw 42 percent of ballot papers returned.[13] Why was there such a commanding reversal of the 1971 election? As well as straining the credulity of perhaps even the union's more gullible members in its actual content, one suspects that the very act of introducing full-scale modern election marketing techniques into an FMWU poll may in itself have alienated at least as many votes as it gained. What was the most common response among the relatively low paid, practical workers who constituted the core of the New South Wales membership to suddenly being inundated with obviously expensive glossy colour brochures and door knocking strangers promising them so much more of the world for less? The campaign bore the hallmarks of being defined in isolation from the actual circumstances of the workers: an agglomeration of every idea anyone could think of at the time without any connecting thread. It was a presidential package; a juxtaposed not an organic campaign. As well as playing the members for fools in their content and style, the practical activity of the Better Deal Labor Team was also marred by a lack of proportion, discipline and basic integrity. Except insofar as it acted as a unifying force for the government by substantiating the charge that the union was being violated by "OUTSIDE FORCES", the opposition's careless use of the NCC's printing and other facilities, the involvement of other unions and the known DLP associations of some of the activists were possibly as irrelevant to most of the members as communism was in 1974. More damaging no doubt were the reckless allegations that Gietzelt was not properly entitled to be the union's General Secretary, which ended with a public retraction and apology in

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13. R.F. Fallon, Australian Electoral Officer, to K.C. Blackwell, 26 February 1974, Gietzelt Papers.

the Supreme Court, the exposure of the free use of false names and addresses (one opposition activist was found to have four aliases) and the wide-scale theft of ballot papers from letter boxes and by direct approaches to members in their homes. One opposition activist even sought Keith Blackwell's vote and ballot paper, oblivious to the fact that he had knocked on the door of the Branch Secretary. Shanahan and Grove were both subsequently convicted and fined for illegally interfering in the ballot in the Commonwealth Industrial Court.(14) The other point, of course, was that a government that had allowed itself to be lulled into a false sense of security over its own members while it waged its larger political battles had been galvanised by the shock of the 1971 result. Neville Wran recalled later:

> I never saw anybody embark with such vigour and dedication as Ray did to root out elements of the NCC in his union. A Robert Bruce like dedication. You would be talking to Ray saying 'do you want another bit of bread Ray', 'Yes, well now, the NCC ...' 'Do you want another drink son, the plane's gonna be here in ten ...' 'Yeah, but I think they are onto it over in Adelaide'. But the results spoke for themselves. He just got this blind stubborn determination once he started on anything.(15)

After 1974 large-scale overt right-wing opposition to the FMWU's government ceased. In the meantime, however, a number of other developments had acted to pin the union back. First, new legislative barriers had been erected to Federal trade union amalgamations, prompted, there can be no doubt, by the amalgamation of the FMWU with the North Australian Workers' Union and the merger of the Amalgamated Engineers with the Boilermakers and Blacksmiths and Sheet Metal Workers to form the militant left-wing Amalgamated Metal Workers'

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14. Sydney Morning Herald, 4 July 1974.
15. N. Wran, "Speech", Randwick, 19 July 1984.

Union. Amalgamations of anything at all were anathema to the NCC and nothing was so evil as a trade union amalgamation, particularly between unions with radical governments. The Metal Workers faced opposition from the DLP despite the fact that employers even supported the merger.(16) This, however, paled next to the problems the FMWU encountered. It was two years and four months after the ten-to-one vote by the NAWU's members before the Industrial Registrar finally granted his official seal of approval to the amalgamation. Predictably, the principal opposition came from the Ironworkers, the Clerks, the Shop Assistants and the NCC's erstwhile ally, the AWU. Lionel Murphy naturally led the defence for the FMWU and it is a measure of the hostility and desperation inspired by the union's growth that, when the Senator successfully appealed to have the hearing conducted in Darwin in deference to Territory stalwarts who wished to follow the proceedings, the Secretary of the Shop Assistants had him charged by the New South Wales Labor Executive with acting 'contrary' to the party's principles of solidarity! The reason: the right-wing officials would also have to pay the extra for airfares and accommodation to uphold their objections.(17) And even after the amalgamation had won the state's imprimatur it took the FMWU another twelve months to clear away further appeals by the same four unions. James Rogers, Australia's leading hand and typewriting analyst, identified one of the appeal applications, the letter seeking to have Lionel Murphy charged and two of the circulars that had been put out by the opposition in the FMWU's 1971 election as all having originated from the same typewriter.(18)

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16. T. Sheridan, op.cit., p.304.
17. B.T. Egan, General Secretary, Shop Assistants and Warehouse Employees Federation of Australia to P.B. Westerway, General Secretary, Australian Labor Party, 12 March 1970, Gietzelt Papers.
18. J.H. Rogers to Secretary, Miscellaneous Workers' Union, 28 December 1970, 4 February 1974, 3 April 1974, Gietzelt Papers.

Moves to place legislative barriers in the way of amalgamations had proceeded apace. In 1972 the method whereby one union could extend its constitution to embrace another's, recruit its members and then allow the defunct union to be safely de-registered - the amalgamation method used by the FMWU in joining up the NAWU - was abolished in the Federal jurisdiction for all except the tiniest unions. In its stead the Liberal Minister for Labour and National Service, Phillip Lynch, introduced the amalgamation by election rule that operated at the State level. Not only were the difficulties associated with this rule greatly exacerbated once it was put on the national scale, but the whole operation tended toward farce by the introduction of an additional rule stipulating that there had to be a "community of interest" between the workers in the amalgamating unions. It is hard not to see these so-called 'Lynch Laws' as anything but bloody-minded bureaucratic manipulation. The new rule created the situation whereby the 130 or so Federal unions that had originally secured their registrations in the court on the basis that they were the only unions to which their particular workers could 'conveniently belong', and that had defended their constitutions against other unions on this basis ever since, now had to stand all their past arguments on their heads to establish 'communities of interest' if amalgamations were to be accomplished. Such a sudden volte face in the raison d'etre behind union constitutions was obviously not easily done and the device achieved what were clearly its objectives in making Federal amalgamations at best subject to the whim of registrars and at worst a sheer impossibility. The FMWU was unable to accomplish any more significant Federal amalgamations, although discussions were held with many large unions.(19)

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19. C. Cameron, op.cit., pp.22-23, 43-62.

Simultaneously right-wing unions came to arrangements with employers to build their numerical strength. In 1967 the Clerks and the Ironworkers had been the second and third largest national unions after the AWU. The rise of the FMWU to second position where it was then lapped by the amalgamations in the metal industry meant two of the three largest unions in the country had radical governments and the other one - the AWU - was the unreliably self-serving joker in the movement's pack. If it was to hold its position, the right-wing had to conquer new territory. In the upshot, the Secretary of the ACTU who had been defeated by Gietzelt and Hawke in the battle for the Presidency, Harold Souter, pulled off a deal with the Retail Traders' Association for closed-shops and automatic pay-roll deductions for the unions controlled by the NCC and its fellow travellers. The Shop Assistants was the main beneficiary. In 1967 it had around 15,000 members, by 1975 it had well over 100,000 and, with the continuing expansion of the service industries, by 1985 it was claiming 170,000, making it easily the largest if still among the weakest of Australia's unions. The Clerks also benefited, expanding from around 60,000 to over 80,000 between 1969 and 1975 and the Liquor and Allied Trades, which had been swung to the right in 1970, was built up from 35,000 to over 80,000 in the same time.(20) Together with the affiliation of many small State-based unions, by 1975 this had moved the ACTU back toward the right.

While the FMWU continued to grow by every measure, it was now to be at a relatively slower rate. Relative, that is, not just to its own earlier pace but also to the rest of the movement where the formation of the Metal Workers and the rapid recruitment by the

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20. D.W. Rawson (1979) op.cit., pp.38-39; J.S. Hagan (1981) op.cit., p.375.

right-wing unions in the service industries joined with the mass influx of white collar workers to close up the gap the FMWU had opened on the rest of the field. Moreover, although there were still few who could match it, an appreciation of the effectiveness of research facilities and university trained staff to argue before the courts, an awareness and acceptance of the presence of women, migrants and young people and a recognition of the utility of modern accounting, communications and organising technologies became increasingly commonplace as the trade union movement set about reconstructing itself within the terms of the changing Australian society. As for a willingness to use the economic power of workers - that fundamental new element in the FMWU's post-1955 history - some idea of the extent to which it now became universally integrated within the movement's modus operandi can be gathered from a survey in New South Wales in 1981 which showed that all of the State's trade unions, irrespective of their sectional or philosophical positions, believed that direct action was the most effective way to secure improvements in wages and working conditions.(21) Thus the organisational rot was stopped. In 1971 Australia's trade unions had begun to expand again as a proportion of the workforce. The FMWU had been among the first to show the way back and most of its methods were now internalised and institutionalised within the wider movement.

The impetus for growth within the FMWU passed from New South Wales to some of the smaller Branches. Under the leadership of Keith Blackwell, and from 1977 Chris Raper, in the 15 years from 1971 to 1985 New South Wales remained more or less stable at 30-35,000 members, as did the Branches in Tasmania, the Australian Capital

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21. D. Plowman & K. Spooner, "Unions in New South Wales", in B. Ford & D. Plowman, op.cit., p.110.

Territory and the Northern Territory. Tasmania held its membership at around 2,500, the Australian Capital Territory doubled to 2,000 between 1970 and 1974 and then plateaued, and the Northern Territory, which continued to demand considerable commitment, sacrifice and subsidies from the rest of the union, maintained a membership of between 3,500 and 5,500 in spite of extremely difficult conditions, which included having to almost completely re-start after the devastation of Darwin by Cyclone Tracy on Christmas Eve in 1974. The Victorian Branch continued its steady organic build-up, adding a further 7,500 members to reach a total of 25,000 in 1985, and the Queensland Branch increased by some 5,000 to around 20,000. The Queensland Branch's expansion was perhaps the most remarkable, given that it was achieved despite the unremitting hostility of what was possibly the most oppressive and unprincipled State Government seen in Australia this century. Under the able leadership of Harry Mellor and from 1982, Wilf Ardill, a feature of the Branch's recruitment was its success in country towns, with the FMWU becoming firmly established in Townsville, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, the Gold Coast, Toowoomba and the southern border areas. By 1985 close to half of the Queensland members were outside the capital metropolitan area.(22)

The other two Branches in South and Western Australia, in contrast to the general picture of consolidation that marked the union during these years, experienced spectacular growth. The flashpoint in the South Australian Branch's development came in 1970 when, to the astonishment of the members, "out of the blue, Ray Gietzelt came over and sacked the Secretary and an organiser who had their fingers in the till".(23) A formidable new leadership took office. Barry Cavanagh,

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22. Queensland Branch Secretary's Report to Federal Council, 1970-1985, FMWU Papers.
23. Interview with D. Eglington, Adelaide, 27 July 1983.

the son of Labor Senator Jim Cavanagh, took the Secretary's job and he was more than ably supported by Don Eglinton, a militant CPA member from the rubber trades, and Clive Brown, "a bloke no-one had ever heard of" who came to Cavanagh's notice because of the vigour with which he once defended a fellow optical worker against dismissal.(24) Finding the actual membership to be half the 4,000 names listed on the books, the immediate priority was placed on building the union. Five years later - five years filled with "sheer hard work when we were out every night of the week and living on peanuts and beer" - the Branch had 10,000 members and was the most militant in South Australia ("we turned the MW-Who into the MWU" said Clive Brown).(25) Eglinton succeeded an exhausted Barry Cavanagh as Secretary in 1975 and when he was elevated to the South Australian Industrial Commission in 1979 the post went to a former motor mechanic in the rubber industry, Vic Heron. A long period of negotiations was then concluded with the amalgamation of the Australian Government Workers' Association, a union of some 10,000 members who comprised virtually the entire 'blue collar' workforce of the State Government, including hospital and water supply workers, psychiatric nurses, ambulance men and prison officers. "I had been a little man with a little stick," recalled the Secretary of the amalgamating union, Bob Morley, "after the amalgamation we had the benefit of Gietzelt, a big man with a big stick".(26) By 1985 the FMWU was the largest affiliate to the South Australian Labor Party and, with a diversity to rival the Queensland and Western Australia Branches, serviced its 20,000 members with 15 full-time officers, 800 delegates and over 80 awards and agreements.

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24. ibid.
25. ibid. Also: interview with C. Brown, Perth, 19 July 1983.
26. Interview with B. Morley, Sydney, July 1984.

The growth of the Western Australian Branch was even more remarkable. In 1976 Don Lippiatt suddenly died and the Secretary's position was briefly held by the union's South Australian militant, Clive Brown, before it passed to Jim McGinty in 1979 when 'Brownie' accepted an opportunity to lead the West's Prison Officers (later becoming Secretary of the Trades and Labour Council). In the year before he died, Lippiatt had completed an amalgamation with the Aerated Water and Cordial Workers and had been elected Secretary of the Metropolitan Laundry Workers, a position that now also went to McGinty whose links were to facilitate one of the most spectacular and far-sighted sequences of amalgamations in the trade union movement's history.(27) The first occurred in 1981 when the Metropolitan Water Supply Union brought in 2,000 members and the next year three amalgamations comprising around 14,000 members were accomplished in one blow: the Hospital Employees' Union, the Pre-School Teachers' Association and, at long last, the Cleaning, Security and Allied Employees' Union of Western Australia.

In addition to all the general pressures favouring amalgamations, there were a host of local reasons in these particular cases why they made good sense. These included the increasing integration of west and east Australia and the concomitant need for hitherto autonomous Western Australian unions to gain Federal constitutional protection, the fact that the only - or at least the major - employer of the members of all four unions was the state under the militantly conservative leadership of Premier Charles Court, and particular developments to do with the various sections of labour involved. The

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27. See W.A. Branch Secretary's Reports and Western Australian Industrial Gazette (relevant years). Also see Minutes of the West Australian Chemical and Allied Trades Industrial Union of Workers and the Coastal Aerated Water and Cordial Manufacturers' Employees' Industrial Union of Workers, FMWU Papers.

Water Supply Union was heavily in debt, declining in numbers and under threat from the AWU. The once independent management of pre-school teaching had been absorbed into the administration of the Education Department. The Cleaning and Security Union was being destroyed by private contractors in a world where huge corporations were rapidly emerging.(28) The Australian cleaning and maintenance corporation, Berkley Holdings, for example, had acquired an annual turnover conservatively estimated to be $110 million derived from 5,000 Australian workers and transnational operations as far flung as London, Kuwait, Singapore and Auckland. Berkleys' principals, with a personal hoard guessed to be at least $70 million, had their names listed among those of the nation's 200 most wealthy people.(29) What chance the West's union of 4,000 cleaning and security workers against giants such as these?

All that was required in these circumstances was sufficient understanding and commitment by the leaders involved and these unions had such people in abundance. McGinty had been an advocate for the Hospital Employees' Union and a University activist, where he had been President of the Guild of Undergraduates. The Secretary of the Hospital Employees' Union, Owen Salmon, had originally been a linesman with the Electrical Trades Union and was a self-taught intellectual of unusual independence with a well-developed philosophical understanding of the labour movement. Read in Mill and Marx, Salmon would distract

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28. See: Minutes of the Government Water, Sewerage and Drainage Employees Industrial Union of Workers, particularly 12 September 1973, 11 August 1975, 7 February, 8 May 1977, 8 February, 4 September, 3 & 10 October, 4 December 1978, 27 February, 15 March, 2 & 22 April, 28 May, 6 August, 10 October, 15 November 1979, 17 & 24 September, 26 October, 11 November 1980, 9 February 1981.; W.A. Branch Secretary's Reports for D. Lippiatt's regular items on the Cleaning, Security and Allied Employees' Union. Also see the Minutes of each of the other Unions (held by the FMWU) and the transcripts of the many court cases associated with the amalgamations.
29. Business Review Weekly, 16 August 1985.

himself with mathematics, science, dialectical conundrums, the fortunes of sporting teams in far-flung countries and with experiments in socialist practices in his union, such as paying all officials the same salary irrespective of rank. Jeannette O'Keefe, the Secretary of the Cleaning and Security Union, like McGinty, had an active university background and had been an advocate in the Hospital Employees' Union under the enigmatic Salmon. Prior to the Hospital Employees she had been an assistant to Jim Coleman, a Commonwealth Conciliation Commissioner who, as an official with the Amalgamated Engineers, had been the inaugural Secretary of the West's Trades and Labour Council. With the amalgamation, which was achieved after she successfully stood in an election that is still celebrated by the West's left, O'Keefe became only the second female Assistant Branch Secretary in the FMWU's history. In Helen Handmere, the Pre-School Teachers also had a forward-looking female leader who, prior to joining the FMWU, had unsuccessfully sought to amalgamate her union with the Hospital Employees, which was clearly the centre of this new left-wing Western Australian trade union universe.(30) Following Owen Salmon's elevation to the Western Australian Industrial Commission, in 1985 Jim McGinty found himself returned as Secretary of what was now an organisation with 20 officials, 77 awards, 784 delegates and almost one-tenth of the State's trade unionists.(31)

Thus, while the FMWU may not have quite retrieved the pre-eminent position it held briefly in the late 1960s - when it suddenly stood so tall between receding, predominantly male, anglo-saxon, blue collar, craft and industry unions and the oncoming wave of white collar, professional, and service based unions that would bring women and

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30. From interviews with the officials concerned in July 1983.
31. See, among many sources, G. Whitlam, The Whitlam Government, 1972-1975, Ringwood, 1985, passim.

migrants along with them - the union nevertheless maintained a remarkable growth rate. This was, of course, despite all the best efforts of its conservative opponents. The FMWU outranged them all. With close enough to 130,000 members, by 1985 it finally eclipsed the AWU and only the Shop Assistants and Metal Workers were larger. Readers should find no surprise at the fact that, as we come to the close of this period, activists in the South and Western Australian labour movements were suddenly finding that their popularity had risen considerably with the 'aparatchiks' - as the press loved to call them - from the New South Wales right-wing machine. Action and reaction, point and counter-point, such is the symbiotic history of the creation of the Australian labour movement.

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But it was not just in overall size, efficiency and effectiveness that the FMWU found itself being caught up with. Though remaining one of the major players, after 1970-75, it was not quite able to hold the leading political position it had claimed during the first 15 years of its new government. Again, this had to do, not so much with the changes within the FMWU itself, as with the changing world around it, changes that the union had been partly instrumental in bringing about.

For a start, by the time the leadership had finished fighting the NCC in 1975 most of the political agenda it had adopted as part of the broad program that had been developed between 1955 and 1970 had been accepted within the labour movement at large, much of it had been implemented and many of the issues were now an integral part of the nation's general political discourse.

On 2 December 1972 a new, more optimistic and confident Australian electorate had emerged from under the cover of the insecurity, pessimism and conservatism of the affluent post-war years to embody many of the causes that had filled the pages of the Miscellaneous Worker and Federation News and to elect the Labor Party led by Gough Whitlam to a majority of seats in the Commonwealth House of Representatives. This government had then delivered a reform program the like of which had never been seen before, and has never been seen since, in Australia's history. Draft resisters were immediately let out of the country's prisons; the troops in Vietnam were called home; China was recognised; Australia's United Nations ambassador was instructed to cease support for South Africa; bans were placed on the sale of wheat to Rhodesia and that country's Australian Information Centre was closed down; Papua and New Guinea was granted independence; the system of Imperial Honours was abandoned; 'Advance Australia Fair' replaced 'God Save the Queen' as the national anthem; international conventions were signed on nuclear arms, racial discrimination and labour relations; the White Australia Policy was dismantled; the Equal Pay case for women was re-opened and brought to a more satisfactory conclusion; people aged between 18 and 21, who had been considered old enough to die for their country in war, were now allowed to vote in its elections; the right of all people to share fully in the country's health and tertiary education resources was recognised by the foundation of a national health scheme and free universities; Aboriginals now had substantial, if still grossly inadequate, programs devoted to their special needs; a Prices Justification Tribunal was established; the arts were encouraged in a way never seen before; spending on the aged almost doubled; wages increased rapidly and breakthroughs were made in annual leave, holiday loading, the 35-hour

week and working conditions such as maternity and paternity leave. Lionel Murphy, as Attorney General and Minister for Customs and Excise, was at the forefront of the reform, being responsible for the Trade Practices, Family Law and Racial Discrimination Acts and founding the Australian Law Reform Commission and the Legal Aid Office. But for the obstruction of the Senate, he would have also introduced a Human Rights Bill. In the Territories he abolished hanging, initiated night and small claims courts, established the independence of magistrates from the public service, abolished court fees and appointed the first Aboriginal magistrates. In 1973 he made a Ministerial visit to the Melbourne offices of ASIO, where his intervention was subsequently found to have aborted a major act of Croatian terrorism. In the same year he led an Australian team of lawyers before the International Court of Justice to restrain French nuclear tests in the Pacific, forcing the terrible experiments to be conducted underground.(32) On 10 February 1975 he was appointed to the High Court where he continued to distinguish himself as the most courageous and radical legal figure in Australia's history.(33) For those with some conception of a more equal, compassionate and liberal society or, indeed, for anyone who had any semblance of optimism about the possibilities for human realisation through social development, this was probably the best time to have been alive in Australia's history.

For conservatives, of course, it was a nightmare; a nightmare that, after only three years - during which time the government was popularly re-elected - provoked a counter-attack as virulent and unprincipled as the government had been heroic. There were numerous

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32. A.R. Blackshield, et al., op.cit., passim.
33. Among countless sources, see G. Whitlam, The Truth of the Matter, Harmondsworth, 1979; B. d'Alpuget, op.cit., pp.288-90.

conservative activists, both in and, many suggest, outside the country, but the key agent of reaction was the ubiquitous John Kerr, the NCC's champion whom Whitlam had foolishly appointed as his Governor-General. While grappling to define the difficult problems that had been presented to the government by international economic changes, and while it was enveloped in scandals largely of the national media's own breathless over-imagination, on 11 November 1975 Kerr overrode the country's democracy and struck it down without notice using hitherto dormant and largely unknown constitutional technicalities. For a moment Australia was poised in disequilibrium. The licence had been created for a direct working class counter-action similarly bypassing Australia's democratic institutions. Bob Hawke, the only leader in a position to mobilise the trade union movement and workers generally, was not confident of victory and in any event preferred to take the moral high ground in terms of the status quo.(34)

When the drama subsided, two things were apparent. First, the conservatives had read (or created) public opinion far better than anyone imagined. In the subsequent election the Labor vote slipped from 50 to 42 percent. Second, Australia's economic problems were not a function of the Labor government's reforms. The balance of power within the international economy was also undergoing a dramatic re-alignment. The world's key commodity - oil - was under the control of an international cartel. The traditional bulk commodities produced by Australian's mines and farms were now being produced in too much abundance by too many other countries in a world economy no longer fueled by the Vietnam War. The transnational corporations that controlled the new manufacturing technologies were finding easier labour forces to plunder in Japan and South-East Asia. In the last

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34. B. d'Alpuget, op.cit., passim.

twelve months of the Whitlam government, unemployment had exceeded four percent, the highest since 1952. Within two more years it was six percent, the highest since 1940. After seven long years of moribund conservative national government, in 1983 it officially reached ten percent or around 700,000 people - the highest level since the Great Depression. In March 1983 Ray Gietzelt's good friend, Bob Hawke, led the Labor Party back to government.(35)

Within this context, many of the old verities changed. Policies and principles that had defined the left in the 1950s and 1960s were now commonplace liberal views within the society at large where most of Whitlam's reforms were retained by the conservative government, if more in outline than content (although some of them, such as those on Rhodesia and South Africa, were even furthered). Organisationally, the left had also been defused. The Communist Party had broken into pro-Chinese, pro-Soviet, national independent and fundamentalist Trotskyist sects, and within the Labor Party and the wider society a new left had emerged that was not so much defined by the force of economic necessity, Cold War persecution and an overriding belief in curing all by the 'socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange', as it was by its commitment to particular issues such as justice for Aboriginals, equality for women, world peace and the conservation of the environment. The new left did not so easily accept the old faith in scientific 'progress' and tended to worry about whether there would be any more history instead of assuming it was on their side. Many of the leading activists were not in any political parties and there were conspicuous

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35. National Times, 24 February - 1 March 1984; Australian, 7 February 1984; Transcript, "Interview with Gerald Mercer, formerly of National Civic Council, now the Industrial Action Fund", Radio 2BL, Sydney, 26 May 1983; Transcript, "Background Briefing Programme", Radio 6WN, Perth, 11 December 1982.

cross-economic-class alliances (with 'middle class trendies', as the older hard-heads tended to refer to some of the new activists).

No generation, of course, speaks with the same voice as the previous one as each has to make itself out of the terrain created by its elders, but what was noticeable in this process of differentiation and change was not so much that any of it was new, but that the relative weightings had shifted. What had once been primary and overriding - socialism and civil liberties - had become secondary, and what had previously been secondary or subordinate - Aboriginals, women, peace and the environment - were now taken, not only to be primary, but to be discrete movements in their own right. The creatures of the old left became the creators of the new.

Over the same time new right-wing positions also emerged. Within the labour movement the success of the Whitlam government had obliterated the reference points and constituency of the DLP forever. Brian Harridine was expelled from the Labor Party by its National Executive in 1975 on charges laid by Gietzelt as a preface to a wide-scale campaign against the NCC in Tasmania, which led to a split in its trade union movement in 1980. Santamaria survived, since he never had to rely on being elected to anything, but he was more a public curiosity than anything else (although his secret sect could still command large funds if the possibility of defeating left-wing trade union leaderships was in the air, and some big attacks were launched in the early 1980s).(36) The right within the labour movement at large became more detached from the NCC and tended to be more defined by its ruthless electoral pragmatism than anti-communism and nostalgia for the lost world. The right-wing leaders of the New

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36. T. Wheelwright, op.cit., pp.30-36; J.S. Hagan (1982), op.cit., pp.377-78.

South Wales labour movement may have still been conspicuous by their conversions to the Catholic Church as their careers advanced, but they also claimed to speak for 'traditional labour values' or to be the heirs of the British Fabians and they became just as likely as the left to have tertiary educations. They developed trade union training links with Harvard University, accepted (or were forced by their members to accept) the efficacy of sectional economic sanctions and embraced abbreviated versions of the left's agenda as it became internalised within the wider society and, hence, more electorally viable.(37)

The leading figure in this new right in New South Wales, and the bete noir of Ray Gietzelt, was John Ducker, a former organiser with the Ironworkers who was Secretary of the Labour Council and State Labor Party President in the critical year of 1970. In many ways Ducker led the counter-attack on the left and the FMWU after 1970, condemning (and inflaming) Gietzelt as having been out to destroy a Labor Party he had been unable to control. At the same time, however, he was prepared to abandon a number of once central NCC policies to maintain the right's position. He did not, for example, hold to the idea of state-compelled union membership and by late 1971 had become a supporter of Bob Hawke's ACTU Presidency:

> ... I'd seen that the ascendance was with Hawke and with the policies and philosophies he was espousing and I was concerned that the Right could become isolated. That was what the National Civic Council grouping wanted; they wanted a total split, in the belief that they could win on that basis. I thought they were bloody mad. So I played my cards carefully. I didn't take the Springbok tour head on. I didn't object to the first 24-hour strike on the budget, I went with it, and was often able to take a step in advance. And would delight in the fact that I could take a Left position, with Gietzelt following up behind. And I'd tell the Labour Council that 'despite some reservations by delegate Gietzelt we were able to take a firm, strong militant position ...'(38)

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37. T. Wheelwright, op.cit., p.33.
38. Cited in B. d'Alpuget, op.cit., p.197.

For his part, Gietzelt would always delight in quoting Ducker's concession on one occasion that the FMWU had been the catalyst for the creation of the modern Labor Party.

Symptomatic of the changing positions, in 1972 the two protagonists had co-operated to secure the passage of Neville Wran to the leadership of the New South Wales Labor Party. Wran had won a seat in the New South Wales Upper House in 1970 with the support of both the left and right-wings of the Party and his parliamentary performance contrasted so sharply with the established leadership of Pat Hills that he began to be touted as the future hope in the run-up to the 1973 State election. "There was a presence about the man", as Rodney Cavalier, an organiser with the FMWU from 1970 until his own election to the New South Wales Parliament in 1977, wrote later.(39) The problem was to secure Wran's passage from the Legislative Council to the Legislative Assembly where he could become a member of caucus and a candidate for the leadership. As Commonwealth Attorney-General, Lionel Murphy appointed a Liberal Member of the Legislative Council to the Federal judiciary to ensure Wran's resignation from that House would not concede his seat to the Askin government and when the sitting Member for the western suburbs seat of Bass Hill indicated that he was prepared to step aside, Wran went to talk with Gietzelt.(40) Wran later recalled:

> Ray really was instrumental in my getting that seat at Bass Hill because we were at a Six-Hour-Day march. We were marching down Pitt Street and the police horses were in front of us and we were doing some pretty fancy footwork because of certain deposits on

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39. R. Cavalier, "Labor Prepares for Government", in E. Chaples, H. Nelson, K Turner (eds), The Wran Model: Electoral Politics in New South Wales, 1981 and 1984, Melbourne, 1985, p.28.
40. For Murphy's role, see ibid., p.29.

> the roadway and I broached with Ray the question that I would be the member for Bass Hill. I had the officers of the Party sewn up, but there were lots of left-wing Branches out there that thought there should be a rank-and-file ballot and was there any chance of swinging them at the pass? Anyway, after we had walked through the horse manure the march stopped and we finished up at a little pub in Railway Square and we had quite a few drinks and Ray put me in touch with Tommy O'Brien [an FMWU official] who still runs the Branches out at Bass Hill. Anyway, it wasn't long before between Ray Gietzelt, John Ducker and Tommy O'Brien, which was not altogether the Holy Trinity, that I got the pre-selection ...(41)

By the time the caucus met 16 days after the 1973 election, at which Labor suffered a two-and-a-half percent swing against it, Gietzelt, his brother Arthur and, particularly, Jack Ferguson, had locked up the entire parliamentary left for Wran. The divisions within the right enabled him to be elected with a majority of primary votes after the distribution of preferences had produced a tied ballot. Three years later Wran was Premier.(42)

The union's role in Wran's ascendancy is just one of the more well-known among numerous stories of occasions when the FMWU was prepared to co-operate with its rivals in the general interest. Hawke later recalled the way Gietzelt conducted himself on the ACTU Executive:

> A characteristic of Ray's which I witnessed day after day - you will know that he had deep feelings in terms of political philosophy and ideology and where he felt that a person had to be castigated in respect of some political action or position he could be very tough in that castigation, but I have never seen him being other than fair and neither have I seen him lacking in compassion - he has always been prepared, as I have found, to try in the end in the interests of the movement as a whole to put aside the decimating and destroying and erosive characteristics of hatred and to try to go that extra distance to meet persons with whom he would be in conflict ideologically to see what he could do to create a base for advancing the interests of the

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41. N. Wran, "Speech", Randwick, 19 July 1984.
42. R. Cavalier, op.cit., pp.29-32.

> movement as a whole. I saw that time after time after time and I saw no one else in the trade union movement who exhibited those characteristics to the same extent.(43)

The changing world, and the changes the FMWU was able to make to the political world, moved the union toward the centre of what was now universally considered to be a political 'spectrum', a metaphor which reflects the new emphasis on different degrees within a single philosophical continuum rather than flat alternatives. Certainly the maintenance of broad left-wing unity on international affairs became more difficult after 600,000 Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968 to stifle its liberal reform movement (the 'Prague Spring'). Gietzelt had immediately cabled the Presidium of the Soviet Union's Communist Party to lodge a protest. "It seems to me," he told the 1968 Federal Council, "the decision to interfere in Czechoslovakia's internal affairs displays a fundamental lack of confidence and understanding of individual rights and democratic processes." Given that the Soviet Union had largely appropriated the definition of socialism, it was a serious blow to the popular cause:

> It means we in Australia must play our part in world events to see that the true spirit of socialist principles and understanding is understood by working class representatives in both capitalist and socialist countries. We must not forget our humanitarianism at both national and international levels. There is no easy path ahead and we must work hard to maintain our principles, exercise tolerance and restraint in the handling of our day to day problems. We can establish a socialist society only with the support of the majority of the Australian people.(44)

Gietzelt was not to develop the prejudice against the communist parties that he had so often been a victim of himself. At the

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43. R.J.L. Hawke, "Speech", Randwick, 19 July 1984.
44. FCM, 3-27 September 1968; General Secretary's Report, Adelaide, 1968.

practical level, people were to be judged on their personal qualities and the evidence of their contribution to the labour movement. While an unwritten law for the union's full-time elected officials was that they be active members of the Labor Party if they wished the support of the rest of the leadership, for other officers and employees of the union the criteria was simply a general sympathy with working class concerns, loyalty to the union and the capacity to work hard.

As time passed he did become more exasperated at the fractionating of the communist parties, more critical of the way in which they dealt with people and disdainful of "super-left" policies which he considered impractical. His wariness escalated when one communist the union had employed as an organiser led workers in the only factory the FMWU covered in the notoriously difficult to unionise northern beachside suburb of Manly into militant confrontations that were not only unsuccessful, but ended in complete disaffection and mass resignations.(45) On the other hand, there were horses for courses. When Gietzelt became frustrated with the lack of headway being made in the Northern Territory he was pleased to have communist stalwart, Neil Byron, accept the Branch Secretary's job. Neil Byron's personality can be summarised by the fact that his legal middle name was 'Australia'. A big male, a former shearer and a veteran of the famous 1955 strike portrayed in the film 'Sunday Too Far Away', he had battled the conservative oligarchy in the AWU for years before joining the FMWU as a waterfront watchman. He was the kind of man who took a handshake as a personal test of strength and once broke the ribs of a woman on the union's staff in a boisterous, warm-hearted bearhug. Laconic, profoundly masculine and as militant and loyal as life is long, a story is told of how another of the Northern Territory's

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45. Interview with R. Gietzelt, Pagewood, 11 February 1985.

officials was once jeered as a 'boss's man' by a team of construction workers he was attempting to recruit. The workers threatened to string the official up if he ever came near them again and, when in due course he did, they grabbed him, formed a noose at the end of a rope and headed for a nearby tree. The panic-stricken official struggled free, jumped into his car and beat a retreat back to Darwin, leaving his dignity behind with the laughing labourers. After hearing the story, Byron went straight to the camp where he was met by the same jeers. "Go on," the men said, pointing to the supervisor in the hut nearby, "go and talk to the boss like you union blokes always do." Byron turned to the hut, which was in earshot, and shouted: "The boss is a fucking cunt". Cheers. The whole construction team signed up.(46)

If relations with the communist parties became more difficult as time wore on, this was slight compared with the damage done to the union's relationship with the new left over another question - uranium mining. As a result of the amalgamation with the traditional union of the Northern Territory, in 1976 the FMWU suddenly found itself in the front line of one of the most divisive issues of recent times - not just in the labour movement, but in Australian society generally - when plans were announced to commence large scale uranium mining operations in the region. The key questions were threefold. Did uranium mining contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons? Were the risks of radiation from uranium mining, milling and waste disposal acceptable? What were the rights of the Aboriginal people on whose land major deposits were found? Within the government of the FMWU there can be little doubt about the poignancy of these issues. Since 1955 the union had campaigned unremittingly against nuclear

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46. I am grateful to J. Slowgrove for this story.

weapons and for world peace, and health and safety issues and Aboriginal rights had been held almost as dear.

The doubts raised by the left over each of the three key issues were sufficient for some in the union, such as Ray Hogan, who had succeeded Roy Cameron as Secretary of the Victorian Branch in 1973, to propose complete opposition. For Hogan, the FMWU could not have anything to do with the work on moral grounds. He equated it to co-operating in the building of gas chambers in Nazi Germany.(47) The union's duty, in the general interest of its existing members, the society and the world at large, was to launch the strongest possible public campaign against uranium mining. On the other hand, the FMWU clearly had the rights to represent the workers in the industry and, for Ray Gietzelt, if uranium mining was to go ahead it was the FMWU's duty to cover them. Not to do so would leave the workers vulnerable, the industry more dangerous and allow the right-wing unions into the industry and the Territory at large. For Gietzelt, the issue turned pragmatically on the question of whether or not the union's abstention could effectively stop mining. If not, it was the union's job to organise the industry.(48)

In May 1976 the FMWU had sent telegrams of support to the Australian Railways Union when it placed bans on supplies to the Mary Kathleen uranium mine in Queensland and six months later the Federal Council resolved to refer the question to the ACTU, which it called upon to convene a meeting of all unions that were, or possibly could be, engaged in the industry to seek a common policy of opposition to mining. In December the peak council resolved that unions were free to honour existing mining-for-export contracts provided there was

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47. Interview with R. Hogan, Melbourne, 20 February 1986.
48. Interview with R. Gietzelt, Pagewood, 26 March 1985.

action on the safety and Aboriginal issues and it called for a national public referendum on the question. By July 1977 the left's concern over peace, safety and Aboriginal issues was crystallizing around the country. Young people, environmentalists and women's groups in particular were hardening their opposition, provoking the Labor Party to adopt a national policy to declare a moratorium on uranium mining and treatment and to repudiate all contracts once it returned to office. On 25 August the conservative Commonwealth Government that had assumed office after the Whitlam coup announced that the mining and export of Australia's uranium deposits would go ahead.

By this time Ray Hogan was publicly criticising Bob Hawke, who was President of the Labor Party as well as the ACTU and whose personal policy was to mine the deposits and place all effort on strengthening international safeguards against its misuse. Ray Gietzelt was publicly supporting the ACTU's policy, but was also committing the FMWU to cover the workers if new Territory mines became operational. The ACTU Congress of September 1977 agreed to honour existing contracts, banned new mines and again called on the Commonwealth Government to hold a referendum. Soon after this Congress, the FMWU's Federal Council met where, despite the deepest divisions since 1955, the ACTU's policy was endorsed and the union declared unequivocally that it would take up its obligations and rights to represent the workers if mining went ahead. The critical vote was Roy Cameron's. As Victorian Branch President and a Victorian delegate to the Council, Ray Hogan believed Cameron had an obligation to represent his Branch's policy of complete opposition. As Federal President, Gietzelt argued that Roy had an overriding responsibility to the whole union. The conflict of loyalties and principles this

gentle, serious man was caught between was intense. He voted with the General Secretary.(49) Ray Hogan never spoke another word to him. Within a year he had retired from both his positions.

The FMWU's involvement in the industry now hinged on the wider movement and here, after the government refused to turn the question over to the citizenry, two dynamics were operative. At policy level the trade union movement and the labour movement at large progressively hardened its opposition. In December 1977 the ACTU Executive recommended honouring existing contracts and banning new mines pending adequate safeguards for workers in the industry and Aboriginal rights, which was endorsed by a Special Unions Conference in March 1978. In 1979, however, the Labor Party affirmed its policy of total opposition and at the following ACTU Congress this was endorsed by the trade union movement (against the recommendation of its Executive). At the practical level the development of the industry had proceeded in the meantime with all the relevant unions involved. Once it had become clear that the AWU and the Ironworkers were prepared to supply the industry with labour, the FMWU had committed itself.(50)

Just as the uranium issue divided Hawke (who hereafter was to have to endure being called 'Yellowcake Bob', echoing the earlier stigmatisation of 'Pig Iron Bob' Menzies) off from his own family, so it also divided Ray Gietzelt off from his brother, Arthur, and created divisions within the union. "Until recent times," the General Secretary said in opening his annual report to the 59th Federal Council held straight after the 1979 Congress,

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49. Interview with R. Cameron, Glen Iris, 23-24 February 1983.
50. See General Secretary's Report, Sydney, 1979. Also see: Sydney Morning Herald, 28 December 1983; P. Westmore, "Uranium and the Unions", Quadrant, October 1977, pp.53-54; Challenge, No.68, June 1984.

> our organisation was free of internal differences which seemed to so characterise the success of our organisation over the last two decades. It is unfortunate that differences of opinion have manifested themselves in recent years which have caused personal bitterness on some issues.(51)

For many on the left, particularly the Victorian Socialist Left which had assumed the national moral high ground, the union had sold out its principles for the sake of adding a few hundred more bodies to its membership when it should have been leading the opposition. For Ray Gietzelt, the union's obligation was to serve these workers like any others once they were on the job and, in the long run, the best service to all the members would be the continuing strength of the union. There would be another day and other important fights - winnable fights. To abstain from the industry would have been a soft-headed dereliction of duty to no-one's benefit but the right-wing unions and to the detriment of the workers.

The issue, as it was contested at the 1979 ACTU Congress, illustrates the changing character of the trade union movement. The ACTU Executive recommendation, which was to recognise the mines that were in operation while opposing further development, was supported by the old NCC right, the Hawke-Gietzelt centre-left coalition and the Soviet aligned communist party, all of whom were defeated by a coalition of the other two communist parties and the new left based in the white collar unions (which Hawke had been instrumental in bringing into the peak council). It was a question of generations and the issues that formed them as much as anything and the division was carried through to the Congress elections where Gietzelt's centre-left ticket was defeated for the first time since 1967. Indeed, two

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51. ibid.

'centre-left' tickets (both titled 'Official Progressive') were circulated and Gietzelt's good friend, Charlie Fitzgibbon from the Waterside Workers, lost the junior Vice-Presidency to a left-right ticket organised by the Metal Workers. The 1967-69 bloc that created the modern ACTU was all but broken by the fruit of its own handiwork. A week after this Congress Hawke announced his candidature for parliament and within twelve months was in Canberra.(52)

The ambiguity on the left was also reflected in distressing internal conflicts in the union. In 1982 the Federal Executive was compelled to adjudicate over an intense personal struggle for the control of its Tasmanian Branch between Leo Brown and Norm Hanscombe. Brown, who was also known as the 'Godfather' in Tasmanian labour circles, and Hanscombe, who was known as 'Gumshoe' by the New South Wales right for the relentless way in which he tracked them in the union's fights with the NCC in the early 1970s, both had long records of sterling service.(53) This was followed in 1983 by a challenge to Ray Hogan, who, ironically, now found himself branded as being on the right when seven of his Victorian Branch organisers went on strike over a claim for a 38-hour week in the union office. Typically, the FMWU's Federal Council had refused to countenance the shorter working week for its own officers and organisers before it was achieved by the majority of its members and the conflict developed into a full-blown struggle for the Branch. It is ample testimony to the organisational strength and respect commanded by the union's government that it could retain its second largest Branch against a full-scale attack by seven of its eight organisers. When it eventually came to a membership ballot, Ray Hogan and the rest of the Branch's elected officials

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52. B. d'Alpuget, op.cit., pp.382-89; J.S. Hagan (1982), op.cit., pp.387-89.
53. General Secretary's Report, Deakin, 1982.

retained their positions by a two-to-one majority of the votes.(54) The point is, however, that Hogan had been personally responsible for selecting every one of the organisers and, as in Tasmania the previous year, the ready availability of opposing left-wing positions underscored the more widespread national and, indeed, international fraying of the old orthodoxies.

Finally, of course, there was Ray Gietzelt's own close personal relationship with Bob Hawke who, by the time of the 1979 ACTU Congress, had himself become a figure of intense left-wing controversy. The Victorian left in particular regarded him with a hostility that reached back even before his election to the ACTU Presidency. The charges were various, ranging from principled opposition to Hawke's advocacy on behalf of Israel and in favour of uranium mining through to suspicion of his consensus style of leadership and his role on the Labor Party's National Executive in its intervention to dilute the radicalness of the post-split Victorian Branch in 1970 (a move exacted by the Executive as the price for its Gietzeld-led intervention in the New South Wales Branch). The hostility fed prejudices which bred wilder charges about his personal friendships with businessmen, the size of his house and so on.(55) They regarded him as an opportunist and a traitor, although the most hard line among them denied he was a traitor: they said he had never been of or for the working class. Gietzelt's loyalty, however, was unshakeable.

When Hawke became Prime Minister in March 1983 the tension within the left over his personality stood to be compounded by the inevitable tensions that arise between the limitations of parliamentarianism and

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54. General Secretary's Report, Coolangatta, 1984.
55. B. d'Alpuget, op.cit., pp.268-69, 304,06, 356-57, 380-81.

the aspirations of the trade union movement. The situation was made worse by the fact that his ascendancy had been at the cost of Bill Hayden's leadership. Unlike Hawke, who now claimed to represent the centre of the political spectrum and found his main body of political support within the New South Wales right-wing machine, Hayden was still publicly committed to the socialist banner and he had widespread support within the FMWU, including the loyalty of its Assistant General Secretary and Gietzelt's most likely successor, Martin Ferguson.

Almost exactly twelve months after Hawke's election, at the FMWU's first quarterly Federal Executive Meeting on 11 April 1984, Ray Gietzelt stunned the union by suddenly announcing his retirement. Technically, at the age of 62 there was still a little over two years before his time was officially up, but the surprise was greater than this would indicate for such was the man's authority and so much was his identity entwined with that of the union that it was not uncommon to hear speculation that he would remain in his position long after the limit prescribed in the rule book. Certainly he was tremendously healthy. Indeed, if his parents were any guide he still had another full career in front of him as both were still fit and well at the age of 88.

Ray Gietzelt had clearly drawn up his own agenda. All he would say was that "it was necessary for me to finally make a decision in the best interests of the union".[56] It was, however, symptomatic of the wider personal ambiguity he had found himself in that two of the most common among numerous lines of speculation on the reasons embodied a contradiction. On the one hand, some held out that it was two years before the next union election and his retirement would

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56. R. Gietzelt to C.J. Raper, 13 April 1984, FMWU Papers.

allow Martin Ferguson sufficient time to settle into the leadership in the event of a right-wing challenge. On the other hand, others suggested that his retirement would free up the union's policy-making processes by removing its intimate association with the Prime Minister who, among other activities causing alarm on the left, was now urging the re-affiliation of the right-wing unions that had been outside the Labor Party in Victoria since the Great Split to further dilute that Branch's radical posture.(57)

One thing is certain. Ray Gietzelt rarely did anything for only one reason. His working files reveal an initial tendency to identify an objective followed by the painstaking building of a case. He would add information and reasons to his file as time went on, methodically listing all the points after an interval, ruling out some, highlighting others and then proceeding to add more before repeating the process after another interval. By the time he acted he would know his argument backwards, having tested it from all conceivable sides and sounded it before some of his most astute critics. Before anyone else, the file stored in his own head would have made him aware that his personal and political integrity were increasingly at odds. If he was to continue, his own or the union's position would need re-definition. Ray Gietzelt was not a person to compromise his loyalties - ever.

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"In a very real sense," said Bob Hawke in a Prime Ministerial Statement in response to the General Secretary's announced retirement,

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57. On this issue, see: Socialist Objective, Vol.4, No.1; Sydney Morning Herald, 2 April 1984.

"Ray Gietzelt made the Miscellaneous Workers Union what it is today."(58) Literally of course there is a contradiction in the suggestion that one individual can make a profoundly collective phenomenon such as a trade union, but Hawke's comment was not just over-generosity easily afforded on the occasion of a close friend, patron and supporter's retirement. It only echoes the higher claim in the refrain 'Ray Gietzelt is the FMWU', which could be commonly heard around the labour movement, among employers and in the back rooms of courthouses during this period.

There was a tendency to magnify Ray Gietzelt's presence and contribution, particularly by those who benefited most from his stubborn loyalty. When all allowance is made, however, there can be no doubt that he was the principal cohesive force within the union and one of the most outstanding centralising and disciplining agents over this or any other time in the labour movement's history. His ability to render whatever relationships he found himself in effective, whether they be the 'waifs and strays' he found on the shop floors of the FMWU, or the delegates at ACTU or Labor Party Conferences, was extraordinary - to the extent that his biography forms one of the guiding threads of Australian political history over this period.

His two outstanding qualities were his absolute reliability and his capacity for hard work. They were qualities for which he received almost universal recognition, from friends and foes. His close contemporaries overwhelmed him with their tributes on his retirement. "I knew perhaps better than anyone", wrote Hawke,

> the magnificent contribution Ray made to Australian unionism over this time. He brought to the ACTU those personal qualities that

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58. Federation News, Vol.11, No.2, May 1984.

> are his hallmark - decency, honesty, courage and compassion - qualities that put him in the front line of the Australian labour movement.(59)

The same sentiment issued from Cliff Dolan, who had followed Hawke into the ACTU Presidency. "Ray has been one of the great trade unionists in the history of this country," he wrote on hearing of his retirement, "Hard work, a sense of industrial realism, honesty and trust have been his hallmarks. I have never known a single union official to question any of these qualities."(60) Dolan's successor, Bill Kelty, was of the same mind.(61)

Hawke, Neville Wran and Lionel Murphy all spoke at an occasion hosted by the union to pay tribute to Gietzelt's career - certainly the only time a current New South Wales Premier, Australian Prime Minister and High Court Judge have ever done such a thing for a trade union leader. "He has made a great, great contribution to the political side of the labour movement," said Hawke,

> and we are all in various ways indebted to him ... a contribution not only to the labour movement of this country, but to the people of this country, a contribution that has been unrivalled in the time that I have been in the position to make these sort of judgements. Australia this night is a better place because of what [he] has done.(62)

It was the same with Murphy:

> Integrity was one of his outstanding characteristics. That integrity has been demonstrated again and again in the labour movement, industrial and political. It is the reason why so many unions have been willing to merge and make this union into the great union it is - because they believed and trusted the word of

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59. ibid.
60. ibid.
61. B. Kelty, "Speech", Maroubra, October 1986.
62. R.J.L. Hawke, "Speech", Randwick, 19 July 1984.

the leader of the union ... The Miscellaneous Workers is now a united, strong, secure, soundly led union, a tribute to Ray's unremitting toil, dedication, strength, loyalty and inspiring leadership.(63)

"He is a true man," said Wran, "he is a loyal man, loyal to himself, to the labour movement."(64) Employers, public servants, trade unionists and politicians of all persuasions from all parts of the country telephoned or wrote to the union to send similar tributes to his honesty, dedication and achievement.(65)

On any issue, Gietzelt had always been driven by a need to satisfy himself to a degree that few others required. If anything, he tended to overwork, to over prepare for any contest, always putting the onus on those around him to do the same. And when he had not been working, he had been usually preparing for work. Whenever asked about how to lead a successful trade union, he would typically say "work harder than your opponents".(66) Throughout his career it was generally estimated that he put in a 60 to 70-hour week and a good deal of the rest of his time was taken up with looking after his physical health. "Gietzelt is a glutton for work," wrote one journalist, "[it is] a characteristic that got him where he is, a non-smoker and an all round surfer, described by a colleague as 'the Spartan' and by himself as a 'fitness fanatic'."(67) "I'll say one thing," said Jack Dwyer, "he got out and did the bloody job."(68) "When it came to the union," recalled Neville Wran:

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63. L.K. Murphy, "Speech", Randwick, 19 July 1984.
64. N.K. Wran, "Speech", Randwick, 19 July 1984.
65. See Gietzelt Papers.
66. Federation News, Vol.11, No.2, May 1984.
67. Australian, 24 January 1970. Also see: Sydney Morning Herald, 29 July 1967; Daily Mirror, 19 December 1968; Australian, 28 January 1970; Sydney Morning Herald, 5 May 1970; Age, 28 November 1970; Sydney Morning Herald, 17 July 1982.
68. Interview with J.J. Dwyer, Pagewood, 28 June 1982.

> he was a big asker and he expected the results to be delivered. He would never hesitate to be on your doorstep. Never hesitated to ring you up and never once expected you to be surprised that he wanted something for his union or wanted one of its causes or indeed the labour movement's causes advanced.(69)

"If he has a fault," said Lionel Murphy, "it is that he has worked too hard. Much too hard."(70) "The bugger never stops," quipped one of the younger ACTU Executive members.(71)

The devotion was complete. Twice he turned down offers of much higher paid positions on the Commonwealth Arbitration Court.(72) "Ray is a man who, in my opinion, could have done anything," said Neville Wran:

> He would have done anything well that he chose to do. If he had gone into parliament he could have risen to any position. He had plenty of opportunities to do that. He had plenty of opportunities to go on to the Industrial Bench. He only had to snap his fingers and he was there. He had plenty of opportunities to take positions in which he could gain satisfaction and a great deal of personal aggrandisement. But always Ray stuck with the cause he believed in most of all and that was his union and the members of that union and the philosophy they adopted and the philosophy for which they fought.(73)

"You cannot fight on all fronts," Roy Cameron would tell him.(74) "Look Ray, you are not God," Dwyer would irritate him. "He was a moralist" summed up Neil Byron.(75) "You would never meet a more honest man," said Associate Professor Jim Hagan of Wollongong

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69. N.K. Wran, "Speech", Randwick, 19 July 1984.
70. L.K. Murphy, "Speech", Randwick, 19 July 1984.
71. Australian, 26-27 May 1984.
72. Australian, 18 December 19784; C. Cameron, op.cit., pp.66, 227.
73. N.K. Wran, "Speech", Randwick, 19 July 1984.
74. Interview with R.H. Cameron, Glen Iris, 23-24 February 1983.
75. Interviews with J.J. Dwyer, Pagewood, 28 June 1982; N.A. Byron, Darwin,

University, with whom Gietzelt made arrangements to have, not only this history written, but histories of the ACTU and two other trade unions. When asked whether he had any fun in his time with the union, his answer was typically serious: "no, we had an important job to do."(76) Not long after his retirement the Prime Minister honoured his mate with the Order of Australia, asked him to join a national inquiry into the automative industry and appointed him to the board of the national airline, QANTAS. "If any at QANTAS have the slightest suspicion that he will be a seat-warmer," warned Murphy, "they should get in touch with TAA. There he has accumulated its biggest ever customer file of suggestions for better service. That is not what they call it all the time, but its what he calls it."(77)

If Gietzelt was a great man, like nearly all great men of this period of Australian history his capacity to achieve also rested to an extent that few will ever know, not on the rest of the union and the labour movement, but on another social class: the women who provided him with personal services and support. This, of course, was the other side of the ideology of the 'labour strong man'. Gietzelt simply would not have been able to devote himself to the FMWU in the way he did without the willingness of his wife Violet to carry out the duties of the traditional housewife and shoulder the major share of the responsibility for raising their two children. While he was organising the terrain on which the country's labour movement turned, Violet was confined to long hours of demanding domestic drudgery, solitude and worry to organise his personal base. Lionel Murphy was the most sensitive. "The labour movement should be grateful to her," he said on Gietzelt's retirement:

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76. Interview with R. Gietzelt, Sydney, 29 May 1984.
77. L.K. Murphy, "Speech", Randwick, 19 July 1984.

> It has not been easy. Throughout these 30 years Ray has only had one love affair outside his marriage and that's been the Miscellaneous Workers Union and she has been a very demanding mistress. His children, his family realised and understood his dedication to the union. They have suffered for it somewhat, but they loved him all the same.(78)

Even left-wing trade union leaders such as Gietzelt, who fought with their full resources to improve the lot of their women members at work and the rights of women generally, had a great deal of trouble coming to terms with gender equality in their own domestic lives. His conservativeness in this regard extended into his own office where his relations with women staff, who were all employed in subordinate positions in the Federal Office, remained confined within respectable middle class conventions. Even his two loyal, long serving personal Secretaries, Alexis Dumas and Joan Edmunds, were always "Miss Dumas" and "Mrs Edmunds", while he remained "Mr G". To the "boys" in the office, however, it was either his first name or "the Gaffer". The only common ground was in the paternal "Uncle Ray". In this sense, Ray Gietzelt's time had also been largely eclipsed at his retirement.

And ultimately, of course, we must see beyond the individual to the complex of relations that constituted the union itself. As significant as Gietzelt was to the making of the FMWU, a trade union can never be just a product of any arbitrary or idiosyncratic set of actions by any autonomous, defined and limited individual, as Gietzelt himself was always the first to acknowledge. It can only be a measure of the capacity of the individual to understand, master, modify and develop the ensemble of relationships that constitute the union through active engagement with them and the wider social relations of

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78. ibid.

which they are a partial expression. No individual or union exists on their own, in and for themselves, but only in relationship with those who define them, and who they themselves define in turn. As the relationships change, develop or expand, so does the individual or union that they constitute in a process of reciprocal determination and realisation. Ray Gietzelt's effectiveness derived, not from the imposition of his own individual autonomous will, but from the practical process of actions he took in forging effective material relationships with other individuals and organisations in the name of the union. By the time he resigned these relationships had taken on their own self-sustaining life. Indeed, in the sense that the great leader also carried with him residues from a past that had now been superseded, he lifted a weight from the union.

Martin Ferguson, as all had supposed, was elected unopposed as the FMWU's seventh General Secretary on 1 June 1984. In many ways he was uniquely qualified to take on the leadership. Like Gietzelt, his family was steeped in working class politics. His father had had a life-time in left-wing trade union and political circles, had been elected as Deputy Leader of the New South Wales Labor Party with Wran's ascendancy in 1973 and became Deputy Premier after the Party's victory in 1976, a position in which he served with distinction up until February 1984. In a situation almost parallel to that which had existed between Ray and Arthur Gietzelt, Martin's brother Laurie was elected to the New South Wales Parliament in his father's place. The new General Secretary's other brother was an organiser with the Building Workers' Industrial Union. He himself had been a rugby league footballer with the Western Suburbs Club, had been active in Young Labor since a boy and had joined the FMWU in 1975, becoming Assistant General Secretary in 1981. As if to round off the complete

circle of Australian working class culture, he also had a Catholic education, his mother being a staunch believer. "He was a great little fellow," Ray said, "I promoted him whenever I got the chance."(79) The respect was mutual. "When a bloke like Gietzelt gives you a chance," said Ferguson, who had contemplated other careers, "you don't say no".(80)

Other differences, however, were apparent. As did his brothers, Martin had a university education. His honours degree in economics from Sydney University reflected the more general internalisation of tertiary education within the trade union movement's leadership. It was not long, also, before the first women took up positions in the research arm of the union's Federal office. Although careful not to move too quickly, plans were also laid for the publication of a new, more sophisticated journal for distribution to the union's 4,000 delegates and additional organisers began to be located in the far north of Western Australia, in Darwin, Alice Springs and in other country regions. By the time Ferguson delivered his first General Secretary's report to the union's 65th Federal Council in October 1985 it was apparent that new energy was being applied under all the FMWU's now traditional organisational headings. It was 70 years since the Federation had been registered, it was the first time the great union's supreme governing body had convened in Darwin and the range of activities outlined in the report was unprecedented.

International action remained as important as ever. The New Zealand Federated Caretakers', Cleaners', Lift Attendants and Watchmen's Industrial Association of Workers was represented at the Council, Federal President and New South Wales Branch Secretary, Chris

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79. Interview with R. Gietzelt, Sylvania, 26 March 1985.
80. Interview with M. Ferguson, Sydney, 22 June 1982.

Raper, reported on the meeting of the Executive Committee of the International Federation of Chemical, Energy and General Workers Union in Geneva and preparations were made for the union to be representated at the forthcoming World Conference on Occupational Health and Safety in Finland, the Asian and Pacific Seminar in Indonesia and the Energy and Chemical Industry Conferences in Germany. Victorian Branch Secretary and Federal Vice President, Ray Hogan, reported on the Pacific Trade Union Forum and an invitation was extended for a delegation from the Soviet Union's Local Industries and Public Service Workers' Union to attend the next Council.

In line with the internationalism that had pre-occupied the union almost without interruption since 1917, the new General Secretary surveyed political and trade union events world wide, dealing with the United States, South America, Africa, Great Britain, the Middle East, the Soviet Union and the Pacific Region, reporting on wins and losses by working people across the globe and drawing out the lessons for Australia. Among the international campaigns the union had involved itself in over the previous twelve months, it had given financial support for the Chilean trade union movement and the strengthening of trade unionism in the Philippines. Donations had been made toward sponsoring visits by members of the International Solidarity Commission to Australia to explain developments in El Salvador, support had been lent to the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Co-ordinating Committee and to the Australians for Kanak Independence Campaign in New Caledonia. Representations had also been made to the Commonwealth Government on the failure of an Australian company to pay national wage increases in the Philippines and over the State of Emergency in South Africa. During the year the union had also helped sponsor the visit of a representative of the South African Congress of

Trade Unions, had intervened before the Foreign Investment Review Board opposing a South African takeover of an Australian company and had affiliated to the Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad. "It is disappointing to report," said Ferguson, "that, since the last Federal Council, the world continues to be troubled with racial and political oppression, famine, local wars and the ever-present threat of nuclear annihilation."

Nationally, the union was represented on the Labor Party's Executive in every State and Territory and on the National Executive. The issues that had to be faced were immense, with the relationship between the trade union movement and the Commonwealth Labor government under stress due to the prospect of wage discounts for the effects of a devalued dollar, decisions to deregister the rebel Builders' Labourers' Federation and the Senate blocking legislation to remove restrictions on improved taxation and the right to strike in support of other unions. Loyalty was also being put to the test by the government's decision to open the country to foreign banks, its support for a broadly based indirect tax and its failure to support the independence movement in East Timor. Beyond this lay more drastic threats in the form of the extreme right-wing policies being thrust onto the agenda by well-organised conservative minorities: the prospect of privatisation, an attack on electrical workers by the Queensland Government and de-regulation of the labour market. "It is up to the Miscellaneous Workers' Union, one of Australia's largest unions to confront these issues in the process of maintaining its own strength," stated Gietzelt's young successor, "I believe that the current problems can be overcome, but not without sacrifice, dedication and a will to struggle."

Insofar as the immediate economic lot of the members was concerned, the picture was no less complex. Overriding the union's policies was the Prices and Incomes Accord between the trade union movement and the Commonwealth Government, a formal pact which turned around co-operation with the government's employment and anti-inflationary policies in exchange for the maintenance of living standards. With the exception of John Curtin's war-time leadership, no Australian government had ever incorporated the trade union movement so comprehensively within its policies to manage the national economy. The statistics all spoke of success. Unemployment, which was over ten percent when Hawke had been elected four-and-a-half years earlier, had fallen to a little over eight percent (although almost 20 percent of young people were still without jobs and the length of time the average person was unemployed had lengthened to around a year). Inflation, which had been almost twelve percent at the time of Hawke's election, had fallen to below seven percent. Increases in award rates of pay had fallen dramatically from over twelve percent in 1982 to eleven percent in 1983, nine percent in 1984 and under three percent in 1985. This, however, had been partially offset by the full-scale reintroduction of a national health care service, taxation cuts and the prospect of wide-scale extension of superannuation benefits in exchange for the rise in productivity. The FMWU's members were among those with the most to gain from these broad improvements in the 'social wage'. Superannuation, particularly, had been, as Ferguson put it, "for too long the right of the privileged," enjoyed as it was by "less than half the workforce and only a quarter of working women."

Beyond these major fronts, there were a myriad of smaller if hardly less significant battlefields. The union was pursuing 13 cases

through the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration system to rectify 'anomalies', inequities' and changes in 'work-value', the 38-hour week was in the process of being extended to the last twelve percent of the members, the equal pay principles established by Whitlam's government in 1972 were still being struggled over, there was the issue of extending over-award payments among low-paid workers and questions about the government's new Occupational Health and Safety Commission, new job security standards, adoption leave, the right to have English taught on the job, portability for long service leave and the further segmentation of the service industries through franchising. And then there was the major attack on trade union and human rights by the Queensland Government, and the Australian Government's Committee of Inquiry into the Australian Industrial Relations System, known as the Hancock Inquiry, both of which contained the potential to redraw the rules of the game.

Continuing to underpin the union's effectiveness, and ultimately insuring the maintenance of the whole political and legal culture within which most of its activities were conducted, there remained the FMWU's capacity for direct action. The General Secretary reported on 16 different sections that had involved the union's Federal Office in direct conflict and the Branch Secretaries all told of more. In Queensland, Branch Secretary Wilf Ardill reported that waterfront workers, paintmakers, tanners, margarine makers, biscuit and pie makers and school cleaners had all left their posts at various times to protest against the government's assumption of trade union and human rights, including on one occasion to join with 150,000 other workers in a major demonstration. In Victoria, Ray Hogan reported on some 36 conflicts stretching across its membership sections over issues ranging from unfair dismissals through to the use of listening

devices. In Tasmania, the new Branch Secretary, Kerry O'Brien, told of the successful extension of the 38-hour week following action by cleaners in the State Education Department. In New South Wales, the watchmen had placed bans on ships trading with South Africa. Nationally, paint workers had undertaken a campaign based on overtime and other bans to underline the seriousness of their claims over long service leave and superannuation and gold miners had left their jobs for a week in the Northern Territory to force the militant Peko-Wallsend company to adopt health and safety standards. The list could go on. Employers in industries ranging from construction, metals, plaster of paris, plastics, rubber and motor vehicles, through to child care, fire fighting, entertainment and photographics still needed to feel the FMWU's militancy to be convinced of the need to deal seriously with the concerns of its workers.(81)

This great convergence of people, forces and resources under the banner of the Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union of Australia was, of course, in one sense an enormously impressive inheritance. The breadth of its interests, activities and responsibilities was massive and we may be grateful to all those whose energies created the union. Yet, in another sense, the extent of this inheritance was a measure of human failure. Who in 1915 could have anticipated the local, regional, national and international upheaval, atrocity and struggle that would mark the history of the next 70 years, creating the content out of which the union was made? Who in 1915 could have imagined that, for all the effort that the existence of such an institution registers, in 70 years' time the plain human and social need for a strong trade union movement could be so undiminished? Who in 1985 could say with any confidence that the good life in the good society

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81. General Secretary's Report, Darwin, 1985.

where each could contribute according to ability and take according to need was really any closer? Who could say without hesitation that the men and women represented by the FMWU could look to their next 70 years with optimism about their chances of being free of fear and need when the hopes of so many of their predecessors had been so misplaced? All we can be genuinely sure of as we look back on these 70 years is that without the union and the great movement of which it has been such an integral part there is no doubt the odds for a better future would be a good deal worse.

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II The FMWU's Records

With some exceptions, the records of the FMWU up until 1955 are held at the Archives of Business and Labour, Australian National University, Canberra. These principally comprise: NSW Branch Minutes (1920-1946); Victorian Branch Minutes (1916-1946).

The post-1955 records of the FMWU are vast and unsorted. The largest collection is held by the union itself in Sydney, although all Branches have collections. The scale of the records prohibits any comprehensive or systematic bibliography. The principal sources examined were Federal Council Minutes (1915-1985), the General and Branch Secretary's Reports, correspondence files, membership registers, balance sheets, rule books and election material.

The union also holds records of the following organisations, all of which were examined: Australian Leather and Allied Trades Employees Federation; Western Australian Cleaners, Caretakers, Lift Attendants, Window Cleaners, Attendants and Watchmen's Industrial Union of Workers; Pre-School Teachers' Union of Western Australia; Western Australian Government Water, Sewerage and Drainage Employees' Industrial Union; Western Australian Coastal Aerated Water and Cordial Manufacturers Employees' Industrial Union; Western Australian Jewellers, Watchmakers, Optical Technicians and Allied Trades Industrial Union; Western Australian Chemical and Allied Trades Industrial Union; New South Wales Sugar Workers' Union; North Australian Workers' Union; Federated Lift Attendants' Union of Victoria.

III Other FMWU Records

The Battye Library, Perth, Western Australia, holds the records of the following unions, which were consulted:

Metropolitan Rope and Twine Manufacturers Employees' Industrial Union; West Australian Saddlery and Leather Workers Trades Employees' Industrial Union; Metropolitan Wool Scouring and Fellmongery Employees' Industrial Union; United Broom and Brushmakers' Industrial Union of Workers; Metropolitan Soap and Candle Manufacturers' Industrial Union of Workers; Metropolitan Water Supply Union of Western Australia.

The University of New South Wales and Sydney University also hold large unsorted collections of FMWU records deposited by J.J. Dwyer (Dwyer Papers), which were examined.

IV Other Union and Labour Records

The V. Molesworth, J. Dwyer and H. Mercer Papers were examined in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, as were the minutes of the Communist Party of Australia and the minutes and reports of the New South Wales Trades and Labour Council/Sydney District Council of the Australasian Labour Federation, Sydney Labour Council/New South Wales Labor Council.

Other collections included:

Rules, minutes and correspondence of the Brisbane Industrial Council/Queensland Trades and Labour Council, Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

Minutes of the Tasmanian Trades and Labor Council, Hobart Trades Hall Council.

Minutes of the Victorian Trades Hall Council, University of Melbourne.

V Private Collections

Records were examined or received from D.C. Howitt, R. Gietzelt, J.J. Dwyer and R.A. Cameron.

VI Interviews

Interviews with the following people were conducted between 1983 and 1986:

D.W. Allen, S.J. Bevan, C. Brown, L. Brown, N.A. Byron, R.A. Cameron, A. Curry, J.J. Dwyer, D. Eglinton, D. Elder, M.J. Ferguson, R. Gietzelt, V. Heron, H. Handmere, R. Hogan, D.C. Howitt, W.S. Latter, S. Lippiatt, B. Manning, J. Meaney, B. Morley, J.A. McGinty, M. Rear, J. Troy, F. Whitby, B. Wood, G.T. Young.

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Final Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Industrial Arbitarion in the State of New South Wales, 1914;
New South Wales Arbitration Reports (various);
New South Wales Census, 1891, 1901;
New South Wales Industrial Gazette, 1911-1985;
New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 1900-1920;
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APPENDICES:

I - Membership Statistics

II - Amalgamations

III - Executive Officials

IV - Evolution of the Federal Constitution

APPENDIX I - MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS

YEAR	TOTAL	NSW	VIC	QLD	S.A.	TAS.	W.A.	ACT	N.T.
1915	1,420	1,300	120						
1916	2,074	1,600	427	47					
1917	2,690	2,038	427	225					
1918	1,754	1,250	263	241					
1919	2,444	1,500	362	582					
1920	2,794	1,564	585	645					
1921	5,672	4,200	900	572					
1922	4,143	2,336	955	852					
1923	4,142	2,800	441	901					
1924	-	2,101	-	953					
1925	6,061	3,000	-	-					
1926	7,044	3,539	1,052	1,497					
1927	8,287	4,300	1,660	2,289	38				
1928	7,657	4,100	1,206	2,205	146				
1929	7,476	4,000	1,252	2,078	146				
1930	-	3,000	-	-	-				
1931	-	3,300	-	-	-				
1932	-	3,400	-	-	-				
1933	4,700	3,450	-	1,534	-				
1934	5,882	3,232	995	1,655	-				
1935	6,727	3,580	1,016	2,038	92				
1936	7,116	3,620	1,187	2,217	92				
1937	7,738	3,704	1,274	2,409	351				
1938	8,798	4,111	1,634	2,542	511				
1939	9,570	4,311	1,909	2,785	565				
1940	-	4,785	-	3,191	-				
1941	-	5,850	2,322	3,336	-				
1942	13,705	7,180	2,842	2,561	1,122				
1943	13,769	7,403	2,842	2,472	1,052				
1944	13,705	7,147	2,842	2,401	1,315				
1945	14,037	7,617	2,920	2,128	1,372				
1946	14,862	8,073	2,711	2,450	1,628				
1947	16,930	8,845	3,597	2,732	1,756				
1948	17,355	8,754	4,030	2,873	1,698				
1949	16,610	8,431	3,583	2,901	1,695				

YEAR	TOTAL	NSW	VIC	QLD	S.A.	TAS.	W.A.	ACT	N.T.
1950	17,609	8,488	3,867	3,234	1,973	47			
1951	18,253	8,710	3,788	3,699	2,011	45			
1952	19,992	9,455	4,005	4,551	1,933	48			
1953	20,250	8,986	4,320	4,915	1,978	51			
1954	24,204	12,143	4,332	5,659	2,013	57			
1955	25,578	12,257	4,720	6,518	1,977	60	46		
1956	26,483	14,210	4,761	5,442	1,951	63	56		
1957	33,058	19,935	5,515	5,212	2,088	166	137		
1958	35,438	20,417	6,350	5,290	2,519	404	458		
1959	38,165	21,022	6,354	6,726	2,763	573	727		
1960	40,933	20,633	7,086	8,224	2,988	639	1,125	298	
1961	44,130	21,700	7,986	8,923	3,086	731	1,285	419	
1962	47,087	21,531	9,644	9,799	3,359	795	1,416	543	
1963	50,732	23,023	10,490	10,662	3,577	967	1,492	521	
1964	51,908	23,216	10,547	11,245	3,842	952	1,562	544	
1965	53,328	23,384	10,898	11,340	4,311	1,137	1,660	598	
1966	55,724	25,211	11,153	11,102	4,611	1,287	1,829	531	
1967	62,532	27,760	14,546	10,970	5,208	1,530	1,883	635	
1968	71,614	29,055	14,977	10,371	5,434	1,658	2,023	783	
1969	72,637	30,780	14,693	16,076	5,552	1,798	2,904	834	
1970	74,671	31,157	17,483	15,795	4,524	1,991	2,820	901	
1971	83,046	35,794	17,583	15,014	4,795	2,197	2,995	1,068	3,600
1972	82,397	32,955	17,728	15,847	5,646	2,424	2,942	1,188	3,667
1973	81,298	32,855	18,414	12,901	6,949	2,455	3,179	1,805	2,740
1974	90,435	34,486	19,522	13,231	10,263	2,412	3,730	2,056	4,735
1975	88,064	32,836	18,825	13,644	11,565	2,633	3,660	1,900	3,001
1976	94,856	33,429	19,678	18,009	13,027	2,613	3,837	1,945	2,318
1977	93,779	30,655	22,776	18,595	10,835	2,204	3,942	1,917	2,855
1978	88,644	31,015	19,995	17,884	8,855	2,067	3,811	1,859	3,158
1979	92,647	32,926	20,857	17,947	8,278	2,395	4,169	1,922	4,153
1980	92,248	32,323	20,782	17,924	8,311	2,454	4,021	1,770	4,663
1981	110,170	33,909	21,405	19,194	19,257	2,404	6,251	1,874	4,876
1982	109,074	32,985	22,464	21,478	18,654	2,343	5,926	1,768	3,461
1983	118,192	32,162	23,308	18,594	16,875	2,151	19,636	1,786	3,680
1984	121,658	33,515	23,005	18,805	18,290	2,220	19,472	1,981	4,370
1985	124,860	33,005	24,938	19,566	19,128	2,306	19,750	2,288	3,879

Totals do not always equal prior to 1955 because, inter alia, of different timing of counts and different criteria for membership.

Sources: Industrial Registries; FMWU Branch and General Secretary's Reports, Minute Books and Balance Sheets; Queensland Year Book.

APPENDIX II - AMALGAMATIONS

At the moment of its foundation in 1915 the FMWU was already a composite of three originally separate State based unions: the Passenger and Goods Lift Attendants' Union of New South Wales (est. 1909); the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Union of New South Wales (est. 1910, from 1914 known as the Miscellaneous Workers' Union of New South Wales); the Watchmen, Caretakers and Male Office Cleaners' Union of Victoria (est. 1913, from 1914 known as the Watchmen, Caretakers and Cleaners' Union of Victoria).

1916 Watchmen, Caretakers, Cleaners, Lift Attendants and Gatekeepers' Association of Queensland
1920 Tent and Tarpaulin Makers and Machiners' Union of New South Wales
1920 Billiard Markers' Union of New South Wales
1921 Undertakers' Assistants and Cemetery Employees' Union of Queensland
1921 Female Office Cleaners' Union of Victoria
1922 State School Caretakers' Association of Victoria
1923 Licensed Billposters' Union of New South Wales
1924 Chemists Assistants' Association of Queensland
1932 Elliotts and Australian Drug Ltd. Chemical Workers Employees' Union of New South Wales
1944 Photographic Employees' Association of Queensland
1945 Hairdressers and Wigmakers' Union of Queensland
1946 Watchmakers, Jewellers and Optical Workers' Union of South Australia
1948 Wharf Watchmen's Union of Tasmania
1949 Victorian Dental Technicians' Union
1952 Pharmaceutical Employees' Association of South Australia
1957 Dairy Factory Employees' Union of Western Australia
1958 Bag, Sack and Textile Union of Western Australia
1958 Lift Drivers' Union of South Australia
1959 Metropolitan Soap and Candle Manufacturers' Employees' Union of Western Australia
1959 Metropolitan Wool Scouring and Fellmongery Union of Western Australia
1959 United Broom and Brushmakers' Union of Western Australia
1961 Saddlery and Leather Union of Western Australia
1961 Undertakers' Assistants and Cemetery Employees' Union of Western Australia*
1962 Federated Lift Attendants' Union of Victoria
1962 Tobacco, Cigar and Cigarette Manufacturers' Employees' Union of Western Australia*
1962 Metropolitan Rope and Twine Employees' Union of Western Australia
1962 Photographic Employees' Union of Western Australia*
1963 Collectors of Marine Stores Union of Western Australia
1966 Hairdressers' Union of Tasmania*
1967 Australian Leather and Allied Trades Employees' Federation
1968 Chemical and Allied Trades Union of Western Australia
1968 Ambulance Services Union of Western Australia
1968 Amalgamated Foodstuffs and Allied Industries Union of Queensland
1970 Queensland Ambulance Employees' Union

1970 Sugar Workers Employees' Union of New South Wales
1971 North Australian Workers' Union
1971 Jewellers, Watchmakers, Optical Technicians and Allied Trades Union of Western Australia
1975 Coastal Aerated Waters and Cordial Manufacturers' Employees' Union of Western Australia
1976 Operative Sailmakers' Trade Society of New South Wales
1980 Metropolitan Water Supply Union of Western Australia
1980 Northern Territory Fire Officers' Union
1980 Australian Government Workers' Association of South Australia
1980 Northern Territory Prison Officers' Association
1982 Pre-School Teachers and Associates' Union of Western Australia
1982 Cleaning, Security and Allied Employees' Union of Western Australia

Others administered by the FMWU:

Laundry Employees' Union of Western Australia
Coopers' Union of South Australia
Watchmakers and Jewellers' Union of Queensland
Tasmanian members of the Victorian Branch of the Clothing and Allied Trades Union of Australia

Sources: Industrial Registries, FMWU Annual Reports, Minute Books and Correspondence

* Indicates the Union was defunct at the time its coverage was taken in by the FMWU

APPENDIX III - EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

Federal

President

Henry W. Williams (1915-1926); Sidney James Bryan (1926-1927); William C. Gollan (1927-1930); William Henry Smith (1930-1953); Frederick Charles Parker (1953-1954); John Noel Shannon (1954-1955); Roy Angus Cameron (1955-1978); Christopher John Raper (1978-1985).

Vice President

Joan Davies (1915-1922); Joseph Coote (1923); Sidney James Bryan (1922-1926); James McConville (1926-1927); Florence Anderson (1927-1931); J. Southwood (1929-1930); Andrew McL'Crockatt (1930-1931); Margaret Colbourne (1931-1932); William C. Gollan (1931-1947); Joseph J. Bell (1933-1948); Stanley Charles Bevan (1947-1949); John Noel Shannon (1948-1954); Alexander Macpherson (1948-1952); Ernest Pederson (1949-1950); A. Govett (1951-1952); Frederick Charles Parker (1952-1953); Ralph E. Bannister (1952-1958); John Betteridge (1953-1957); Walter Costello (1954-1955); Malcolm Graham (1955-1959); Douglas Charleson Howitt (1957-1968); Glen Raymond Broomhill (1959-1965); William Thomas Ward (1959-1965); William Wharton (1965-1969); Frederick William Whitbey (1965-1969); Keith Campbell Blackwell (1968-1978); Donald Charles Lippiatt (1969-1976); Leo Brown (1969-1973); Harold Thomas Mellor (1973-1982); Clive Morris Brown (1976-1978); Walter Ronald John Eglinton (1978-1979); Norman Thomas Hanscombe (1979-1982); Raymond Hogan (1978-1985); Victor Stanley Heron (1982-1985); Wilfred Granville Ardill (1983-1985).

General Secretary

Joseph Coote (1915-1922); Frederick Katz (1922-1927); Sidney James Bryan (1927-1939); Harry James Harvey (1939-1949); Stanley Charles Bevan (1949-1955); Ray Gietzelt (1955-1984); Martin John Ferguson (1984-1985).

Assistant Secretary

George Henry Wallin (1915-1918); Harry Bessell (1918-1922); Donald Albert Hancock (1969-1973); Peter Ferdinand Talmacs (1973-1976); Harry Ernest Mitchell (1976-1985); Martin John Ferguson (1981-1984); Frank Raffaelli (1984-1985).

Trustees

James H. Sharman (1915-1916); Edward H. Shaw (1915-1916); Frederick C. Williams (1916-1918); James McConville (1918-1922).

Executive Members

Sidney O'Flaherty (1943-1946); Keith Campbell Blackwell (1956-1968); William Thomas Ward (1956-1959); Donald Charles Lippiatt (1959-1969); Leo Brown (1965-1969); Leslie McVeigh (1965-1973); Raymond Hogan (1968-1978); Harold Thomas Mellor (1969-1973); Barrymore Frederick Cavanagh (1970-1975); Kenneth Williams (1973-1976); Leslie Wood (1973-1979); Johnathon Martin Isaacs (1974-1978); Walter Ronald John Eglinton (1975-1978); Norman Thomas Hanscombe (1976-1979); Neil

Australia Byron (1978-1982); Clive Morris Brown (1978-1979); Wallace Joseph Page (1978-1984); James Andrew McGinty (1979-1985); Colin McJannett (1979-1982); Victor Stanley Heron (1979-1982); Raymond Edward Rushbury (1982-1985); Frank Raffaelli (1982-1984); Wilfred Granville Ardill (1982-1983); Kerry O'Brien (1983-1985); Owen Keith Salmon (1983-1984); Ian Williams West (1984-1985); Edward Forbes (1984-1985).

NSW Branch

President

Edward Harvey Shaw (1915-1916); Joseph Thomas Cummings (1916-1922); James McConville (1922-1927); Robert Webster (1927-1931); Thomas James Keniry (1931-1939); James Moore (1939-1941); Frederick Charles Parker (1941-1949); George Sharpe (1949-1955); Ray Gietzelt (1955-1962); Keith Campbell Blackwell (1962-1967); William Mathew Rigby (1967-1972); George Thomas Chaloner (1972-1974); Wallace Joseph Page (1975-1984); Jeff Roser (1984-1985).

Vice President

A. Hinton (1915-1920); J.B. Lee (1915-1920); Charles William Sykes (1920-1924); Christopher Young Hook (1920-1924); William Henry Smith (1924-1925); Lance Sharkey (1925-1926); George Sharpe (1926-1928); Richard Beashel (1928-1930); J.D. Scott (1928-1930); J.D. Lowe (1930-1931); James Moore (1930-1931); William Griffiths (1931-1936); J. Meade (1936-1938); Patrick Donnelly (1938-1940); Mervyn Wallace Matheson (1940-1941); Alfred James Hutchins (1941-1943); Harold Facer (1943-1944); George Sharpe (1944-1949); Percy L. Skenar (1949-1951); Henry Adamson (1951-1955); Sidney Nestor Smith (1955-1965); Edna Ethel Brown (1956-1962); Ray Gietzelt (1962-1973); Donald Albert Hancock (1973-1978); Keith Campbell Blackwell (1978-1982); Margaret Errey (1982-1985).

Secretary

Joseph Coote (1915-1924, 4 months in 1926); Christopher Young Hook (1924-1926); Robert Thomas Cash (1926-1931); William Henry Smith (1931-1952); Charles Frederick Parker (1952-1955); George Sharpe (1955-1956); Douglas Charleson Howitt (1956-1967); Keith Campbell Blackwell (1967-1977); Christopher John Raper (1977-1985).

Assistant Secretary

George Thomas Ford (1956-1966); John James Dwyer (1967-1974); Wallace Joseph Page (1974-1975); Christopher John Raper (1975-1977); Thomas O'Brien (1975-1982); John Cavers (1977-1985); Ian Williams West (1982-1985).

Treasurer

James McConville (1915-1922); William Walters (1922-1924).

Trustees

Michael J. Burke (1915-1917); Eric Withers (1915-1917); Clement Arnett Colland (1915-1917); Arthur Agnew (1917-1920); Alfred Armitage (1917-1920); Joseph Cummings (1917-1920); John Charles Belpitt (1920-1922); George Rees (1920-1921); Christopher Young Hook (1920-1922); James Duncan Jamieson (1921-1922); Lillian Creswick (1922-1924); Arthur Howes (1922-1924); Edward Sinclair (1922-1924); William Walters (1924-1925); Thomas Doherty (1924-1925); Isidore Edwin Ryan (1924-1925); Richard Beshel (1925-1926); Thomas Peters (1925-1926); Eva Hayden (1925-1926); Thomas McKindy (1926-1931); Robert Webster (1926-1927); William Walters (1922-1923); Victor Montgomery (1927-1929); James McConville (1927-1930, 1932-1938); Sidney Sullivan (1929-1932); Frederick Bohleson (1930-1931); Henry James Stewart (1930-1932); James Moore (1931-1938, 1941-1943); Ernest Pederson (1944-1945); Charles William Sykes (1937-1938, 1953-1958); Ernest Bede Cotter (1938-1940); Alfred James Wincote (1938-1946); Frederick Charles Parker (1940-1941, 1951-1952); James Evans (1943-1944, 1945-1956); William Smith (1945-1949); Henry Adamson (1947-1951); James Blackberry (1949-1953); William Henry Smith (1952-1953); William Edward Scott (1954-1962); Keith Campbell Blackwell (1955-1962); Harold George Tredigo (1957-1958); Alfred Edward Monk (1957-1961); William Dennis Boss (1962-1974); Edna Ethel Brown (1962-1967); Jean Grace Emerson (1964-1968); J. Organ (1967-1973); Norman Bray (1967-1968); Harris Burnham (1968-1973); Arthur Charles Ovenden (1968-1969); William D. Blue (1974-1975); John Allen McCarthy (1974-1978); Richard Noel Ross (1974-1980); Margaret Grace Schwebel (1974-1985); Army Selwyn Connor (1978-1982); Leslie Bruce Ellis (1980-1985); Irene Phipps (1982-1985).

Executive Members

Thomas Doherty (1946-1949); Patrick M. Keenan (1946-1955); D.F. Swannie (1946-1948); Percy Skenar (1948-1949); Ernest Pederson (1949-1951); Cecil Russell (1949-1953); Alfred James Wincote (1951-1955); H.E. Daunley (1953-1955); william Dennis Boss (1955-1959); Edward John Keech (1955-1965); Percy James Millan (1955-1962); James Reid (1959-1965); George S. Brard (1962-1965); Harry Burnham (1965-1968); Keith Warren (1965-1967); Leslie Robert Brookman (1967-1970); Allen Daley (1967); Arthur Charles Ovenden (1969-1974); John Parkinson (1969); Arthur Bruce Crowe (1970-1974); Elsa Dydowski (1970); Norman Bray (1971-1974); Grace Schwebel (1971-1974); Phyllis Green (1974-1978); Irene Thelma Phipps (1974-1976); Gloria Davis (1975-1976); William Tasman Thompson (1976-1978); Frederick Bede Croke (1976-1979); Jean Isabel Warrington (1978-1982); George McCoughan (1979-1982); Kemel Umit Ismen (1982-1985); Don Garcia (1982-1985); Laurice Thorley (1983-1985).

Victorian Branch

President

Henry W. Williams (1915-1925); James Darcy (1925-1941); Joseph J. Bell (1941-1949); William H. Ward (1949-1950); Ernest Edward Walsh (1950-1973); Roy Angus Cameron (1973-1978); Douglas William Allen (1978-1982); Henry Hodge Dunlop (1982-1985).

Vice President

William Williams (1915-1917); Joseph Skurrie (1917-1918); William J. Moran (1918-1919, 1920-1921); H.J. Robinson (1919-1920); M. Rogers (1921-1929); W. Buckley (1921); Thomas Cummings (1921-1922); James Darcy (1922-1925); B.Fleville (1925-1927); W. Green (1927-1928); J. Stapleton (1928-1929); C. Edwards (1929-1930); Mrs Hay (1929-1932); William Fraser (1930-1934); M. Newcombe (1932-1934); E. Winzer (1934-1935); H. Holmes (1935-1938); Charles Alexander Ross (1938-1942); John Robertson (1942-1945); William H. Ward (1945-1949); Richard James Slater (1949-1956); Michael Mooney (1956-1959); Vincent J. Scully (1959-1965); Leo Cantwell (1965-1974); Ernest Edward Walsh (1974-1978); Werner Julius Lowenstein (1978-1985).

Secretary

George Henry Wallin (1915-1918); Henry Edmund Bessel (19181-1919); William Friend (1919-1922); Frederick Katz (1922-1927); Henry Edmund Bessel (1927-1930); Florence Anderson (1930-1946); John Noel Shannon (1946-1956); Roy Angus Cameron (1956-1973); Raymond Hogan (1973-1985).

Assistant Secretary

Henry Edmund Bessel (1915-1918); Harold Thomas (1918-1921); Florence Anderson (1921-1930); John Noel Shannon (1930-1941); Roy Angus Cameron (1948-1956); K. Bickhom (1956-1958); John Humphries (1958-1959); Christopher Blackwell (1959-1960); Raymond Hogan (1960-1973); Edward Forbes (1973-1976); John Frank Neil (1976-1985).

Treasurer

Henry Edmund Bessel (1915-1918, 1919-1921); Harold Thomas (1918-1919); Ms Willis (1921-1922); Joseph J. Bell (1927-1929); W. Gallop (1929-1932); Charles Alexander Ross (1945-1967); Douglas William Allen (1967-1971); Ronald Rosewarne James (1971-1985).

Trustees

William Williams (1915-1921); William Smith (1915-1917); J. McGloskey (1915-1918); V.W. Lynch (1918-1920); Charles Faulks (1920-1921); M. Newcombe (1921-1931); John Hornley (1921-1922); Ms A. Hart (1922-1927); C. Edwards (1927-1929); E. Winzer (1927-1928, 1933-1934); W. Bate (1929-1930); W. Hippisley (1928-1932); Mr Beanland (1930-1931); Mr Gillespie (1931-1933); James Arrowsmith (1932-1933); J.J. Bell (1932-1941); Mr Tisell (1933-1934); H. Holmes (1934-1935); William Frazer (1934-1935); Charles Alexander Ross (1935-1940, 1945); C. Hunt (1935-1937); Roderick McKenzie (1937-1942); William H. Ward (1940-1945); R.W. Hunter (1941-1946); Robert J. Leonard (1942-1949); E. Ershold (1949); A. Ross (1947); James Sutton (1949); John C. Betteridge (1953); Michael Mooney (1953-1956); D. Ross (1959-1967); John Alphonse Carroll (1967-1974); Henry Hodge Dunlop (1974-1978); Annie Merle Cain (1978-1982); Douglas William Allen (1982-1984); R. Weeks (1984-1985).

Executive

John C. Betteridge (1946); A.D. Jones (1946); Richard Jans Slater (1946-1949); Richard Leonard (1949-1956); Leo Cantwell (1959, 1961-1965); James Sutton (1956); J.L. George (1956-1965); W. Cleeman (1956-1959); John Noel Shannon (1959-1962); John Alphonse Carroll (1962-1967, 1974-1982); A. Vici (1965-1973); A. Higgitt (1965-1971); A. Lloyd (1967-1973); Douglas William Allen (1971-1974, 1984-1985); Werner Julius Lowenstein (1971-1978); Henry Hodge Dunlop (1973-1974, 1979-1982); Frank Richardson (1973-1974); Annie Merle Cain (1974-1978); Michael Gordon Rogers (1978-1982); Eunice Veronica Sutherland (1978-1980); Joseph Bako (1982-1984); Beryl Jane Powell (1982-1985); Kenneth Lance Wearmouth (1982); F. Helmot (1983-1985).

Queensland Branch

President

Paul Creyton (1915-1920); W. Crain (1920-1927); William C. Gollan (1927-1929, 1929-1953); Andrew McL'Crockatt (1929); R.S.F. Greig (1953-1955); Malcolm Graham (1955-1959); William Thomas McGill (195-1965); Mark Dobson (1965-1974); Wilfred Granville Ardill (1974-1982); Hedley William Perry (1982-1984); David Keith Brown (1984-1985).

Vice President

W. Hampson (1915-1920); W. Carniegie (1920-1923); T. Wharton (1923-1924); R.L. Ault (1924-1925); D.G. Andrews (1924-1927); H.D. Cantwell (1925-1927); J. Wilkinson (1927-1929); William Mathewson (1927-1928, 1929, 1938-1941); Andrew McL'Crockatt (1928-1929); W. Brennan (1929); Harry Harvey (1929-1938); George Shaw (1941-1942); A. MacPherson (1942-1953); C. Toni (1953-1955); M. O'Dowd (1955-1956); Thomas Pedrazzini (1956-1959); John Alexandar Anderson (1959-1961); Mark Dobson (1961-1965); william Edward Stream (1965-1967); William John Hansen (1967-1974); Hedley William Perry (1974-1982); Norman Conway Rees (1982-1983); Wendy Turner (1983-1984); M. Davey (1984-1985).

Secretary

Frederick Charles Williams (1915-1918); G.W. Dawson (1918-1920); Sidney James Bryan (1920-1938); Harry James Harvey (1938-1947); Walter James Costello (1947-1956); William Ward (1956-1965); Frederick William Whitby (1965-1969); Harold Thomas Mellor (1969-1982); Wilfred Granville Ardill (1982-1985).

Assistant Secretaries

Robin Colin Greenleaf (1978-1982); John Anthony Cash (1982-1983); Paul Bernard Casey (1983-1985).

Treasurer

A. Gorman (1915-1921); J. Anderson (1921-1923); Miss Chesterton (1923-1924); Miss I. Christison (1924-1926); J.G. Coulter (1926); Mrs F. Taylor (1927); H. Llewelyn (1953-1959); Otto Arnold Bieleford (1959-1965); Harold Thomas Mellor (1965-1969).

Trustees

Alistair C. Macoll (1956, 1958-1959, 1965-1967); Harold Thomas Mellor (1955-1956, 1958-1959); William Edward Stream (1955-1956, 1958-1959); J.A. Anderson (1956-1959); J.C. McWalten (1956-1959); William E. Higgins (1958-1959, 1960-1961); Mark Dobson (1959-1961); Frederick Phillip Bromley (1959-1961); Kenneth Henry Alchin (1961-1965); Archibald Frederick (1961-1965); Margaret Josephine Clancy (1965-1965); Malcolm Graham (1965-1967); Herbert Thomas Graham (1965-1969); Leslie Handron (1967-1968); John Pearce Penberthy (1967-1974); Hedley William Perry (1969-1971); Gordon James McLean (1969-1970); Vernon Roy Ashton (1971-1978); John Frederick Farrington (1971-1974); Norman Conway Rees (1974-1982); Rowland Vincent Lang (1974-1978); Jack Henderson McRae (1978-1985); Ernest George Rub (1978-1985); Eileen Dorothy Plant (1982-1985).

Executive Members

Andrew McL'Crokatt (1927-1928, 1930-1931, 1931-1934); Alex Macpherson (1972-1945); J. Palmer (1927-1929); George Shaw (1927-1929); William Mathewson (1928-1929); Harry James Harvey (1929); F. West (1929); F. Heaton (1929); W. Brennan (1929-1930); R. Walton (1929-1930); F. West (1930-1935); T. Wharton (1931-1932); W.E. Crain (1934-1937); J. Goodwin (1936-1953); Archie Neil (1937-1938); F.G. Marriott (1938-1943); R.S.F. Greig (1943-1953); J. Dowdle (1945-1946); H. Barns (1946-1956); P. Curran (1953-1956); Alistair MacColl (1953-1956); J.H. Anderson (1956, 1958-1959); Arthur Sullivan (1956-1959); Harold Thomas Mellor (1957-1958); William Edward Stream (1957-1958); William Thomas McGill (1958-1959); Otto Arnold Bielefeld (1959); Thomas Harper (1959-1956); Robert Cecil Sharpe (1959-1961); Eric Clifford Cherry (1959-1961); Frederick Phillip Bromley (1961-1967); Hedley William Perry (1962-1965, 1967-1969); Stephen Cavenagh (1965-1967); Arthur Sullivan (1965-1967); Frederick John Hansen (1966-1970); Vernon Roy Ashton (1967); Neil Judd (1967-1971); Charles Robert Claydon (1970); Joyce Eunice Bufoot (1971-1974); Norman Conway Rees (1971-1974); Charles Harold McIntyre (1974-1978); Sybil Ethel Neander (1974-1978); Ernest George Rub (1974-1978); Rowland Vincent Lang (1978-1980); Shirley Ann Van Dyke (1978-1982); Stanley Richard Briscoe (1978-1982); Eileen Dorothy Plant (1979-1982); Harry Joseph Ashton (1982); Joan Dorothe Christiansen (1982-1985); Bevan Ronald Waters (1982-1983); Donald Percival Sorrensen (1983-1985); T. Maddison (1985).

Northern Territory

President

Donald Kilander (1971-1972); Charles Payne (1972-1973); John Henry Meaney (1973-1976); Terence Patrick Kincade (1976-1982); Neil Australia Byron (1982-1985).

Vice President

Charles Payne (1971-1972); James McDonagh (1972-1973); Charles Payne (1973-1976); Harold Ambrose Black (1976-1978); Johnathon Martin Isaacs (1978-1982); Anthony Michael Walsh (1982-1985).

Secretary

Patrick Carroll (1971-1973); Johnathon Martin Isaacs (1973-1978); Neil Australia Byron (1978-1982); Raymond Edward Rushbury (1982-1985).

Assistant Secretary

Neil Australia Byron (1976-1978); Raymond Edward Rushbury (1972-1982); Raymond Cianta (1982-1985).

Treasurer

Robert Vincent Savage (1971-1973); Ella Mary Ros Ahmatt (1973-1978); Anthony Michael Walsh (1978-1982); James Theodore Clarke (1982-1985).

Trustees

Henry Lee (1971-1973); Timothy Thomas Angeles (1971-1973); Christian Arnout (1973-1975); Alfred McRobbie Brien (1973-1976); Terence Patrick Kincade (1973-1976); Albert William Clarke (1976-1980, 1982); Vassal Ljuldjuray (1976-1979); Kenneth John Hubbard (1978-1979, 1985); James J. Clarke (1978-1982); Anthony Clark (1980-1982, 1985); Vivienne Ingrid Manu Lasike (1982-1984); M. Glass (1985).

Executive Members

Dorothy Jamieson (1971-1972); Lindsay Thorburn (1971-1972); Cuthbert Lenin Hampley (1971-1973); Christian Arnout 1972-1973); Christian Arnout (1972-1973); Bryan Lawrence Nash (1972-1973); Leonard Cole (1972-1973); Ross Leslie Pearce (1972-1973); Albert William Clarke (1972-1976); Liamonis Apfelbaums (1973-1975); Harold Ambrose Black (1973-1976); Roy Vernon Lowrey (1973-1977); Arthur Edward Walker (1973-1977); N. Thorburn (1975-1977); Harry Ernest Andrews (1971-1978); Anthony Justice Morcombe (1977-1978); Geoffrey Solway (1977-1978); James Clark (1977-1978); Anthony Michael Walsh (1977-1978); Helen Margaret Lucas (1978-1980); Kenneth John Hart (1978-1982); Ewen Smith Cameron (1978-1981); Phillip Vincent Patten (1978-1980); Franz Stefan Stangl (1978-1982); Vivienne Ingrid Nickels (1980-1982); Jessie Richard Stokes (1980-1981); Kevin Arthur Cave (1981-1982); Robert William Friel (1981); John Alexander Drake (1982-1985); B. Ralph Stewart (1982-1985); Ronald George Baumgart (1982-1985); Hilde Patricia Raymond (1983-1985).

Western Australia

President

Frederick Midas Andrew (1956-1958); Ray Thurkle (1958-1961); Leslie Walter Harcourt (1961-1963); Harold Coleson Atkinson (1963-1967); Jack Graham Raishley (1967-1969); Brian George Tennant (1969-1982); Samuel Mathew Piantadozi (1982-1983); Arthur Roy Fragall (1983-1985).

Vice President

John Henderson (1956-1958); W. Bourke (1958); W. Romeyn (1958-1959); Leslie Walter Harcourt (1959-1961); Ray Thurkle (1961-1963); Jack Graham Raishley (1963-1967); Brian George Tennant (1967-1969); Frederick William Gaunt (1969-1973); Barrymore Neil (1973-1976);

Leonard Francis Maton (1976-1978); Kathleen Jones (1978-1979); George Paul Stain (1979-1982); Brian George Tennant (1982); Rory M. Neal (1982-1985); Stanley J. Hardie (1982-1985).

Secretary

Patrick Lawrence Troy (1956-1958); Donald Charles Lippiatt (1958-1976); Clive Morris Brown (1976-1979); James Andrew McGinty (1979-1982, 1984-1985); Owen Keith Salmon (1982-1984).

Assistant Secretary

G.H. Pim (1958-1959); A.C. Lamond (1959-1961); R. Banbiere (1961); William C. Wood (1961-1962); Raymond Mathew (1964-1965); Willem Haanappel (1965-1967); Gloria Jean Warren (1967-1968); David Harold Dobson (1968-1969); Charles Zerafa (1969-1970); Richard Radland Bryant (1970-1972); Barrymore Neil (1972-1973); Stanley Perry (1973-1977); Kathleen Jones (1977-1978); Allen Graham Shuttleton (1978-1982); Gordon Trench (1982-1983); Jeannette Patricia O'Keefe (1982-1984); James Andrew McGinty (1982-1984); Beryl Baker (1984-1985); Tony Beech (1985).

Treasurer

John Henderson (1985-1975); Gordon Donald Parker (1975).

Trustee

A.G. Phillips (1985-1961); William Henry Weston (1961-1970); Walter J. Hammond (1970-1973); Lessie Beale (1973-1976); Gordon Donald Parker (1976-1982); Arthur Roy Fragall (1982-1983); Mark Anthony Wheeler (1982-1985); Jean Kid (1985); Maisie Stokes (1985).

Executive Member

William Gilmore (1956-1961); Frederick George Woods (1956-1958); Rosier Valentine (1956-1958); J. Cameron (1958); W. Dewhurst (1985); J. Rich (1958); Thomas Jennis (1958-1967); G.H. Pim (1961-1963); Jack D. Knight (1961-1964); Harold Coleson Atkinson (1963); Donald Ferguson (1964); Michael Fox (1964-1969); Edward William Connor (1964-1965); Kathleen Joy Dewhurst (1966-1967); Frederick William Gaunt (1967-1969); Arthur Kay (1967-1969); Pamela Violet Noble (1967-1978); Terence Gardner (1969-1970); James Kearing (1970); John Riley (1972-1973); Mathyr Both (1972-1973); Helen Mary Bremen (1973-1975); Leslie Francis Maton (1973-1976); Glenn Searle (1975-1976); Kathleen Jones (1976-1977); Terence Eliott (1976-1977); Raymond Daly (1977-1983); Alice Mary Inwood (1977-1978); Clive Mathew Hughes (1978-1980); Avie Roukema (1978-1979); James Michael Wellings (1979-1984); Brian Marsh (1979-1984); Paul Stain (1985); Jim Miller (1985); George Wheeler (1985); Lauraine Macpherson (1985); Kevin Kersting (1985); Tom Johnson (1985); Beverly Hicks (1985); Doreen Dodd (1985).

South Australia

President

William Gow (1932-1944); T.F. Scott (1944); A.R. Govett (1953); Cyril T. Hasse (1953-1959); Bruce Henry Stringer (1959-1965); Keith Burney Butler (1965-1970); Victor W. Hardy (1970-1971); Thomas Harry Hobert (1971-1974); Nicolaos Robakis (1974-1978); Edward Patrick Robert Dunn (1978-1982, 1982-1985); John Newland Brown (1982).

Vice President

Robert A. Dale (1941-1942); T.F. Scott (1944); Keith Butler (1949); A.J. Helme (1953); R.W.B. Afford (1953-1956); Bruce Henry Stringer (1956-1959); Cyril T. Hasse (1959-1962); Stanley Charles Bevan (1962-1965); John Francis Dorman (1965-1970); Brian C. Sanderson (1970-1973); Nicolaos Robakis (1973-1974); Victor W. Hardy (1974-1976); Edward Patrick Robert Dunn (1976-1978, 1982); Peter Alexander Sochacki (1978-198); John Newland Brown (1980-1982); David Mathew Chambers (1982-1985).

Secretary

Mr Baldcock, (1927-1935); Sidney O'Flaherty (1935-1943); Stanley Charles Bevan (1943-1952); Ralph E. Bannister (1955-1958); Glen Raymond Broomhill (1958-1965); William Wharton (1965-1970; Barrymore Frederick Cavanagh (1970-1975); Walter Ronald John Eglinton (1975-1979); Victor Stanley Heron (1979-1985).

Assistant Secretary

Desmond Keith Nicholas (1974); Clive Morris Brown (1974-1975); David John Parkin (1975-1976, 1977-1979); Peter Alexander Sochacki (1976-1977); Ronald Barry Schultz (1979-1985).

Trustee

Stanley Charles Bevan (1956-1959); Oscar Joseph Allen (1959-1965); Thomas Henry Hobert (1965-9171); Bruce Fenton Foster (1971-1974); Kenneth Franz Arthur (1974-1977); Peter Alexander Sochacki (1977-1978); Reginald Radford (1978-1984); Arnold Burns (1985).

Executive Members

Stanley Charles Bevan (1952-1956, 1959-1962, 1965-1968); A.J. Helme (1954); W. Ewen (1954); R.W.B. Afford (1956-1963); K. McNeil (1956-1961); Oscar Joseph Allen (1959-1965); L.E. Hanscombe (1960-1963); Keith Barnes Butler (1962-1965); Thomas Harry Hobert (1962-1965); Glen Raymond Broomhill (1965-1971); Harry Alfred Byerley (1965-1968); Walter Ronald John Eglinton (1968-1970); Bruce Fenton Foster (1968-1971); N.T. Begg (1970-1971); Clinton William Collins (1970-1982); Nicolaos Robakis (1970-1973); Lindsay Richards (1971-1974); Ian Cowan Kerr Smith (1973-1974); Edward Patrick Robert Dunn (1974-1976); Vincent John Daly (1976-1978); Reginald Radford (1976-1978); Keith D. Hearn (1978-1979); Robert George Foster (1978-1980); John Newland Brown (1979-1980); J. Nowak (1980-1982); Barry William Maguire (1980-1984); Robert F. Morley (1981-1982); John Arnold Barnes (1982-1984); Patrick Conlon (1982-1984); George T. Young

(1983-1985); Jamie Allen Downs (1985); Harold Wilkinson (1985); Michael Kostoglou (1985).

Tasmania

President

Edward Harrison (1952); Charles Findlay (1952-1954); Robert Stokes (1954-1955); W.E. Wallis (1955-1956); Frederick Gerlach (1956-1957); Albert George Poke (1975-1972); Kenneth Williams (1972); Leo Brown (1972-1985).

Vice President

Charles Hansen (1953); Roy Hale (1953-1959); Robert Stokes (1959-1961); Charles Boyd Davidson (1961-1972); George Henry Bailey (1972-1978); Edith Westwood (1978-1982); Caroline Robbins (1982-1983); Kevin Jones (1983-1985).

Secretary

W.J. Grace (1952); C. Robertson (1952-1953); Douglas Charleson Howitt (1953-1955); Robert Stokes (1955-1956); Frank A. Cosgrove (1956-1958); Leo Brown (1958-1972); Kenneth Williams (1972-1976); Norman Thomas Hanscombe (1976-1983); Kerry O'Brien (1983-1985).

Trustee

A. Burt (1952-1959); Robert Henry Kennedy (1959-1972); Brian Bodie (1972-1973); Leslie Alfred Sproule (1973-1982); Edith Mansfield (1982-1983); Edie Westwood (1983-1985).

Executive Members

P.A. Markham (1953); V.J. Burt (1953); J. Canter (1953); J.H. Richardson (1953); Douglas Charleson Howitt (1953); D. McColloch (1953-1954); W.A. Fielding (1953-1954); J. Kenny (1953-1954); Aaron Beardsley (1954-1957); Oscar Robert Miller (1954-1957); Charles Hansen (1954-1957); Michael T. Donovan (1955-1957); Roy J. McIver (1955-1957); Ralph Edward Gearman (1957-1959); Robert Stokes (1957-1959, 1967-1970); Thomas Stapleton (1957-1967, 1970-1972); Clifford Francis Roach (1964-1970); Frederick Gerlach (1964-1967); Reginald Broadby (1972-1974); Lesley Alfred Sproule (1972-1973); Samuel John Rex Wilton (1973-1974); Robert Kennedy (1974-1975); Maxwell Thornton (1974-1976); T. Bradburn (1975-1981); Douglas A. Baker (1976-1982); Frederick A. Sharlples (1976-1980); Keith Tuttle (1980-1981); Mary Mansfield (1981-1982); Pat Free (1982-1983); Wally Allen (1984-1985).

Australian Capital Territory

President

Eric Jurd (1960-1961); Harry Clark (1961-1963); Mark Elon Wittaker (1963-1965); Robert Owen Cogman (1965-1966); Edward Michael Larkin (1966-1970); Arnold Alexander Hateley (1970-1973, 1978-1982); Thomas Hugh Stewart (1973-1974); Nelson Leslie Ashman (1974-1978); Neil Patrick Gardiner (1982-1985).

Vice President

Alan Leithhead (1960-1960); James Poulter (1961-1963); James Bossie (1963-1965); Albert George Bossie (1965-1970); Walter James Doolan (1970-1971); Roland Harrison (1971); Hilary Warrall (1971-1972); Frederick Bloomfield (1972-1973); Joseph Sandler Abel (1973-1975); Arnold Alexander Hateley (1975-1978); Stanley Burange (1978-1981); Neil Patrick Gardiner (1981-1982); Douglas Bell (1982-1985).

Secretary

Leslie McVeigh (1960-1973); Leslie Wood (1973-1979); Colin McJannett (1979-1982); Frank Raffaelli (1982-1983); Edward Forbes (1983-1985).

Assistant Secretary

Edward Michael Larkin (1965-1966); Terence John Gibson (1971-1972); Leslie Wood (1972-1973); Ronald Harrison (1973-1982).

Trustee

George Sykes (1960-1961); Nathaniel Brian Smith (1961-1965); John Francis Nelson (1966-1973); Leslie McVeigh (1973-1976); Thomas Bain Smith (1976-1978); Alan White (1978-1982); Bernard Valentine (1982-1985).

Executive Member

Hilde Jazczah (1960-1963); Reginald G. Andrew (1960-1962); John Kenneth Hughes (1960-1963); Clair Marshall (1962-1963); Clarice Ruby Reynolds/McVeigh (1963-1969, 1970-1973); Charles Roland Wilson (1963-1966); Anthony Martin (1963-1965); Jan Blom (1965-1968); William George Gibson (1969-1970); Reginald James Eacott (1970); Andrew Balyntyne (1970); Jack Townley (1970-1971); Leonard Anthony Sly (1971-1973); Leslie Scott (1971-1973); Raymond William Lowe (1971-1973); Sidney Burnage (1973-1978); Donald Arthur Weber (1973-1975); Nelson Leslie Ashman (1973-1974); Arnold Alexander Hateley (1974-1975); Alan Oswald White (1975-1978); Leslie McVeigh (1976-1978); Harold Hewlett (1978-1981); Frank Shuttleworth (1978-1982); Bernard Francis Gibson (1978-1982); Edward Forbes (1982-1983); Richard Williams (1982-1985); Philip Anthony Walters (1982-1985).

APPENDIX IV - EVOLUTION OF THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION 1916-1985

10 November 1916

Watchmen; Caretakers; Cleaners; Lift Attendants; Motor Car Washers and Cleaners; Gatekeepers.

9 June 1925

Laundry Workers; Male Domestic Workers; Ice-Cream Makers; Luggage Porters; Messengers; Ferry Workers; Paint Workers.

8 May 1928

Basket Makers; Bill Posters; Cemetery Employees; Dental Mechanics; Female Domestic Workers; Undertakers Employees.

9 July 1929

Commissionnaires; Dental Assistants and Attendants; Motor Car Greasers; Asbestos Makers; Carbon Paper Makers; Linoleum Makers; Plaster of Paris Makers; Sack Makers and Repairers; Typewriter Ribbon Makers; White Lead Makers.

17 June 1931

Linoleum Makers and all Employees therewith; Spruikers.

23 April 1934

Chemical Workers; Employees in Motor Garages.

25 May 1939

Broom Makers and Brush Makers (QLD); Crematorium Employees (QLD); Fibrolite Workers (NSW/QLD); Gardeners and Greenkeepers (NSW/QLD); Manufacturers of Lead; Librarians (QLD); Margarine Makers and Packers (QLD); Oilskin Makers; Manufacturers of Photographic Supplies or Materials; Toy Makers and Assemblers (QLD).

16 September 1945

Dentists; Employees in Photographic Establishments (SA/VIC/QLD).

9 June 1948

Employees engaged in or in connection with the manufacture of goods in which plastics or substitutes are used (NSW).

4 April 1950

Employees engaged in the Manufacture of synthetic resins in the Paint, Varnish and White Lead Industry (VIC); Plastic Workers (VIC/QLD/SA).

15 October 1958

Airbrush Artists in the Photographic Industry; Animal Welfare Workers (household pets); Ballroom Dance Instructors; Employees engaged in the manufacture and treatment of Cork and Cork Products (not QLD/VIC); Manufacturers of Engine Packing; Manufacturers and Assemblers of Pyrotechnics; Telephone Hygiene Cleaners; Typewriter Service Cleaners; Zoological Gardens Employees (not NSW/QLD).

7 April 1960

Domestic Staff or Groundsmen or Yardmen in Denominational Schools; Health and Physical Culture Instructors; Laboratory Assistants, Attendants and Testers in the Oil Industry; Manufacturers of Stramit Boards.

28 May 1962

Emergency and Safety Employees of the Melbourne Harbour Trust; Parking Attendants; Manufacturers of Sisalkraft, Duk-bak and similar products.

27 July 1965

Manufacturers or Treaters of Pearlite and Vermiculite Products.

16 January 1967

Stonemasons, Marble Masons, Polishers, Machinists, Sawyers and other Stone, Marble, Slate and Terrazzo Workers (SA); Employees in the Tanning and Leather Dressing Industry; Manufacturing, Handling, Bagging or Grinding Bark and other Tanning Products; the Classing or Sorting of Leather done on Tanning Premises; Manufacture of Agar-agar; Glue and Gelatine and By-Products, Adhesives, Pastes, Fertilizers, Constituents; Dextrine, Calciners or Other Like Materials; the Washing or Other Treatment of Animal Hair; Tanning, Dressing, Dyeing or Other Treatment of Fur or other skins including Woollen, Lambs or Sheep Skins; Manufacture of articles made from Leather, Wooled Lamb, Sheep Skins or Furred Skins such as Spindle Polishing Mops, Paint Roller Sleeves, Dusters, Playsuits, Woolskin and Fur Skin Toys and Soft Toys; the Clicking, Cutting by hand or machine or the Making or Repairing of Saddles, Saddle Trees, Harnesses, Collars and Rugs for Horses and Other Animals, Bridles, Fly Veils and Strapping, Whips, Whip-Thongs, Machine Belting Respirators or Gas Masks of Leather, Canvas or Fabric; Welder's Masks, Trunks, Bags, Port-Manteaux, Travel Goods, Suit or Attache Cases; Braces of all descriptions, Belts, Razor Straps, Watch Straps, Suspenders, Sporting Goods of Canvas or Leather and Travellers Sample Cases of all descriptions; Slither Cases; Musical, Grammophone, Wireless, Surgical and Spectacle Cases of all descriptions; Ladies Evening Bags, Ladies Handbags and Handbags of all descriptions; Making and/or Fitting Zippers, Wallets, Purses, Pouches, Folio or Folio Covers of all descriptions; Leather or Fabric Gloves and Mitts, Leggings, Hat Leathers; Designing Leather Coats, Leather Hats or Caps; Playsuits of Leather or Fabric; Artificial Limbs and Appliances including Surgical Belts and Surgical Supports of Leather, Canvas, Webbing; Sails, Tents, Tarpaulins, Rigging, Flags, Nose Bags, Water Bags, Weather Cloths, Dodgers, Canvas, Duck or Calico Bags; Inside and

Outside Blinds, Mast Coats, Awnings, Sail Covers; Canvas, Duck, Fabric or Calico Covers; Canvas or Coir Save Alls; Slings; Wind Sails; Hose, Covers for Wings or Aeroplanes; Component Parts of Aeroplanes of Canvas or Fabric, Aeroplane Hangars, Sheds; Components of Aeroplane Hangars, Sheds or Houses of Canvas Fabric; Mailbags, Fenders, Cargo Nets, Ships' Gear, Marquees, Skillions, Binding and Conveyor Aprons; Gaskets and Washers of Leather or Canvas; Industrial Mops, Camp Beds, Deck Chairs, Camp Furniture; Rope or Wire Splicing and all classes of goods other than boots, shoes and slippers made from Leather, Fabrics, Canvas Fibre or Vulcanised Fibre, Webbing and Substitutes (including Plastics).

1 June 1970

Employees in Child Minding Centres, Day Nurseries and Pre-School Kindergartens; Tea Attendants; Employees in the Northern Territory engaged in the following industries and callings: Pastoral, Agricultural, Horticulture, Viticulture, Dairying, Fruitgrowing, Sugar-Growing; Cane-Cutting; Cotton-Growing; Timber Getting; Saw-milling; Building Industry; Butchering and Meat Industry; Cotton Industry; Oil Industry; Boring for Water, Oil or Other Mineral; Mining Industry; Milling and Smelting or Refining of Ores; Stone-Quarrying; Construction and Maintenance of Rivers and Harbours; Diving; Waterside Workers; Construction and Maintenance of Roads, Aerodromes, Water and Sewerage Works; Public Works and Services; Construction and Maintenance of Fuel Oil and Petrol Tanks and Pipelines; Municipal Works and Services; Construction and Maintenance of Railways; Surveying; Fishing; Fish-Cleaning; Net Making; Clerical Work; Brewing; Motor Driving; Shipping; Saddle-Making; Baking; Cordial Manufacturers; all Workers engaged in Hotels, Clubs, Restaurants, Shops, Stores, Laundries, Picture Theatres and all kinds of General Labour.

20 November 1973

Asbestos Cement Products Workers (not QLD, TAS, WA); Cleaning and Pollution Control Workers; Animal Welfare Establishments Workers; Chemical Industry Employees (not medical); Manufacturers of Gypsum, Plasterboard and Similar Products; Manufacturers of Insulwool, Slagwool and other Insulation Products; Pest Control Workers (not NSW, QLD); Sealers, Sanders, Treaters and Processors of Floor Coverings and Floor Surfaces; Sugar Refinery Workers (not QLD, SA, VIC). In New South Wales: Artists' Models; Billiard Markers; Manufacturers of Pytram Aircraft and Industrial Components Therefor; Manufacturers of Window Display Models; Trained, Trainee and Untrained Make-Up Artists; Employees in connection with the Manufacture, Processing, Warehousing and Despatch of Refined Sugar, Refined Sugar Products, Carbon Dioxide, Alcohol and Other Distillery Products and/or of Building and Associated Materials in the establishments of the Colonial Sugar Refining Co. and Hardboards Australia Ltd. Workers in Experimental Research and Pilot Plant Work at Colonial Sugar Research Pty Ltd; In Queensland Only: Manufacturers of Compressed Fibre Board; Employees engaged in Beauty Treatment, Hairdressing, Scalp Treatment and Wig Making, including Barbers, Beauticians, Hairdressers, Hairworkers, Manicurists, Maxilo-Facial Technicians and Wigmakers; Oil Extractors and Processors; Manufacturers of Ship and Boat Fenders; Models, Comperes and Mannequins' Comperes; Pharmaceutical Chemists and Industrial Chemists; Dental Technologists, Radiographer Attendants;

Assistants and Receptionists in Dentists, Doctors and Optometrists' Surgeries and Consulting Rooms; Ambulance Transport Brigade and First Aid Duty Attendants (not Senior Staff); Swimming Pool Employees; Used Car Yard Employees, Tow Truck Operators; Employees in Sportsgrounds, Laundrettes, Laundromats and the Accommodation Industry including Domestic Workers in Boarding Houses, Accommodation Houses, Motels, Flats, Clubs, Hostels, Residential Colleges; Employees Handling, Manufacturing, Baking, Packing and Distributing Biscuits and Bread; Employees in Businesses, Clubs, Airports and Canteens Catering, Preparing and Serving Food and Drinks; Employees Handling, Manufacturing, Packing and Distribution of Confectionary, Flour, Pastry Goods and Cakes; Restaurant Receptionists and Cashiers. In South Australia Only: Cycle Builders, Assemblers and Repairers; Workers in Milk or Cream Depots and in the Manufacture of Milk and Cream Products; Motor Tyre Retreaders and Repairers; Rubber Workers; Jewellers; Watchmakers; Optical Mechanics; Poultry Catchers and Preparers; Hardware Shop Assistants, Registered Pharmaceutical Chemists employed as a Manager or Managing Assistant of a Hospital Dispensary, the Dispensary of a Medical Practitioner or Public Institution or as Assistant who is qualified Pharmacists. In Western Australia Only: Manufacturers, Preparers or Processors of Butter, Casein, Cheese, Milk or Yoghurt; Manufacturers of Records, Rolls, Tapes or any such like article used for Reproducing Purposes; Manufacturers, Preparers or Processors or Treaters of Coated Abrasives, Candles, Cotton, Felt or Felt Products, Glycerine, Soap or Soda, Tobacco or Tobacco Products; Ambulance and First Aid Attendants; Marine yard Workers; Rag Pickers; Flock or Cotton Waste Makers; Wool Scouring or Fellmongery Employees; Mounters, Setters, Chainmakers Swivelmakers, Bolt Ring Maker or Repairer; Ring Maker, Polisher, Lapper, Melter, Refiner; Bracelet and Bangle Maker, Stamper, Silversmith, Spinner, Goldsmith, Gilder, Chaser or Engraver; Watch, Clock, Clockwork, Electric and Spring Dial Clockmaker, Repairer, Attendant and Winder; Jewellers' Toolmaker and Optical Technician; Lapidaries Spectacle Maker, Maker and Renovator of Electroplated Ware; Metal Badge Maker; Jewel Case Maker; Drying and Refining of Salt; Handling of Scrap Metals or Wrecking or Dismantling or Plant or Machinery for Scrap Salvage; Drum Reclaimers; Manufacturers of Artificial Fertilizers, Acids, Bonemill, Animal Manure; Phosphate, Superphosphate, Compost, Bird Manure, Fish Fertilizer, Seaweed, Lime or other Mineral Processing and/or other Chemical Industries including Bleaching Powder or Liquid, Fungicides, Insecticides, Veterinary Medicines, Synthetic Hormones, Solvents, Power Alcohol, Alkali, Synthetic (Ammonia, Liquid Cattle Dips, Stock Licks, Marking Fluid, Speddo Milk Oil, Fluid, Branding Liquid, Tricalos, Stockfood, Itch Fluid, Foot Rot Paste, Blow Fly Repellent, Molasses Manufacture or Processing and also Food Processing Works within the Kimberley Land Division. In Tasmania Only: Attendants, Assistants or Receptionists in Dentists', Doctors' and Optometrists Surgeries or Consulting Rooms; Industrial Chemists and Assistants; Hairdressers; Manicurists; Manufacturers of Milk or Ice-Cream; Radiographers; X-Ray Technicians.

13 July 1977

Jury Keepers (VIC only); Library Attendants; Persons Designated as Attendants and/or Assistants; Laboratory Assistants (QLD only); Teacher Aids (QLD and WA only); Employees in the Production and Processing of Game and Poultry by Total Environment Methods (WA only).

In Northern Territory Only: the Brick Making Industry; Manufactures of Concrete Products; the Industry of Searching, Boring For, Extracting, Storing, Transmitting, Processing of Water Oil, Hydro-Carbons and/or any other Mineral Element; the Hydro-Carbon Industry; the Industry of Harvesting and Processing of Finfish (Wetfish), Crustacea, Molluscs and Plankton; Biscuit Makers, Port Authority Workers; Hairdressers, Scalp Treaters, Beauty Care, Body Care, Massage.

26 July 1978

Northern Territory Hospital Workers.

23 January 1980

Dental Therapists; Northern Territory Fire Prevention, Suppression and Extinguishing Officers; Tasmanian Domestic Staff, Groundsmen and Yardmen in Schools or Colleges.

1 June 1980

Workers Employed in the South Australian State Government Service and Government Subsidised Institutions and all District and other Hospitals.

14 June 1982

Persons Employed or Usually Employed by the Western Australian Government in the Department of Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage or by the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Board.

20 July 1983

Employees in the State of Western Australia in any Hospital (other than Nurses but including Enrolled Nurses); Western Australian Pre-School Teachers; Western Australian Cleaners, Caretakers, Lift Attendants, Window Cleaners, Watchmen, Charwomen, Ushers, Doorkeepers, Gatekeepers, Porters, Janitors, Day or Night Patrolmen, Security Officers; Attendants in Ladies Retiring Rooms, Libraries, Art Galleries, Museums and Car Parks; Gardeners, Gardeners' Labourers, Maintenance Men, Maintenance Labourers, Groundsmen and Home Economics Maid employed by the Education Department, the Western Australian Institute of Technology, the University of Western Australia and any other Tertiary Institution and the Department of Agriculture, National Parks and Zoos and Public Works.

NOTE: To facilitate comprehension a number of qualifications, exclusions and other descriptive details have been left out of this list. For an authoritative description of the constitution, see FMWU Rules, October 1983.

SOURCES: Federal and State Industrial Registry Files, Rule Books, Minute Books.