



Labour History Project

BULLETIN 61 | AUGUST 2014

Mark Briggs: A Forgotten Hero

Smoke, Mirrors and Spooks: the Watersiders' Dispute 1951

"Suing Muldoon and doing time"

Union family: Jim Ferguson and Jim Turner

Field Punishment No.1: TV drama

Dreams lie deeper: concert review



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publications and news, check out our website:

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FROM THE SHOP FLOOR

Editorial

Regular readers will notice that Barry Pateman and I have been assisting Mark Derby with editing the *Bulletin*. Mark kindly offered me the opportunity to write the editorial for this issue. As a new member of the LHP I think it is appropriate that I first introduce myself. Having followed with a keen interest the events and publications of the LHP, I became involved with the organisation via the “Another World Is Possible” essay competition last year (*Bulletin* 59, December 2013). In my view the LHP plays an important, although perhaps undervalued, role in the small but vibrant civil society of New Zealand. For a nation with such an influential labour tradition, it is curious that our historical memory is often so short. I was one of the first to grow up without any experience of a paradigm other than neoliberalism, being born in the same year the Employment Contracts Act was passed. As the Chair alludes to in his report, many of the old evils which the labour movement opposed and succeeded in overturning have returned since the 1980s, while simultaneously trade unionism has steeply declined.¹ However, there is evidence that this negative trajectory is in the early stages of arrest. The global Occupy movement is just one example of the spectacular and inventive ways in which people are organising collectively to combat the inequities of modern capitalism. With the crisis that sparked Occupy—the collapse of the financial markets in 2008—continuing unabated in many countries and barely improving in others, resistance is likely to increase. Paul Mason, one of the few well-known journalists to have reported capably on the social movements of the last decade, offered his response to the latest OECD report of the global economic outlook for 2060:

The OECD's prescription—globalisation, more privatisation, more austerity, more migration and a wealth tax if you can pull it off—will carry weight. But not with everybody. The ultimate lesson from the report is that, sooner or later, an alternative programme to “more of the same” will emerge. Because populations armed with smartphones, and an increased sense of their human rights, will not accept a future of high inequality and low growth.²

However, much of the opposition thus far has been focused, understandably enough, on the political sphere, addressing the loss of democratic rights and the feelings of effective disenfranchisement. As these new movements grow in numbers and confidence, the issue of compensation and conditions of work as well as workplace control will likely again attain a central importance. The relevance of labour history to contemporary experience cannot therefore be overstated. The late Bert Roth was right when he said that “there is a basic economic conflict between those who work for wages or salaries, and those who employ them, and that trade unions will play a major part in any effort to resolve this division.” For him, one of the principal contributors to the public's low regard for unions was “a lack of knowledge.”³ For those of my generation who will play a leading role in the struggles of the future, labour history offers, at the very least, a source of hope and inspiration. I am excited to be part of an organisation dedicated to such an important task.

Introductions aside, some comments about the latest issue of the *Bulletin* are in order. As 2014 is the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, we

have encouraged submissions to the *Bulletin* addressing opposition to the War. One of the feature articles, written by Margaret Tate, details the life of Mark Briggs a one-time Red Fed and prominent conscientious objector. Peter Clayworth has also provided a critical review of the recent drama *Field Punishment No. 1* which aired on TV One earlier this year. These complement well a feature article in the previous issue (*Bulletin* 60, April 2014) by Richard J. Meyer, which examined the correspondence between James Allen and William Massey regarding the suppression of domestic dissent during the war. Readers should also note the upcoming People's History Talks and Events series which will be held later this year in Wellington, further details of which can be found in the news round-up.

Ciaran Doolin

ENDNOTES

1. Two recently published works have addressed these issues in detail: Jonathan Boston, Simon Chapple, *Child Poverty in New Zealand*, Bridget Williams Books: Wellington, 2014; Max Rashbrooke ed., *Inequality – a New Zealand Crisis*, Bridget Williams Books: Wellington, 2013
2. Paul Mason, 'The best of capitalism is over for rich countries and for poor – and for poor countries it will be over by 2060', <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jul/07/capitalism-rich-poor-2060-populations-technology-human-rights-inequality>, retrieved 19 July 2014.
3. Bert Roth, *Trade Unions in New Zealand Past and Present*, Reed Education: Wellington, 1973, xii.

Chair's report

Note: this report was written before the AGM, but appears here after it. A report on the AGM itself will appear in our next (November) issue.

Our annual general meeting will be held on 29 July, as we have advertised, and it will be good to see many of you there. Particularly I am looking forward to the address which will be given by Grace Millar. Grace will discuss her research on how families managed, were affected by, and survived the 1951 waterfront dispute—locked-out watersiders and those workers in other trades and occupations who struck in solidarity and protest. However one views the dispute itself, I think it is vital to remember the importance of a strong trade union movement for a free and democratic society.

There is at present something of a sputtering debate about inequality in the mass media. Overseas, a French economist, Thomas Piketty, has published a large work, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. I haven't had the opportunity to read it yet, but his arguments and his data have been subjected to considerable criticism from business organs like the *Financial Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, as one might expect. Piketty is not the only economist in recent times to argue that growing inequality is harmful to society as a whole, and by implication to business as much as to workers. In New Zealand, as elsewhere, increased inequality has been a feature, of course, of the last 30 years or so (indeed, I am writing this on 14 July, the 30th anniversary of the election of the Lange government with all its mixed record).

It is perhaps easy sometimes to forget that inequality diminished in many countries between 1945 and about 1980—a trend which owed much to the patient activism of the organised labour movement and social democratic parties. With the general election approaching, I don't imagine I need to emphasise in this column the importance of voting however your views dictate

—but do let us encourage to vote those who need encouraging. There is nothing so demobilising as the cynicism, so ably fostered in some quarters, that all politicians are dishonourable, or that the result of an election is a foregone conclusion. For me personally quite the worst feature of the 2011 election was that the turnout was the lowest since 1887—that is, in all the years since universal suffrage was won in 1893.

Looking ahead, there will be another series of People’s History talks in Wellington during the spring—last year’s were very successful and this year the theme will be immigration, with a Wellington focus.

In advance of the AGM let me take this opportunity to acknowledge many years of service to our organisation by Peter Franks. Peter has indicated that he wishes to step down from the committee, not least because he is very committed to writing labour history! I thank him for his wise counsel and his comradeship.

With best wishes

Jim McAloon

News round-up

RAISING THE ROOF: THE CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE RUNANGA MINERS’ HALL



The Runanga Miners’ Hall is under imminent threat of demolition. This is despite the fact that it is one of the most important buildings in New Zealand’s labour history, as recognised by Heritage New Zealand (formerly the Historic Places Trust) giving the hall category 1 status, meaning it has ‘special or outstanding historical or cultural significance or value’. The Miners’ Hall currently belongs to the Grey District Council (GDC), which appears strongly in favour of demolishing it. The hall has been closed since 2011 when the GDC put an earthquake threat notice on it. Until that time Runanga people were using the hall for a range of community activities and a group was trying to raise funds for its repair and maintenance. In the recent devastating Cyclone Ita, the Runanga Miners’ Hall lost its roof. Rather than set about repairing the building, the GDC responded by putting up another notice saying the hall had to be either repaired or demolished by 1 August 2014. The council also made it clear that it would not be paying to repair the hall. The GDC has a policy of not providing funding for maintaining community halls.

At the time of writing (13 July) we still don't know how much insurance money the GDC will receive for the damage to the Runanga Miners' Hall, nor whether it will put any of that towards repairing it. The GDC have also made much of how much repairing the hall will cost the Runanga ratepayers. Its most recent move was to hold a referendum among the north ward (Runanga and Rapahoe) ratepayers offering three options:

1. Give the hall to the Runanga Area Association and let them raise all the money to fix it. (There was some indication that the GDC might give insurance money for this but nothing clear).
2. Keep the facade but demolish the hall and build a smaller one behind it.
3. Demolish the hall.

The referendum closed on 27 June, with disappointing results. Only 527 of a total of 1394 ballots were returned (38%). Of these only 63 (12%) voted to retain the hall, while 168 (32%) wanted to demolish it. The largest group of voters—294 (56%)—wanted the facade retained but the hall demolished.

The Runanga Area Association has resolved to press on in trying to save the hall regardless of the referendum result. It is, however, clear that this can only happen if they are able to persuade some of the Grey District councillors around to the cause.



On 11 June, before the referendum closed, the Runanga Area Association held a meeting at Runanga on the future of the Miners' Hall. About 30 people were present at the meeting, which is a pretty good turnout for a town the size of Runanga. Peter Clayworth, from the Labour History Project, attended the meeting and gave a talk on the history of the hall. He specifically argued that the current hall (completed in August 1937 following the arson of the first hall in January of the same year) must be seen as a direct continuation of the 1908 hall and an embodiment of the history of both. Also speaking at the meeting were Runanga residents Paul Kearns and Les Holmes, who are local stalwarts of the campaign to save the hall. There were also a number of people from nearby areas who have been active in campaigns to save heritage buildings in their towns or who are knowledgeable on local history—Paul Thomas of Reefton, John Kennedy from Taylorville, Brian Wood, an expert on mining and union history (formerly of Blackball, now of Blue Spur Hokitika), Stewart Nimmo of

the Greymouth Heritage Trust, and Bruce Watson from Hokitika (who helped save the Carnegie Library there). Local MP Damien O'Connor also spoke and gave qualified support. Basically he said he'd like to save the hall but the decision is up to the GDC. Jeffrey Paparoa Holman (poet, historian and a coalminer's son who grew up in Blackball) read some of his poems relating to mining life on the Coast.

As a result of this meeting a larger group of activists has come together to try to save the hall. The next step is a meeting of the GDC on the night of Monday 14 July to consider information and make its decision. (This meeting was yet to occur at the time this article is being written). A range of speakers will be given time to speak in favour of saving the hall. The Labour History Project sent a submission to this meeting which Brian Wood, who is one of our members, will read.

STOP PRESS - last-minute news from Greymouth reports that the Miners Hall no longer faces demolition. Its roof will be repaired, then, according to hall supporters, "serious fundraising begins for the restoration work."

NO CUSTARD ON THE MENU: TWENTY YEARS OF MAY DAY CONCERTS
IN PALMERSTON NORTH - *Marie Russell*



A traditional black-and-red ribbon rosette has usually been the 'thank you' to artists at May Day concerts in Palmerston North. But in 2014 performers received a special-issue, heavy bronze medal engraved:

*Aotearoa–NZ
Unions Manawatu
May Day Concert
Celebrating International Workers Day
20 Years 1995-2014*

May Day concert organiser and Palmerston North unionist Dion Martin paid for the 180 medals out of his savings. He could have had them made in China for half the cost, but supporting New Zealand workers was more important.

Martin has been a union organiser for 25 years with what is now First Union. He's a big man whose flood of conversation bubbles with ideas, diversions and anecdotes. But if he flies off on a tangent, he always comes back—to the importance of workers' culture.

Organising the May Day Concert has been a labour of evenings, weekends and love, since the first do in 1995. Until then Martin's May Days consisted of having a few beers, listening to Billy Bragg CDs and thinking 'someone should be doing something for International Workers' Day'. Martin had seen the power of song and performance among workers and unionists while visiting South Korea and the Philippines with the Asia Workers' Solidarity Links group in late 1988, when he was working as a hospital orderly.

After hearing the women's group 'Choir, Choir, Pants on Fire' in Wellington around May Day in 1994 Martin got going, and the first May Day Concert was held at Palmerston North's Albert Street karaoke bar in 1995. The next two years saw concerts in the Scottish Society Hall, then the Globe Theatre in 1998 and 1999. That last year the Globe was so crowded, (some people were sitting on the steps) that it constituted a health and safety risk, and a local city councillor walked out, unwilling to be associated with such a hazard. Martin was still hankering for 'a real theatre, where the lights go out', so from 2000 the concert moved to the Regent Theatre on Broadway, Palmerston North. The Regent's a grand old theatre, beautifully refurbished and not cheap, even at 'community' rates. Entrance to the concerts has generally been by gold-coin donation, so Martin did annual fundraising and received good support from the local Community Arts Council and the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions.

Women's union choirs were stalwarts of the early May Day Concerts: 'Choir, Choir, Pants on Fire', Auckland's 'Union Made' and Palmerston North's own 'Brazen Hussies'. The Hussies have been five times winner of the May Day Cup. The cup was recycled from a former Trade Union Sports trophy, a relic of the days when unions organised sports events. Buckled and tarnished, it needed attention from a trophy specialist and, re-engraved, has been the subject of 'a gentle competition' in May Day concerts since 1996. The judging panel has typically comprised local Labour or Green politicians, unionists and international visitors (this year, the Cuban Ambassador).

A highlight for Martin was the first of two years when pianist Michael Houston performed. Houston was to play Beethoven's 'Moonlight' Sonata, and the stage manager wanted to haul away the row of union-type banners above the stage, believing they would cast the pianist in shadow. Martin disagreed; he wanted Houston with the banners: 'I thought, this isn't a Michael Houston concert, it's a May Day Concert with Michael Houston playing'. They appealed to

Houston, who calmly looked at the problem, and turned to Martin: 'Leave them there' he said. 'If it all goes to custard, it's your fault'. Martin was sweating, but custard wasn't on the menu. The audience could see both Houston and the banners, and 'you could hear a pin drop' as the virtuoso played.

The banners are always an important part of the May Day Concert. A key one reads, after words attributed to Emma Goldman, 'If I can't dance and sing, I won't be part of your revolution'. Others proclaim: 'Resistance is Fertile' and 'Dare to struggle, dare to sing'. Concertgoers bring their own banners too, and this year they were invited to take them up onto the stage as the Brazen Hussies sang 'Bandiera Rossa' (the Italian communist anthem, 'Red Banner').

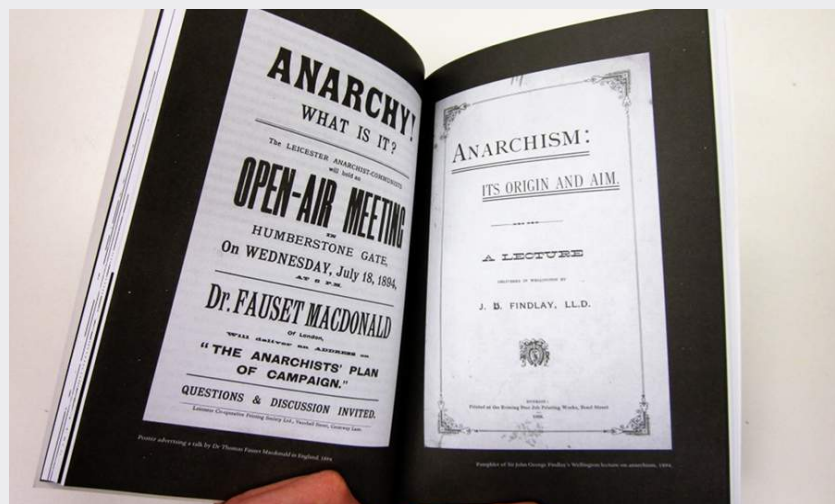
An unusual component of the May Day Concerts since 2000 has been the dance troupes. Michelle Robinson must be a remarkable dance teacher—her troupe once danced to Billy Bragg's version of 'The Red Flag'. On another occasion, which must have been just fizzing with joyful culture clash, they danced on pointe in classical ballet style, with white tutus and red sashes, to 'Solidarity Forever' recorded by a brass band and with words up on the screen so the audience sang along as the young women danced.

The annual concert programme is a treasure trove of information. This year's is typical—it doesn't look flash, but it packs in information about the history of May Day, slogans, and reasons why unions matter, as well as listing the performers.

After 20 years of driving the May Day Concert, Martin and his key support, wife Maryanne Mechen, are ready to step aside. There have been rumours that the 20th May Day Concert might be the last. I hope not. This tradition is too interesting to let go, but funding and support will be needed to keep it going.

Marie Russell works as a public health researcher and is a member of the LHP committee.

BOOK AWARD FINALIST



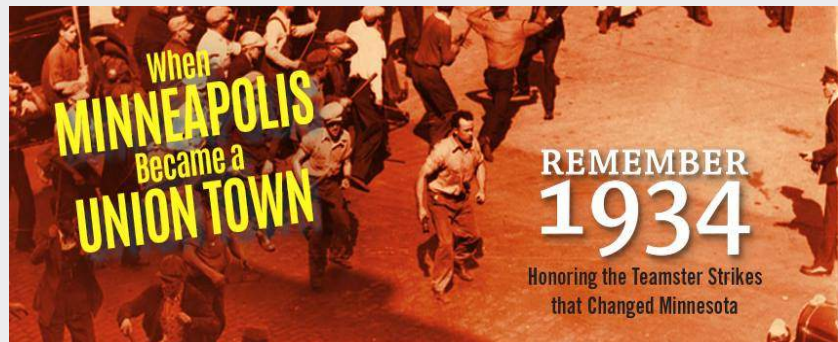
The designer of this publication, Jared Davidson, is also a published author who designs his own books. The latest of these, *Sewing Freedom: Philip Josephs, transnationalism and early New Zealand anarchism* (AK Press 2013) was one of

five finalists for the Publishers Association of NZ award for 'best non-illustrated book'. It didn't win, but simply to make the finals of this coveted award, sought after by the country's leading publishers and designers, is an extraordinary achievement. Congratulations, Jared, and keep publishing. More images of the book can be viewed at www.sewingfreedom.org

PEOPLE'S HISTORY TALKS AND EVENTS SERIES

Last year saw a highly successful series of public talks in Wellington marking the centenary of the 1913 strike. In a somewhat different form, the series will be repeated this year. The 2014 People's History Talks and Events series will be held in Wellington on Wednesday evenings in October and November. The series is a collaboration between the Alexander Turnbull Library, Museum of Wellington City & Sea and the Labour History Project. The talks will be held at the National Library and the Museum. This year's theme is 'Immigrant workers'. Details of the programme will be available soon at www.lhp.org.nz.

INTERNATIONAL SECTION



July 2014 marked the 80th anniversary of a series of important strikes in American history—the West Coast waterfront strike, the Toledo Auto-Lite strike and the Minneapolis trucker's strike. All three happened simultaneously in mid-1934, and set important precedents for industrial unionism, mass picketing, the involvement of unemployed movements and breaking anti-union vigilante alliances. Our US counterparts are commemorating these important events in a range of imaginative forms, and we send them our best wishes from afar.

More information on these events can be found at <http://libcom.org/blog/remember-1934-17072014> and <https://www.facebook.com/Remember1934>

RECENT AND CURRENT RESEARCH

STRONG, SILENT TYPE - *Peter Cranney*

“The [Arbitration] Court felt it was a matter of perfect indifference whether work was performed by males or females—equal pay should be given for equal work.”

NOTE: any recent, current or forthcoming research in the field of New Zealand labour history, including specific inquiries, will be covered in this section of the journal. Please send details to: chair@lhp.org.nz

This ringing proclamation for pay equity was issued in Auckland when the 20th century was just a few months old and might be thought to herald a glorious era of equality for women workers. The reality was somewhat cloudier and less uplifting.

Since at least the 1890s young women had worked in the typesetting rooms of New Zealand printeries, especially in Auckland. The work generally involved ‘solid typesetting’—extracting individual lead letters from special wooden cases and assembling them into words and sentences for printing. It was painstaking, skilful work, requiring a high level of literary and manual dexterity, and women typesetters were evidently just as capable as their male colleagues.

Around the beginning of the 20th century, the New Zealand printing industry experienced a major technological shift. Linotype machines, which enabled a keyboard operator to set a whole line of type mechanically, began to replace hand or ‘solid’ typesetting, especially for newspaper work. Many typesetters lost their jobs, and those remaining fought to retain reasonable pay and conditions. To this end a Female Typesetters’ Union was formed, with a small but determined membership.

The union was included in the typesetters’ award delivered by the Arbitration Court at a hearing in June 1900. Union member Jane Davis, employed at the Star newspaper, gave evidence that she had worked a six-year apprenticeship. Four years after completing it her pay had not risen and was significantly lower than that of male colleagues.

In his judgement, Justice Martin delivered the endorsement for pay equity quoted above. At the same time, he announced pay rates for female typesetters that were significantly lower than those for males. The contradiction was explained in the judgement. The lower rates would apply only to women already employed as typesetters, in order to prevent them losing their jobs to male applicants. “It would be hard after having learned a business to throw these girls [sic] out of employment.” However, women entering the typesetting trade after the application of the new award “will rank as men, and must be employed on the same conditions and at the same rates.”*

This early and admirable stand on the principle of equal pay for equal work is unlikely to have softened the blow that mechanical typesetting inflicted on the printing trade. Typesetters, both male and female, continued to lose their jobs to the linotype, and women were not considered sufficiently strong or mechanically minded to operate those machines. However, the actions of Jane Davis and her fellow union members appear to have secured them a temporary improvement in their pay and job security.

Peter Cranney is a Wellington employment lawyer

* Justice Martin’s Arbitration Court judgement can be found in *Auckland Star*, 7 June 1900, p. 3

THE BUSINESS & LABOUR HISTORY GROUP

The Business & Labour History Group (B&LHG) is part of the Work Research Institute (formerly the New Zealand Work and Labour Market Institute) at AUT University in Auckland. Led by Associate Professor Simon Mowatt, the group exists to provide historical perspectives of long term trends in business practices and ideology, including patterns of work and organisation and labour relations, as a contribution to understanding where we are today, and why. Research themes include labour history, working class culture, trade unions, non-union employee representation, political parties of labour, studies on technological and industrial change, and historical research in economics, employment relations, labour law, occupational health and safety, marketing, management, accountancy, finance and other business-based disciplines.

Our members include AUT researchers such as Prof. Rob Allen, Prof. Erling Rasmussen, Associate Professor Felicity Lamm, Dr Geoffrey Brooke, Prof. Paul Moon and Dr Peter Gilderdale, and many external Research Associates including Prof. Greg Patmore (University of Sydney), Prof. Ray Markey (Macquarie University), Prof. Geoffrey Jones (Harvard Business School), and Gay Simpkin of the Auckland Labour History Group (ALHG).

The B&LHG presents research in progress with symposiums, seminars and conferences aimed to support those conducting historical work and promote cross-disciplinary discussion. In 2013 the group hosted a symposium entitled "Learning from the historical record: work in historical context" jointly with the Auckland Labour History Group. The event reported on the ALHG Oral History Project, and a variety of papers explored themes such as the origins of Labor Day in the US and a review of the Waihi miner's strike. In May this year we ran a conference themed "The Future of Work: Lessons from the Past - Lessons for the Future" aimed to explore the trends driving workplace change through a mixture of historical and contemporary research.

Recent project have included a long-run analysis of magazine publishing industry in the UK, with a detailed examination of labour relations in the sector, resulting in a book entitled *Revolutions from Grub Street: A history of magazine publishing in Britain* by Simon Mowatt and Professor Howard Cox (University of Worcester, UK) published by Oxford University Press.

We are always open to new external members seeking to affiliate, join our mailing list and attend our events. We have provided some funding for research projects and are also open to suggestions. Our next event will be in early 2015 as our summer meeting will be combined with the Academic Association of Historians in Australian and New Zealand Business Schools (AAHANZBS) conference on November 4-5 at the University of Sydney, Australia. In early November 2015 the B&LHG will host the 7th annual AAHANZBS conference at AUT University in Auckland. We invite you to submit papers and ideas for sessions, panels or research updates covering business and labour history themes for our forthcoming meetings and the conference by contacting Simon Mowatt at simon.mowatt@aut.ac.nz

FEATURE ARTICLES

A Forgotten Hero

Mark Briggs—flaxworker, conscientious objector, Palmerston North businessman and member of the Legislative Council—has been largely forgotten in his own city.
By Margaret Tate

Revised and reprinted with permission from
Manawatu Journal of History, 2008



MARK BRIGGS ON HIS APPOINTMENT TO
THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN 1935, AGED 51.
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY JOAN HORNIBROOKE.

At Mark Briggs' death in March 1965, the *Manawatu Evening Standard* published a brief obituary which omitted any reference to the fact that he had been one of the fourteen New Zealand conscientious objectors transported to France in 1917. However, five months later the new weekly *The Tribune* accepted two short articles on Briggs by local journalist Barry Leader who gave details of this shameful episode. Since 1965 Mark Briggs' name has not appeared in any local histories.

The most comprehensive account of Mark Briggs' experiences as an objector is contained in *Armageddon or Calvary* by Harry Holland, published in 1919 and now long out of print. However, there are references to Briggs in a number of more recent works on the antiwar movement. Archibald Baxter, one of the Fourteen and father of the poet James K Baxter, gave high praise to Briggs' courage in his memoir *We Will Not Cease*. Baxter's life history consequently came to personify the treatment of the Fourteen while that of Briggs faded from view. However, he was given his due in David Grant's account of the New Zealand anti-militarist tradition, *Field Punishment No. 1*, published in 2008. This recognition has made Briggs' name known more widely than at any time since his death.

Briggs and Baxter were the only two of the Fourteen who steadfastly resisted military command and refused to compromise their beliefs in any way. Even the courageous Baxter was driven to the edge of insanity and spent a short time in a mental hospital on his return. Briggs, undefeated in body and mind, took up his auctioneering business in Cuba Street, Palmerston North once more. Once re-established, he led an active public life in business and sport, in the local and national Labour Party organisation and, in later years, in the Legislative Council.

Briggs was born at Eastthorpe, Lonesborough, Yorkshire on 6 April 1884, the son of Albert Briggs, a shepherd and his wife Clara Dooks. After a village education he was apprenticed in his early teens at 2/6d a month to a local farmer who treated him badly. He ran away but his father insisted that he return. In 1904, aged 20, he emigrated to New Zealand with his father, then a widower, and his brother Samuel. All three became itinerant workers in the flax industry. At that time, within a triangle bounded by Palmerston North, Shannon and Foxton, some thirty or forty mills existed, the largest near Shannon employing 200 men. It is difficult to follow movements of the Briggs family exactly as workers moved from mill to mill as work became available. However records show that in 1906 Mark was employed at Koputaroa and in 1914 both Mark and his brother are listed on the Otaki electoral role as living at Rangiotu and their occupation is given as 'labourer'. Their father was employed as a cook in the Rangitane Mill near Opiki.

Briggs' attitude to service in World War I was based on his political convictions and it was as a flaxworker that his political education commenced. On 16

October 1906 he joined the Manawatu Flaxmills Employees' Industrial Union of Workers and in 1912 he was elected as delegate for the Tokomaru workers to the Management Committee. The Union was initially a conservative organisation initiated by the permanent workers who lived in Shannon, Foxton and Palmerston North. However, a large number of the transients became more involved in union affairs because of a dispute with the employers over contract work. The union took a more radical direction and joined the Federation of Labour, the 'Red Feds', in July 1911. The flaxworkers were one of the larger groups in the Federation, which also included miners, shearers and general labourers. This radical presence distinguished Palmerston North from other towns in the region. The influx of 'flaxies' from the railway station to union meetings in the Opera House, and afterwards to the hotels of Main Street, would have been a notable event in the town where most unions were small and conservative.



Above left: FLAX WORKERS ON THE JOB.
IAN MATHESON ARCHIVE, PNCC LIBRARY.

Above right: MIRANUI MILL, SHANNON.
IAN MATHESON ARCHIVE, PNCC LIBRARY.

Briggs' experience was further extended when he was appointed delegate to the Federation of Labour Conference in Wellington in May 1912. Some people who appear in the conference photograph with him are Michael Joseph Savage, Peter Fraser, Robert Semple, H T (Tim) Armstrong and P C (Paddy) Webb. These were all to be Cabinet Ministers in the First Labour Government and several remained his friends for life. The conference was held during the miners' strike at Waihi, and industrial versus political action was hotly debated. The 'flaxies' voted in favour of supporting suitable parliamentary candidates. However Briggs held radical views. He supported an attempt to remove the more moderate president of the flaxworkers' union from office and appears to have resigned from the management committee of the union when the attempt ended in failure.

For Briggs there was another significant meeting in 1912. Though satisfactory accommodation and recreational facilities were provided at the large Shannon mill, Miranui, buildings in the smaller mills were makeshift and drainage and plumbing poor or non-existent. These conditions resulted in outbreaks of typhoid fever.

On April 27 the *Manawatu Evening Standard* reported that the Manawatu Flaxmills Employees' Union waited on the Minister for Labour and raised three matters: insanitary accommodation, the need for first aid appliances because of the frequency of accidents; and some aspects of the awards. Briggs was one of the delegates who addressed the Minister. In the Legislative Council 36 years later, Briggs said, "When I had finished he said. 'Well, Briggs, if I'm Minister

of Labour for very long these conditions won't last.' [T]he next day the newspaper came out mentioning the 'Red Feds' who had interviewed the Minister the day before. Up to that time I had always been able to get work in the Manawatu but after that I was refused work from one end of the Manawatu to the other. I went away to the Waikato and they asked my employer there to put me off. In those times, I say, a man was outlawed who dared to ask for better conditions." Briggs did not forget this experience. It is not surprising that in these years he used the rhetoric of socialism and industrial action, concluding a letter to his father from France with the rallying cry, 'Workers of the world unite!'

Briggs eventually found work in the flax industry again at Mangaiti, near Te Aroha on the Hauraki Plains, but by September 1916 he had returned to Palmerston North and joined the Empire Auctioneering Company in Cuba Street. The business had been started in July by a friend and former flaxworker, John Robert (Bob) Brown who had been an active 'Red Fed' on the union's management committee in 1912-1913. An advertisement in the *Manawatu Daily Times* lists a furniture department at 9 Cuba Street and machinery, produce and poultry sales next door. By November the partners were also advertising as a licensed Employment and Registry Office.

However Briggs now had to face the issue of military service in World War I. It is well known that when war was declared in 1914 there was an outbreak of patriotic fervour but as the death toll mounted in Europe fewer volunteers could be found. Despite widespread resistance to conscription from labour organisations, peace activists and women's groups, the Military Service Bill introducing conscription was passed in May 1916. Conscientious objection was permitted only for members of a small number of religious sects and harsh penalties, including five years in gaol, were enacted for defaulters and objectors. Repressive legislation resulted in those speaking out against the Bill, including future Cabinet Ministers Peter Fraser and Bob Semple, being gaoled for sedition. Briggs' former union notified that a 'cessation of operations' would take place on Saturday, 10 June 1916 so that members could attend a mass protest meeting against conscription at the Fullers' Hall in Palmerston North. When Briggs was required to register he had stated that he was a conscientious objector, prepared to do work of national importance other than war service. His name was drawn in the Third Ballot and he was ordered to 'parade for medical examination.' He refused, fully aware of the consequences. On 22 March 1917 he was arrested by the Military Police. He was taken to Trentham Military Camp where he was court-martialled for having 'refused a lawful command' and sentenced to hard labour in Mount Cook prison.

It is interesting to make a comparison between Briggs and Ormond Burton, who enlisted at the age of 20 in 1914 but became a prominent Christian pacifist in World War II. Burton's biographer explained that because of 'the patriotic bias of political, journalistic and religious leaders, he accepted their justifications for the war'. Burton himself wrote later of the prevailing spirit of narrow self-centred nationalism. The *Manawatu Evening Standard* of the period was politically conservative and firmly patriotic. The headline 'Lively Incident in Napier' was followed by a jocular account of an attack on an anti-war speaker. The paper reported accounts of the major strikes of 1912-13 in Britain, Australia and New Zealand, and gave graphic details of attacks by the army on striking workers in European countries. The editorial's only concern was the threat to the New

Zealand economy. By contrast, militant socialism provided the source of Briggs' anti-war views.

The *Maoriland Worker*, the organ of the Federation of Labour, offered a radical alternative to the conservative major newspapers. Prominent Labour leaders from Australia, Britain and the United States visited New Zealand frequently, spoke to large audiences and helped to create an international perspective. In Palmerston North Rod Ross, Edinburgh-born and later to be a controversial figure in local politics, delivered an address on socialism on 28 January 1912 to a full house. 'Red Feds' such as Peter Fraser and Robert Semple held meetings with the flaxworkers and in the Square. All these voices spoke the language of the class struggle, supported the widespread industrial action and stressed the common interests of workers throughout the world. The basis of their opposition to fighting in World War I was the contention that wars were made by rival imperialist powers in a struggle for markets and for economic supremacy. They were appalled by the fortunes made from the international arms trade. Put plainly, they maintained that wars were not made by workers, were not in their interests and since the interests of the workers of all countries were identical there was no reason whatever why they should be forced kill one another. They were concerned that the burden of war service fell heavily upon the working class who found it harder to get exemption. Briggs spoke later in the Legislative Council about honest but uneducated men 'who could not get up in this Chamber and say two words' and who were therefore disadvantaged in making their case to military tribunals. The low pay in the army was contrasted with the 'war profiteering' of local businesses. Finally, with many Labour leaders in prison, there was a real concern at the loss of civil liberties in time of war and the possible use of an army to quell civil unrest at home. It was in this context that Briggs developed his strong international perspective, his lifetime opposition to war and his willingness to suffer for his convictions.

By July 1917 Briggs had been in prison for four months, while many other objectors had been imprisoned for much longer. The sudden decision to transport fourteen of these men to France was ill-considered, especially as the earlier British attempt of putting objectors in the front line to break their spirits had been a failure. The group included men of differing views. Some like Briggs were socialists, Archibald Baxter was a pacifist and a socialist and there were a number of Irish Catholics who had no reason to fight for England during the struggle for Home Rule. On July 13 the Fourteen were marched through the Wellington streets after dark, dragged up the gangway of the *Waitemata* and put in 'clink' (the ship's jail cell). They were deliberately humiliated during the voyage, held down by force to be given military haircuts, and when they resisted all attempts to make them wear khaki their own clothes were removed and they completed the voyage using towels as loin cloths, suffering from cold as they neared England. In England they were imprisoned but no longer kept together and some of the objectors, young, isolated and worn down by bullying or persuasion, accepted non-combatant service. Briggs was older, determined and a plain and forceful speaker. He was given high praise from other members of the Fourteen who regarded him as a leader. Thomas Harland said that they all felt that he had the right to be the spokesperson for the Fourteen and described him as utterly unbroken intellectually and able to give every detail of their martyrdom.

Briggs refused absolutely to obey any military commands. He was transferred to France, put in irons and endured a considerable period of solitary confinement with minimal rations. He was sentenced to No 1 Field Punishment, handcuffed with his hands behind a sloping post and with his feet barely touching the ground. This was well known to cause extreme pain and would now be regarded as torture. Three of the Fourteen, Briggs, Baxter and Kirwan, were then forced to go up to the front lines. Briggs refused to walk and was dragged over the duckboards which caused lacerations to his back and right thigh. At the command of a military policeman he was hauled three times through icy water in shell holes. Suffering from shock, he was returned to camp where he was given minimal medical attention for the deep flesh wounds. Archibald Baxter was taken to Briggs' cell just after his injuries and he attributes his decision to stand firm to Briggs' stoicism: 'I did not think that Briggs would survive their deliberate violence or that I would survive it either ... In fact the blow did not fall as it had on Briggs, but came more slowly in another way, by starvation. But I had already made my decision at the time when I saw Briggs.'



BOB KERR, NUMBER ONE FIELD PUNISHMENT, NO 6. 'THE DUCKWALK', OIL ON BOARD, 151X122.
PRINTED WITH PERMISSION OF THE ARTIST

Briggs was seldom abused by ordinary soldiers. He wrote, 'Soldiers expressed intense indignation about the actions of the military policeman and threatened that they would take his life. Next day when he was crossing the parade ground the camp cooks came and counted him out. I could hear the 'one, two, etc 'and the medical orderlies told me what was happening.' Briggs was barely able to walk for months and completely unfit for work, which in any case he would have refused.

Eventually Briggs was returned to New Zealand, bearing the scars which would remain with him for the rest of his life. Soldiers cheered him on his arrival in Wellington. It is ironical, however, that the army, entangled in red tape, was now at a loss to know how to get rid of him. A letter was sent to the Palmerston North Post Office offering a discharge and army pay. However, as he had no regimental number and had never given his signature to any document, it could not be handed over. He had no intention of accepting it.

The rest of his life was more comfortable and less eventful than his first three decades had been. Unlike many conscientious objectors who met hostility and discrimination when they were discharged from detention, Briggs immediately returned to his auctioneering business which had been managed by his partner, Bob Brown. They had weekly auctions of new and secondhand furniture and at Christmas a special collection of toys and dolls. When Brown left in 1922 Briggs was joined by Bertie Victor Cooksley, a Gallipoli veteran who later became a National Party MP for Wairarapa. According to Briggs' daughter, Joan Hornibrooke, they remained friends for life. Cooksley approached Briggs on the recommendation of Mr. B J Jacobs, one-time president of the Returned Services Association, and Briggs later conducted the furniture side of his business from a shop at the corner of Cuba and George Street in the RSA building. There seems to have been no hard feelings on either side. Cooksley eventually left the partnership and Briggs continued until 1947 when his assistant Norm Sinclair moved away and the business was closed.

W P Reeves, former editor of the *Dominion*, recalls that he would wander into the auction rooms as a boy and that there always seemed to be friends and acquaintances around Mark Briggs, spinning yarns and enjoying each other's company, 'Briggs was a popular sage. He was a thin, slightly stooped figure with a round face and benign look about him. As I got to know him in my youth I found him a very gentle man, obliging, tolerant of argument but forthright in his socialist opinions.' Briggs was noted for his generosity. He looked after his employees in the business, providing gifts at birthdays and Christmas and generous leave and support at times of bereavement. He was also popular as a sportsman. He coached boxing at a local club, working with young people during the Depression, and became a committee member and patron of the United Cricket and Football Club.



BERTHA SYDNEY BURRILL, AGED 19. PHOTO COURTESY JOAN HORNIBROOKE.

After his return from the war Briggs lived at Fernley's, a small private hotel in Main Street, until his marriage to Alberta (Bertha) Burrill on 14 April 1920. Bertha, born in Queenstown, was the daughter of a lawyer, Robert James Burrill and after the death of her parents had lived for some years in her sister's large and well-appointed household. Reeves remembers Bertha as a 'modern, educated woman'.



BRIGGS' HOUSE IN NIKAU STREET. PAT SCRIVENS

They rented a small house at 19 Lombard Street where their only daughter Joan was born on 14 January 1921. Briggs then purchased a section at 10 Nikau Street (now No. 16) and over the next few years built a substantial home remembered by their grandchildren as containing some fine furniture. Thus, in his mid-30s, Briggs finally began to enjoy a settled domestic life. The couple were always hospitable and their daughter recalls meeting some famous figures. “Every weekend we had visitors—Harry Holland and his wife, Michael Joseph Savage, Fraser and the rest of the Cabinet. They talked to Labour Party members on a Sunday afternoon. I have known five Prime Ministers, Holyoake and Muldoon as well.”

Briggs is believed to have supported the Palmerston North political labour movement during the '20s and '30s but there is no record of his holding a leadership role until 1935. After the radical Palmerston North Branch of the Social Democratic Party dissolved in 1922, the efforts of the Labour Party locally and nationally became directed to success in municipal and national elections rather than promoting socialist ideology. Dissension in 1935 resulted in the City Branch of the Labour Party being disbanded and Briggs supported the moderate Terrace End Branch, established in 1934. In 1935 he was endorsed as a delegate to the annual Labour Party conference and in subsequent years was elected to the Palmerston North Labour Representation Committee. In 1935 he also stood for Labour on the Palmerston North City Council and polled well but unsuccessfully. This pattern was repeated when he stood for the Manawatu-Oroua Electric Power Board and the Wellington Harbour Board in the 1938 local government elections.

Prime Minister Michael Savage sought to appoint him to the Legislative Council on several occasions. Though initially reluctant, he finally accepted and took his seat in the House on 25 March 1936 along with another local Labour Party leader, Rangi Mawhete (William Arthur Moffat), grandson of Wiremu Kingi Te Awe Awe. From 1928 Mawhete had played a significant role in developing the relationship between Labour and the Ratana movement. He was a Manawatu-Rangitikei land agent and interpreter and Briggs' warm association with the Maori community of Manawatu is likely to have been influenced by their relationship. Both Briggs and Mawhete remained members of the Legislative Council until their term expired shortly before its abolition in 1950.

Briggs took his role in the upper house seriously and made a number of major speeches. He maintained a socialist position in debates on such topics as arbitration, the subsidising of the Bank of New Zealand, and compensation payments for manual workers. His attitude to the Labour Government, however, showed that he had put his radical days behind him. Expressing his profound admiration for the First Labour Government, he contrasted the present lives of working people with what had known as a young man. He concluded: ‘I am in favour of the right to strike because of my own experiences; but I do not wish to be misunderstood and have people think that the right should be used today ... [D]espite the war no country in the world has attained such extraordinary heights in social and economic achievement as this country under a Labour Government.’

However, with World War II at a critical stage in 1940, conscription again became a live issue but the issue was now different. During the 30s, leftwing voices had been raised against the dangerous rise of fascism and they now

reluctantly supported the war. W P Reeves said of Briggs, 'I recollect calling at his home in the early forties. He was appalled at the descent into war and was predictably despairing, as most of us were, of the failure of diplomacy to find an alternative to armed conflict'. Prime Minister Peter Fraser well understood the former objections to conscription. When he introduced the Emergency Regulations Amendment Bill to the House in May 1940 he stated firmly: 'It would be unfair to apply it [conscription] to human beings and not to the cumulative wealth and prosperity of the country'. The Regulations were debated gravely and at length and the Bill passed without a division in both the upper and lower House.

Several former conscientious objectors in the Legislative Council continued to warn about the threat to civil liberties in wartime and it was on this subject that Briggs was most effective. It was not only the cruelty and waste of war that concerned him but the threat to democracy and freedom of speech. "It is after the war that Pacifist ideas will be needed. Those ideals will be needed in order to establish the freedom for which we are supposed to be fighting ...It may be a most important thing that we should win the war, but it is equally important that we should not stifle every opinion that is honestly and faithfully held by individuals who are prepared to sacrifice everything in order to uphold these opinions."

He continued during the war and in the immediate postwar period to seek just treatment of conscientious objectors. In 1945 he spoke strongly against the continued imprisonment of objectors and the slow and often inequitable process of reviewing their cases. He also maintained his international perspective and was in touch with the plight of objectors in Nazi Germany. He told the House that conscientious objectors in countries such as France, Norway and other countries overrun by the Nazis were taken from gaol and, after refusing to work on munitions, were among those who died in the concentration camps. He referred knowledgably to prominent members of the English anti-war movement, including writers such as Vera Brittain, Aldous Huxley and Rose Macaulay, academics such as Bertrand Russell, and the actress Sybil Thorndike.

Briggs made a passionate case for world peace. In 1948 he expressed disappointment at the lack of progress made by the Great Powers who continued to be motivated by self interest. 'I think 95 percent of the people of the world today are fed up with having their homes wrecked, their cities ruined and lives destroyed by the millions. Think of those four hundred million who are starving in Europe today because of the destruction of war. They are the coming nations of the future.'

High praise for Mark Briggs can be found from diverse sources. Ian Matheson, former Palmerston North City Archivist, recalls that Briggs was always remembered as a hero by the older generation of Labour members in Palmerston North. Surprisingly, John A Lee, the outspoken Labour politician of the 30s who had fought in the First World War, also described him as one of his heroes. Perhaps he is best described in his own plain words. He spoke in the House of what prisoners of conscience endured. 'When they go into these camps they have no say as to conditions, and they do not know what they will face... It may be that their sentence is a 'Kathleen Mavourneen' one behind barbed wire. [i.e. "It may be for years or it may be forever".] They may experience bread

and water for days, and, in some cases, no bread at all. I have experienced that. When a man is prepared to do that, there is something in him.'

Margaret Tate is a Palmerston North historian

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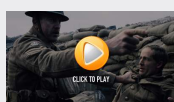
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to acknowledge David Grant for generously sharing his material on the life of Mark Briggs, particularly information gained from oral interviews with local people who have since died. His book *Field Punishment No.1* has aroused public interest in the story of the Fourteen, and other efforts have now been made to remedy its long neglect.

Mark Briggs on TV3

Briggs' story is told with six others' in a series entitled *Great War Stories*, which screened on 3 News at 6pm from 4 August. Mark Briggs was featured on 9 August.

Introduced by Hilary Barry, whose great-grandfather fought at Passchendaele, the series delved into the war histories of seven distinctly different characters—from a legendary Kiwi fighter pilot to a warhorse called Jess. The series is the brainchild of documentary maker Anna Cottrell, and has been made in association with TV3, the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Archives New Zealand and the Alexander Turnbull Library, funded by New Zealand On Air.



You can watch the video online here :

<http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/video/mark-briggs-great-war-story>

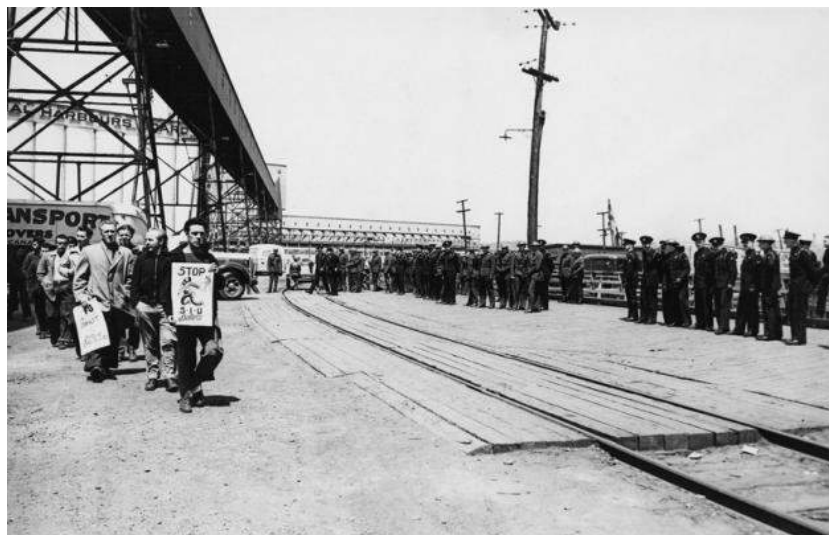
Smoke, Mirrors and Spooks: The Watersiders' Dispute 1951

By David Burke

Two years after the Second World War industrial relations in New Zealand entered a new phase coinciding with the onset of the Cold War. In 1947 102,725 working days were lost owing to industrial action, more than three times the number in 1946 and by far the most costly in terms of lost working days since 1932. The National Government was quick to blame this upsurge in industrial unrest on members of the Communist Party of New Zealand (NZCP) and drew up plans to combat what they saw as a communist threat to the New Zealand labour movement, culminating in a showdown between the government and the watersiders in 1951.

There is a vast amount of literature on the watersiders' dispute of 1951 and while some attention has been paid to the surveillance of strikers and their supporters by members of New Zealand's Special Branch, little has been paid to the role of the Western intelligence agencies in the development of an anti-communist strategy in the early stages of the Cold War in New Zealand. Central to this strategy was the creation of a civil intelligence agency in NZ similar, if not actually affiliated, to the British counter-intelligence body MI5. Proxy trade unions were set up by the CIA, FBI and AFL-CIO in the Canadian and US labour movements that would guide the trade unions away from the communist-dominated World Federation of Trade Unions and into the non-communist International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. A series of covert operations against the left in the Mediterranean and Pacific regions, with New Zealand being described as a 'danger area' in respect of communist infiltration of the trade union movement, helped them achieve this goal. During the Canadian Seamen's strike of 1949, a major dispute that tied up 77 ships in 25 countries, the CIA set up a Canadian District of the American Seafarers' International Union (SIU) with the help of the ship-owners and Canadian government to supplant the Canadian Seamen's Union (CSU) that had called the strike. The strike, which began in April 1949, was a simple one. The CSU rejected Canadian ship-owners' proposals to cut wages and end the union's control over recruitment and engagement of seamen through the CSU's 'hiring hall'. However, the strike quickly took on a new dimension when CSU pickets were fired on in Halifax, Nova Scotia, by thugs working for the Canadian District of the SIU.

The strike reached New Zealand on 14 April 1949 when the crew of the *Tridale*, berthed in Wellington, were gaoled for refusing to take her to sea. NZ seamen refused to man her and the watersiders would not load her. A controversial figure in this dispute was Fintan Patrick Walsh, a founder member of the CPNZ and the leader of the Federated Seamen's Union of New Zealand. Walsh's membership of the CP had been brief, and from 1940 until the late 1950s he was active in the anti-communist cause, using his presidency of the Wellington Trades Council to speak out against 'communist tactics' and 'those who seemed determined to destroy New Zealand's arbitration system.' Walsh was in Britain when the strike began, where the reaction of British dockers to the dispute threatened to derail Clement Attlee's post-war Labour government. Dockworkers in Avonmouth, Bristol and Liverpool were the first to boycott strike-bound



THIS PICTURE WAS PROBABLY TAKEN ON MAY 16, 1949 WHEN 100 RCMP OFFICERS AND POLICE ESCORTED SIU SCABS ONTO THE STRIKE-BOUND VESSEL THE OTTAWA VALLEY. NOTE THE 'STOP SIU' POSTER. CANADIAN PRESS PHOTO, WWW.WFHATHEWAYLABOUREXHIBITCENTRE.CA

Canadian vessels. When the secondary action spread to London in early July, the dispute rapidly took on another dimension. London port employers responded with what the dockers regarded as a lockout at any dock where a Canadian ship was 'blacked'. Clement Attlee's Labour government imposed a formal State of Emergency on 11 July 1949, only to see the number of strikers rise to 15,000 one week later, by which time 7,000 troops were working in the docks. It was almost another week before the CSU president, Harry Davis, called off the strike, surrendering on the worthless assurance that there would be no victimisation.

The solidarity actions embarrassed Britain's post-war Labour government and proved a deeply humiliating experience for the British Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), which had condemned the action from the outset, and threatened dire retribution for any member taking part. The Labour Government portrayed the action as communist-inspired, with the Attorney General, Sir Hartley Shawcross, depicting the unofficial dockers' actions as a Communist assault on 'Social Democracy, our way of life'; the Minister of Labour, George Isaacs, declared the dockers were being 'used' by Communists 'to dislocate our trade and thus retard our economy'; and the Minister of Health, Aneurin Bevan, spoke darkly of 'malignant forces'. Once back in New Zealand Walsh followed suit and took immediate action to end secondary action in support of the Canadian seafarers denouncing the dispute as an 'extension of the Cold War' by communists.¹

The whole response seemed to be carefully and rigorously planned. The CSU strike, in what appeared a legitimate response to the ship-owners' determination to cut the seamen's wages and destroy their union, was exploited by the British and Canadian governments to discredit strike action in order to oversee the smooth delivery of US aid under the Marshall Plan to countries in the Western bloc. The Soviet Union opposed the Plan as an imperialist policy that would guarantee American control of Europe. When the strike was lost, the deep-sea shipping companies did indeed impose substantial wage cuts and the SIU, despite the fact that it had almost no Canadian membership at the time, accepted them.

The previous year, 1948, Sir Percy Sillitoe, director-general of MI5, and one of his top men, Roger Hollis, had made a brief, unpublicized visit to NZ, arriving on 19 March. Looking to resurrect an earlier British ill-fated attempt to establish a Security Intelligence Bureau in New Zealand,² Sillitoe sounded out the secretary of external affairs and head of the PM's Department, Alister McIntosh, and his deputy, Foss Shanahan, Cabinet secretary. No record has survived of Sillitoe's presentation to McIntosh and Shanahan but McIntosh appears to have pre-empted the Sillitoe-Hollis plan by one of his own, recommending that a civil security intelligence organisation be set up within the police force, free of British 'experts'. An unsigned paper from the PM's Department dated 2 March 1948, two and a half weeks before Sillitoe and Hollis arrived and almost certainly the handiwork of McIntosh, recounted the unfortunate experience of the British-led Security Intelligence Bureau during the Second World War:³

The Bureau never functioned satisfactorily and, after the departure of Major Foulkes [sic],⁴ the direction of it was taken over by Mr J. Cummings, then Superintendent of Police, and on his appointment as Commissioner, by Detective Sergeant J. Nalder . . . It had not been appreciated when the Bureau was established that a considerable proportion of the duties it would undertake were substantially being discharged by the Police Department. Furthermore, experience of this para-military organisation indicated that personnel recruited on a military basis were not suitable to undertake military duties of this kind in New Zealand. Civil security is primarily a function of the Police Department, which is organised to undertake duties of this kind, has personnel skilled in detection and interrogation and, to a degree also, appreciation of intelligence...⁵

The writer said the military chiefs of staff agreed that the best approach was to create a special branch of the police force to handle civil security intelligence which would report monthly to the chiefs of staff through the commissioner of police.

In 1949 the then-head of MI5, Sir Percy Sillitoe, considered it timely to resurrect the idea of a Commonwealth-wide security intelligence network with MI5 at its head.⁶ In the background were accelerating security problems in the colonies; heavy demands were being made on MI5 by riots and insurgencies in the Middle East, Egypt, the Gold Coast and Malaya. On 29 December 1949 the New Zealand authorities co-operated with a request from Sillitoe to contribute to an international 'who's who' of prominent communists and fellow travellers. The new police commissioner, Bruce Young, responded a month later with the names of the 18 members or reserve members of the national committee of the NZCP, along with that of Dick Griffin, a former member of the national executive, then active in the Society for Closer Relations with Russia. Walsh's recent intervention in the Canadian seamen's strike helped to convince Sidney Holland that a security intelligence organisation aimed at negating communist influence in the labour movement was needed in New Zealand.

Holland, the leader of the National Party had campaigned during the 1949 general election on the slogan 'economic freedom', which included a return to voluntary trade unionism after years of wartime state controls on nearly every aspect of the economy and industrial relations. The deregulatory policies he championed, however, were those most likely to lead to a wages explosion and more industrial trouble. His fallback position was the Industrial Conciliation

and Arbitration Act; economic freedom would lead to the removal of hundreds of war-related controls and subsidies but would not extend to allowing unions to negotiate directly with employers. The hand of the state, through conciliation boards, the Court of Arbitration, or other negotiating agencies subject to the Industrial Conciliation & Arbitration Act, would continue to rule.⁷

Walsh at this time was vice-president of the Federation of Labour, which had only recently gone through its own anti-communist shake-up, having quit the Moscow-aligned World Federation of Trade Unions in May 1949 on the grounds that it was a communist front and an agent for disrupting the free world economy. A year later the Federation joined the new, non-communist International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

The Waterside Workers' Union, on the other hand, refused to quit the maritime section of the World Federation of Trade Unions, and in April 1950 the watersiders left Walsh's Federation of Labour and formed a rival union organisation, the New Zealand Trades Union Congress.



'TOBY HILL AND JOCK BARNES (SECOND AND THIRD FROM LEFT), LEADERS OF THE WATERSIDE WORKERS' UNION WHICH WALKED OUT OF THE 1950 FEDERATION OF LABOUR CONFERENCE IN OPPOSITION TO WHAT THEY SAW AS A POLICY OF MODERATION BY FEDERATION OFFICIALS.' ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY

Following the publication in 1950 of NSC-68, a top secret report by the US National Security Council spelling out the policy of containment vis a vis the Soviet Union, the capture of the labour movements by the CIA and British intelligence became a priority. "The Kremlin is inescapably militant," NSC-68 stated. "It is inescapably militant because it possesses and is possessed by a world-wide revolutionary movement, because it is the inheritor of Russian imperialism, and because it is a totalitarian dictatorship. It is quite clear from Soviet theory and practice that the Kremlin seeks to bring the free world under its domination by the methods of the Cold War."

Following the formation of the NATO alliance in 1949, western intelligence operatives had been tasked to monitor Communist activity directed against NATO 'war material'; and to consider how to 'combat communist influence and to strengthen the free and democratic trade union movement'.

On 29 December 1949 New Zealand state security underwent an overhaul when Police Commissioner Jim Cummings decided that the section of the force dealing with subversive organisations would be designated immediately as Special Branch. This followed a conference of commissioners of police in Melbourne the previous month which decided unanimously to adopt the Special Branch name for sections dealing with subversive organisations. It was also in line with McIntosh's advice to the New Zealand government before the Sillitoe-Hollis visit. In reality, the creation of Special Branch was mere window-dressing; the Branch had no more resources than those previously allocated to monitoring subversives and the personnel were the same, including the section head, Senior Detective Jim Nalder, who had handled day-to-day security intelligence matters after the promotion of Cummings to Police Commissioner in 1944. Its brief was to deal with subversive organisations and the vetting of public servants, not counter-espionage.⁷⁸ Special Branch could not deal with the wider intelligence ramifications of the watersiders' dispute of 1951. The watersiders, on 8 February 1951, had rejected the offer of 4s.5d an hour and had ceased working overtime. Their action was met by an ultimatum from the Holland Government, demanding a resumption of normal work, which included overtime work. This was rejected by the workers. On 23 February the government introduced sweeping Emergency Regulations, using the armed forces, extending the powers of the police and also freezing the union's funds. When servicemen started to load cargo, the NZ seamen walked off ships. The union was de-registered and a new union was formed on 26 May, its members beginning work on the wharves on 28 May. A Special Branch report commented: The executive of the new Union comprises:- Mr. A. Bell, President, who has an unsavoury record; Austin, the Walking-Delegate, who is also referred to in Police Records; Mr. Ayr, Secretary; Mr. B. Lowe, Vice-President; Mr. Audley, Bureau Officer.

During the dispute "activists" were made the subject of what were called Subversive History sheets, and kept under surveillance by NZ Special Branch. The nature of the reports served notice that the lack of a security and intelligence body capable of carrying out the new security and intelligence functions of the Cold War was hindering both intelligence and counter-intelligence operations in New Zealand.

The need to separate security intelligence from the activities of Special Branch began to make itself increasingly evident as the dispute unfolded, as these documents held in Archives New Zealand suggest:

46/47/48/to56/131 Telephone Message SECRET
 Received by: Sub-Inspector P. J. Nalder, Police Headquarters.
 Sent by: Detective Sergeant R. Jones, Auckland.
 Date Received: 5 March 1951.
 Time sent: 8 a.m. [12 page report] [starts p. 2]

In respect to the questionnaire forwarded from the Hon. Minister of Labour, I would like to point out briefly the difficulties experienced by a member of Special Branch in obtaining replies in the manner suggested by the questionnaire. The Communist Party have told the militant Trade Unions that members of the Special Branch are Security Police. Individual watersiders, even moderates, are therefore loath to speak openly to

members of this Branch on matters relating to their Union. Expressions of opinion of watersiders are more difficult for Special Branch officers to obtain than possibly an ordinary member of the Uniform Branch of the Police Force...

I have been successful in obtaining contact with two rank and file members who were prepared to supply me with information, namely on questions concerning Communist influence within the Waterside Workers Union. During the present dispute, however, one informant has failed to make contact with me and any approach on my part in the present circumstances would meet with failure, not only for the present but also for the future. The second informant has supplied me with some information but has had one fright and is therefore very naturally ensuring his own safety first which is understandable. Early in this dispute this informant made it quite clear that while he was prepared to assist me while a Labour Government was in power circumstances had now changed since the National Party had assumed office. However, he assured me that he would assist me personally but no more. His assistance in the present dispute has therefore been spasmodic.

But what proved more persuasive in the creation of a New Zealand civil intelligence service to protect government secrets was the following Top Secret report:

37/38[blurred]/39/40/[redacted]/41/42/131 Top Secret. Police Department Wellington 2 April, 1951
 Memorandum for
 The Hon. Mr W. H. Fortune,
 Minister in Charge of Police,
 Parliament Buildings,
 WELLINGTON

I forward herewith a report from Detective Sergeant R. Jones, of Auckland, re allegations that Harold Barnes, President of the de-registered Waterside Workers Union, has contacts in high Government circles. Barnes is a boaster and what he says may be quite untrue, but I understand that he frequently drinks at Bellamys in the part set aside for the Ministers Secretaries, but as the guest of certain members of the Opposition.

Since I was appointed to my present position, which includes responsibility for internal security, I have not been happy concerning the question of security in the Prime Minister's Department.

In my opinion there is considerable reason for apprehension concerning the loyalty of at least one member of the present staff employed in the Department of External Affairs. I refer to Douglas William Lake, who, in the light of the present world situation must, in my opinion be regarded as a security risk and therefore is considered unsuitable for employment in a position where he will handle or have access to classified documents.

My opinion is based on the information I have in my possession concerning his wife and not on account of any undesirable display of political affiliations by Mr. Lake.

It is, therefore, necessary to furnish herein a summary of the history



DESMOND PATRICK COSTELLO (RIGHT) IN PARIS IN THE 1950S DURING A DIPLOMATIC POSTING. COSTELLO WAS ONE OF THE PUBLIC SERVANTS UNDER SUSPICION OF "COMMUNIST LEANINGS".

of Mrs. Lake. [Master of Arts with first class honours in French, awarded in 1934.] During her last year at the University, Mrs Lake was the Women's Vice-President of the Students Association.

[Became an active communist, writing many books and pamphlets on the subject.]

The plain position is that while Mr. Lake is employed on highly confidential matters of Government policy, War Book preparation, etc., his wife is acting as a willing tool for the New Zealand Communist Party and the USSR.

Detective Sergeant R. Jones (Special Branch) Auckland, has mentioned Desmond Patrick Costello, who, I understand, is a member of the New Zealand Diplomatic Staff in Paris.

I cannot escape making some further reference to him, although it could be said that he can have no responsibility for any leakage of information to Harold Barnes, but it is known that not only Barnes but Tobias Hill, Alexander Drennan and others of the same political ideology have been guests of the Soviet – Mr Burov, and in this way comment concerning Mr Costello is relevant for was he not with Mr and Mrs Lake in the Diplomatic Service of this country in the U.S.S.R.?

It is known that prior to his appointment to the U.S.S.R. Mr. Costello had married a woman of Russian origin, who with her brother was a member of the Communist Party in England. It was known that Mr. Costello had other associations in England indicative of his Communist leanings...

Mr and Mrs Lake are on common ground so far as concerns their political beliefs. They served in the USSR together. Mrs Lake returned to New Zealand and has unhesitatingly attacked public statements made by Mr and Mrs Boswell concerning the USSR and in doing so has aligned herself with potential "fifth columnists" in New Zealand in the event of the USSR being engaged in a war in which New Zealand was involved.

I do not think it can be said that Mr Lake has completely escaped the influence of his wife. On the other hand there has been no sign of any restraining influence of Mrs. Lake and this would naturally be expected from a person in Mr Lake's position.

We feel that we cannot report freely information that may be of vital importance to the Government while an employee in the Department of External Affairs is not free of security risk.

Prior to the recent departure overseas of the Permanent Head of the Prime Minister's Department, Inspector P. J. Nalder, Special Branch, Police Headquarters, discussed this matter with Mr McIntosh, who at that time was not altogether happy about the position of Mr Lake on his staff. Since then further information has been received and as you will notice this report could not be properly prepared without giving information which has bearing on the identity of an informant. I have, therefore, classified it 'TOP SECRET'.

I am enclosing a copy of this memorandum as you may wish to pass it to the Rt. Hon. The Prime Minister for any action he may consider necessary, but I do ask that it be restricted to you and the Prime Minister.

The security service was now expected to act as a conduit between secret intelligence and the government.

43/44/131 S.51/61. New Zealand Police. Confidential Special Branch, Auckland. 26 March, 1951.
 REPORT of: Detective Sergeant R. Jones, No. 3272.
 Relative to: WATERFRONT STRIKE – Questionnaire from Hon. Minister of Labour. Vide attached.

I have no direct knowledge of who would be likely to pass on information from the sources mentioned, but it does surprise me to know that Desmond Patrick COSTELLO and Douglas William LAKE continue to hold high Government positions, despite adverse reports from this office regarding their Communist associations.

The defection in Australia in 1954 of two KGB agents, Vladimir and Evdokia Petrov, claiming that a number of KGB agents were active in New Zealand, finally led to the creation of a Security Intelligence Service (SIS) in New Zealand. Sidney Holland had long vacillated on the setting up an independent security service until he received a phone call from the Australian PM, Robert Menzies. Petrov, Menzies told him, had informed the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) that he had a ‘contact’ inside the NZ Prime Minister’s Department. ‘This alarmed Holland very much but his two top officials, External Affairs Secretary Alister McIntosh and Cabinet Secretary Foss Shanahan, remained sceptical. They went through the list of senior public servants and the only possible name they could come up with was that of Dr Bill Sutch.’⁹ Special Branch were out of their depth.

David Burke is a historical researcher at Cambridge University, and a frequent visiting scholar at Victoria University’s Stout Centre for New Zealand Studies.

ENDNOTES

1. See Lewis, Harold, ‘Smoke, Mirrors and Spooks: The International Transport Workers’ Federation Vigilance Committees, 1949-1953’, *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* No 17 Spring 2004; Hunt, Graeme, *Black Prince: The Biography of Fintan Patrick Walsh*, Auckland: Penguin Books and Waddington Press (2004)
2. See Price, Hugh, *The Plot To Subvert Wartime New Zealand*, Wellington: Victoria University Press (2006)
3. Hunt, Graeme, *Spies and Revolutionaries. A History of New Zealand Subversion*, Auckland: Reed Publishing (NZ) Ltd (2007) pp.155-158
4. Major Kenneth Folkes, Head of the New Zealand Intelligence Bureau.
5. Cited Hunt, *Spies*, p.158.
6. Hunt, *Spies*, p.156.
7. See Hunt, *Spies* p.163
8. Hunt, *Spies* p.162
9. Hunt, *Spies* p.227.

The letters cited with grey backgrounds come from Archives New Zealand, ADMO 21007 W5595/1 25/9/20/1.

2014 RONA BAILEY LECTURE

'Suing Robert Muldoon and doing time': From anti-apartheid to Project Waitangi

This year's Rona Bailey Lecture was given by Robert Considine of Christchurch, whose decades of activism followed many of the same themes that Rona Bailey had emphasised in her own life. In particular they were both strongly committed to the struggle against apartheid, and later, to educating Pakeha about the Treaty of Waitangi. Robert's lecture was delivered on 13 February 2014 at Toi Whakaari/the New Zealand Drama School. We are very grateful to them for allowing us to use their Rona Bailey Room, and to Robert for his thoughtful address, which was heard and appreciated by a large audience. A slightly abridged version of the first part of Robert's address appears below. The second and final part will appear in the following issue of the Bulletin. The full text will also be available on our website.

E nga mana, e nga reo, e nga iwi o te motu, kia ora tatou katoa.
Distinguished guests, old friends, warm greetings to you all.

I knew Rona Bailey only by reputation. I wish I had known her personally. We had much in common even though she was a communist and I was a Catholic. She also lived in a different period of history. She was born in 1914—only five years before my father—and was 28 years older than myself.

As I read a profile of Rona by David Grant, I realized once again the extent to which our lives are shaped by our experience. She was described as a 'legendary communist and activist' and witnessed, as a child, a protest march of unemployed in Gisborne. She was influenced by her schoolteacher aunt and attended a Paul Robeson concert in Panama. Paul was an African American and a well known Communist. Rona also witnessed the hooded riders of the Ku Klux Klan and was active in the 1951 waterfront lockout, during which the police ransacked her flat. A conviction for having an unregistered Gestetner duplicating machine followed, and she was fined 14 pounds. Now that is a conviction worth having! She was also active in the 'No Maori No Tour' campaign, anti-Vietnam protests, the Springbok Tour protests in 1981, Project Waitangi and the foreshore and seabed hikoi.

She was a remarkable woman. Our passion for justice emanated from different sources, Rona with her communism and me with my Catholicism.

My Irish whakapapa is very relevant to my identity in Aotearoa. On my mother's side I am descended from a long line of Irish revolutionaries. We are aware of three of them. One worked with Wolfe Tone who led the failed 1798 uprising against the English colonizers. Another was jailed in the land wars of Galway. The ancestor, Thomas Sweeney, who projected us to New Zealand was sentenced to hang in Tipperary on 1 April 1823 for 'felonious assault on a habitation' between sunrise and sunset. Just before he was due to be hanged he and his fellow 'urban guerrillas' were given a choice between hanging and transportation. He chose transportation to Australia. Sweeney later married and his daughter immigrated to Hokitika in 1865 where she married another Irishman. That was the start of our family in New Zealand.

I grew up in Addington, one of the most interesting suburbs in the country. The entire district was working class. We were part of an Irish Catholic ghetto on the edge of Protestant Christchurch. The environment of Addington was unique. Looking back there were some global significant influences which began to shape my worldview.

One was Pope John XXIII who, in a very radical way, opened the Catholic Church to the global struggles in the world. Another was the Irish Catholic Kennedy family—particularly JFK.

In 1967 I was the youngest NZ delegate to attend the Catholic Church World Conference of the Laity in Rome. Capitalizing on contacts I had made in Rome and at the Vatican, I was subsequently hosted by families in nine US cities. I attended civil rights planning meetings; Anti-Vietnam War meetings, including meetings about the secret anti-Vietnam pipeline to Canada to avoid the draft; and a variety of other meetings held in slums and ghettos.

As chair of the Canterbury Youth Council I was a New Zealand delegate to the World Assembly of Youth Conference in Liege, Belgium. This involved listening to fiery speeches, witnessing dramatic withdrawals of delegates and meeting with members of liberation movements. I listened to and sometimes met members of the PLO, ANC, PAC, ZANU, MPLA, Sinn Fein. I subsequently found out that this gathering was funded by the CIA.

In 1973, while working for New Zealand's international aid agency CORSO, I went to six Asian countries with John Curnow and was exposed to radical new thinking about aid. We were both NZ delegates to the UN training conference on Peoples Participation in Development. The overall theme was that aid has failed and that people need to be the authors of their own development.

Nobody can do anything alone. We all operate in groups. I have never done anything alone.

I am often asked 'how do you decide what to get involved in.' My answer always is 'do what's in front of you.' I have never consciously looked for something to do. My strategy has always been to empower others. That is, to start by forming a group and then assessing the ability of individuals to act. Setting achievable goals; teaching strategies; developing a plan; training to build confidence; leading from behind; evaluating, celebrating and having fun; keeping morale and our convictions grounded.

In 1972 I joined Halt All Racist Tours. As part of preparation for the rugby tours, HART leaders attended a three-day training course in nonviolent direct action. We engaged in realistic socio-drama and roleplay scenarios which enabled us to learn how to take over buildings, block roads and bridges and create other civil disobedience activities. The target of our training at that time was the 1973 Springbok Tour of New Zealand which was subsequently cancelled by prime minister Norman Kirk.

In 1976 CORSO acquired a 16mm film, *Last Grave at Dimbaza* (1973). We held showings for journalists, MPs, school teachers and civic leaders. *Dimbaza* was one of the first, and certainly among the most influential, films about apartheid. It was shot secretly in South Africa and smuggled out of the country, and had an enormous impact on global opinion at a critical moment in the struggle against apartheid.

As the 1970s progressed it became apparent that the police had infiltrated HART. Political actions depended on surprise, and we decided to set up a new group, Action Against the Tour, to avoid infiltration by the police. Our members all knew each other personally. We remained separate from and aligned to HART. I now began to train activists in civil disobedience for anti-tour political action. We eventually carried out two major actions which proved the value of good planning and training. After intensive training our group took over the



ROBERT CONSEDINE IS FORCIBLY REMOVED FROM THE RUGBY UNION BUILDING IN CHRISTCHURCH AFTER HE AND THREE OTHERS CHAINED THEMSELVES TO THE SCAFFOLDING ON THE FACADE ON 8 JULY 1981.

Rugby Union Building in Christchurch on Soweto Day, 16 June 1981. During the occupation the group contacted and was interviewed by South Africa's *Rand Daily Mail* and the *Cape Times*. The day afterwards, members of our group took flowers to the evicted staff and paid the toll bill, as part of our commitment to the philosophy of civil disobedience. This group subsequently had a jury trial and were found not guilty.

Just before the Springboks were due to arrive our team discerned that the anti-apartheid movement needed a morale boost. The tour was going ahead. It looked as though we had lost the argument. We were worried about the potential for violence in the coming months and wanted to create a powerful model which demonstrated the power of non-violence.

Our group came with the idea, used extensively overseas, of using a jail, a hunger strike and the courts in a political action aimed at maximizing anti-tour publicity. We worked out that we needed two small criminal charges to get ourselves remanded in the Addington prison. Four of us would go to prison on a hunger strike and the rest of the team would engage in a range of external activities to support us and our families.

It's not easy to get into jail when you really want to. Here's how it played out. The detail is important. That's why it was successful.

On the morning of 8 July 1981 our well-trained team of about 30 went to the Rugby Union headquarters. Four soon-to-be-incarcerated conspirators climbed the scaffolding and carefully chained themselves to the railings. We then threw the keys away. We raised the New Zealand and South African flags together and, having dipped them in kerosene, set them alight. It was a spectacular fire. Below on the footpath another member of the team was on standby with a fire extinguisher. Our 'press officer' had pre-warned the media, who were present in force.

Our team was all operating on the street with different roles and plenty of placards. We had an anti-tour leaflet to distribute. The scaffolding, unintentionally provided by the Rugby Union, made a brilliant platform from which to make fiery speeches.

The police arrived and blocked off Manchester Street at both ends and demanded that we descend. We informed them that we were unable to comply as we were chained to the scaffolding. The police—there were 32—then sent away for boltcutters and started to climb the scaffolding. We assisted them to prevent casualties. Mike Gillooly, Robin Woodsford, Malcolm Twaddell and myself were arrested, charged with 'being in possession of a building' and processed at the police station, then told to go home. We had lunch and then moved on the second part of our plan.

After lunch we all went to the National Party headquarters in Christchurch, blocked the street and proceeded to paint slogans and pour our blood on various sacred objects in the building – notably photos of PM Robert Muldoon. This time we were arrested for 'wilful damage.' There was a minor hiccup. I had been to school with both arresting officers and they simply didn't want to arrest me. I demanded that they do their job and they eventually complied. We were taken to the police station where we were processed and held overnight for

court the next morning. We were told by the police we could go home if we promised to behave ourselves. That wasn't in the plan so we declined their kind offer. We appeared in court the next morning charged with 'wilful damage', and were offered bail of \$500 on our own recognisance. We refused to sign the bail bond. They had to then remand us in Addington jail.

This action took place in the two weeks immediately preceding the arrival of the Springboks. The action created widespread domestic and global publicity. We were eventually convicted of 'being in possession of a building' (the Rugby Union) and the 'wilful damage' which we intentionally inflicted on the National Party headquarters.

At the time Addington Remand Jail was packed with Maori, mostly from the North Island. This was a huge shock to us. This was the monocultural Addington of my childhood. The old jail, which had housed Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi in 1882-3, was still housing large numbers of Maori. We started to hear their stories. My cellmate was a 29-year-old Maori man in on his third conviction. He had been in jail since he was 14. I needed to know more. This place was a shameful blot on the landscape.

Later that year, after the Springboks had gone home, we wrote a detailed report with the Canterbury Council for Civil Liberties on the appalling conditions at Addington Prison. We released it to the media and posted it to the homes of each of the 14 judges who lived in Christchurch. We are still waiting for a reply. The convictions were subsequently overturned by Justice Maurice Casey. From memory he ruled that 'a scaffolding is not part of a building,' hence no trespassing. We brought in a professional cleaner as a witness and the charge of 'wilful damage costing \$1800' was overturned on the grounds that the blood could be cleaned up with a bucket of water.

The day we left jail Robert Muldoon announced on TV that the 'hunger strikers' had been 'nibbling' (ie. secretly eating while claiming to be on a total hunger strike). Rob Muldoon was the gift that kept giving. We decided to sue him for defamation. He had falsely and publicly accused us—on TV—of lying. Then another gift emerged. One of New Zealand's most prominent QCs, Brian McClelland, offered to take our case pro bono. The case lasted eight years. We won. The (taxpayers') money all went to legal aid.

There were many other courageous stories from 1981 reflecting the involvement and commitment of New Zealanders in the anti-tour protests. Ordinary people, with a passion for justice found that they could do extraordinary things. One story is about my friend and former PA at CORSO, Mary Baker.

The day before the start of the tour Mary was sitting in the Air New Zealand departure lounge in Los Angeles and she realized that the Springboks were on her flight back to New Zealand. With her heart in her mouth she promptly decided to tell these big rugby players individually that they were not welcome in New Zealand. The Air New Zealand staff told her to desist or she would be offloaded.

She finally decided that the smartest approach was to wait until the flight was closer to Auckland and she couldn't be offloaded, and then act. She carefully wrote the word 'SHAME' in big letters on an aircraft sick bag. After waiting

until the breakfast trays were down, for her own safety, she then paraded up and down the aisle, at 43,000 feet, holding the placard in the air. The only abuse came from the New Zealand passengers. The stewards finally told her to sit down. They arrived in Auckland to the sound of massive protests.

Mary later reflected that the Springboks appeared to have no idea what was ahead of them in New Zealand. Along with Bishop Tutu and Springbok captain Wynand Claassen, Nelson Mandela said a few times that New Zealand's opposition to the Springbok Tour was the single biggest external factor in bringing 'apartheid to its knees.' Although history may decide differently, those of us who heard this directly from Mandela at a post-apartheid gathering in Auckland received it as a magnificent compliment. The irony is that had the tour not proceeded, the impact on apartheid may have been negligible.

Part Two of Robert Consedine's 2014 Rona Bailey Lecture will appear in the next issue of the Labour History Project Bulletin.

UNION FAMILY

Jim Ferguson and Jim Turner: Public service union leaders

By Michelle Turner

'Union Family' is an occasional series about a contributor's family member and their involvement with the labour movement. We welcome suggestions for contributors and subjects for this series.



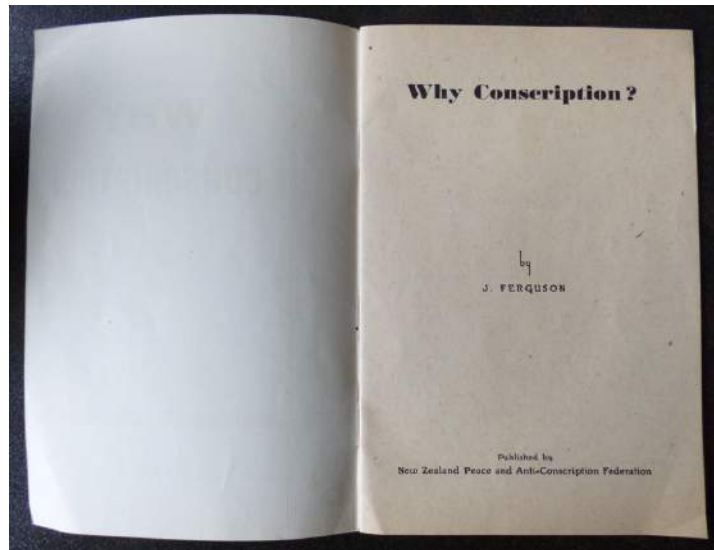
JIM FERGUSON.

I grew up in a multigenerational political socialist family. As children we were always surrounded by political discussion and debates at gatherings with friends and family. These friends included my parents' generation such as Pat Kelly and Tom Skinner and my grandparents' generation included the former PSA presidents Jack Batt and Dan Long.

As a child I thought it was fairly normal to go on political marches and have my father be interviewed on TV and radio. When my niece was 10 years old she did a school project about family and she wrote, "our family are always having loud discussions at family dinners". I always thought this summed up our upbringing.

My maternal grandfather was James (Jim) Taylor Ferguson, born in Nightcaps (Central Otago) on 26 January 1914. His parents had emigrated from Scotland about six years earlier. Great-grandad was a miner who belonged to the local union and he had left Scotland, like many emigrants, for a better life. My great-grandmother, his fiancée at the time, waited in Scotland for three years while he saved the fare for the journey, then she sailed out with her sister. My great-grandparents lived into their 90s and never returned to Scotland. Grandad was the elder of their two children and the first child in their family to go to university, where he received a BSC in Botany and an MA in Education from Otago. He met my grandmother Dorothy, née James, at the local bible class and they were married in Dunedin in 1939. They had three children—the eldest, Ann, is my mother. Grandad first studied at medical school but his student job was as a cleaner there and after he found an amputated limb lying in a sink, he re-considered his studies and career. He graduated from Otago in 1940 and they moved to Wellington where he joined the Child Welfare Department as a Child Welfare Officer. At that time he also joined the PSA, and would become a lifetime member and eventually President from 1956 – 1958.

During WW2 Grandad was a conscientious objector; he had to prove his pacifist philosophies, which meant appearing in court. He had to collect testimonies, one of them from the minister of the church he had attended as a teenager in Dunedin. The minister was not very happy about this and Grandad and my grandmother eventually became disillusioned with the church, and withdrew from religion. Most of our family are now atheists. Both he and my grandmother were often ostracized for their anti-war views which were not fashionable at the time. Grandad also remembers a family story of a cousin who had been a Conchie during WW1 and had received white feathers in the letterbox. Pacifist teachings have been passed down through the generations of our family.



Grandad was expelled from the Labour Party in 1949 because of a pamphlet he wrote called 'Why Conscription?' which argues against conscription. He never bothered applying to rejoin the Labour Party although he continued to vote for them until quite recently when his sympathies lay more with the Green Party. Grandad was supportive and sympathetic during the 1951 waterfront dispute and would help out the workers, help organize and attend meetings. During this time my mother remembers the family receiving a late-night phone call with death threats to Grandad. This was to be repeated with the next generation. Grandad was a very gentle man but with strong convictions and dignity; he was always polite but firm. On the rare occasions when he told us off, the quiet manner in which he did was more effective than anything else.

After he retired from government service in 1973, he served as a member of the Employment Appeal Tribunal for several years. He also served as Chairman of the PSIS during the 1970s.

He died in his sleep on 1 May 2010, aged 96. We always said how pleased he would have been to die on May Day, a day recognized for workers around the world. My grandmother died last year, also aged 96 years—they were married for 71 years.

My father James (Jim) Frederick Turner was born 12 July 1940 in Kaitaia, one of five children of a working class family. They moved to Palmerston North when he was young and he stayed there until he went to University. He was also the first child in his family to attend university and graduated from Victoria



JIM TURNER.

in 1963 with a BA (Hons) in Political Science. He met my mother Ann at university and they were married in 1961.

When my parents were first married and Dad was still a student they lived in a very small flat with me as a new baby and then toddler in Mount St. (Later on this became the Victoria University Bookshop, and is now Pasifika Haos). My mother says I regularly sat at the front gate as a toddler and would invite passing students in for cups of tea. After Dad graduated he worked for the then-Department of Trade and Industry. After working there for seven years he became the youngest Trade Commissioner at the time for the NZ Embassy in Tokyo from 1969-1973. My parents very nearly lost the posting before they even left New Zealand. At a classical concert they refused to stand for the national anthem—this was noted and Dad was suspended from the civil service for two days, although apparently it was not enough to ban them from the posting. That period in Tokyo was a time of burgeoning trade with Japan. It was an interesting time to be there and a great experience for myself and my younger brother and sister.

When Dad returned to New Zealand he became the president of the PSA from 1974-1978. He then joined the staff as deputy general secretary in 1979. As a child I was always very disappointed that we had no more diplomatic postings, especially as our next posting would probably have been to Europe.

Dad's presidency of the PSA coincided with the 1977 electricity rents dispute, which arose when the government raised rents on Electricity Department housing to market levels, although the earlier subsidized rentals were a factor in the occupants' pay rates. I happened to answer the phone aged 12, to have a man tell me to tell my "f..ing commie father to f... off or he would be seen to". At that time there were other death threats and phone calls to the house, some at 5am and very strange clicks and noises when we had phone conversations. My parents were suspicious that the phone was being tapped.

Dad served four terms as PSA president and led the PSA through the difficult Muldoon years when the union was threatened with de-recognition. He played a significant role in gaining support for an all-union organisation that later led to the creation of the Council of Trade Unions. He retired from the PSA in 1997 but still does consulting work for various unions.

I have lots of memories of going on political marches and protests as a child with either or both of my parents, including several anti-Springbok tour marches (these were almost regular weekly family occasions), Save St Helens Hospital, the anti SIS Bill and pro-abortion protests, amongst others.

I consider myself very fortunate to have grown up in a family with strong convictions and values, lively discussions and debates and a strong sense of what was right and fair. I had great role models with both the men and women in my family.

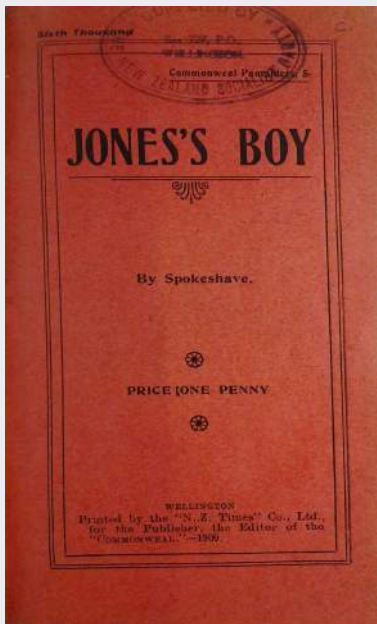
We were taught to always ask questions, never just accept authority and to query decisions. There was a true sense that it could be possible to change things by political means if we felt strongly enough about it.

Michelle Turner is a Wellington film producer.

REVIEWS: WORTH A SECOND LOOK

“Have you got any stocks, pa?” Some thoughts on *Jones’s Boy* by “Spokeshave”

Reviewed by Barry Pateman



If you have material you think we should review, or are interested in reviewing for us, then contact the reviews editor at reviews@lhp.org.nz

Around September 1909 the socialist newspaper *Commonweal*, based in Wellington, and newspaper of the New Zealand Socialist Party, published a fifth addition to its series of propaganda pamphlets. *Jones’s Boy* by Spokeshave had been a staple of British radicalism over the previous ten years or so, and is one of those important pieces of propaganda that, for whatever reason, appears to have slipped from our view. We can sense its importance for those socialists around the *Commonweal* as they had already printed an extract in April 1904 and again in July 1909. Their advertisement for the pamphlet described it as a “whimsical, witty weapon to wallop opponents with. Makes them laugh in spite of themselves”. Small pamphlets like this often had a far greater impact on thought and action than they have been given credit for and it’s exciting to be able to rescue them from the political amnesia they have fallen into and, hopefully, gain some understanding of the development of ideas and sensibilities within radical and labour circles.

Socialist and anarchist writers often drew on their reading of classical philosophy when searching for a form and style that could make their message clear and understandable to their readers. A favourite method of exposition was the use of a dialogue: a conversation where ideas could be offered up to the reader through discussion and questioning. Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward, 2000-1887* (1888) and its extended conversations between Dr Leete and Julian West is an early example of this form, as is Errico Malatesta’s *A Talk Between Two Workers*, published in August 1891 by the anarchist Freedom Press group in London, with its use of straightforward language to explain the contours of anarchist communism.

Jones’s Boy is also written as a dialogue, and made its first appearance in the Toronto-based *Labour Reformer*. The first UK publication I can trace is in Aberdeen, Scotland in 1890, which was published by James Leatham, a member of the Social Democratic Federation and a friend and devotee of William Morris. He would go on to print another edition in 1891 and a third in 1916, this time at his Deveron Press in Turriff, Aberdeenshire. James Tochatti, editor of the London anarchist paper *Liberty*, published an edition of the pamphlet in 1896 with the subtitle “Dialogue on Social Questions Between An Infant Terrible and His Father” (his addition also included the words of Edward Carpenter’s song *England Arise*). The London publisher of radical and free thought material William Reeves published an edition in 1906 and Twentieth Century Press (the publishing house of the Social Democratic Federation) printed one in 1908. Such a publishing history suggests a pamphlet that was regularly in demand.

Using the trope of the apparently naive youngster questioning his apparently wise elder (in this case his father) and, of course, exposing the latter’s fallacies, *Jones’s Boy* is roughly divided into three sections. The first deals with questions of morality and ethics where the fixing of the price of coal is compared to a

man stealing from a store to support his family because they are starving. The latter is imprisoned while the fixers of the coal ring, who prevent people who are freezing to death from buying coal at anything but the maximum price, reap monetary rewards and are praised. They steal life and health but go unpunished. The father's blustering defence of such actions clearly illuminates how his position of support for the coal ring is untenable. The second section of the pamphlet considers the immorality of surplus value and how workers are cheated out of their just reward for their labour in order that others can make money from it. The final section examines the idea of ownership of land (a prominent issue in late 19th century British radicalism) as the son asks if the man who sold the dirt that makes his father's bricks bought the dirt from God! All of this is presented in a humorous and rather gentle way, while suggesting that capitalism is illogical as well as ethically indefensible. Like so many other pamphlets of this time that are aimed at working people, it has the ability to present complex ideas in a clear, straightforward way and is an accessible read.

It's easy to see how it was able to have a shared popularity with groups that in many other ways would be deeply antagonistic to each other. (It was basic reading in Socialist Party of Great Britain circles as well anarchist ones, for example.) The pamphlet is a moral critique of capitalism that illustrates Marx's idea of surplus value but avoids any discussion of how to achieve a more egalitarian and moral society, thus providing a basic platform of criticism that many anti-capitalists could agree on. Interestingly, the pamphlet also implies that the movement to get rid of capitalism is a movement based on plain common sense. That stress is one we can certainly identify as a major theme in British leftwing political writing of this period. We can see it in the works of Robert Blatchford, William Morris and a host of socialist writers as well as anarchist ones, including the underrated anarchist writer Louise Bevington's *Common Sense Country* (1896), also published by James Tochatti. Like Peter Kropotkin's *Appeal To The Young*, which also crossed political boundaries and was enormously popular, Spokeshave's pamphlet combines a faith in youth, morality and common sense in its critique of capitalism and consequently became part of the radical education of many men and women including, we now know, some in New Zealand.

Barry Pateman is reviews editor of the LHP Bulletin.

Field Punishment No.1: TV drama

Reviewed by Peter Clayworth



Watch online at
http://tvnz.co.nz/field_punishment_no1/video

Field Punishment No.1, a 'docu-drama' film directed by Peter Burger and produced by Donna Malane and Paula Boock, tells the story of fourteen war resisters deported from New Zealand in July 1917, at the height of the First World War. The film, which premiered on TV One in April this year, vividly portrayed their courage and sufferings. The New Zealand government and military tried to force the fourteen objectors to fight by imposing a regime of imprisonment, brutality, starvation, and in four cases at least, torture. Henry Patton, Lawrence Kirwin, Mark Briggs and Archibald Baxter all underwent Field Punishment No.1. They were tied to poles in a manner that inflicted extreme pain, and left outside in extreme winter weather. Briggs was also dragged by a wire across the duckboards of the trenches, inflicting severe wounds.

Readers of Archibald Baxter's classic account *We Will Not Cease* will be familiar with the story of these war resisters. Their story has since been retold in two excellent accounts, Paul Baker's 1988 book on conscription in the Great War *King and Country Call* and David Grant's 2008 book, also called *Field Punishment No. 1*, accompanying superb paintings by Bob Kerr. It is perhaps less well known today that during the war itself socialist activist Harry Holland, who was elected MP for Grey in 1918, also publicised their plight. Holland continued to advocate the cause of the fourteen and of other opponents of war and conscription in his 1919 book *Armageddon or Calvary*.

As a large number of New Zealanders remain unfamiliar with this story of resistance to militarism and war, the appearance of *Field Punishment No. 1* on primetime television is a welcome one. It is particularly appropriate that the film should appear in 2014, with the centennial of the outbreak of the Great War occurring this August. I am pleased that the powers that be at TV One had the courage to show this film just a few days before ANZAC day. The performances of the actors were all of a high standard and the film itself was very well made.



STILL FROM *FIELD PUNISHMENT NO. 1*. TVNZ

Field Punishment No. 1 did not flinch from the details of the torments the fourteen men. It graphically portrayed the brutal treatment they received and the disproportionate force applied by the military authorities to break their will. The film showed the courage of the fourteen, revealing in a non-judgmental way how most of them eventually gave in to the overwhelming pressure they faced. Many of the Tommies, the ordinary soldiers, sympathised with the plight of the conchies and respected their courage. While *Field Punishment No. 1* depicted some officers as jingoistic sadists, the humanity of the ordinary soldiers was emphasised.

The film largely focused on the two men who held out to the end; Archibald Baxter (Fraser Brown) and Mark Briggs (Byron Coll). Baxter has become well known through *We Will Not Cease* and to a lesser extent through the fact that he was later the father of the visionary poet, James K. Baxter. Briggs is less well known but deserves to be as famous (see p.14). His courage and defiance of the military authorities were, if anything, even more uncompromising than Baxter's. It should be pointed out here that, officially at least, the film was not based on *We Will Not Cease*, as the film-makers did not have permission to use the book.

David Grant pointed out to me that the docu-drama was more ‘drama’ than ‘docu’. In particular the film’s depiction of the death of William Little (Michael Whalley) while working as a stretcher bearer was heavily fictionalised. The film shows a despairing Little standing up in No Man’s Land to die a martyr’s death. In fact he was killed while retrieving a wounded soldier.

For me there was another aspect of the film *Field Punishment No.1* that severely detracted from its value. I was deeply disappointed that an otherwise powerful and moving production largely ignored the reasons why these men chose to make their stands against war. There were a few very vague references to the origins of their beliefs. At one point on the ship taking them to Europe one of the men made a brief statement in Irish, saying they should not be fighting alongside the English who were killing the rebels in Ireland. Archibald Baxter was portrayed as speaking rather vaguely of the brotherhood of man, while Mark Briggs’ character spoke equally vaguely of workers dying for their bosses. The overall impression was of individual stands made by ‘ordinary blokes’ who simply thought war was wrong.



STILL FROM *FIELD PUNISHMENT NO.1*. TVNZ

We are used to war films ignoring the reasons why nations and individuals choose to go to war. Surely a film about war resistance should be examining why men choose to go against the mainstream ideas of society. The fourteen deportees made their stands for a variety of reasons including strong religious beliefs, deeply held support for Irish independence, and staunch commitments to socialism. In some cases they held a mix of these views. Lewis Penwright, Albert Sanderson and David Gray opposed war on religious grounds. Henry Patton and Garth Ballantyne had a combination of socialist and religious objections. Frederick Adin was a socialist with German relatives, while Daniel Maguire, Lawrence Kirwin and William Little were opposed on socialist and Irish nationalist grounds.¹

Archibald Baxter, who named his second son James Keir after Labour hero Keir Hardie, was a committed socialist, as well as having religious reasons for opposing war. His brothers Alexander and John shared this mix of socialist and religious opposition to war. In *We Will Not Cease* Baxter recounts that on one occasion, when talking to ordinary soldiers, he proudly declared he was a socialist, following which everyone in the hut shook his hand.² No such scene

was included in *Field Punishment No.1*. Mark Briggs was a more militant socialist than Baxter, having been a Red Fed union activist during his days as a Manawatu flax worker. Baxter wrote that Briggs was pushed into a water-filled shell hole, with an officer shouting at him, “Drown you bastard! You’ve not got your Paddy Webbs and your Bob Semples to look after you now.”³ The shell hole scene was shown in the movie but all mention of socialist activism was carefully removed.

The dreaded ‘S’ word, socialism, scarcely got a mention in *Field Punishment No.1*. It goes without saying that the film made no mention of the Labour Party and other socialists back in New Zealand who campaigned in support of the fourteen and in opposition to conscription. There is a real danger in the 21st century that the fictional portrayals of our ancestors strip them of the realities of their beliefs. Perhaps it is thought that causes that are no longer considered fashionable, such as the struggle for socialism, will only muddle the audience if they are discussed. Yet it is not possible to understand the world of the early 20th century, especially that of working class people, without considering the impact of socialist ideas. This is particularly so with subjects such as opposition to war. *Field Punishment No.1* did well in raising the subject of war resistance at a time when we need to remember it. The film failed badly, however, in explaining why people chose to resist war and the important role that socialism and socialists played in that struggle. It would appear that in 2014 socialism has become the love whose name we dare not speak.

Peter Clayworth is a Wellington historian and member of the LHP committee.

ENDNOTES

1. P. Baker, *King and Country Call: New Zealanders, Conscription and the Great War*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988, pp. 179-80.
2. A. Baxter, *We Will Not Cease: The Autobiography of a Conscientious Objector*, Whatamango Bay: Cape Catley, 1983, pp. 107-8.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

Dreams lie deeper: A concert dedicated to the Pike River miners

*Orpheus Choir of Wellington, 10 May, Michael Fowler Centre, Wellington.
Reviewed by Marie Russell*

How do art and politics mix? A hero of the 20th century—singer, actor and activist Paul Robeson—was quite clear about it; he wrote, “The artist must elect to fight for freedom or slavery. I have made my choice. I had no alternative.” Not all artists face such stark choices, but when art engages with the lives and deaths of workers, the artist’s point of view is of central importance.

At a concert in May this year, the Orpheus, Wellington’s premier choir, presented choral works about mining, with content emphasising its dangers. They drew in impressive support from the Wellington Brass Band, two children’s choirs and well-known rock artist Dave Dobbyn, to perform three new works. Two were given their world premiere—*If blood be the price* and *This love. 17 Days* by James McCarthy, given its Australasian premiere, is a meditation on the 33 Chilean miners trapped underground in 2010. Here I discuss the two local works.

From a labour history point of view this concert was a mixed bag, and some of the concert sponsorship left a queasy feeling: while art was tackling serious issues of workers' rights and workers' safety, corporate mining power was also parading in full view.

There was considerable interest among the audience where leftists and unionists leavened the classical music crowd. TV cameras, not usually present at Orpheus concerts, were there to film Dave Dobbyn performing his commissioned song *This love*, which made national news. The mix of memorial service and concert was clear from the start, with the mihi and karakia by Wellington City Councillor Ray Ahipene-Mercer who noted a West Coast mining Welsh great-grandfather in his whakapapa.



A PROTEST MARCH IN AUCKLAND DURING 1913 WATERFRONT STRIKE. PRICE, WILLIAM ARCHER, 1866-1948: COLLECTION OF POST CARD NEGATIVES. REF: 1/2-000186-G. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY.

If blood be the price. In memoriam: Fred Evans (music by Ross Harris, words by Vincent O'Sullivan, conducted by Christopher Clark) is about Waihi in 1912. O'Sullivan's seven sections touch in impressionistic, sometimes rhyming text, on matters such as the workings of the Martha mine, the dignity of work and the comradeship of workers, Prime Minister Massey, health and safety, and life in a country that does not believe you, that digs your grave. Harris' music worked well with the text. As the choir sang

*The crush of the quartz is the crush of earning
the racket in the mine is the racket of living*

the brass band gave us the loud rhythmic stamping of the Waihi battery. When section 4 introduced

*...a toast to the world as it was
To William Fergusson Massey,
Who keeps the mob in its guttery place
How's he do it? He isn't fussy,*

the tempo moved to a jolly, music-hall 3/4 rhythm with the horns making pompous oompahs. ‘Farmer Bill’ Massey’s portly form and stuffed-shirt manner came immediately to mind. But the mood became serious with a canon on:

*eight hours work
eight hours pay
eight hours sleep
eight bob a day.*

The piece ended with ‘the words on the banner’—which give the name of the whole composition. This section started with a funeral bell tolling, then the side-drum’s cortège rat-a-tat, and built to huge fortissimo discords:

*If blood be the price of your cursed wealth
Good God, we have bought it fair.*

This piece was moving and entertaining, but I question the combination of classical choir and brass band. The Wellington Brass Band is very good. But for me the choir jarred with the typical brass-band ‘Coronation Street’ theme-tune tone which can be mellow to the point of cloying. Perhaps it was a purposefully dissonant choice, but I felt this piece cried out for a more forthright, round, orchestral brass sound to match the voices.

Dave Dobbyn’s contribution *This Love* was much feted. The work was commissioned by the Orpheus Choir but paid for by sponsors. The EPMU (NZ Amalgamated Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union Inc.) contributed just under \$8000.

The combination of guitars, drums, piano and cornet with choir worked well and the chorus is singable: there are ten verses and three anthemic choruses. The choral arrangement was by conductor Mark Dorrell. Dave Dobbyn’s guitar sound, so reminiscent of early Bruce Springsteen, was perfectly pleasant—musically the piece was enjoyable.

But in a choral work the words are also important, and unfortunately its content renders *This love* as a whole less satisfactory. By its presentation this work was clearly meant to be something grand. Dobbyn began by solemnly reading the names of the 29 miners killed at Pike River in 2010. He has spoken of his contact with the Pike River Families as being his inspiration for the song; this was also clear in a programme note. The elegiac words are about ‘our sorrows’, love, longing for peace, remembering the dead and honouring ‘our twenty-nine’; the song-writer addresses them repeatedly in the chorus:

With love as our witness you will rest in peace.

These are fine warm sentiments but sadly they ignore much of the story of the Pike River 29. These men didn’t have to die; their deaths didn’t come out of nowhere as an act of god but were workplace deaths that took place within a certain context. The men were in fact killed. Their deaths were caused, in the calm words of the Royal Commission on the Pike River Coal Mine Tragedy, 2012 by the ‘inadequate’ safety systems of the owner; ‘inadequate oversight of the mine by a health and safety regulator that lacked focus, resourcing and inspection capacity’, and a deficient ‘legal framework for health and safety in

underground mining'. *This Love* has just one verse that barely hints at all of this:

*Justice is slow turning now
But a Coaster's here to stay
The truth is always burning now
And its light outshines the day.*

The truth may be burning, but *This love* left me cold. Dave Dobbyn has made his choice, and has settled for sentiment. At the end of *This Love*, while others in the audience stood to applaud the grand old man, an acquaintance who was sitting next to me summed up the remarkable absence of politics in the work with a laconic remark: 'And no-one's to blame!' Perhaps shocking events of violence against workers have to be a century old before their bitter truth can be told in art.

Given the grim history of violence and death among miners at the hands of corporate and state aggression and neglect, the sponsorship of this concert by Newmont Mining Corporation was, at best, curious. Their quarter-page notice in the programme booklet states: "Newmont Waihi Gold proud to be associated with the Orpheus Choir of Wellington production of *Dreams Lie Deeper* in memory of the Pike River 29." Newmont, a multinational company based in Denver, Colorado, is the most recent mining company to operate the Waihi mines. Its activities in Waihi have been controversial (cf. Alison McCulloch, 'Mining Below The Floorboards', 11/6/2013, www.werewolf.co.nz), and problems of gold mining for health, the environment, property values and employment are considerable.

As a coda, recent statistics illuminate some realities of mining in New Zealand. The day before the concert Peter Crampton, one of the authors over 20 years of NZDep – the Index of Deprivation (search at www.otago.ac.nz) discussed the 2013 census deprivation report. He pointed out that this careful research shows that where there are extractive industries, such as at Waihi and on the West Coast, the community deprivation level is high. Yet the government touts mining and mining exploration as increasing prosperity and bringing jobs to these regions. Yes, profit may come but it is not distributed in the mining areas. Someone may be getting rich and having a good life, but not these residents. Far from riches and the good life, miners risk losing the one life they have.

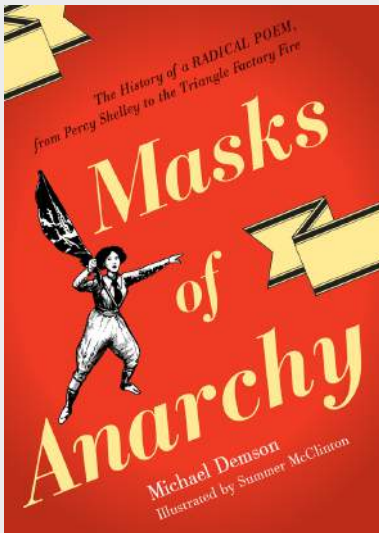
Marie Russell works as a public health researcher and is a member of the LHP committee.

Masks of Anarchy

Masks of Anarchy – the history of a radical poem from Percy Shelley to the Triangle Factory Fire by Michael Demson, illustrated by Summer McClinton, Verso 2013, ISBN 978-1-78168-098-8.

Reviewed by Mark Derby

I'm an old-fashioned word guy and I've never been able to warm to graphic novels, even while acknowledging that their content has become indisputably



impressive. Now that the discerning leftwing publisher Verso has entered the genre, I'm making the effort to adjust to speech-bubble text immersed in swirling pen-and-ink drawings, and finding that it's possible to be moved and informed by a work that can be read in a single sitting.

Masks of Anarchy was a good place for me to start. It's short, sharp and vigorously visual, but the story was written by a young English lecturer, and Shelley specialist, now teaching at a Texas university. He explains in his introduction that he seized on the idea of the book while reading Howard Zinn's *People's History of the United States*—one of my personal favourites (and now itself apparently republished in graphic novel form). This mentioned in passing that Shelley's great poem 'The Mask of Anarchy' ("Rise like lions after slumber, in unvanquishable number... ye are many, they are few"), written as an incandescent response to the 1819 Peterloo Massacre of peaceful Chartists, was popular among New York union organisers in the early 20th century.

This information was new to Demson, he explored it further, and learned of a truly remarkable Lithuanian-born garment worker and labour reformer named Pauline Newman (at least, that's the name the English-only immigration officer gave her when she arrived off the boat as a young girl in 1897.) She learned to read and write English, began organising rent strikes in the garment district from the age of 16, and worked long, poorly-paid hours at the Triangle Shirtwaist clothing factory. On her way home she would call in at the Socialist Literary League to listen to Eugene Debs, Jack London and Upton Sinclair proclaim against poverty. Another League member, a professor of English, introduced her to Shelley's poetry, and she found that its impassioned lyricism went down well during her speeches on behalf of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

In 1911 Pauline was organising for the union in Philadelphia when she learned of the devastating fire in her former workplace, in which almost 150 people, mainly young women like herself, lost their lives. Only Shelley's words after Peterloo seemed able to convey the emotions she felt.

The lives of Percy Shelley and his wife Mary, and of Pauline Newman, are recounted in alternate chapters, using artfully contrasting graphic styles apparently derived from photos, etchings and other images contemporary to both periods. The result is a gripping and respectful treatment of two magnificent episodes in the history of emancipation—the later one barely known until this book's publication.

My one objection, and it's a big one, is that the author's preface, and a foreword on non-fiction graphic novels in general by Paul Buhle, are both set in the same all-caps Comic Book Sans typeface as the speech-bubbles in the rest of the book. I found the result so excruciating to read that I didn't finish either one. And I'm a word guy from way back.

Mark Derby once recited part of Shelley's Mask of Anarchy to a Wellington demonstration via the Occupy-style 'human microphone'.

What is the Labour History Project?

The struggle for workers' rights has a long history in Aotearoa New Zealand. Trade unions and the fight for a fair society are important strands of our national story. Many major historical events have their roots in labour-related issues. These have also been key influences on national politics and the evolution of New Zealand society. Labour history connects New Zealand to the world. Work has been a prime factor in our migration history and local unions (and related groups) have important links overseas.

Much of New Zealand's labour history, however, remains undocumented and unpublished. The social history of work in New Zealand has been relatively neglected by historians. Without a more accessible labour heritage, we overlook important ways of understanding New Zealand's past and present, and vital perspectives on where we are heading.

In 1987 the Trade Union History Project (TUHP) was formed by historians, trade unionists and political activists to help document New Zealand labour history. Initially established with state funding, since 1991 the organisation has relied upon volunteer resources, donations, and occasional publishing grants. In 2008 the TUHP changed its name to the Labour History Project (LHP) to better reflect the range of member interests. The LHP is an energetic and independent incorporated society. It has over 150 individual and institutional members and maintains links with affiliated organisations such as the Auckland Labour History Group, trade unions, libraries, museums, academics, and counterpart groups overseas. It is the only national organisation dedicated to fostering New Zealand labour history and cultivating an important part of our collective memory. The Labour History Project has no affiliation with the New Zealand Labour Party or any other political party.

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