

We  
will  
not  
go  
to  
War.

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## Labour History Project

BULLETIN 63 - APRIL 2015

**'Bugger the contract, I'll sing!' Robeson in New Zealand**

**Gerhard Rosenberg: people's architect**

**Wobbly driplines: strikes, stowaways & the SS Manuka**

**Restoring the Runanga Miners' Hall**

**The Noble War**

**My father, Charlie Gough**

**LHP Bulletin 63 - April 2015**

ISSN 1175-3064

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For more information on LHP membership,  
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website: [www.lhp.org.nz](http://www.lhp.org.nz)

COVER: *We Will Not Go To War*, original music  
by Charlie Gough (see 'Union Family' on p.40).

DESIGN: Jared Davidson

## BULLETIN 63 - APRIL 2015

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FROM THE SHOP FLOOR

## Editorial

As some of you are aware, I have been providing Mark Derby with editorial assistance over the past year. With a hectic work schedule necessitating his departure from the helm of the *Bulletin*, he has asked me to carry on as editor. I thank Mark for his mentorship. Under his direction the *Bulletin* has gone from strength to strength, and it is a project he is immensely proud of. It is my sincere hope that I can maintain the positive trajectory of the *Bulletin* that Mark's dedicated work has established.

The *Bulletin* provides a unique platform to promote the history of the New Zealand working people and the labour movement. Eschewing the formal structure of an academic journal, we publish professional scholarship alongside the work of amateur historians, activists, community groups, and trade unionists and their families—a format which appropriately mirrors the egalitarian and autodidactic spirit of the labour movement. We also aim to keep our readers abreast of ongoing research and community projects. I have no intention of modifying this successful approach.

However, as a recent graduate in my early 20s with a burgeoning interest in labour history, I would like to encourage other young writers to take an interest in an important, though regrettably little-known, aspect of New Zealand history. With the apparent triumph of neoliberal capitalism in the past several decades, many of the issues confronting workers in the 21st century—casualization, hazardous work, low pay etc.—are shared with our forbears. Although the operative nature of class and its intersection with gender and race has changed dramatically through the intervening years, as has our understanding of these concepts, there are many parallels to be drawn. In this connection, I would also encourage submissions that attempt to place contemporary struggles in a historical context.

The *Bulletin* has an ongoing focus on issues surrounding peace activism and resistance to conscription during the First World War. With the recent announcement of another deployment of New Zealand troops to the Middle East, coinciding ominously closely with the upcoming centenary of the ANZAC landings at Gallipoli, there is an obvious urgency to the effort to present a rigorous counter to the received narrative.

*Ciaran Doolin*

*Editor*

# Chair's report

The LHP Committee held its annual planning meeting on Sunday 22 February at Cybèle Locke's home. Thanks to all who attended or otherwise contributed; it was good, too, to share lunch before work. Much of our yearly work is now well in hand, and we are looking forward to our essay competition 'Another World is Possible'—we thank the Tertiary Education Union for their generous support of this endeavour. We will again offer the Bert Roth Award for excellence in New Zealand labour history. At the end of the year we will have our biennial Rona Bailey memorial lecture, and details about this will be finalised in the next couple of months. A major focus of the next couple of years, as we have noted before, will be engaging with histories of the First World War, with particular attention to dissent. We are also looking forward to another People's History programme later in the year.

I am writing this in Christchurch, where the Canterbury Workers Educational Association—the WEA—is celebrating its centenary, as are other WEA organisations throughout the country. For all of the past century, the WEA has filled a valuable niche in community education. In the 1920s, for instance, it helped Labour MPs and activists educate themselves in economics and political thought. In the 1970s and 80s some of its courses addressed issues around colonisation and the Treaty of Waitangi. Its book discussion groups have brought people together, and many people have developed recreational and practical interests and skills through its classes. When one ill-informed politician, if I recall correctly, a few years ago dismissed much community education as private indulgence in 'Moroccan cooking classes', the WEA has always known that education enlarges the mind and the spirit and as such develops our communities—in ways that don't show in a profit and loss account.

Elsewhere in this *Bulletin* will be a note about the Runanga Miners Hall. Here I would like to acknowledge the work that Peter Clayworth has done on our behalf on this matter, over a considerable period and with exemplary dedication.

Exemplary dedication is, also, the only way to characterise Mark Derby's long service to the Labour History Project, as committee member, chairperson, writer, all-round fount of wisdom and advice, and of course editor of this *Bulletin*. The *Bulletin* is a publication of which we can be proud, and Mark has been instrumental in bringing it to its current standard. As he leaves the editorship I thank him on behalf of all of us for all his work.

We have a solid base of membership support of some 70 individuals which enables us to do the work that we do, and the finances are very sound. It would however be very good to have more members. If you like what we do, perhaps you would like to encourage a friend or colleague or relation to join as well.

With best wishes for the months ahead.

*Jim McAloon*  
Chairperson

# News round-up

## **'Opposition to WW1' poster series**

*By Ryan Bodman*

With the centenary of Anzac Day upon us, Marama Mayrick and Ryan Bodman have produced a poster series showcasing opposition to World War One in New Zealand. With financial support from PADET and the Quaker Peace and Service Aotearoa/New Zealand, the poster series seeks to publicise alternative stories to the traditional narrative of World War One.

The four A2-size posters provide a visual celebration of New Zealanders who resisted the government's war effort, showcasing the stories of Te Puea Herangi, Archibald Baxter, Harry Urquhart and the trade union movement. Each poster includes a striking original illustration by Mayrick alongside a short blurb by Bodman outlining the group or individual's experience during the war years.

In producing the posters, Mayrick and Bodman aimed to create a publicly accessible resource that sheds light on the complexities of the past, focusing on New Zealand war stories that complicate the notion that World War One was a great battle for freedom and democracy. As Bodman explains, "We hope that the posters will promote the war stories of New Zealanders who suffered at the hands of a government that curtailed freedoms at home, while purporting to fight for freedoms abroad; themes that remain eerily familiar to this day."

The poster series was made available free of charge, on the condition that recipients commit to displaying the posters in a public place between 17 and 25 April 2015. The response to this offer has been overwhelming.

More than 60 history teachers from Invercargill to Kaitaia have ordered the poster series, and many have expressed their intention to use the posters for Year 12 and 13 NCEA internals. Posters will also be displayed at the offices of First Union, Unite, the Nurses Organisation, the EPMU and the Rail and Maritime Transport Union. In addition, Te Papa, a number of universities and public libraries and the Kotare Education Centre for Social Change have committed to displaying the posters, and will add them to their collections after Anzac Day 2015. The posters will also feature at the premier of Dean Parker's new play, *Gentler than a Rifle Butt*, and the Wellington art exhibition *Disrupting the Narrative*, where additional copies will be available.

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*Following spreads: Two of the four designs, Te Puea Herangi and Archibald Baxter.*

# HERANGI

Te Pahi Hērangi was the granddaughter of Tāwhiao – the second Māori King – and a prominent twentieth-century leader of the Kingitanga. At the outbreak of World War One she discouraged Waikato men from enlisting in the army, a position informed by the pacifist teachings of her grandfather and the impact of the Queen's land confiscations on her people. Responding to the government's rallying cry for young men to fight for their King and Country, Te Pahi stated: 'We've got a King. But we haven't got a country. That's been taken off us. Let them give us back our land and maybe we'll think about it.'

When the government extended conscription to Māori in June 1917, it was punitively applied against Waikato men alone. In response, Te Pahi coordinated a campaign of civil disobedience, gathering her people at Te Pahi marae, near Manurewa, and refusing to hand conscripts over to the authorities. Despite such efforts, many Waikato men were forcibly transported to the Māori Training Camp in Auckland, though the majority maintained their defiance and refused to drill. Ultimately, Te Pahi's campaign was a success. By the end of the war not a single Waikato man fought in the conflict against his will.



# BAXTER

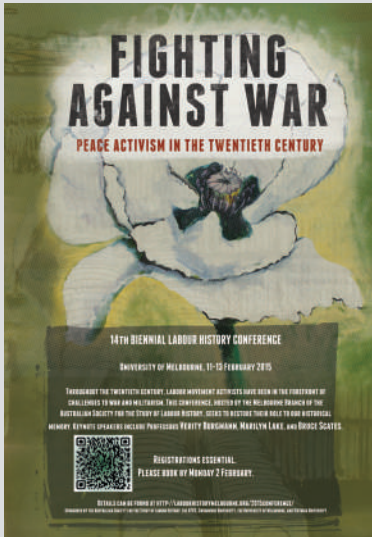
Archibald Baxter was one of 34 anti-militarists forcibly transported from New Zealand to the front lines of World War One for refusing to submit to conscription. By transporting the men to the Western Front and subjecting them to military punishment, the New Zealand government hoped to break their resolve, force them into active service and use their submission as a warning that opposition to the war would not be tolerated. Baxter, however, would not be swayed.

Despite extended periods of Field Punishment Number one, a punishment that saw the victim tied to a post with the body's weight supported by his arms alone, Baxter refused to serve. He insisted that just because 'the imperialists and financiers had fallen out was no reason why the workers should be led into war to blow the souls out of one another'. Near the end of the war, Baxter was transported back to New Zealand where he remained a staunch peace advocate until his death in 1970.



## **Fighting Against War: Peace Activism in the Twentieth Century** **14th Biennial Labour History Conference, Melbourne, 11-13 February 2015**

By Toby Boraman



Given the jingoistic militarism apparent during this year's ANZAC centenary on both sides of the Tasman, the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History (ASSLH) conference in Melbourne was very welcome. It offered a sustained critique of the blinkered and sanitised nationalist distortion of history being pushed currently. We were reminded throughout the conference of the substantial antiwar movement that has existed in Australia and beyond. Particularly important was that conference participants highlighted how each war was opposed, rather than assuming that everyone got caught up in an all-encompassing nationalist wave, fluttered their flags, and ran off to support wars.

Many talks, importantly, focussed on the role of women in the peace movement locally and internationally, not just in more recent times, but going back to WWI. An excellent paper came from Val Noone, who argued that the anti-Vietnam War movement did make a difference in influencing the Australian government decision to withdraw from that war, and questioned the official history that it did not. This is an argument that needs to be made in New Zealand too.

Verity Burgmann's keynote speech about the Australian IWW's (Industrial Workers of the World) spearheading of the successful anti-conscription campaign in WWI in Australia was also important. She argued the IWW's uncompromising class-based and internationalist opposition to war ('Let those who own Australia do the fighting, put the wealthiest in the front ranks') represented a 'radical flank' which helped in turn to make the moderate wing of the anti-conscription movement more acceptable.

Two people associated with the Labour History Project, Kerry Taylor and myself, spoke. Kerry gave an entertaining talk about the establishment of the spy network in New Zealand in the early years of the cold war. Another New Zealand speaker was Sam Oldham, who focussed on rank-and-file resistance to retrenchments in Australia during the 1970s. Greg Kealey, a prominent Canadian labour historian who is currently a visiting scholar at Massey University, presented an interesting paper about E. P. Thompson's use of spies' reports for *The Making of the English Working Class*, and related this topic to the global development of the massive surveillance state today.

This brief overview is based on my very limited personal impressions—I wasn't able to attend all talks or keynote speeches. My only criticism of the sessions I did see was that a lot of papers could have examined more deeply the significant influence of workers and the labour movement in the anti-war movement, and also could have looked a little more beyond Australasia and the Anglophone world in terms of the need to develop a truly global labour history. Overall, the academic conference was well-organised and of high quality. A book containing the conference proceedings was published.

The activities of the group Honest History (<http://www.honesthistory.net.au/>), a coalition of historians and others supporting a balanced and honest presentation and use of Australian history during the WWI centenary, are of relevance to the LHP.

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### **Lessons from the past**

*A group of emerging union leaders had a stimulating lesson in labour history in February from Cybèle Locke and Mark Derby. The two were asked to co-facilitate a session at the NZCTU's annual Residential Leadership Development Programme in Silverstream for 22 participants drawn from a dozen public and private sector unions. "Cybèle and Mark did a great job in providing a rich and diverse picture of our labour history and helped make the critical and relevant linkages to what we see happening today in the world of work," says Ross Teppett, CTU Director Union Development.*

*An extract from Cybèle Locke's seminar presentation, Reviewing Labour History as a way in to discussing current trade union organising, appears below. (Mark Derby's presentation was entirely oral, and he can no longer remember it.)*

The Waihi goldminers joined the New Zealand Federation of Labour (Red Fed) and withdrew from the Arbitration Act. They then used direct action to win wage increases and improve conditions, such as the contracting system. However, with encouragement from the Waihi Goldmining Company, a group of about 40 engine drivers formed a breakaway union in April 1912, with the intension of registering under the Arbitration Act. Red Feds were concerned that if the engineers were successful in negotiating an award, it could apply to all workers in the industry and drive the entire workforce back to arbitration. In response, the Waihi Trade Union of Workers, with 1000 members (in a total population of 6,500), decided to cease work until the engine-drivers disbanded their organisation and rejoined the miners' union.

On 13 May, Waihi came to a standstill. The Red Fed supported both striking and locked out workers by raising funds in NZ and Australia. This may have succeeded if the Liberals had remained in power (they relied on Labour for votes) but the Reform Government came to power in 1912 under the leadership of William Massey.

Massey was determined to break the strike quickly and force strikers back to arbitration. Police reinforcements were sent in to support the employers. In early October, the mines were reopened, using what unionists described as scab labour (or more politely, strikebreakers or arbitrationists).

Strikebreakers were driven to work under strong police guard past jeering strikers and their wives. The numbers of arbitrationist workers grew and shifted the balance away from the strikers. Unionists were prosecuted and jailed (for using terms like scab) and a new blackleg miners' union was registered. 12 November, the blacklegs stormed the Miners' Hall, shots were fired, a policeman

injured and one of the hall's defenders, Fred Evans, was killed by a policeman's baton. Lists of strikers were drawn up and forced (under threatened and actioned violence) to leave town—hundreds of people left, mostly for Auckland.

*What happens to this history if we focus on the roles women played?*

In the early days of the strike, women, mostly as domestic dependents, played support roles—ran the social committee and found ways to put food on the table. They were part of a community deeply radicalised by socialist and syndicalist education that was centred on the Miners' Hall. As the police presence increased in Waihi and strike leaders began to be arrested for yelling scab and sent away to Mt Eden prison for a year—67 in total, about 50 women formed a group to maintain the strike that became known as the Scarlet Runners. A few women became nationally known public speakers: Katherine Leach, married to a rank and file miner with two pre-school children, gave fiery speeches alongside well-known Red Feds such as Bob Semple—this was an unusual role for women to play at the time.

The *Maoriland Worker* reported:

[I]t did our hearts good to hear our Comrade Mrs Leach from Waihi deliver her message at the Auckland Opera House. 'You can jail all the men, and then we women will fight you! The women of Waihi know exactly what the quarrel is about, and they are standing shoulder to shoulder with the men,' said our comrade--and the audience yelled and stamped and cheered when the little woman sat down.

*(Maoriland Worker, 4 October 1912)*

Women maintained the picket lines, followed-up and ambushed scab labour at work and at home, attacking strikebreakers both verbally and physically.\* They pursued these activities accompanied by their babies and small children. The mainstream press used the label 'Scarlet Runners' to censure female strikers for unwomanly behaviour and neglecting their private domestic lives. Evidence in the *Maoriland Worker* and the *New Zealand Truth*, however, would suggest working-class gendered norms in a mining town allowed for women's public activities that were frowned upon in other circles, as long as working-class women continued to care for their families and protect their male breadwinners. It would appear that striking men and women took advantage of gendered notions of female respectability: arresting women would have been a moral defeat for the police, thus women felt safe in pursuing militant strike tactics.

*After a brief discussion of how gender impacted the situation in Waihi, we broke into groups to discuss the following two questions about trade unionism in the present:*

*How does gender inflect the worksites and communities we are familiar with?*

*And how does gender impact union organising efforts?*

*Other history topics discussed were Maori shearers in the 1910s, the relationship between the organised unemployed and trade unions in the 1930s, and the formation of union standing committees for women, Maori and Pasifika workers during the 1980s.*

\* This history is described in detail in Cybèle Locke, 'Rebel Girls and Pram-Pushing Scab-Hunters: Waihi 'Scarlet Runners,' 1912,' *Labour History*, no. 107 November 2014.

### **Radical Walking Tour of Victoria University**

*By Grace Millar*

In the 1960s, “Workers and Students Uni” was graffitied on the Rankine Brown Building at Victoria University. No-one has ever claimed ownership of this slogan—or explained it. Is it missing some apostrophes? Was it supposed to say ‘Unite’ but the author was interrupted (or ran out of paint)?

On 24 March 2015, the International Socialist Organisation (ISO) ran a radical walking tour of Victoria University which recapped this and other events in Victoria protest history from the 1950s to the present day, including the anti-apartheid movement, feminism, Maori representation and continued contestation over the nature of education. The tour guides provided printouts from student media to illustrate their points. The tour was not just a romantic account of the heights of radical activity at Victoria—we learnt about troughs as well as peaks of political activity.

The radical walking tour was more conceptual than actual—the campus of Victoria has changed so significantly recently that very few former sites of protest and activism remained. For decades, a lecture theatre bore a “Stop the Tour All Out July 3” sticker from 1981, but this was destroyed to install modern lecturns. The night of the tour the Student Union building was closed for a toga party as part of Orientation. This illustrated an ongoing conflict at Victoria University—between those wanting to promote a drinking culture and those who wanted to create a political culture (although many student activists will argue that these were not mutually exclusive).

This excellent event was well attended and the second radical walking tour the ISO has organised. It's really great to see activist groups ensuring that local, radical history is remembered.

### **Counterfutures - new leftwing journal**

*By Counterfutures editorial board*

Essays, articles, polemics, interviews and reviews are now sought for issue one of *Counterfutures: Left Thought and Practice Aotearoa*, to be published in February 2016. *Counterfutures* hopes to provide a single meeting point for Left thinking and debate in Aotearoa New Zealand. It will combine perspectives from activists, intellectuals, researchers and writers situated both inside and outside university circles.

For issue one of *Counterfutures* we invite responses to the topic of 'Connections'. While it is true that the globe is vastly interconnected, this state of interconnection coexists with profound barriers and disconnects between rich and poor, debtor and creditor, 'developed' and 'developing' nations, and distances between those of differing ethnic, class, gender, and sexual identities. The emblem of 'connection' remains a potent one for the reimagining and reoccupying of the Commons. In this cusp between new forms of connection and enduring patterns of disconnection, where does the Left stand? Are different Left fractions disconnected from one another to such a degree so as to render the act of recreating the Commons impossible? What now is the relationship between the Left and 'the people', or with other classes or constituencies that it might hope to engage? Where is the Left now positioned relative to the horizon of institutional politics, here in Aotearoa New Zealand and in the wider world?

The editorial board of *Counterfutures* is: Sue Bradford, Tim Corballis, Chamsy el-Ojeili, Sean Phelan, Dylan Taylor and Warwick Tie.

For more information on *Counterfutures*, including the submission deadline and style guide, refer to its website: [www.counterfutures.blogspot.com](http://www.counterfutures.blogspot.com)

### **'Another World is Possible' essay competition 2015**

*By Cybele Locke*

For the second time, the Labour History Project is running an essay competition to inspire debate on alternative futures.

In December 2014, an OECD report ranked New Zealand as the most deeply affected by growing income inequality out of all developed countries. It makes the case that we are all affected by growing income inequality, not just those in the lowest tenth of households in New Zealand. In this context, the Labour History Project invites progressive New Zealanders of all ages to offer visions and strategies that would enable a future world where inequality is eradicated.

Entries for this competition must be received by 5pm Tuesday 2 June 2015. Late entries will not be considered. The entries will be judged by:

Sandra Grey – academic, Tertiary Education Union  
Sue Bradford – activist academic  
Gordon Campbell – journalist

For the rules of and more information about the second 'Another World is Possible' essay competition, refer to the LHP website: [www.lhp.org.nz](http://www.lhp.org.nz)

# Recent and current research

Nicola Braid is currently completing her Masters research, through the Stout Centre at Victoria University, in the construction of masculinity in New Zealand after the 1950s. Her work uses oral history life narratives from members of the Petone Workingmen's Club and looks at engaging, challenging and refocusing existing scholarship surrounding working-class masculinity in New Zealand. As well as a considerable engagement with New Zealand historiography and theories of masculinity, Nicola's project uses oral history theory surrounding intersubjectivity and memory with the overall hope of injecting lived experience into the persisting stereotypes surrounding New Zealand men.

If any reader has information that may be relevant to Nicola's research, contact her through the editor of the Bulletin: [editor@lhp.org.nz](mailto:editor@lhp.org.nz)

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British Spanish Civil War researcher Alan Lloyd has been a fount of information and advice for New Zealanders exploring this country's connection with that pivotal and inspiring conflict. He has contacted the LHP as a result of reading James McNeish's *The Sixth Man*, a biography of the New Zealand leftwing intellectual Paddy Costello. Alan noticed that Costello "had access to a lot of information about Griff McLaurin", a former Auckland mathematician who was killed in the early months of the civil war at the Casa del Campo in Madrid. Alan says these references "led me to wonder if [McLaurin] sent any letters back to NZ which may have contained snippets of information about Robert "Ronnie" Symes, who is something of the forgotten third man at the Casa del Campo, not least because we know so little about him....I wondered if you knew of another name there, one Dr Campbell Maclaurin, in the hope that, a) he is related, b) he is aware of any Griffith McLaurin correspondence relating to Ronnie Symes."

The LHP referred this query to Sir James McNeish, who replied, "Please tell Alan Lloyd that I don't know of any letters that Griff sent back to NZ, Ronnie Symes is a mystery to me." However, James offered to search his files in case they contain any information that might throw light on the identity and actions of Ronnie Symes. If any readers of the *Bulletin* have information that may be of help to Alan Lloyd, please contact the editor of the Bulletin: [editor@lhp.org.nz](mailto:editor@lhp.org.nz)

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*Any recent, current or forthcoming research in the field of New Zealand labour history, including specific enquiries, will be covered in this section. Please send any details to: [chair@lhp.org.nz](mailto:chair@lhp.org.nz)*

## FEATURE ARTICLES

# 'Bugger the contract, I'll sing!' - Paul Robeson in New Zealand

By Ciaran Doolin



*Paul Robeson looks at ease in the company of Wellington watersiders in this October 1960 photo, taken during his NZ tour. At left is Jimmy Napier, general secretary of the Waterside Workers Federation. Third from left, with his face turned from the camera, is union leader Chip Bailey, then the husband of Rona Bailey, who took this photo (and was later a stalwart TUHP/LHP committee member). Fourth from left is Waterside Workers Union (WWU) member Pat Heffron. Second from right is Tommy Wells, Wellington branch president, WWU. Photo courtesy Victor Billot, Maritime Union of NZ.*

In 1960 Paul Robeson, the famed American singer, actor and activist, toured Australia and New Zealand. On the New Zealand leg of the tour he played shows in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch and visited Dunedin. During his time in the country, in characteristic style, he sang and spoke principally of the ideals he passionately held to—socialism, internationalism and racial equality. The recent tour of British actor and architect Tayo Aluko's *Call Mr Robeson: A Life In Song*, a one-man performance that chronicles Robeson's life and work, marked a welcome return of the voice which captivated New Zealand audiences 55 years ago.<sup>1</sup>

The son of a minister who had been a slave, Paul Robeson, born in 1898, experienced from an early age the racial discrimination which was to dog him for much of his life—and which he tirelessly opposed. A talented scholar, he won an academic scholarship to Rutgers University where he excelled as an athlete, debater, actor and singer. After graduating from Rutgers he attended Columbia Law School. However, the racial prejudice he encountered in practice put an early end to his legal career and he decided to become an entertainer. He appeared in a number of films and was one of the first singers to introduce Negro spirituals to

a wide audience. His fame reached its height during the 1930s and 1940s. In the turbulent milieu of the 1930s his political beliefs began to crystallise. He visited the Soviet Union in 1934 and remarked, 'Here I am not a Negro but a human being for the first time in my life'.<sup>2</sup> He spoke out against colonialism in Africa, supported anti-imperialist struggles around the world, and expressed solidarity with workers involved in the British class struggle. He became a vocal opponent of fascism during the Spanish Civil War and later supported the American war effort against the Axis powers. While he was honoured for his latter contributions during the war, afterward his continued advocacy of racial equality, workers' rights and decolonisation proved less popular with the authorities. During the McCarthy era Robeson was silenced, with concert hall bookings and recordings denied, and he faced constant harassment by the FBI. Finally, his passport was withdrawn from 1950 to 1958.

When he arrived in New Zealand he was treated with suspicion by the establishment—the *Herald* concluding, 'He is a man who quite openly wears a chip on his shoulder', while the U.S. Consul in Auckland gleefully reported to the State Department, 'no civil reception or other formal type of welcome was tendered to Robeson during his stay.'<sup>3</sup> However, he received a warmer welcome from peace groups, workers and Maori. As the late Rona Bailey recalled:<sup>4</sup>

So we got together [Eslanda—Robeson's wife—and Rona] to arrange this reception after the concert in the [Wellington] town hall in the Green Room. And there were some, a few qualms about...who should be invited...because of the time, McCarthyism was still there and there was still this anti-communist flavour....But I said this to Robeson and I told him about this and he said 'Well if the workers and the trade unionists aren't there I won't be there either!' You know, it was just straight out. And then I said I wondered whether you'd be willing to come down because the watersiders would really like you to come and speak to them, is that at all possible? And he said 'Yes, of course I'll come'. And I said there's a further request...would you be willing to sing to them? Because, I said, I'm a little bit afraid of asking you or a little bit nervous of asking you that because it may break your contract, because I gather the contract said he was only to do the concerts. And so he said 'Bugger the contract, I'll sing!'

Ken Douglas, who was responsible for driving Robeson around Wellington, described the performance for the watersiders as 'packed out':

...[The audience was] so electrified, so stimulated by this person's presence and the words that he spoke in such a gentle but commanding way. He was in this great big meeting, in our terms about, I guess, well over a thousand people there, and everybody was convinced that he was talking to him.

In a remarkable address to workers at the Addington Railway Workshops in Christchurch, Robeson spoke of his humble origins and his belief in the right of workers to receive a just share of the product of their labour:

I come today not as any sort of distinguished guy, I come as a guy who has struggled....[C]oming up in pretty much dire poverty and having to work my way through school. And I'm proud to stand before you today as one who is a part of the working class of his country, and the working class of Great Britain, and I feel the working class of the world. I feel that folks like us or you, we create the wealth, it's also necessary we get some part of it.

He also spoke of the necessity of racial equality for a peaceful world:

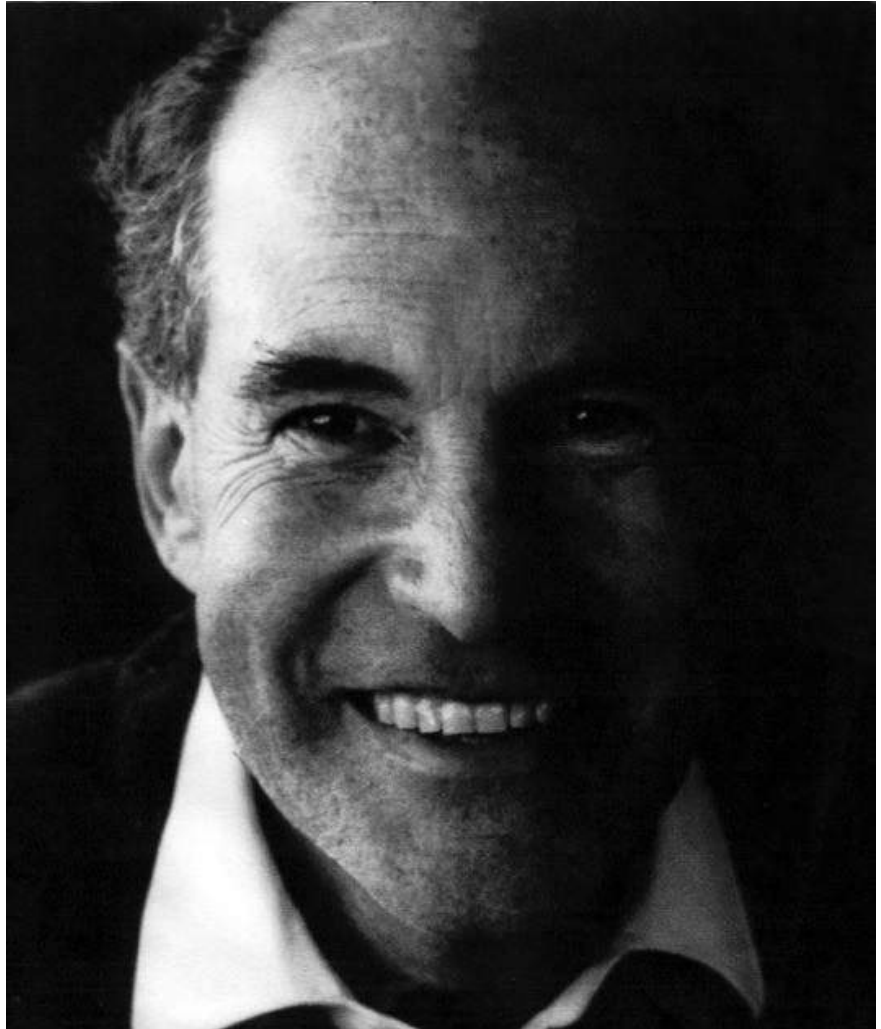
Yes, I was a famous singer, but the Welsh miners, I was down in the valley and they had made me understand as a black man I was their friend and I belonged to them. And I will always be thankful for them making me understand that it's just not a black world, and just not a white world, and just not a yellow world, brown world. That we all belong to one race, one family—the human family. I want my grandchildren to walk this Earth with their shoulders back as full human beings. You who understand here in New Zealand, you the white workers, you have all got to understand this and help this come about. There's got to be peace in the world, there's got to be friendship. You've got to look at your coloured brothers here and coloured sisters and see, not just in words, not just on paper, somewhere they've got to feel full parts here, of your life here in New Zealand. Full citizens, full citizens.

Robeson's Australasian tour was to be one of his last major public appearances. The following year his health deteriorated and he was beset by bouts of severe depression. He lived quietly for the remainder of his life, passing away in 1976. However, he left a proud legacy. Wellington writer Giovanni Tiso appraised *Call Mr Robeson* as 'a fitting tribute to the great man: a fully rounded study that doesn't gloss over the problematic aspects of his life and politics...and revives his art through the performance of some of his best-known songs.' The performance of the play here, Tiso continues, reactivates 'a largely hidden past of social upheaval and activism.' This observation is apposite in light of the profound influence Robeson had on a number of New Zealand activists, in particular Rona Bailey: 'I would think that the concerts I attended and meeting Robeson...was really the highlight of my life....He has influenced me and been a support, if you like, in times of... crisis, in times of struggle for human dignity....[He helped me] to stay staunch and firm.'

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1. *Call Mr Robeson* was performed between February 20 and March 1 this year as part of the Wellington Fringe Festival. The play is written and performed by Tayo Aluko, directed by Olusola Oyeleye, and designed by Phil Newman. The piano accompanist in Wellington was Julian Raphael.
  2. Smith, Vern. 'I am at Home,' Says Robeson at Reception in Soviet Union, *Daily Worker*, January 15, 1935. Quoted in Foner, Philip S., ed. *Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings, Speeches, Interviews, 1918–1974*. Larchmont: Brunner/Mazel, 1978, 94-96.
  3. *New Zealand Herald*, October 18, 1960; James P. Parker, American Consul in Auckland, to State Department, November 7, 1960, FBI New York 100-25857-4294. Quoted in Duberman, Martin B. *Paul Robeson*. New York: New Press, 1988.
  4. The interviews of Rona Bailey and Ken Douglas, and excerpts from Robeson's speech at the Addington Railway Workshop are quoted from Russell, Marie. Spectrum: Remembering Paul Robeson, retrieved from <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/spectrum/audio/20169062/spectrum-remembering-paul-robeson>, April 12, 1998. Cath Kelly, Ted Thompson and Shirley O'Connor were also interviewed for Spectrum.

# Gerhard Rosenberg: people's architect

By Margaret Mackenzie-Hooson

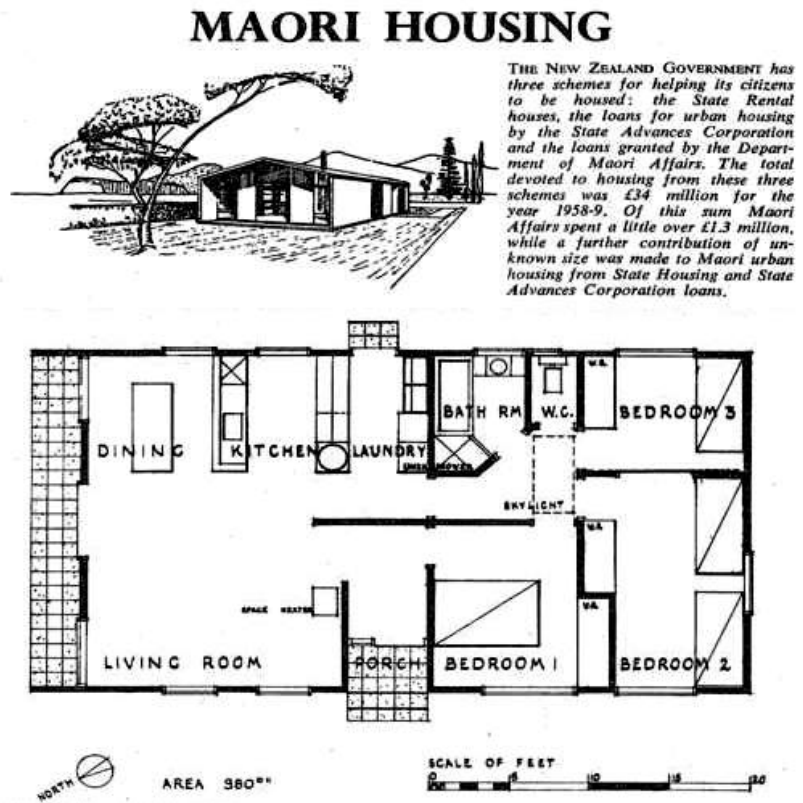


*Portrait of Gerhard Rosenberg, courtesy of Marti Friedlander.*

*In 1959 the émigré architect Gerhard Rosenberg presented a Maori Young Leaders Conference with proposals for housing designed specifically for Maori migrant patterns of use. These plans were startlingly innovative in a national climate that equivocated about integration while expounding assimilation.<sup>1</sup> This paper explores possible personal and political sources for this facet of Rosenberg's work in New Zealand as a pioneer in town planning. An outsider, a recent migrant himself, may have been more likely to focus on marginalized people while local architects were developing a distinctively New Zealand postcolonial style, and when Polynesians had not yet penetrated the profession to design their own culturally sensitive architecture.*

In 1959, when Gerhard Rosenberg (1912-1955) presented his plans for houses designed to be appropriate to the social and cultural patterns of Maori urban migrant living, his designs made a remarkable and controversial impact.<sup>2</sup> They included a kitchen and sitting room spacious enough to prepare meals and

hold meetings for extended families. They separated cooking space from the bathroom because of the customary restriction on having cooking and sanitation areas nearby. It was an innovation that took domestic architecture by surprise because it was planned specifically for Maori and Polynesian people.



Maori housing plans by G. Rosenberg, as they appeared in *Te Ao Hou* no. 30 (March 1960), p. 18.

Yet the design was not particularly successful. It embodied some features of buildings in rural Maori settlements, such as a central gable extended to cover a front verandah. Perhaps combining all the living functions in one building broke with longterm tradition, in which each structure would have a separate use: a cooking building, a sleeping house, a storehouse. Yet many Maori people had been living in European-style houses for over a century.

The houses Rosenberg designed were built of innovative and economical materials. His hallmark was setting a standard of aesthetic possibility, high quality, and even ecological originality, beyond what was usually associated with their frugal cost.<sup>3</sup> These economical designs were also made available for clients who were not Maori. This legacy of Rosenberg's is to be found today in the principles outlined in his substantial body of publications, his influence on his students and their successors, and in his archives—some held at the Architecture Library at the University of Auckland and others in the possession of his family.

This perspective<sup>4</sup> from an anthropologist seeks to make a case that the life and work of Rosenberg could be interpreted as contributing to the reasons why he might have produced these designs. It does not touch on his concurrent



*This demonstration house was built in Titirangi, W. Auckland, to demonstrate economy in the use of timber materials. It was profiled in Architectural Review, October 1959.*

*(Below) The Rosenberg family tenement in Berlin.*

significant work as the first person appointed in New Zealand in Town Planning, jointly in Architecture, or his activities as a public intellectual and his advocacy for Maori land rights.

New Zealand already had a tradition of public housing, surviving in 2015 in the architectural and financial appreciation of state houses, but in 1959 not widely appreciated because these houses were designed for people with modest incomes. Architects who had migrated to New Zealand from the mid-1930s to escape Nazism were responsible to a significant extent for state houses' sturdy design, and for the construction of large projects such as the new towns for workers at hydroelectric dams and the forestry industry, as well as significant public buildings.<sup>5</sup>

New Zealand architects were engaged in developing a domestic and public architecture that incorporated international modernism with a distinctive local character and materials, suitable for the climate, with wooden construction and open plans that embodied antipodean light and life.<sup>6</sup> It was a move away from imitating traditions of Britain in the colonies to establish an independent postcolonial identity, but its primary focus was not on embodying indigenous Polynesian character.

Gerhard Rosenberg was born in Berlin in 1912.<sup>7</sup> His family were secular Jews, and belonged to the educated professional urban bourgeoisie. His father, Curt Rosenberg, a lawyer who worked during the First World War as a translator for French prisoners of war, was a pacifist and a Social Democrat.<sup>8</sup> He took the young Gerhard to hear the revolutionary socialist Rosa Luxemburg give a speech in Berlin. By then, socialism was regarded as subversive, dangerously sympathetic to Bolshevism. Gerhard Rosenberg had already entered a political category ripe for suspicion and exclusion.<sup>9</sup>

Shortly after he was born, Gerhard's family moved to a tenement building in the inner-Berlin neighbourhood of Alt Moabit.<sup>10</sup> He loved this apartment, and later wrote that it was the place where he felt most at home in his life. His memoir gives vivid detail, complete with floor plan, about the apartment's design, including its shortcomings, which reveal that it could be efficient only if there were servants in the household; about its inhabitants as a microcosm of Berlin's social structure.<sup>11</sup> His later interest in architecture and town planning are prefigured in the model of a complete Arab city that he built there when he was twelve.<sup>12</sup>

Rosenberg attended the Collège Français de Berlin for his twelve years of schooling.<sup>13</sup> It was then a school for the intellectual elite; the earlier teaching was in German, the later in French—including learning Latin in French. The curriculum was strong in mathematics and in the literary heritage of German Romanticism. Goethe was Rosenberg's hero; Nature his refuge.

It was here that he became a pacifist himself, attributing the turning point to a talk given by the brother of one of his friends, a former pioneer officer in the Army named Gerhard Halle. Halle told the students that when his troops were retreating from France in WW1, they mined the halls of the towns so that

the people would be blown up when they gathered to celebrate the withdrawal. Rosenberg wrote that:

...he suddenly realised that a situation which corrupts ordinarily kindly and reasonable people to such a depth of perversity is absolutely inadmissible. It must absolutely not exist. One must not allow people to be faced with a situation that turns them into fiends.<sup>14</sup>

It was the time of the Weimar Republic. Rosenberg was living through a vortex of an experiment in democracy, exalted intellectual performance, but also rising anti-Semitism, the intense poverty of a defeated Germany, and breathtaking inflation. One did not visit relatives or friends near mealtimes because few had any food to share.

Everyone who graduated in his class was either a Jew or partly Jewish. Rosenberg went on to the Technische Hochschule to study architecture.<sup>15</sup> This included some focus on the environment and making use of local resources, such as earth building, an interest he retained. He had just completed his Intermediate examination in 1933 when Hitler came to power. This meant that as a Jew, he could not stay on for further education.

Gerhard Halle helped connect Rosenberg with English representatives of the Quakers and he managed to get an invitation to Britain to get a travel visa. He was one of the first of an immense wave of people escaping the rise of Nazism and anti-Semitism. In London he worked as an architectural assistant for the path-breaking firm of Tecton, pioneers in modernist architecture. The firm was co-founded in 1932 by Russian architect Berthold Lubetkin and Godfrey Samuel, among others. When Samuel left to set up his own practice with Valentine Harding, Rosenberg followed. Meanwhile he was studying at the Polytechnic<sup>16</sup>, now London Metropolitan University, where he was one of the earliest students of Urban Planning, working with Jacqueline Tyrwhitt<sup>17</sup> who would later become an international leader in the discipline focused on improving the quality of life in cities.<sup>18</sup> She introduced him to the works of pioneer theorists: Patrick Geddes,<sup>19</sup> later the Swiss Sigfried Gideon.<sup>20</sup>

This shaped the lifelong priorities of Rosenberg's scholarship, teaching, and civic activism: a commitment to designing and working to enhance peoples' experience of their homes, neighbourhoods, cities, and transport. He paid particular attention to meeting the needs of all age groups, from children through adolescents to the elderly. He was conscious that children flourished through having safe places to play, that green spaces nearby were more practical than parks, that having nooks to hide things was really important to children. His focus was more than the house itself; housing included the surroundings and the environment, close and even distant.<sup>21</sup>

Rosenberg completed his thesis in 1935, receiving high distinction. He began entering design competitions, mainly for modernist apartment buildings. But as the 1930s progressed, the threat of another war grew, as well as the Depression. Fewer major architectural projects were planned, and British firms struggled



*British internment camp, where Rosenberg was held during WWII.*

*(Below) Rosenberg's painting of the landscape visible from his internment camp at Lennoxville, Quebec*

to keep their employees. Rosenberg moved to Glasgow where he was hired by a Swedish timber firm, heartbroken that he was unable to practise his beloved architecture. Soon that firm closed its offices.

Rosenberg wrote anguished letters to Godfrey Samuel, reporting that he could find no-one who would hire a Jew, or even accept free work from him. It was not until 1939 that the Royal Institute of British Architects set up a committee, headed by Samuel, to study the plight of Jewish architects desperately seeking work in Britain. Nothing has caused more sorrow in my research than reading those letters: architects of high distinction reduced to pleading petitioners, despairing for their families and survival.<sup>22</sup>

Although Rosenberg survived an appearance before a tribunal charged with uncovering British spies, he was concerned about being identified as a pacifist. Before he was required to appear before a further hearing, Churchill came to power and on 10 May 1940 ordered the detention of all males aged between 17 and 70 who held German or Italian nationality papers. Rosenberg was sent as an enemy alien to internment camps in Canada. His son owns a painting he made there, of the landscape visible beyond his prison fence.

Rosenberg returned to London in 1941 and worked with Tyrwhitt at the School of Planning and Regional Reconstruction, established to train returned servicemen to design for the reconstruction of a devastated Britain. After the war, he taught part-time at the School and worked in the architectural office of Frederick Gibberd. He became an expert on farm buildings while working for six years in the Midlands for the Ministry of Agriculture.<sup>23</sup>

In 1955 he won a prize for a housing design in a New Zealand competition.<sup>24</sup> He migrated with his family that same year, persuaded by his brother Wolfgang Rosenberg, an influential economist at Canterbury University, and later a lawyer and distinguished political activist, who had migrated in 1938.

In an interview in 2012, architect Don McRea told this story. Rosenberg had been appointed to a post at Auckland University, and McRea accompanied him there by train. Rosenberg asked if a woman further down the carriage was Maori. McRae said yes, and Rosenberg went along to the woman and introduced himself. McRae was struck by Rosenberg's ease in approaching her. The two sat and talked together for several hours. When Rosenberg returned, McRae heard the woman say to him: 'Remember that not all of us speak Maori'.

Four years later Rosenberg, together with McRae, presented the first of his housing designs for urban Maori.<sup>25</sup> In 1972 another of Rosenberg's designs would be added to the catalogue of houses available through the Department of Maori Affairs.<sup>26</sup> His design was not chosen by Maori clients, and was criticized for looking like a toolbox. It would have stood out like a sore thumb in a suburb of one-storey conventional houses, many of them occupied by descendants of Europeans.

This might seem paradoxical, as by 1972 the climate of Maori activism was often vehement about independent autonomy, yet there is a sense in which originality has its limits. The complexity of intercultural relations remains ever engrossing.

Maori activism in New Zealand was still muted in the era of Rosenberg's first housing design, apart perhaps for the 'No Maoris no Tour' campaign, to which he was sympathetic. This campaign arose in response to South Africa's refusal to admit Maori rugby players to compete against the Springboks. By 1959 there was also vehement controversy about the Hunn Report which inflamed not only Maori but many Pakeha for its opposition to sustained support of cultural autonomy and preservation of Maori tradition.

Rosenberg's designs for housing for Maori people could be interpreted as a function of his time: they are an important link to remember in the history of New Zealand architecture and town planning as well as in the history of Maori-Pakeha relations. His life was punctuated by wars, anti-semitism, detention camps and exile. That a person who had experienced so much suffering and prejudice should commit his life to working towards improving the quality of life for others in a strange land marks him as an outstandingly human-hearted man.

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*Gerhard Rosenberg's son Julian adds:*

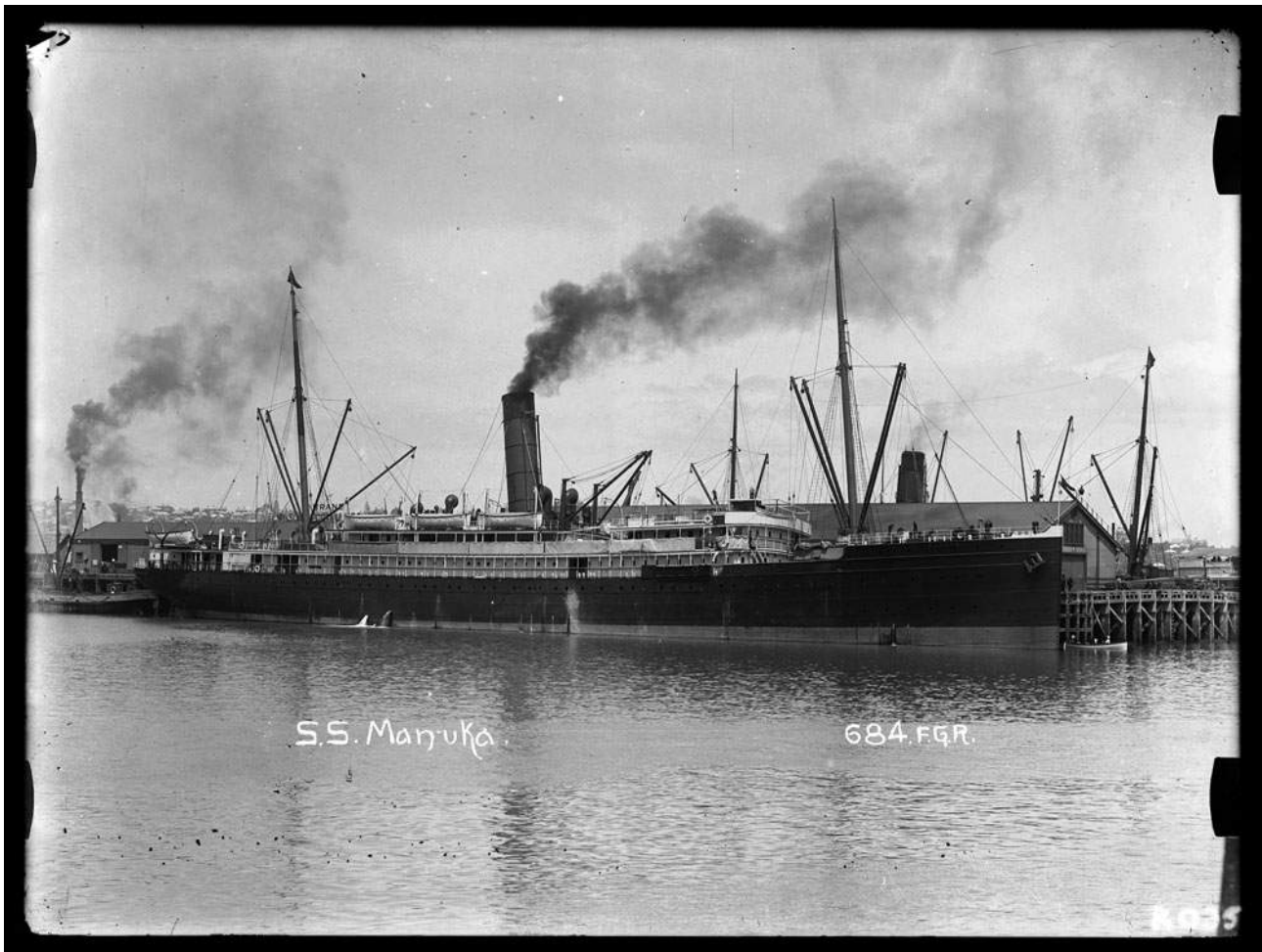
Gerhard did more than support the 'No Maoris No Tour' protests. We as a family participated fully in this campaign. He was a lifelong activist—constantly marching against Vietnam, going to Auckland City Council meetings and appeal hearings, opposing removing trees and degrading amenities, defending the powerless, opposing the design of Paremoro Prison and then visiting inmates there. He was a good friend and ally of Betty Wark, whose organisation Arohanui tried to house homeless Maori people in Auckland. Labour's Attorney-General and Justice Minister Martyn Findlay was a good friend and neighbour, and Gerhard felt mostly, I think, that the Labour Party was the political party worth supporting.

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1. Hunn, J.K. *1960 Report on the Department of Maori Affairs*. New Zealand: Government Printer 24 August.
  2. Rosenberg, Gerhard 1959 Data paper: 'Some Aspects of Maori Housing'. Maori Young Leaders Conference. University of Auckland Council of Adult Education. Typescript. Archive R813b Library, School of Architecture & Planning, University of Auckland. The drawings were done by Don McRae: Rosenberg, Gerhard & Don McRae, 1959 Appendix: 'Designs for Permanent and Transit Houses'. Maori Young

- Leaders Conference University of Auckland Council of Adult Education. Archive R813b Library, School of Architecture & Planning, University of Auckland. Rosenberg, Gerhard, 1960 Maori Housing. *Te Ao Hou*. (March) p. 18. Archive R813b Architecture Library, University of Auckland; Rosenberg, Gerhard, 1964 Some Aspects of Maori Housing. *NZIA Journal* (September) pp. 243-5. Rosenberg, Gerhard, 1970 House Plans for Maori Families. *Te Maori*. pp.15; 45-7. Rosenberg, Gerhard, 197 The housing of Maoris and Islanders in New Zealand cities. *AAA Bulletin* (May) 49 (8-10) pp.9-10. Archive R813b, Library, School of Architecture & Planning, University of Auckland.
3. Where information is not footnoted, its sources are fieldnotes from interviews with Rosenberg family members conducted by the author in 2013-2014.
  4. I am very grateful for the most generous help of Michael Austin, Professor, Unitec Institute, Auckland; Leonard Bell, Associate Professor, Art History, University of Auckland, Wendy Garvey Head Librarian and Sarah Cox, Archivist, Library, School of Architecture & Planning, University of Auckland, the late Tom Davies, Town Planner Auckland, the late Tom Fookes, Vice-President, World Society for Ekistics & Associate Professor, School of Architecture & Planning University of Auckland (retired), Julia Gatley, Associate Dean & Associate Head Postgraduate – Architecture, Bruce Howie, Librarian, School of Architecture & Planning, University of Auckland, Jack Lasenby, writer, Wellington, New Zealand, Don McRae, architect, Auckland, Luca Muscara, Associate Professor, Political Geography, Faculty of Economics, University of Molise, Italy; Michael Pritchard, Associate Professor Emeritus, School of Architecture & Planning, University of Auckland, Jeremy Rotherham, Auckland, and librarians of National Library of New Zealand, Wellington, of the Library of Royal Institute of British Architects, and their archivists at the Archives and Drawings Collection, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.
  5. Bell, Leonard and Dianna Morrow, (Eds) 2012 *Jewish Lives in New Zealand: A History*. Auckland: Godwit.
  6. Gatley, J. (Ed.) 2010 *Group Architects: Towards a New Zealand Architecture*. Auckland: Auckland University Press.
  7. Wolfgang Rosenberg, the eminent economist at Canterbury University and later lawyer, was his younger brother.
  8. He was reprimanded by his corporal when, nearing defeat, the platoon were told to unload their rifles. The corporal noticed that Rosenberg did not touch his. Asked to explain, he said that his gun had never been loaded.
  9. In 1938 Curt Rosenberg was disbarred by the Berlin judiciary on grounds of his views, and those of his Liberal Democrat wife, Gerhard's mother. They reached Britain on the last boat from Hamburg on the day that the Second World War broke out, forced to leave all their belongings on the dock. Each would contribute to helping refugees in Scotland where they settled, including to the Association of Jewish Refugees.
  10. Mietshaus is translated usually as 'tenement' from German. It refers to the housing built in the nineteenth century as the Wilhemian ring, an expansion. It has five stories, and a courtyard large enough for a fire engine to turn around. These tenements do not refer to crowded housing for the poor.
  11. Rosenberg Gerhard, 'Gerhard Rosenberg 1912-1995: His 21 Years in Berlin 1912-1933'. Typescript 41pp. p.1-2.
  12. Whitfield Jill, "Memoirs of Miriam Whitfield (née Rosenberg)," Typescript transcribed by her daughter. Rosenberg Family Archives, Auckland, New Zealand, (n.d.).
  13. Französisches Gymnasium (F.G.).
  14. Rosenberg, Gerhard, n.d. 'His 21 Years in Berlin: 1912-1933'. p.
  15. Now the Universität because, closed in 1945, it reopened in 1946 as the University.
  16. Now London Metropolitan University
  17. Shoskes, Elaine, 2013 *Jacqueline Tyrwhitt: A Transnational Life in Urban Planning*. Farnham Surrey UK: Ashgate.
  18. The term 'Ekistics' was coined by Constantinos Doxiadis in 1942 for the science of human settlements. See his 1968 *Ekistics: An Introduction to the Science of Human Settlements*. New York: Oxford University Press.
  19. For example, his 1915 *Cities in Evolution*. London: Williams & Norgate
  20. For example, his *Space, Time & Architecture: the growth of a new tradition*, 1941 - Harvard University Press
  21. The key article is Rosenberg, Gerhard 1965-6 'City Planning Theory and the Quality of Life'. *American Behavioral Scientist* IX (4&5) Dec 1965-Jan 1966 pp. 3-7. Also for example, Rosenberg, Gerhard, 1971 'The Landscape of Youth'. *NZIA Journal* (20 March) pp. 88-95.
  22. Samuel, Godfrey 'Correspondence on political refugees, 1935-40', SAG/83/3, SAG/84/1-3, London, RIBA Archives, Victoria & Albert Museum. 13 Rosenberg's letters to Godfrey Samuel, almost identical in tone to those of the others in pleading for help to find work, are held in the Samuel and Harding archives: Godfrey Samuel & Valentine Harding, 'Professional and personal papers of Samuel and his partner Harding, and other related papers, 1925-1961,' Tecton SAG 1-100 London: RIBA Archives, Victoria & Albert Museum.
  23. Rosenberg, Gerhard 1944 'New trends in farm buildings'. *Architects' Journal* (July 20): 47-52; 1948 'Building for Agriculture'. *Builder* (February 13):199.30 Competition, 1955 'New Zealand House Construction'. *The Architects' Journal* (January 6) p.10. Archive R813b Architecture Library, University of Auckland
  24. A house built to the design remains in Panmure. It is so modified that the design is almost unrecognizable. Its historical importance suggests that there is a case for considering finding a way of restoring it and establishing it as a trust.
  25. Sheeran, Garry 1972 'Toolbox or exciting?' *Auckland Star*, May 20. Archive 813b Library, School of Architecture & Planning, University of Auckland.

# Wobbly driplines: strikes, stowaways & the SS Manuka

By Jared Davidson



TSS Manuka berthed next to Princes Wharf, Auckland, c.1909. Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, 35-R35.

What do a Latvian anarchist, the Wobblies, ham and eggs, the Military Service Act, and *The Australian Communist* have in common? The *TSS Manuka*, a 4,505 tonne, twin screw passenger ship originally owned by the Union Steam Ship Company (USS Co.). Built in 1903 and wrecked off New Zealand's southern coast in 1929, the *Manuka* was a floating fragment of class society—and of class warfare. It operated during a time of new ideas and a militant workers' movement. It connected strikes across the Tasman, transported radicals and radicalism, and experienced its own on-board struggles. And like most things in 1914, was caught in the storm of war.

## *The Manuka and its crew*

When the *Manuka* was built and delivered to the USS Co. in late 1903, it was the largest and fastest ship in their fleet. Made of mild steel and with a distinctively tall funnel, it was designed to add prestige to the aptly named 'Red Funnel' fleet. Although planned for the trans-Tasman route between New Zealand and Australia, the *Manuka* occasionally made the longer journey to Honolulu and

Vancouver. It was also used as occasionally as a troopship during the First World War, making a number of passages to and from Egypt (although it was never given an official military troopship number).

Its civilian passengers travelled in style. ‘The [interior] framework is in waxed oak’ beamed the *NZ Herald*, ‘and decorated in ivory and gold. The ceiling is panelled to correspond; the upholstery is in sylvano velvet.’<sup>1</sup> Passengers could dine, dance and smoke surrounded by red velvet and green buffalo hide, sleep on modern spring mattresses, and keep cool with the assistance of electric fans. The culinary department also impressed the *Herald* reporter. ‘Pantries are fitted with hot presses and steam boilers for water, coffee, milk, eggs etc’, and ‘fitted with all the modern conveniences.’<sup>2</sup> Provisions were kept cool by large refrigerators, ready to feed nearly a hundred people at any one time.

If you were travelling first-class and full on fine dining, you slept in the middle of the vessel ‘where the motion and vibration are at a minimum.’ Second-class passengers bedded down in the less stable but still comfortable rear of the ship, where the officers and stewards also had their quarters.

The rest of the *Manuka*’s crew, however, worked, ate and slept in what little space remained. Usually this was the fo’csle (or ‘glory hole’ as it was more commonly known)—the cramped, wet, dirty and constantly pitching space at the front of the ship. Because of poor ventilation, the fo’csle became ‘an evil-smelling damp hole’ of close living and discomfort.<sup>3</sup>

Even these conditions were hard won. In 1893, seamen fought to extend the 72 cubic feet of cabin space allowed for each crew member to 120 feet—the space legally required for passengers. Indeed, the year the *Manuka* was launched saw a ‘brief but bitter dispute’ between the USS Co. and the Seamen’s Union over the condition of crew quarters.<sup>4</sup> Seamen finally gained 120 cubic feet in 1909, but only for ships yet to be built—existing vessels like the *Manuka* were exempt.<sup>5</sup>

As Neil Atkinson explains in *Crew Culture*, the social organisation of the merchant ship was determined by traditional concepts of gender, power and class. Like their passengers, the crew were divided by a social hierarchy—the separation of living quarters aboard the *Manuka* reflected the social distances between officers and those who worked below deck. ‘As steamships grew in size and complexity, their crews were divided into three distinct departments: deck; stokehold or engine-room; and “providore” or catering (cooks, stewards, and stewardesses).’<sup>6</sup> Thanks to the increasingly bureaucratic and managerial nature of 20th century steam ships, these spatial and social gulfs remained stark. Divisions between workers continued below deck, where the ‘Black Gang’—firemen, stokers, greasers and trimmers—fought heat and grime under the watchful eyes of marine engineers, ‘who were themselves a new breed of professional-managerial employees at sea.’<sup>7</sup>

#### *Solidarity Forever*

Where you slept, ate or worked on the *Manuka* was literally determined by class. But class is not simply a measure of wealth or occupation; it is the result of a particular social relationship. The life of those on board was shaped by capital,



*Firemen and trimmers on the TSS Manuka, c. 1910. Otago Museum Wahi Kahuika, CT79.1270b.*

in the form of their work; the state, in the form of the Arbitration Court and other legal sanctions; and the struggle against both, mostly (but not always) represented by the Seamen's Union.

Crew were governed by legally enforceable articles (fixed-term contracts) that bound them to the service of the shipowner for a specified time, or for the duration of a voyage. 'Seafarers faced prison sentences for refusing to work or leaving their place of work, the ship, without permission. Desertion—quitting the ship before the term of the contract expired—was punishable by up to three months imprisonment, with or without hard labour.'<sup>8</sup> They also lost any clothes, personal belongings or wages owed to them.

Struggles against such measures took many forms, ranging from discreet, on-the-job acts like go-slows or spelling, to the formation of national and international organisations. The New Zealand Seaman's Union was formed in 1880 although prototypes had come and gone before then. Rocked but not sunk by the 1890 Maritime Strike, the Union found protection in the 1894 Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act. While still controlled by articles, the Act and its compulsory arbitration courts recognised unions, set general working conditions for seamen through periodic awards, and settled disputes. However in return, workers lost the right to strike, which became illegal.

During the *Manuka's* lifetime, union membership was a core part of a seaman's experience. Although hard to imagine now, the closed shop was normal at that time. The union card ensured a seaman got work, and pay changed with whatever award or levy was in place. Non-union members were either scabs or blacklegs, and not welcome.

While employment and awards were an important part of union organising, the safety of the crew was a crucial concern. 'Rust-buckets' whose hull plates 'punctured in the course of painting by being tapped with the handle of a paint-

brush' were all too common, leading to one of the highest rates of wrecks and deaths in the world.<sup>9</sup> A number of workers were killed on the *Manuka*, such as Albert Hayward, a watersider who in 1917 stepped on a defective hatchway and fell 40 feet into the hold.<sup>10</sup> Crew had their fingers mangled, shoulders smashed, and as the reports of the Marine Department show, suffered countless other injuries.

However the union meeting was more than just a place to talk pay and conditions. Although no occupation can confidently be equated with militancy, seamen were also renowned for their radicalism and solidarity with causes wider than their own. Alongside miners and watersiders, seamen were at the forefront of the syndicalist upsurge from around 1905-06, and many were influenced by the revolutionary ideas of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

'Wobblies were internationalists in practice as well as in spirit' writes Mark Derby. 'They belonged to transitory occupations, they crossed and re-crossed the Tasman, the Pacific and much further afield, were often in danger of deportation or on the run, and in general they regarded their nationality as an accident of birth and a supreme irrelevance.'<sup>11</sup> Seamen and the IWW were a perfect fit, and seafaring Wobblies or those sympathetic to IWW ideas joined those who argued against the arbitration system. Even after the defeat of the 1913 Great Strike, the Wobbly spirit remained present within the Seamen's Union well into 1920s and beyond. IWW literature, international seamen, local advocates of the 'one big union', and the use of direct action tactics all kept the ideas of the IWW alive.

#### *Driplines*<sup>12</sup>

The nature of their work meant seamen were also at the forefront of what is now called transnationalism. Webs of action and interaction criss-crossed between ports, and along these lines passed radicals, rituals, literature, and modes of struggle.

'The maritime world has geographic and industrial features that have the effect of creating a unique working-class culture' writes Paula de Angelis. 'Its transnational economic structure and work force create conditions where the need for international co-operation amongst workers is easily perceived, and the difficulties of applying national controls and discourses to the labour force in the face of this perception have contributed to the persistence of radical philosophies such as syndicalism in the industry.'<sup>13</sup>

Anarchist historian Michael Schmidt notes that one of the IWW's most successful branches, the Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union (MTWIU), 'integrated Sydney, Melbourne, Wellington and Auckland into a global network of ports: Cape Town, Hong Kong, Canton (Guangzhou), Shanghai, Manila, Rangoon (Yangon), Yokohama and San Francisco among them. This had a direct impact on labour organising in all those cities.'<sup>14</sup>

Transnationalism was a multi-directional process. Those who brought ideas into port also left with them modified or clarified. For example, in 1916 the IWW launched a fishermen's strike in Fiji, 'probably under the influence of the



'In the Hollow of his Hands' - striking firemen are depicted as holding up the public and the USS Co.  
 NZ Truth, 18 January 1919.

Australian IWW or New Zealand IWW' which, in turn, had been influenced by Canadian Wobblies such as JB King.<sup>15</sup> Tom Barker, a British-born Wobbly who was radicalised in New Zealand, went on to organise for the IWW in Australia and the anarcho-syndicalist Federación Obrera Regional Argentina. He also wrote a seaman's guide to syndicalism called *The Story of the Sea: Marine Transport Workers Handbook*, published in 1923 and no doubt read by Noel Lyons, instigator of the 'Ham and Egg Revolution'.

#### *The Ham and Egg Revolution*

During its time in service, the *Manuka* was held up by a number of strikes, such as those triggered by watersiders refusing to work any ship in port, or due to larger withdrawals of labour during events such as the 1913 Great Strike. For example, newspapers reported the *Manuka* stuck at port due to major watersider strikes in 1908, 1910, 1913, 1921, 1922, and again in 1928. No doubt there were many more un-reported cases.

The *Manuka* was also held up by the militancy of its own crew, or by a particular section of the crew. Despite the legal might facing them, throughout 1915 'troublesome firemen' of the *Manuka*'s Black Gang refused to work until they were paid the same as firemen picked up in Sydney. At one stage volunteers had to be called from the steerage passengers to make up the numbers!<sup>16</sup> Further strikes during wartime agitated for better working conditions, while in 1917 the *Manuka*'s crew joined a 'seditious strike' that froze the Wellington wharves for a fortnight.<sup>17</sup>

Post-war discontent and on-the-job forms of control saw a flurry of strikes in January, May, June and July 1919 alone. Interestingly, the May dispute saw the crew refuse to sail unless three of their fellow workers, sick with influenza and quarantined on Matiu Somes Island, were moved to more suitable quarters.<sup>18</sup> This is one of many examples of seamen using their power for more than bread-and-butter issues.

Again, discreet acts of everyday resistance were bound to have gone unreported. However one case of job control—dramatic, at least, in the eyes of the capitalist press—did make the headlines. This was a series of actions in 1925 led by a Wobbly coal trimmer named Noel Lyons.

The quality of food served to seamen had always caused discontent, especially when compared to the fine dining lavished upon first class passengers. In May 1925 the situation came to a head on the *Manuka*, when the crew refused to leave Wellington until their food was improved. The press quickly dubbed the incident the 'ham and egg revolution', and mocked the crew for their 'unreasonable' demands.

However as the USS Co. made clear to reporters, the real issue was 'the deliberate attempt to institute job control' via the go-slow.<sup>19</sup> Throughout the voyage Lyons and the crew had used the go-slow to good effect, hindering the running of the ship. Using the pretext that IWW literature and posters had been found on board, Lyons was read the 1919 Undesirable Immigrant Exclusion Act and given 28 days

to leave New Zealand. Instead, he and the crew walked off their Sydney-bound vessel singing 'Solidarity Forever,' and convened a meeting at the Communist Hall.

Three hundred people packed into the Manners Street hall to hear Lyons speak about the strike. 'I have been described as a paid agitator,' he argued, 'but it is a well known fact that all who take an active part in attempting to better the condition of the worker... develop whiskers overnight, and appear as a Bolshevik.' Despite resolutions of protest from a range of influential unions, Lyons was imprisoned for two weeks before being shipped to Australia. However, this transnational radical was far from deterred. On his arrival Lyons made the most of what the *NZ Truth* called 'the new spasm of [the] IWW,' organising mass meetings and reviving the Sydney IWW.



Noel Lyons arrives in Sydney after being deported from New Zealand. <http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/201155941>

#### *Yours for the OBU*

Twenty years before Lyons and the crew of the *Manuka* flaunted the syndicalist tactic of the go-slow, another transnational figure who popularised such methods had walked the same decks. In March 1904, Latvian anarchist Philip Josephs steamed into Wellington aboard the *Manuka*. With him were his wife Sophia, four daughters, and the seeds of one of New Zealand's first anarchist collectives, the Freedom Group, which he formed in 1913.

I've written about the influence of Josephs on New Zealand's working-class counterculture in past issues of the *LHP Bulletin*, and elsewhere.<sup>20</sup> His advocacy of syndicalism, his involvement in the New Zealand Socialist Party and the Wellington IWW, his tailor shop-cum-radical bookstore, his distribution network of radical literature, and his participation in public meetings and strikes, are just some examples. And while the *Manuka* may arguably have first brought organised anarchism to New Zealand (in the form of Josephs), he in turn influenced the anarchist movement abroad. His international mail network helped to form arguments against state socialism, and countered reports of New Zealand as a workingman's paradise.

Another syndicalist to cross the Tasman on the *Manuka* was John B. Williams. His 1920 visit was two-fold: to fundraise on behalf of Broken Hill miners embroiled in a bitter strike, and to set up locals of the One Big Union. (The OBU had continued the syndicalism of the Wobblies after the Australian IWW was declared illegal during the First World War). After a brief visit back to Sydney, he returned to New Zealand in 1921 as an organiser for the New Zealand Workers' Union (NZWU), where he agitated amongst North Island public works labourers.

The Special Branch of the New Zealand Police—set up in 1920 to spy on 'extremist labour agitators' like Williams—closely monitored his return. After attending a meeting in Christchurch, Detective Sergeant Gibson reported that Williams had told the audience 'he was in New Zealand to form the "One Big Union" and behind the movement were the IWW men who had been recently liberated in New South Wales.'<sup>21</sup> These were the Sydney Twelve—Wobblies that had been charged with treason, arson, sedition and forgery in 1916. Alarmed that Williams had formed a branch in Auckland, detectives pondered whether they could use the Undesirable Immigrants Exclusion Act to prohibit further IWW and OBU speakers into the country.

Their fear of an IWW resurgence in New Zealand never eventuated, for the Twelve did not arrive, and the OBU movement was overshadowed by the Alliance of Labour. Yet Williams remained a prominent organiser for the NZWU well into the 1930s, and in 1927 he led a strike at the Arapuni Power Station, the first government-built hydroelectric station on the Waikato River.

#### *Appropriate swag*

Who knows how many other radicals arrived aboard the *Manuka* during this period? However, the ship did more than transport radicals. Seamen were especially prolific in smuggling mail, penny pamphlets, and revolutionary newspapers in and out of New Zealand, especially during the First World War and the red scare that followed.

Vessels laden with IWW literature helped to fan the flames of discontent wherever they docked. 'All boats from America were met by one or more of us wearing our IWW badge in case there should be a Wobbly on board with the appropriate swag,' recalled Alec Holdsworth of the Auckland IWW.<sup>22</sup> The effect of such 'swag' was not lost on the authorities. In 1915, the government banned the entire output of the IWW from New Zealand, and in 1920 extended War Regulations to cover communist material and other revolutionary works.

One radical who was caught in the net of censorship was William Blair, a communist watersider based in Wellington. In June 1921 Blair sold *The Australian Communist* to an undercover detective, who then charged him under the 1915 War Regulations for selling seditious literature. Rather than go to court, Blair took an assumed name and boarded the *Manuka* with a one-way ticket to Sydney. Unlucky for a second time, he was stopped by police and jailed for two months. (He later wrote a scathing report on prison conditions and 'the tortures of the 'dummy' or solitary confinement' for *NZ Truth*).<sup>23</sup>



New Zealand Expeditionary Force Recruitment poster, WE Smith Ltd, Sydney. Archives New Zealand, AD1 9/169/2/1.

### Stowaways

Blair was not the only one to try and escape New Zealand aboard the *Manuka*. During the First World War, a section of its crew acted as agents of freedom for those trying to avoid military conscription.

The 1916 Military Service Act forcibly pressed all non-Maori men aged between 20 and 46 into military service, summoning them through a ballot of the national register. Resistance to the ‘body-snatchers’ included newspapers, flyers, mass rallies, seditious strikes, ‘going bush’, or skipping the country. The Seamen’s Union issued a number of anti-conscription circulars, and stood in solidarity with strikers deemed unpatriotic for fighting wartime profiteering. Some seamen also formed the final link in an ‘underground railway’ of working-class conscripts leaving New Zealand.<sup>24</sup>

On 21 August 1918, six labourers—Jeremiah Courtney, Bernard Bradley, Michael O’Conner, Thomas Prendergast, William Collins and Patrick Toohey—were arrested by Sydney police after a three hour search of the *Manuka*. Five of them were caught while leaving the ship posing as firemen, while the sixth was found hiding in a lavatory. As a number of them were wanted for desertion from Trentham military camp, they were bundled back to New Zealand and jailed for three months on the charge of leaving the country without a permit. ‘A sturdy-looking crowd of men like you might have been expected to do something better than funk it, as you did,’ remarked magistrate Frazer.<sup>25</sup>

If it had not been for a tip off from the New Zealand military, these anti-militarists may indeed have ‘funked it’. Before leaving New Zealand, every passenger ship was thoroughly searched for anyone leaving without a permit: one constable would guard the gangway as the second combed all areas of the ship, assisted by the Chief Deck Officer and the Engineer on watch. This was how Samuel Fitzgerald, another defaulter avoiding military service, was caught. Found boarding the *Manuka*, he was sentenced to a year’s hard labour for desertion in March 1917.

However, the six labourers had been buried deep in coal by sympathetic firemen and later hidden in the focsle. ‘I have no doubt that the six men... were actively assisted by firemen’ wrote Police Commissioner O’Donovan in his report to the minister. ‘It is of course possible that some of the engineers knew something of what was going on, but there is no evidence of it.’<sup>26</sup> In fact, the Chief Engineer had found three military defaulters on an earlier trip and reported them to the authorities—highlighting the social divisions amongst the crew.

### Conclusion

The *Manuka* and its crew was not the only USS Co. vessel with an eventful past. But a focus on this ship enables a micro-level entry into a larger and more complex story. This includes the working-class counterculture of seafarers, the transnational nature of seamen and syndicalism, on-the-job forms of class struggle, and resistance to First World War conscription.

Were these experiences and events relating to the *Manuka* typical of the period? It is hard to make any conclusions without comparative research of other USS Co. vessels. Yet in a way, the life of the *Manuka* reflected the journey of the syndicalist movement itself. Built and launched as syndicalism was expanding its influence, the *Manuka*—like syndicalism—was rocked by strikes, affected by agitators and printed agitation, pioneered new forms of on-the-job action, and was divided by war. After riding out the turbulent 20s, the *Manuka* was finally wrecked in December 1929, just as the depression was beginning to hit New Zealand's shores. The 283 passengers and crew on that voyage survived, as would the ideas of the IWW in New Zealand. Wobbly driplines had nurtured its growth, which in turn, grew into a culture and ethos that persists in certain labour circles today.

*Jared Davidson is a Wellington labour historian, archivist and graphic designer.*

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1. *NZ Herald*, September 1903
  2. *Ibid.*
  3. Neill Atkinson, *Crew Culture: New Zealand Seafarers under Sail and Steam*, Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2001, p. 30
  4. Conrad Bollinger, *Against the Wind: The Story of the New Zealand Seamen's Union*, Wellington: New Zealand Seamen's Union, 1968, p. 49.
  5. Atkinson, *Crew Culture*, p. 30
  6. Atkinson, *Crew Culture*, p. 16
  7. Atkinson, *Crew Culture*, p. 17
  8. Atkinson, *Crew Culture*, p. 96
  9. Bollinger, *Against the Wind*, p. 75-76
  10. *Thames Star*, 25 May 1917
  11. Mark Derby, 'Towards a Transnational Study of New Zealand Links with the Wobblies', available online at <http://redruffians.tumblr.com/post/2616013507/towards-a-transnational-study-of-new-zealand-links>
  12. Driplines are the area directly located under the outer circumference of the tree branches. This is where the tiny rootlets are located that take up water for the tree.
  13. Paula de Angelis, 'Tom Barker and the Syndicalism of the Sea: The Underground Influence of the IWW', Presentation, 2012, p. 7
  14. Interview with Michael Schmidt, *Imminent Rebellion* 13, 2014, p. 60
  15. *Ibid.*
  16. *Evening Post*, 17 December 1915; 'Te Anau (ship) and "Manuka" (ship) - Trouble caused by action of firemen', M1 Box 1014/ 15/3/179, Archives New Zealand, Wellington Office.
  17. Bollinger, *Against the Wind*, p. 126
  18. *NZ Herald*, 15 May 1919
  19. *NZ Herald*, 22 May 1925
  20. *LHP Bulletin* 54, April 2012; *Sewing Freedom: Philip Josepohs, Transnationalism & Early New Zealand Anarchism*, Oakland: AK Press, 2013.
  21. Det. Serg. Gibson to Chief Detective, Christchurch, 21 April 1921, 'CPNZ: Wellington District: Sympathisers and Contacts, Vol.1', Box 6/ 21/5/10, Archives New Zealand, Wellington Office. An earlier OBU Council in Auckland had been formed during 1920 by Wobblies active in the 1913 Great Strike, but it had a brief existence. See *LHP Bulletin* 56, December 2012.
  22. Derby, 'Towards a Transnational Study of New Zealand Links with the Wobblies'
  23. *NZ Truth*, 5 November 1921
  24. Bollinger, *Against the Wind*, p. 122.
  25. *Evening Post*, 28 August 1918

# Restoring the Runanga Miners' Hall

By Angela Stratford



*The Runanga Miners' Hall after Cyclone Ita blew through in April 2014.*

Restoration of the Runanga Miners' Hall continues to make steady progress. In December 2014 the Runanga Miners' Hall Trust completed the first major step in the restoration by re-roofing the entire building. The roof was the major casualty in Cyclone Ita, which struck the West Coast in April last year, when one third of the iron was blown off, exposing the sarking and allowing a huge amount of water to enter the building in the subsequent days. Days turned into months, and despite the efforts of the Council and the Trust in covering the roof with tarpaulins, water could not be prevented from continuing to rain into the interior.

During these months, the Trust was formalised, ably lead by experienced heritage advocate Paul Thomas, of Reefton, and well supported by Runanga locals, administrator Sandra Gibbens, building tutor Rick King and former community constable Rose Green. A further circle of supporters was organised in the form of a wider Project Committee.

Delicate negotiations with the Grey District Council (the building owner) and the Council's insurance company ensued. The Council was eventually persuaded to transfer to the Trust a significant sum as an advance on the insurance payment,



*The Runanga Miners Hall Trust receives its first donation, a cheque from the Runanga Area Association.  
From left: Paul Thomas, Rick King, Sandra Gibbens, Brian Wood, Les Holmes (RAA Inc Chair), and Rose Green.*

while the actual amount of the insurance was still being calculated. This funding allowed the Trust to engage a local building firm, and by late December the last of the new iron, appropriately bright red, was fixed in place.

To mark this milestone, the Trust sought a way to include the local Runanga community in the celebrations. A roof party—held on the grassed area outside the Hall—saw between 100 and 120 people, of all ages and from all sectors of the community, show up across the afternoon on the promise of free sausages (courtesy of Hellers). Elders of the community, Johnny Menzies (93), Alice Menzies and Nelly O’Neill recalled the dances and balls hosted by the Hall, and the drawcard it was for Greymouth people as a picture theatre. Albert Whitehead described the time he played international badminton against Australia in the Hall. Young children on bikes came by, moving on once they had gained some refreshment—in some cases this totalled an extraordinary number of sausages—while families with babies and toddlers took advantage of the sunshine to linger and talk. “The roof party was a definite success”, said Trust Chair Paul Thomas. “A significant purpose of the Hall was to bring people together, and it has once again done this”.

By February 2015, two applications to the Lottery Grants Board had been submitted—a large one to Lotteries World War I, Environment and Heritage to support the site preparation, repiling, and floor repair; and a more modest request to Lotteries Community Facilities for funding for a feasibility study and concept plan for the proposed new-build to replace the kitchen and toilets.

At the same time, a dedicated team has completed removing the stucco from the south side of the building, revealing beautiful shiplap weatherboards, most of which are in astoundingly good condition. The original horizontal lines of the weatherboards, extending for the full 39 metres of the hall’s length, create a graceful linearity on the impressive expanse of the building’s flank. These boards will be prepared as needed, and repainted in the original cream to further improve the exterior look of the building.



*The Hall as it looked at the opening in 1937.  
Photo courtesy of History House, Greymouth.*

*(Below) The Hall after its resurrection in 2000.  
The Trust intends to restore the building as much  
as practical to its 1937 design.*



In March and April, the Trust will conduct a comprehensive community consultation to engage with residents of Runanga and the wider Grey District in order to determine the future uses of the Hall so that the interior design and layout can best meet the community need.

At the same time, an oral history project will use funding from the West Coast Community Trust to capture the memories and experiences of older Runanga residents who recall the community across the changing decades of the 20th century.

New guttering will be installed very soon, completing the roof project. Detailed design planning for the foundations, floor and structural repair will now commence. The iconic façade will be repaired next, with its famous slogans given a new lease of life.

Following the structural works, the design for the interior of the building will be finalised. The Trust intends to re-establish, as far as practical, the original 1937 layout. Up until recently, this had to be determined on locals' rather inexact memories of the various rooms and spaces, but the discovery of what is hoped are the original blueprints for the building has given this task more certainty.

Needed immediately is an interpretation panel outside the hall, giving an overview to residents and visitors alike of the building's unique history as a 'temple of Labour', and its place in the fascinating development of the working class Runanga community.

Following this, the Trust will work on a comprehensive interpretation plan to work out how the rich history of the community and its residents could be best presented to engage and inspire locals and visitors. Brian Wood, historian and author, is part of the project committee, but further contributors are encouraged to get involved. "There is a considerable amount of research to be done, to identify the main themes and find further relevant material" said Brian. In addition, the hall holds a large collection of memorabilia which needs to be sorted out and formally catalogued, before decisions are made on what to display and how to present it effectively.

Further fundraising will need to take place to realise the full vision of the Trust. This vision sees the hall as a community facility, acting once again as a meeting place for local residents to connect, engage, learn and be inspired. It will function as a West Coast venue for events and exhibitions, drawing people from along the Coast and sparking a new collection of special memories. Finally, the hall will be open as a visitor destination, recreating the history of this marvellous building and the community that created it, and keeping alive the spirit and success of the working people of Runanga who understood that united we stand and divided we fall.

*Angela Stratford is a member of the Runanga Miners Hall Project Committee*

# The Noble War

By Dean Parker



Gordon Watson (left) and John Mulgan.

April this year is the centenary of that bungled attempt to invade Turkey in the early years of the First World War, the senseless war. It's also the 70th anniversary of the deaths of two New Zealand soldiers killed in the last weeks of the noble war—the Second World War. One died on 17 April 1945, one on the 26th. One was killed by the enemy, one by his own hand. Both were slain by the duplicity and treachery that accompany all wars.

Gordon Watson was a communist. A student at Victoria University, he'd joined the Party during the 1930s depression. He became editor of the Party paper, then Party Secretary.

In 1941 Hitler invaded the Soviet Union and Stalin declared the war had turned into a struggle to defend socialism. Watson immediately enlisted in the New Zealand infantry. In April, 1945 he was in north Italy, in the Po Valley. There, in the words of writer Elsie Locke, "He took over a Bren gun after the two previous gunners had been wounded—knowing well that the Germans had the Bren neatly located. He was killed almost immediately by Spandau fire."

Watson died when he was thrown against a German rearguard force following an Allied decision to advance with all speed on the north. The main German Army was already in full retreat back into Austria. Dominant in the minds of Western leaders was the fear that the collapse of fascism would lead not to a restoration of the old order, but to a workers' revolution.

In the industrial belt of northern Italy, the days of April 1945 were immense in upheaval and potential. The Germans were in full retreat and the Italian partisans and workers took advantage of the sudden vacuum of power. On April 18, the day after Watson died, a general strike in Turin was a prelude to huge insurrections in Genoa and Milan and then Turin again. On April 24, 60,000 workers in Milan came out on strike, setting up workers' councils. The strike spread and assumed insurrectionary levels, with 20,000 fascists executed.

Much of northern Italy was in fact being liberated by Italian partisans and not the Allies' Fifth and Eighth armies. In Genoa the partisans trapped the German garrison force within the city, forcing the commander to surrender. That Allied decision to advance with all speed was taken to head off popular power and secure the northern industrial belt from its workforce.

British leader Churchill had already reached an agreement with Soviet premier Stalin. In the post-war world, Britain would resume hegemony in the Mediterranean; the Soviets would have a free hand in the Balkans. Under orders from Stalin the Italian Communist Party, its leader flown in from Moscow, ordered its partisans to disarm. The old order of things was preserved.

The fact is—two wars were fought between 1939 and 1945. One was a people's war. One was an imperialist war.

Seven days after Watson's death, Auckland Grammar old boy John Mulgan killed himself in a hotel room in Cairo. Mulgan was a graduate of Auckland University. He'd gone on to Oxford in the 1930s where he, too, drew close to the Communist Party - though less enthusiastically than Watson. "There was nowhere else to go," he'd written. "Except the pictures."

At the outbreak of war he enlisted in the British Army and was eventually parachuted into Greece. This key ally of the British Empire had been a pre-war fascist state. In 1941 Italian dictator Mussolini saw it as easy pickings for a new Roman Empire. Mussolini invaded, but was repulsed. Hitler came to Mussolini's aid and the British, in turn, came to Greece's aid—for these were our fascists.

Mulgan was parachuted behind enemy lines and began successfully coordinating activities between British saboteurs and local partisans, who were mainly communist (four-fifths of overall partisan casualties in Greece during WWII were from communist bands).

Following the German withdrawal from Greece in November 1944, Britain took control of Athens. Churchill's deal with Stalin was that the Russian leader could have the Balkans, sure—but with the exception of Greece, where Churchill

intended restoring Britain's role in Greek affairs. Churchill told his military commanders, "Treat Athens like an occupied city."

The British released from prison 12,000 members of collaborationist units which had been part of the German SS and placed them in the National Guard and the army.

British planes which had once dropped supplies into the mountains of Thessaly now dropped bombs on working class neighbourhoods, communist strongholds. Over the next couple of months thousands were killed and left-wing supporters rounded up and sent to a gulag of internment camps. Anyone suspected of helping communist partisans was herded into these camps.

Mulgan was, and remained, a member of Britain's wartime intelligence unit, Force 133, Special Operations Executive. During his period in Athens, January-April 1945, he would have taken part in briefing the British Mission and its puppet Greek government on his former comrades. He would have seen them rounded up and incarcerated, possibly executed. War would have seemed to him endless, a swapping of sides: the British for the Germans. As for the Communists, local Party leaders took to matching their opponents with kidnappings and violence.

In April Mulgan left Athens for the Allied command base in Cairo and there, on Anzac Day, 1945, he took an overdose of morphine tablets.

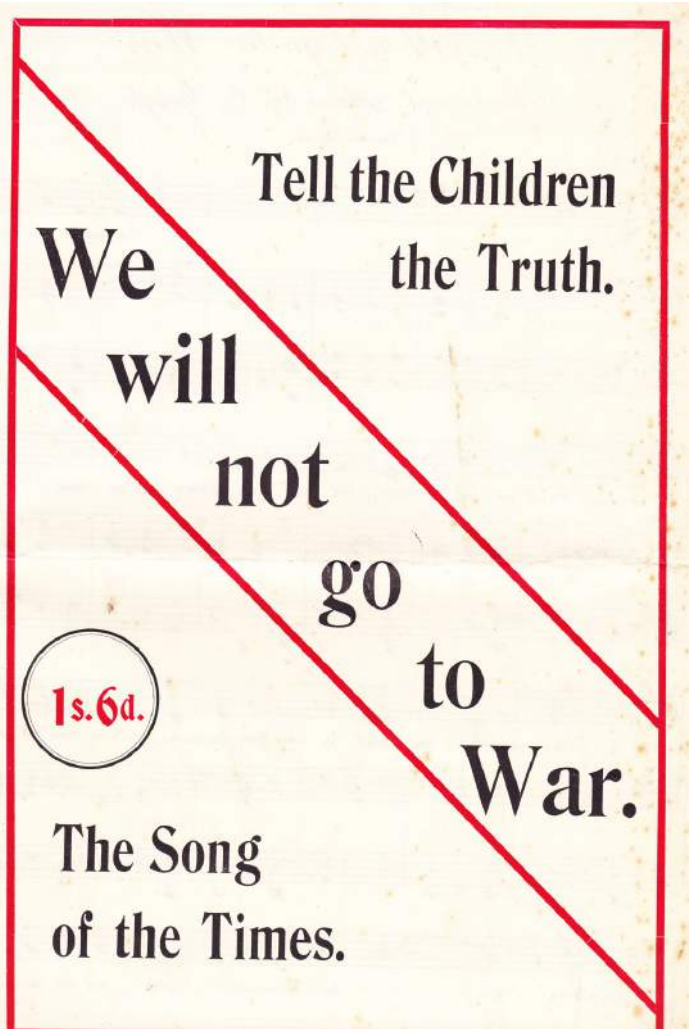
Gordon Watson and John Mulgan had fought a war to end fascism, a war that was meant to see in a new order of peace and plenty, dignity and democracy. They had gone where the argument led them, from the Victoria University Socialist Society to the Po Valley, from the Oxford Labour Club to the mountains of Thessaly. They met duplicity and betrayal. Watson was killed before he found out the truth. Mulgan realised the truth, and couldn't live with it.

*Dean Parker is an Auckland writer, and a frequent contributor to the LHP Bulletin*

UNION FAMILY

## My father, Charlie Gough

By Ray Gough



Charlie Gough strolling in Wellington, 1953.  
(Right) the sheet music for his self-published anti-war composition.

Charlie Gough was born in Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset on November 25 1890. Early in the 20th century his elder sister (my aunt Rosa) emigrated to New Zealand with her husband James Andrews, and they settled in Christchurch. In 1907 Charlie, aged just 16, and his 21-year-old brother Harry followed them, disembarking in Wellington on August 12 1907.

In WW1 Charlie enlisted in the Canterbury Mounted Rifles and sailed for Egypt where he served for about five months. He was then declared unfit for further military service and returned to New Zealand. As a result of the terrible destruction and senseless loss of life that WW1 brought about, followed by the Russian Revolution, Charlie saw that in all the capitalist countries ordinary people were faced with poverty, unemployment and starvation, while the rich got richer. This contrasted with the experience of workers in the early Soviet Union where there was no unemployment and life for ordinary working people was rapidly improving. Charlie became a fervent Socialist.

He married Ellen Sexton in July 1922 and they moved to the conservative Wairarapa town of Pahiatua. In the following two decades they had five children, two boys and three girls. I was the third child, born in 1929.

My father was strongly antiwar, although not a pacifist. Even as a small child I can remember him sitting me on his knee and showing me gruesome pictures of soldiers mutilated in WWI from the book *No More War*. This book had been published in Amsterdam in 1929 by the International Federation of Trade Unions. In the early 1930s Charlie wrote the words and music to *We will not go to War*, which he had printed and sold.

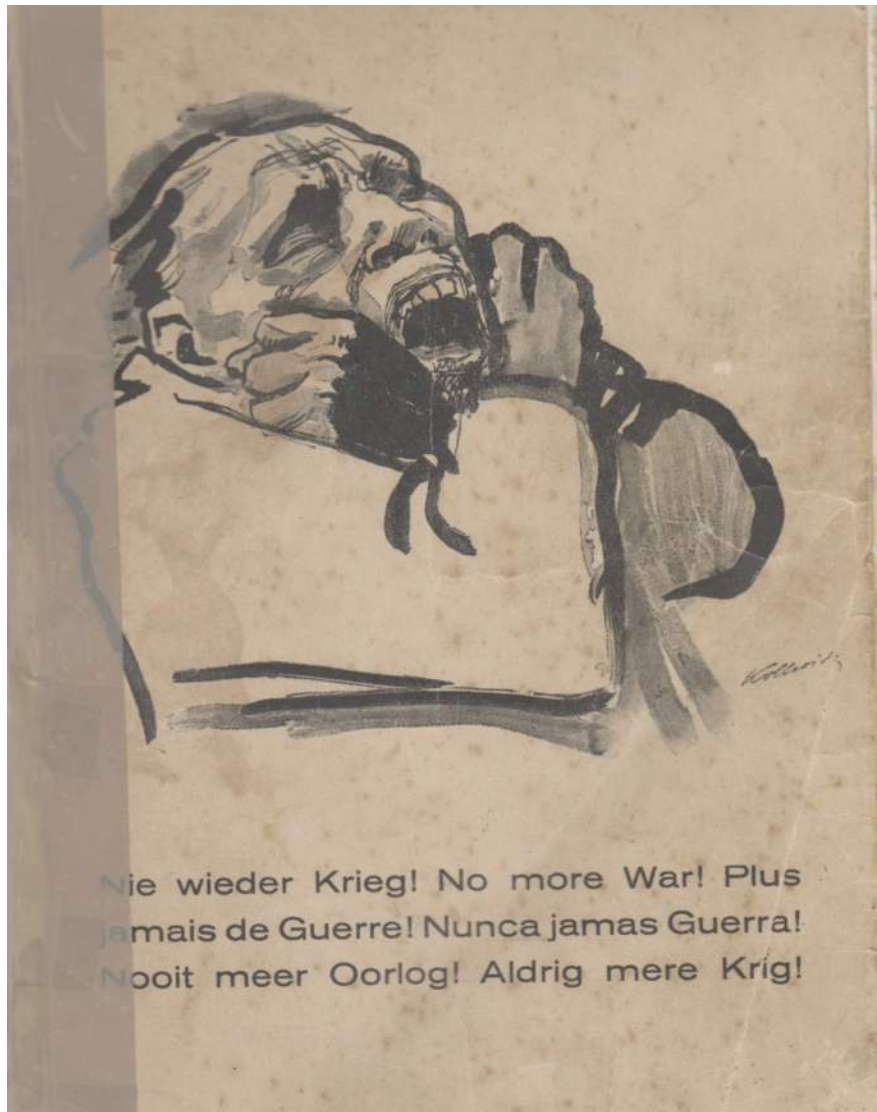
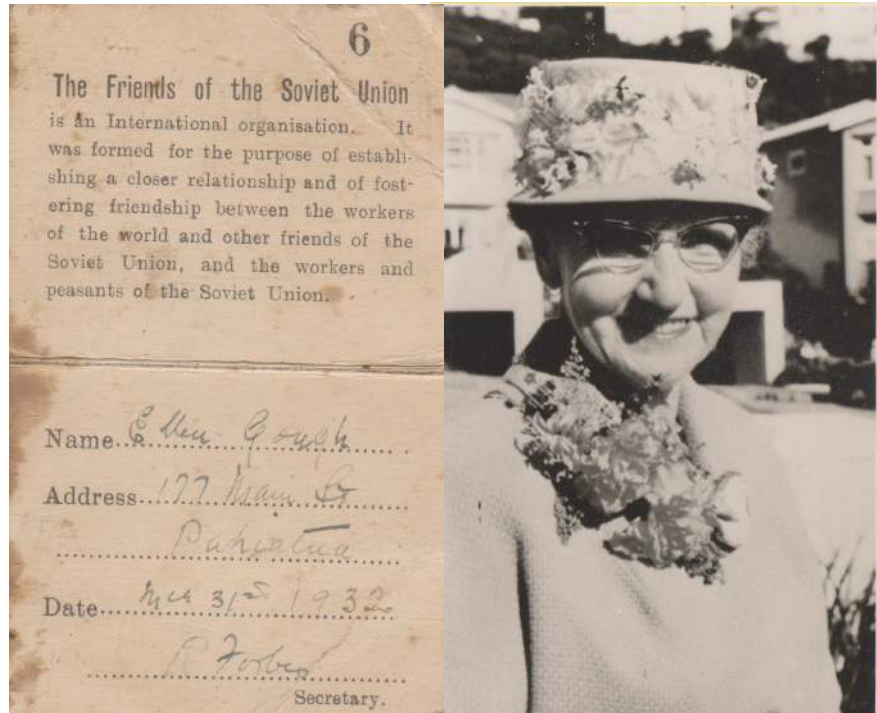


Image from No More War

My father had a Model T Ford van that he used to travel the country farms selling clothing. In 1926, just prior to the depression, he became the inaugural fulltime secretary of the Wellington Dairy Workers Union. The dairy workers worked the longest hours, did the hardest work and received the lowest pay of almost any workers in the country at the time. When the depression struck Dad was on unemployed relief work for several years. He took the opportunity to take his two



Ellen Gough's Friends of the Soviet Union membership card, 1932. Right: Ellen Gough, 31 October 1959.

sons with him one day to watch the gang of unemployed doing heavy pick and shovel work, this being part of our education, for as he explained, he wanted us to see 'slaves at work'.

Many families in Pahiataua resorted to all sorts of measures to supplement their meagre existence on the unemployment benefit. Our family, like many others, scoured the empty paddocks looking for cocksfoot grass in seed. The seedheads were cut just before the seeds were ready to fall and then taken home to dry, and when ready the seeds were shaken out onto a cloth sheet. After that came the painstaking task of picking all the bits of straw out so that finally you had clean seeds which were taken to the local seed merchant. For all that time and effort you were rewarded with a few pennies.

Only after the worst of the depression, while we were still living in Pahiataua, did my father resume his position as fulltime union secretary, and he retained it until his retirement in the early 1960s.

In the early 1930s my parents became two of the earliest members of the Friends of the Soviet Union, an International organisation formed to establish a closer relationship with the people of the Soviet Union. They received by mail regular copies of the Soviet pictorial magazine *USSR in Construction*. These Charlie circulated around the town— to the doctor's waiting rooms, to the local schoolteacher's and to individuals, although they weren't always welcome! The police raided our house in Pahiataua during this period and took away a quantity of Soviet publications. They held these for some time and it was only after Charlie threatened the police with legal action that they were returned.

In 1937 the family shifted to Wellington. We lived in Darlington Road, Miramar. Our mother was a wonderful person; she worked tirelessly night and day keeping our house spotless and providing for her family. Dad was a great gardener and kept the house well supplied with vegetables but it was Mum who, without the help of modern appliances, toiled night and day. Every Monday morning over the washtub she hand-washed for our family of seven. All the whites were boiled in the copper, rinsed twice in cold water and then soaked in water with a blue bag to make them look even whiter. On a tight budget, her evenings were often spent ironing, darning holes in clothing, or on some other household chore. She made her own jams and pickles and always seemed to have on hand a freshly baked batch of scones. Mum was never into books but she had a wonderful understanding of people and had a great way of handling disputes amongst us children, and she had a good relationship with our neighbours. She always had a deep sympathy for the underdog.

At the age of about eight I was taken to meetings of the Wellington Spanish Medical Aid Committee of which my father was chairman. I well remember the meeting at the Wellington Town Hall (Concert Chamber I think they called it) at which the three New Zealand nurses were farewelled on their departure for the Spanish Civil War in 1937. My father made the appeal for finance and before a collection was taken he auctioned off a Chinese-made fan to the highest bidder. He made the point that the fan symbolised the common struggle of the Chinese and Spanish people in their struggle against fascism.

My father was also active in the campaign to have International Brigader Ernest Baratto released from his internment on Somes Island, and he was in the deputation that went to the Minister to make representations on behalf of Baratto. When Baratto was released he came to our house and as a token of appreciation, presented my mother with two beautiful doilies he had made while on Somes Island.

I also remember going to a Spanish Medical Aid Committee meeting at the Capitol Theatre in Miramar. It was a Sunday night and Dr Bill Sutch was a speaker. Just after the meeting started four or five Catholic priests entered and sat at the back of the theatre, and one of them began interjecting. Shortly after this the interjector was forcibly removed from the theatre and then the other priests walked out but as they left they each dropped a small metal disk with 'Viva Franco' stamped on it into a collection plate at the door. My father gave one to me to keep but regretfully I lost track of it over the years.

In 1942 the Wellington Dairy Workers Union's members went on strike and Charlie was charged with calling a strike in violation of the Wartime Emergency Regulations which prohibited all strike action. He was charged under the Public Safety Emergency Regulations with making a subversive statement at the Oroua Downs dairy factory, and summoned to appear in the Supreme Court before Sir Michael Myers, then Chief Justice. The jury in that first trial couldn't reach a verdict because one juror refused to find my father guilty. Sir Michael called for a second trial and after lengthy proceedings the jury again couldn't agree on a unanimous verdict. The law required a prosecution within six months of the

"We will not go to War"  
 Words and Music by C. Gough.



Sheet music of We Will Not Go To War, composed by Charlie Gough.

charge being laid. The second trial ended just two days before that deadline, so Charlie escaped an otherwise certain jail sentence. This outcome resulted in a sharp rebuke from the Chief Justice, apparently directed at the politicians for the delays in the case.

Dad was expelled from the Labour Party in 1940 over his antiwar principles. His disillusionment with the first Labour government increased when the government caved in to pressure from the Medical Association. The doctors insisted on the right to charge patients over and above the state payment for each patient visit. There were several other policies the Labour government pursued that he disagreed with, but the king hit was the introduction of compulsory military training in 1949, which appalled him. However, he had a great admiration for Labour's Harry Holland and often expressed regret at his early death.

He was particularly critical of the Labour government for their treatment of Colin Scrimgeour. Scrim had been appointed director of the state-owned NZ Broadcasting Corporation by then-PM Michael Savage. For many years previously, Savage had been subject to continual attacks from the leading daily newspapers against the Labour Party and its policies. He was determined that they weren't going to get control of the radio, and he believed Scrim was the most likely of the candidates for NZBC director to prevent a press takeover of the radio waves.

Scrim had previously operated a private radio station and his Sunday night broadcasts had been very popular and played a significant part in Labour's great election victory in 1935. However, when Peter Fraser replaced Savage as prime minister, he worked might and main to have Scrim removed from his post at the NZBC, and finally succeeded. As a result, Scrim contested the Wellington Central electorate, held by Peter Fraser, in the first wartime general election in 1943. Charlie supported Scrim in his campaign.

Dad encountered the thuggish union boss, Fintan Patrick Walsh, on a number of occasions. The Australian Labour MP Frank Anstey travelled to Europe after World War I and on his return wrote *Red Europe*, which welcomed the 'Social Revolution' in Russia and forecast its spread to Europe. The book was banned in New Zealand. Dad wanted a copy and went up to the Communist Party headquarters in Wellington seeking to buy one. He knocked on the door and who should open it and sell him the book—none other than Fintan Patrick Walsh.

A worker at the Featherston Dairy Factory drew Dad's attention to the fact that a farm worker employed by Walsh on his Featherston farm (thought to be the largest dairy farm in the country) was living in a house that was substandard and posed a potential health hazard. My father must have taken it up with the appropriate authorities because Walsh got to know about it. Later, when Dad was walking down Cuba Street in Wellington, he encountered Fintan Patrick who furiously confronted him for poking his nose into his affairs, and physically threatened him. Dad told me he went to the police station to lodge a complaint, but wasn't taken seriously.

Charlie was also active on local issues that affected the community. He strongly opposed the building of Wellington's new airport on the Rongotai isthmus. He led a group of city councillors up Maupuia Road on the western side of the Miramar Peninsula and proposed that the top of that hill be levelled and the airport built there. He argued that it could be done at a fraction of the cost of building at Rongotai, would be safer and would need only the removal of Mt Crawford jail. But this was not to be.

Although not a Marxist or a member of any party since his expulsion from the Labour Party, Charlie was a determined activist for progressive causes and believed socialism would ultimately triumph. On his death in May 1963 tributes to him were published in the Communist Party paper *People's Voice*, one from lifetime family friend May Sim. She wrote that, "His many sacrifices for the workers in the dairy industry are reflected in the good conditions enjoyed by these workers."

What I appreciate now about my father is that from very early childhood he introduced me to the realities of capitalist society—the gap between the rich and the poor getting wider and wider; the accumulation of Capital becoming concentrated into fewer and fewer hands. He introduced me to Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* by Robert Tressell [featured in the previous issue of this *Bulletin*]. Dad had the Little Blue Book six-volume pocket edition of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, which I read when I was 15. Once I started, I couldn't put it down. Such an exposure of the meatpacking industry in America led me to read *The Flivver King*, *Oil* and other Sinclair books, all of which deeply impressed me and reinforced my view that antagonistic class divisions were part and parcel of the capitalist system.

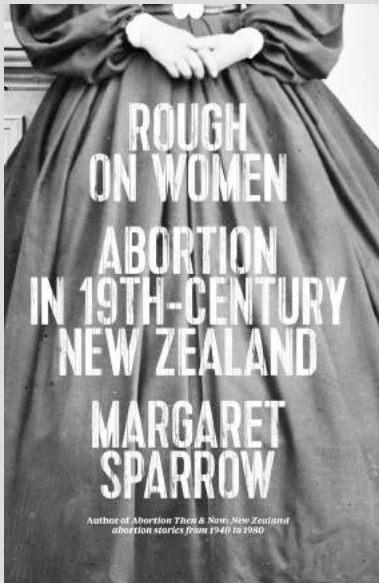
The most enduring advice I ever received from anyone was from my father. At our house there were always lively discussions and arguments on a whole range of subjects. I remember that when I was still at school and having an argument with Dad on one occasion, I ran out of further points to score in my favour so I fell back to my last position and said 'Well, that's what our teacher told us'. Dad hesitated a few seconds and then he wagged his finger at me and said 'Always remember; never accept what anyone else tells you, no matter who it is, without thinking it out for yourself'. I thought that was pretty good advice.

*Ray Gough trained as a fitter and spent his working life on the railways. He lives in Auckland.*

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*'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.*

# Reviews



## **Rough on Women: Abortion in 19th Century New Zealand**

*By Margaret Sparrow (Victoria University Press, 2014)*

*Reviewed by Grace Millar*

In 1868, George Henry Clarke was tried under New Zealand's new abortion laws. He had had sex with Ella Kemp, who "was described as an 'afflicted' child who needed special education" and then provided her with pills from a doctor (which she did not take). When she told her parents, they went to the police; he was charged with procuring abortion because the police thought that charges of rape would be difficult to prove. He was eventually acquitted, because there was no evidence that the pills he had given her actually worked as abortifacient. This case, with its ambiguities confusion and proxies, shows how much is involved in abortion history in New Zealand.

Margaret Sparrow has written the history of abortion in New Zealand in more ways than one. An abortion doctor and long-time campaigner for abortion rights, her previous book explored the history of abortion in the 1940s-1970s, using both newspaper and oral history reports.

This history of abortion in the 19th century is based on more limited sources, as there is no-one alive to tell their story. The unsafe and illegal nature of abortion in the 19th century provides most of the evidence of its existence; the book is largely based on inquests into women's deaths from abortion and the prosecution of abortion laws.

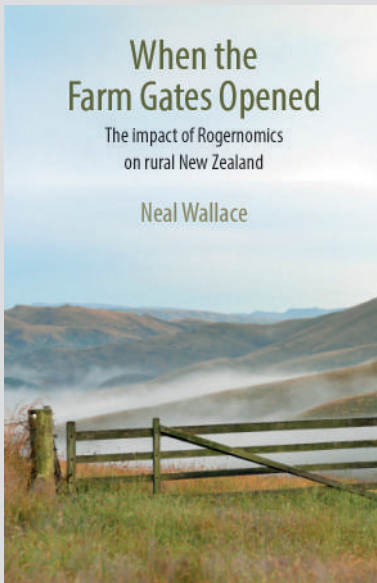
There are, obviously, limits to these sources as they only tell exceptional stories. Abortion laws were harsh in the 19th century, but few were prosecuted and while abortion was not safe, deaths were rare. This leaves large areas of 19th century abortion history still hidden. In particular, no-one was ever charged for providing an abortion to a Maori woman (or, probably more accurately, no-one was ever charged for providing an abortion to a woman who the court identified as Maori).

Despite the limited sources available Sparrow's work provides important insight into abortion in the 19th century. Being an abortionist was a risky job, and the cases where abortionists were tried, convicted and charged with hard labour shows the price some paid. Sparrow's work also shows the contradictory attitudes towards abortion in the 19th century. Penalties were harsh, but few were charged and juries frequently refused to convict. The legal reports show how many people were involved in helping women who were pregnant obtain an illegal abortion. The widespread acceptance of strict laws about abortion and widespread illegal abortion was a contradiction that lived well into the 20th century (and with the ambiguous state of the current law, in some ways exists still). Sparrow documents this contradiction, and provides a starting point for historians who could use a wider range of cultural sources to explain it.

What comes through most clearly is women's fierce desire and need to control their fertility. Many of the cases discussed provide snapshots not just into the

lengths women went to procure an abortion, but the circumstances that caused them to seek one. A history of abortion is also a history of the pressures on women's lives and Sparrow's work provides insight on both.

*Grace Millar recently completed a PhD recording the experience of women in the 1951 waterfront dispute. She is a committee member of the LHP.*



**When the Farm Gates Opened: The impact of Rogernomics on rural New Zealand**

*By Neal Wallace (Otago University Press, 2014)*

*Reviewed by Jim McAloon*

This is a sympathetic and worthwhile account of the consequences for farmers and (to a lesser extent) for rural communities, of the radical changes in economic policy after 1984. Most readers will be familiar with the outline of Rogernomics, but the context is concisely outlined. The book's basic argument, and one difficult to refute, is that necessary reform was poorly managed in terms of the impact on farmers and rural communities (despite the best efforts of Colin Moyle, the Minister of Agriculture). Only belatedly in 1988 did the government establish a Rural Support Trust network, and Rural Bank officials exercised considerable and helpful discretion in trying to manage the process. There are some very useful nuggets of information here.

Although this book is primarily concerned with farmers' experience, I found myself wishing for a slightly more nuanced account of economic policy in the decades after 1945. Sometimes the discussion is a little simplistic; British accession to the European Economic Community was not 'the first unequivocal message that we had to adjust the economy to survive on our own merits'. There is room for discussion, too, over whether mistakes or ideological obsession made things worse. For instance, a policy choice for high interest rates and early deregulation of foreign exchange markets meant that the exchange rate quickly damaged exporters, and the initial benefit of the July 1984 devaluation was wiped out. Nor did severe weather events help matters.

In the medium term a more competitive farming sector benefitted both from reform and technological advance. The book includes many interesting case-studies of farmers—men and women—who adapted either by remaining in farming or pursuing other careers. The book is more particularly concerned to deal with the experiences of farmers, who of course are only one part of rural communities. Although the consequences of public service restructuring for small towns are briefly alluded to, this is a whole other story which deserves also to be told, as does the impact on those whose wages depended on a prosperous farming sector. With these qualifications, *When the Farm Gates Opened* will be read by many with interest.

*Jim McAloon teaches history at Victoria University, and chairs the LHP*

# 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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