



Labour History Project

"AN INJURY TO ONE IS A CONCERN TO ALL"

NEWSLETTER 48 - FEBRUARY 2010

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FORTHCOMING EVENT: SEMINAR

Working Women: learning from the past - looking to the future

Saturday 1 May 2010 (May Day) 9:00 am to 4:30 pm
St Johns Centre, cnr Willis and Dixon Streets, Wellington

2010 marks the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Working Women's Charter by the NZ Federation of Labour. It is also 50 years since the introduction of the Government Services Equal Pay Act 1960.

Following a seminar about the Working Women's Charter held by the Auckland Labour History Group in May 2009 (see a report in *LHP Newsletter* 46, July 2009) the Wellington seminar will reflect on the Working Women's Charter and how well we've achieved the Charter's objectives. It will also consider the relevance of the Charter today for different groups of women. We will ask whether the Charter needs to be updated.

Sponsored by the Labour History Project.

Registration: Waged: \$30.00; Unwaged \$10.00.

See further details at: www.lhp.org.nz

INVITATION TO A SYMPOSIUM

Globalisation and Labour in the Pacific: Re-evaluating the 1890 Maritime Strike

Auckland, Thursday 4 November 2010

Organised by the Auckland Labour History Group and the Labour History Project, in association with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History and the New Zealand Work & Labour Market Institute.

The 1890 Maritime Strike, one of the largest ever in Australia, also directly involved New Zealand and Fijian workers, and its impact reverberated throughout the Pacific Rim because of the global structure of capital and labour in the maritime industry. British, European and American employers, politicians and academics took a keen interest in the dispute, part of a strike wave sweeping Europe, North America and Australasia in 1889-94.

On 16 August 1890 members of the Mercantile Marine Officers' Association of Australasia went on strike over longstanding pay and conditions claims, complicated by employers' objection to their affiliation with the Melbourne Trades Hall Council. Industrial action quickly spread to seamen, wharf

labourers, then gas stockers. The Union Steam Ship Company's dominance of trans-Tasman shipping saw the dispute spread to New Zealand. Coal miners from Newcastle and the Illawarra in New South Wales and in New Zealand were locked out after refusing coal for non-union operated vessels. Broken Hill silver miners were also locked out. By September 1890 28,500 workers were on strike. Soon afterwards they were joined by 20,000 shearers throughout Australia and wharf labourers in Fiji.

The dispute became a struggle over freedom of association. Fear gripped middle class hearts and colonial governments deployed troops, artillery and special constables in Sydney, Melbourne, Newcastle and other ports. In Melbourne military volunteers were exhorted by Colonel Tom Price to *'Fire low and lay them out'*.

The eventual defeat of the strike in November 1890 was the turning point that led unions to form the Australian Labor Party and adopt a policy for compulsory state arbitration. The New South Wales Labour Defence Committee stated that *'the time has come when trade unionists must use the parliamentary machine that in the past has used them'*. In New Zealand the strike was a key issue in the December 1890 general election, which led, in early 1891, to the formation of the Liberal government and ultimately to state arbitration legislation in 1894.

Call for papers

Due date for abstracts: 1 June 2010 to Ann Williamson at nzwalmi@aut.ac.nz

Refereed papers may be selected for publication in the *NZ Journal of Employment Relations*.

Attendance

All welcome. Fee: \$40.

FEATURE ARTICLE

'Fuel of the future': New Zealand reactions to the Haymarket Martyrs



'We propose this week to honour the memory of the Chicago Martyrs.... November 11 is an anniversary to make the blood burn as its retrospect becomes fuel of the future. Twenty-four years ago some heroes of the mighty past were robbed of their lives and thus made moulders of a mightier present...'

The Maoriland Worker, the fiery weekly newspaper of the early New Zealand labour movement, devoted much of its issue of 10 November 1911 to commemorating an historic tragedy in the US. That event was the execution in November 1886 of four labour leaders accused of a bomb attack that killed seven police officers in Chicago's Haymarket Square.

The convicted men, including a German-born upholsterer named August Spies, had been active in the campaign for an eight-hour working day. The bomb attack took place at a time of mass strikes and demonstrations, and violent repression by the police. Four unarmed strikers had been shot and killed by Chicago police just the day before the bomb attack, and Spies had called on all workers to arm themselves in retaliation.

Yet there was no firm evidence at all to link Spies and his fellow accused to the fatal bombing. They were anarchist scapegoats, and victims of a wave of anti-labour hysteria. Their cases provoked outrage and expressions of support around the world and May 1, the date of an eight-hour-day demonstration that led directly to the Haymarket bombings, became the official annual holiday of the international labour movement.

Far-off New Zealand was briefly and curiously invoked during the trial of one of the accused men. August Spies was asked about the explosives he admitted possessing when he printed a revolutionary circular in the office of a leftwing German-language newspaper.

Q. How many bombs did you have in the office of the Arbeiter Zeitung?

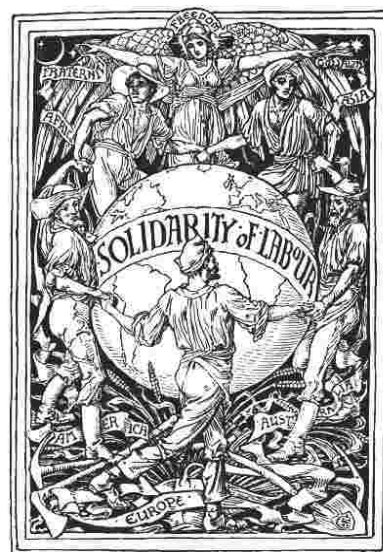
A. I think there were four of these shells that looked like that [indicating], and I think two others. They were iron cast, and given to me by a person, I believe his name was Schwape or Schwoep, who left for New Zealand.

Spies said that this man, a shoe-maker from Cleveland, had visited the *Arbeiter Zeitung* office three years previously and then announced his intention to travel to New Zealand. Unsurprisingly, given the vagueness of the details, New Zealand immigration records of the time cannot confirm his arrival here and in any case the Illinois Supreme Court gave no weight to such an alibi.

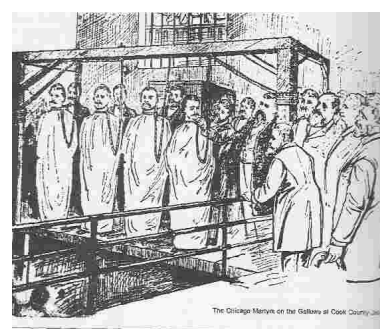
On November 11 1886, Spies and three fellow defendants were hanged: Albert Parsons, Adolph Fischer and George Engel. A fifth, Louis Lingg, killed himself in prison. The three remaining men were saved by international outrage at this injustice. A new and less vindictive governor of Illinois investigated their case, denounced what had happened and pardoned the three.

The four Haymarket Martyrs became icons of the worldwide labour movement. The December 1906 issue of *Commonweal*, the radical journal of the NZ Socialist Party, noted that the Party's Wellington branch had recently held a 'Chicago Martyrs' commemoration meeting addressed by comrades such as Phillip Joseph, a Russian-born tailor and well-known local anarchist. A visiting speaker from Australia, Dr TF McDonald, 'also referred to the US Governmental conspiracy which led to the judicial murder of Parsons and his comrades', before proceeding with his prepared speech on the philosophical inheritance of Kropotkin, Bakunin and others.

The *Commonweal* was edited, in his spare time, by Wellington journalist



LABOUR'S MAY DAY
DEDICATED TO THE WORKERS OF THE WORLD



TOP: August Spies, one of the Haymarket Martyrs.

MIDDLE: A May Day poster from the early 20th century.

ABOVE: The four men at their execution.

PREVIOUS PAGE: The Haymarket Anarchists by Walter Crane.

Robert Hogg, who worked for the national liberal daily, the *New Zealand Times*. It was probably Hogg who reported in the *Times* on a meeting of anarchists in Wellington in 1907. The lead speaker said he said known personally some of the comrades of the executed men.

‘These men had been brutally murdered because they had dared to show the wage-slaves how they were exploited by capitalists.... The capitalist class, who composed the State, deemed it necessary to get rid of these organisers, and so they were flung into prison and some eventually murdered.’

The 1911 issue of the *Maoriland Worker* quoted above included a glowing review of Frank Harris’s Haymarket-inspired novel *The Bomb*, portraits of the eight convicted men, a reprint of US socialist leader Eugene Debs’ impassioned memorial oration for them, and a six-column editorial titled ‘The Chicago Martyrs – the men and their message’. The paper made powerfully clear its contempt for the judicial process that had convicted and sentenced the men. ‘We are inclined to agree with the view that the bomb-throwing was the work of a Pinkerton’ [a hired detective].

The principle of the eight-hour working day, one of the key demands behind the May Day demonstrations in the Haymarket, had been adopted in New Zealand ahead of most other countries but could only be put in practice here among some craft unionists. A tiny group of land barons and speculators, the ‘governing families’, controlled the legislature and threw out every Bill intended to guarantee the eight-hour day to all. One politician declared that if it was passed, the Bill would destroy the fabric of society since servants could refuse their masters’ demands to work at any time.

From 1890, even though their working hours were still not guaranteed in law, New Zealand workers were granted an annual day’s holiday to celebrate the founding of the eight-hour day. Along with the United States, Australia and Canada, and unlike almost every other country in the world, that holiday is called Labour Day and is not held on 1 May. From as early as 1896, socialists in the labour movement could recognise this as a failure of solidarity. ‘The time has come,’ said one, ‘when New Zealanders should stretch out the hand of comradeship to their brothers across the seas by joining the May Day movement.’ That view, sadly, did not prevail and today New Zealand’s Labour Day is an entirely depoliticised day off work, while May Day goes almost unnoticed.

— *Mark Derby*

FEATURE ARTICLE

Two New Zealand-born Wobblies

William Ernest Trautmann

A founder and leading theorist of the Industrial Workers of the World (the IWW or 'Wobblies'), William Trautmann was born in 1869 in the goldrush settlement of Grahamstown, Coromandel. His father, a German-American miner, died in a mining accident four years later and his widow returned to Germany with her young family. Trautmann was apprenticed to a brewer at age 14, then spent several years travelling in eastern Europe where he absorbed the radical labour philosophy that would remain with him throughout his life.

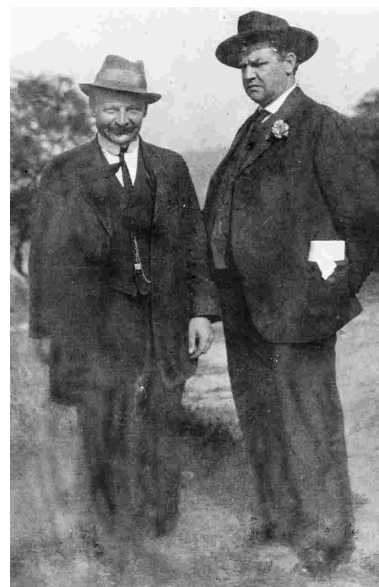
In 1890 Trautmann emigrated to the United States and worked in Chicago as a brewer and as organiser for the Brewery Workers' Union. He was by then widely read in Marxist literature and an eloquent advocate for local forms of the syndicalist labour organisations he had seen in Europe. Dissatisfaction with the racist and conservative American Federation of Labor led him to help set up the founding convention of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in June-July 1905. Trautmann was elected its inaugural general secretary-treasurer and in his acceptance speech said, 'I was born in a country considered to be free – in New Zealand'.

Trautmann proved a highly gifted organiser and propagandist and in 1909 he led the McKees Rocks, Pa., steel strike, the IWW's first successful organising effort among eastern United States immigrant workers. He then criss-crossed the eastern industrial states to head strike organisations and set up IWW locals. In a volley of pamphlets such as the *Handbook of Industrial Unionism* and *Direct Action and Sabotage*, he aimed to apply European syndicalist strategies to the IWW's direct action philosophy. Trautmann tried to establish the IWW among Detroit automobile workers, and played a leading role in the famous 1912 Lawrence textile strike, the 'Bread and Roses' strike.

During that strike he became disillusioned with the IWW's preoccupation with direct action and resigned amid bitter recriminations with its leadership. With the outbreak of World War One and through the 1920s Trautmann divided his efforts between labour organising and peace activism. In 1922 he published an historical novel, *Riot*, drawing on his experiences during the McKees Rocks strike. He drifted to the Los Angeles area and at one stage organised film extras in Hollywood. Trautmann died in 1940, near-blind, impoverished and alone, but with a secure reputation as a distinguished radical pioneer

Len De Caux

Leonard (Len) De Caux, a prominent and much-admired figure in the mid-20th century US labour movement, was born and raised in New Zealand and always valued his links to this country.



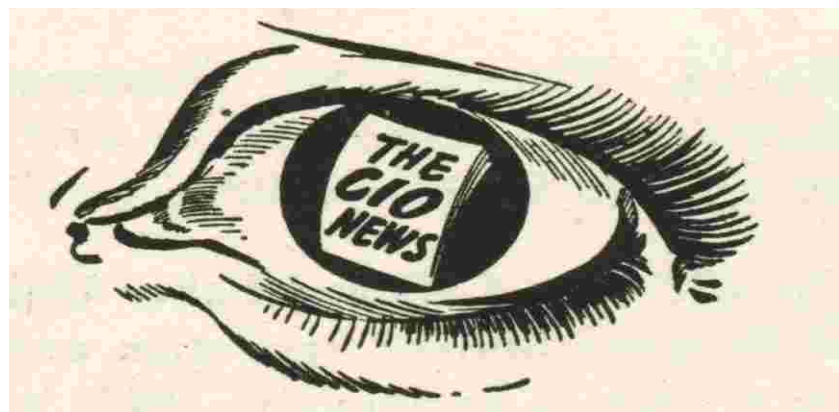
TOP: Coromandel-born co-founder of the Wobblies (the Industrial Workers of the World), William Trautmann (left) is seen here besides the more imposing figure of Big Bill Haywood, the Wobblies' first national leader.

ABOVE: Len de Caux was born in Westport. A member of the IWW, he wrote vivid accounts of American radicalism.

He was born in Westport in 1899 where his father was the Anglican vicar. Soon afterwards Rev. De Caux was transferred to Waipawa in Hawkes Bay, where young Len grew up with an awareness of the deep class divisions between sheep station aristocrats and their employees. He met elderly Māori women who smoked pipes and wore the facial moko, but was never allowed to forget that 'home' was his father's birthplace in England. After early schooling at Huntley School in Marton, Len left New Zealand for the UK in 1912 with his family. As a teenager he abandoned his father's religious faith, and the poverty and inequality he observed in industrial cities like Belfast made him a lifelong anti-capitalist radical. However he received an elite education at Harrow and studied classics at Hertford College, Oxford.

In 1921 De Caux travelled to the United States 'to join the working class in a country where class struggle was more brazenly brutal than in England or New Zealand', as he later wrote in his autobiography. In New York he soon joined the Industrial Workers of the World and wrote first-hand accounts for the IWW newspaper *Industrial Solidarity* of working in the Midwest grain harvests, on Great Lakes freighters and in Chicago packinghouses and steel mills.

De Caux settled in Chicago and worked as a reporter, editor and printer. In 1925 he became assistant editor of the *Illinois Miner*, European correspondent for a major press syndicate, and a member of the British Communist Party. Soon afterwards he met Caroline Abrams, a fellow labour activist. They were married in 1928, raised two adopted children and remained personally and politically devoted until her death in 1959.



In 1937 the CIO (Council of Industrial Organizations) was founded in opposition to the conservative and corrupt American Federation of Labor. Its director hired De Caux to direct press relations and he developed its newsheet into the *CIO News*, a lively weekly with impressive coverage of labor issues. However, as McCarthyism swept the US, the CIO's increasingly anti-Communist orientation forced Len's resignation in 1947.

He moved to southern California and from 1951-53 edited the *March of Labor*, a newspaper representing fellow leftists who had been isolated by

the mainstream labor movement. This isolation continued as he was called to testify before McCarthy's House UnAmerican Activities Committee and was discharged or blacklisted from a string of jobs in the printing industry. After his retirement in 1965, De Caux wrote a political autobiography, *Labor Radical*, and a history of the IWW, *The Living Spirit of the Wobblies*, each providing vivid and unrepentant accounts of American radicalism.

Len De Caux returned to his country of birth in the 1970s, finding that Westport looked like 'almost any little soon-to-be-ghost town in the early western United States'. New Zealand under Muldoon struck him as a 'snug little, smug little country' whose 'democratic, tolerant people became a puppet of the imperial powers, first of Britain, then of the US, and sent young men to fight in their service against the revolutionary aspirations of Asian people'. Although dismayed at the political changes he saw, De Caux, the radical exile, retained a deep fondness for New Zealand, clearly recognising its inequalities, admiring the erratic efforts to overcome them, and finding that even in a dispirited age, 'the old dream still lingered'.

— *Mark Derby, from entries prepared for the Dictionary of American Labor History*

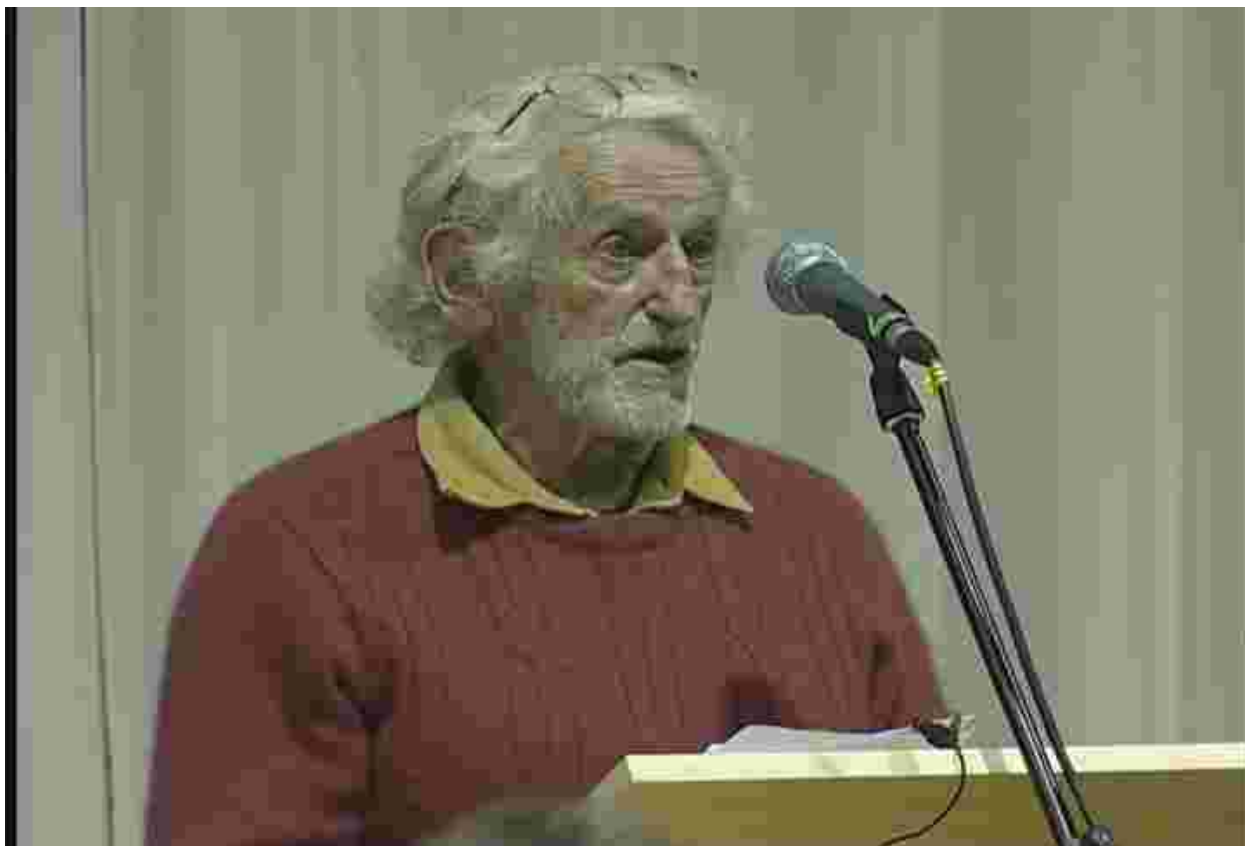
LHP RONA BAILEY MEMORIAL LECTURE

The Rona Bailey Memorial Lecture 2009: Dick Scott

David Grant introduces Dick Scott's lecture:

On 3 December 2009 in the Rona Bailey Room at Toi Whakaari, the New Zealand Drama School's headquarters in Wellington, some 300 attendees listened with intense interest to the second Labour History Project's Rona Bailey Memorial Lecture delivered by veteran New Zealand historian, Dick Scott. Over a writing career that has spanned nearly 60 years, Dick has written a number of the country's more acclaimed works including *151 Days* (1951) a first-hand account of the waterfront lockout; *Ask That Mountain* (1975) which expanded his 1954 account of the country's first pacifist activists Te Whiti O Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi and the events at Parihaka in the 1880s, and his memoir *A Radical Writer's Life* (2004) for which the LHP organised a Wellington launch. In 2007, Dick was awarded the prestigious Prime Minister's Award for literary achievement in non-fiction.

Following the lecture, the audience was treated to a performance of songs by Chris Prowse and friends from the musical he wrote, *Trouble on the Waterfront*, based on events during the 1951 lockout. This musical was recently awarded the Vodafone New Zealand Music's Tui Award for the best folk album for 2009.



TOP: Dick Scott delivering the Rona Bailey Memorial lecture at Toi Whakaari, Wellington on 3 December 2009.

ABOVE: After Dick's talk, Chris Prowse and his group presented original songs from their recent production 'Trouble on the Waterfront'.

Below is an edited version of Dick's lecture which he entitled Unfettered by Convention.

Celebrating the life of Rona Bailey is celebrating significant years of New Zealand history. But my introduction to Rona was at the level of a 21-year-old sharemilker who had just lived in a cowshed; one who was being granted temporary accommodation by an unknown fellow Communist when he found a Wellington friend's house already full. I had joined the Communist Party in Palmerston North at 19 and joint political beliefs smoothed out my ignorance of Rona's middle class life. I was to sleep on a divan – what was that? I was offered coffee – black or white? What was that? The only coffee I knew was a murky grey, a thick syrup from a big square Symington's Coffee & Chicory bottle my father stirred with boiling water and heavy doses of milk and sugar.

The regular stream of visitors to Rona's modern flat was just as daunting. The main New Zealander who had fed my political journey with a string of books was Dr William Sutch; about to take a high United Nations post, he was simply Bill Sutch. Another was an exciting left-wing economist, Wolfgang Rosenberg, a refugee from Nazi Germany (he became a friend). Well-remembered is Labour MP Martyn Findlay's first wife Peggy who insisted on ironing my baggy grey flannel trousers when she learned I was about to wear them at my, so to speak, urgent and necessary marriage to Rona's flatmate, 28-year-old Elsie Mary du Fresne.

High level public servants, union officials, actors and dancers (Rona later taught at the New Zealand Drama School) all populated my learning curve, but none struck me spell-bound like the New Zealand Rhodes Scholar, John Platts-Mills, who became a rebel Labour MP in the British House of Commons. He spent a magical evening with us unveiling the strategy and tactics of political powerhouses on the other side of the globe. He made the remedies of the left – most certainly the far left – the correct prescription for the post-war world.

Rona Meek, as she was then named, was living with her future husband Chip Bailey, a Marxist devotee later expelled from the Party as a case of chronic individualism. The previous marriage to Ronald Meek, a communist, but tightly academic university lecturer who played loud classical music on rising (not an easy start to the day for a folk-music enthusiast) was soon terminated. Meek, after all, was hardly the name for a vivid personality like Rona. Meek went to Britain where he became a highly-regarded political economy professor.

As the daughter of conservative Gisborne parents Rona had been pointed leftwards as a 12-year-old by a teacher (she was her aunt) who spoke of a growing gap between rich and poor, a lesson supported by the sight of the Gisborne unemployed protest march to Wellington.

Rona made an action-packed visit to America in 1937-39, one that consolidated her political view. She heard a speech by Harry Bridges,

the great San Francisco waterfront leader, attended a concert of the famous black singer Paul Robeson, a former college football star, lawyer, and Communist who fought the cruel racism of his country, cruelty well emphasised for Rona by her experience seeing hooded night riders circling around a burning cross in Virginia. Even her study of dance in New York was a radical event, for left-wing theatre had rejected ballet and ballroom.

In 1947, she traveled overseas again to visit Britain, attend a World Youth Festival in communist Czechoslovakia and to visit Yugoslavia where for three weeks she joined an international group of volunteers who were helping to build a railway. A highlight was meeting Marshal Tito.

New Zealand was soon to offer its own contribution to high-level politics. In February 1951 the government imposed extreme restrictions on watersiders. In *151 Days*, my history of the lockout, it was accurately described as a fascist blueprint. And this unlimited censorship of the written word, the spoken word and the people's very thoughts was handed to the police with powers of enforcement to match.

Trial by jury was automatically jettisoned by the Public Safety Conservation Act under which the regulations were proclaimed, and the Court was also empowered to 'admit such evidence as it thinks fit, whether such evidence would be admissible in other proceedings or not'. But in the regulations the Court itself was set aside.

The shipowners had asked for the American Taft-Hartley laws. Even unions in the land of Taft-Hartley were outraged by the severity of these regulations. Said *Voice*, organ of the U.S. Marine Cooks' and Stewards' Union:

'If any relative of a New Zealand docker now on strike visits that docker's home and gives him a couple of bucks to help feed his wife and kids a New Zealand police sergeant has the right to break into the house and arrest the relative... he can break into a citizen's home just if he imagines the occupant is thinking 'this strike breaking stinks'.... Fantastic? No. Fascistic. And it is the lengths to which the Government has gone....'

The supreme irony of the situation was that as the Governor-General put on his plumes, set his jaw in the vicinity of its stern 1913 lines and heralded the regulations by proclaiming a state of emergency because the watersiders had taken action 'of such a nature and on so extensive a scale as to be calculated... to deprive a substantial portion of the community of the essentials of life', 8000 watersiders were still offering each morning to work a 40-hour week and the Tasman Steam-ship Company's *Union Trader* was being worked an 11-hour day by Auckland wharfies— for 5/2 an hour.

Hone Tuwhare, in his poem *After 151 Days of Rain* highlights the violence that descended on any protest:

'Armed marines, steel-helmeted – running

*That day in the streets, batons whistled just
like a tui strangling; a wharfie crumpled
in the gutter with blood rushing to his face.'*

'It was like being set down in a foreign land the first days,' I later wrote in a history of 1951. 'In streets warm with autumn sunshine the people hurried to work, shopped and went about their business, but under the pall of the regulations they could as well be in police-ridden Madrid.'

Blanket censorship left the *Transport Worker*, the watersiders' monthly union paper which I edited, in deep trouble. Nothing could be printed or published 'likely to encourage, procure, incite, aid or abet a declared strike or that is a report of any such statement made by any other person'. The wrong written word, like the wrong spoken word, was good for three months' hard labour, a £100 fine, or both.

'Do You Remember This?' the first regulation-restricted front page asked in March, reprinting a 1933 London *Times* report of how 'the great free trade unions of Germany were taken over by the Nazis... their newspapers seized....' The parallel was spelt out:

*'If the regulations would or could be fully enforced, New Zealand
would become a vast prison.'*

A TUC reprint of the article, a Henry Lawson poem, *I'm Too Old to Rat* on the back page, was seized at the post office, the first pamphlet listed in government warrants 'to open and detain mail'.

The April issue carried the Nazi analogy further:

*'One of the oldest and most famous union papers in Germany came out for
the last time with its front page article on 'How to Grow Tomatoes'. By the
strict terms of the regulations the German editor would find that subject
no protection in this country: For would it not help striking workers feed
their families! (Section 8(c)).*

Would it not suggest a missile to be hurled at 'free labourers'?

(Section 15(4)).

Would it 'satisfy' a constable! (Section 12(e)).'

The last reference mocked the power given a constable to arrest without warrant any person 'at or near any premises' who 'fails to satisfy that constable that his attendance is not an offence against this regulation'. 'This is not the joke it seems,' I wrote.

*'No wrong-headed, foolish or vicious action is impossible where wrong-
headed, foolish or vicious men are given unlimited licence without the
check of Parliament or the people.'*

The banner headline read, *'How Not To Grow Tomatoes'*, with a subheading, *'Demand Parliament Be Called! Repeal the Regulations! Defend Trade*

Union Democracy!

And so for five months the paper flirted with prosecution, framing articles with an eye to bringing ridicule on the government should charges be laid. Historical allegory, weapon of the silenced in dictatorships, must have had its successes. 'A paper like the *Transport Worker*... should be controlled all the time,' Police Minister Fortune told Parliament in defending the regulations; 'It... should never have been born. There was no more scurrilous paper in New Zealand.'

Running through a notebook with jottings from earlier reading I was pleased to find the Russian poet Nekrassov's lines had taken my student fancy:

*'We hear the voice of approbation
Not in dulcet sounds of praise,
But in savage howls and vituperation.'*

The printed word as weapon, a recent memory of how the French underground press defied the Gestapo, gave defiance of our government's edicts a crusading ring. In head-on confrontation a flood of illegal union bulletins, leaflets and posters poured across the country. Homes were raided in search of printing presses and people suspected of distribution were arrested in the street, but the flood rolled on.

I contributed several pamphlets, none more popular than government-supporting union leader FP Walsh's potted biography, *If It's Treachery Get Tuohy!* (Tuohy was his original name). Copies of the first edition of 6000 changed hands for as much as £5.

The Walsh pamphlet was reissued in many forms around the country, taking the number produced to around 40,000, a printed edition organised by the poet Ron Mason, editor of *Challenge*, the Auckland Labourers' Union paper, providing tasty additional paragraphs on the man's financial gerrymandering.

Two friends, Max Bollinger and Chip Bailey, helped produce my underground work. Max, with almost larger-than-life zest for his freedom illustrations, made pygmies of the tyrants in more ways than one, while Chip typed the wax stencils always to an appealing layout, and operated the Gestetner duplicator. We worked as a team throughout the emergency, too security-alert to use the telephone (the government was ever indignant in its denial of phone-tapping) or to meet together at any stage of publication.

Late at night Rona and Chip distributed the leaflets and pamphlets around Wellington. There were police raids on both our homes. Our raid seemed a little less severe than the Baileys.

A late knock at the door, raincoated figures in the porch, police uniforms ringing the house – the night raids that had increased around the country

had brought a search without warrant to our place. 'Acting on information received,' they said. We had floor-to-ceiling drapes the full length of the living room (tall windows retrieved from an earthquake-damaged wing of Porirua Mental Hospital explained such an unusual pre-Plischke innovation) and, pressing forward as if a battery of illegal printing presses lay ahead, the plainclothes team swept the curtains aside, almost stubbing their noses on the glass.

They went on to explore other rooms less enthusiastically. Paper seemed (seems) to accumulate in many piles around the house – until the squad leader, 'Call me Dave' Paterson, a journalist-turned-detective well named for his ever-friendly approach, pounced on red-hot evidence poking from a heap of newspapers. A corner of the cover of my pamphlet, *Workers v Holland — Holland v NZ*, was showing, one published by The Early Bird Press, its logo a crowing rooster perched on a police helmet. He snatched it out, Bollinger's Sidney George Holland on display, limbs contorted to form a swastika – but it was only a reproduction of the cover in the Australian miners' paper *Common Cause*. I could hardly be arrested for another country's readiness to cast slurs on our National Party leader. There were more boxes of books, many more papers stored under the house but the search party left it all unexamined. 'Call me Dave' had had enough. Or perhaps, as a former *Waikato Times* reporter, he had retained some respect for freedom of the press. At the dispute's fiftieth anniversary, the *NZ Herald* reported after interviewing him in his 80s that

'Mr Paterson recommends that those wanting to know about that tumultuous event should consult a book by a man whose home he had once raided... Mr Paterson regrets lending out a copy which never came back.'

There was a similar raid on Rona and Chip's home, which she described at the 50th anniversary of the lockout in 2001.

I left the Communist Party behind in my late 20s. Mostly an undercover member, I had been unaware of how the leadership operated. Rona remained a life-long member but our political differences did not ruin the friendship.

In 1956 we joined in a West Coast visit. She was collecting folk songs for *Shanties By The Way* and I was researching Coast memories of its radical Irish and industrial labour past.

Our last radical alliance was in the 1981 campaign against New Zealand playing rugby with racist South Africa. But we operated at different ends of the North Island. She was batoned and left bloodied in the battle of Molesworth Street, as David Grant has described it.

In my case I had paraded a Springbok tour banner with the figures of a government massacre at a black township, it read 'Sharpsville Score 128 to nil'. It triggered a raging response, one bulky football devotee pulling at the scoreboard with one hand and punching with the other. That the banner was nailed to a pole, nail ends protruding, left me still in possession when

I hit the ground. My son Mark who planted the deciding heavy blow to the assailant's jaw was rewarded by bleeding scratches on his own arm as it brushed past the pole.

With infrequent visits to Wellington in the years ahead I seldom called on Rona and with infrequent visits to Auckland to see her grand-daughter she seldom called on us. An extract from her 2003 letter indicates the situation:

'Dear Dick, Good to hear your voice on the phone... still hope to get to Auckland later in the year. One realizes that at 88, the recovery time is much slower, especially as I am told I'm to have a whole knee reconstruction so I'll just have to be patient! It's balance that has gone, so I'm going to do some weight lifting to see if that will improve it! But enough – it's a boring subject....'

Two years later Rona died. The 1500-word obituary by Peter Kitchin in the *Dominion Post* headlined 'Unfettered by Convention' gave a highly enthusiastic account of her life. The last words have this to say:

'Mrs Bailey was no trendy gadfly. Her activism was born of a lifelong commitment to the disadvantaged and she put in the long hours – decade after decade.... In the pursuit of social justice she was tireless, but she also believed that while history was there to be shaped, life was also for living and to be enjoyed. She was actively involved in the country's cultural life, particularly in theatre and dance. She taught movement to aspiring actors. She co-edited 'Shanties By The Way', a groundbreaking piece of research about New Zealand Folk Songs.... She always held dear central tenets of socialism, though she expressed more interest in ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity than the strict application of communist theory and its human cost.'

I wrote to thank Rona's daughter Meg for sending Kitchin's obituary and an invitation for Sue and me to attend a celebration of her mother's life. 'As you can imagine', she wrote,

'we have a committee to organise the event but you can be sure it won't run as smoothly as any Rona had anything to do with.'

'Dear Meg, thanks a million for the extraordinarily detailed obit', I replied. 'Hard to believe a capitalist, overseas-owned newspaper would demonstrate the details of such a wonderful radical life. Before your letter arrived we had asked if a date had been set for the celebration as we want to attend.'

The celebration 'Remembering Rona Bailey' was alive with song and dance. To end this talk it would be fair to say that with Rona's life so packed with activity I've only managed to cover a fraction of it. To face reality I must admit that at my age of 86, I would have needed all the energy she had to do justice to her.

— Dick Scott

UNION FAMILY

**Thomas Gale: worker, adventurer,
organiser**

During Thomas Gale's last days in 1948, his sons Jim and Len asked him to jot down his story. He did so — in two exercise books, with numerous sketches. Here, Len Gale writes about his father's life, drawing both on Thomas Gale's text and on some additional family history, as recalled by Len and his sister Gertrude Sylvia.

Although born elsewhere my parents grew up in the mean streets either side of Scotland Road, Liverpool. Dad's parents had come from the Isle of Man and my mother's family moved from Warrington.

Life was hard; children were soon put out to work. They became young adults. The girls worked as maids and in shops. Taking in washing and ironing became a family life-line. At 11 years of age, Dad became a handkerchief seller, standing in the street until late at night with the goods pinned to his jacket. The six surviving children stood three each side of the table, spoons and enamel plates ready for the day's food.

At Ashfield Street Elementary School Dad won a scholarship that would lead to a clerical job with the Booth shipping company when he turned 16.

'Union Family' celebrates the life and times of workers who may or may not be well-known, but who made a contribution to our labour history. We welcome contributions to this series: please contact the LHP Newsletter Editor at PO Box 27-425, Wellington, or email: newsletter@lhp.org.nz.

ABOVE: Thomas Gale (second from left) with shipmates.

But by the time Dad was 13 he had left school to work as a telegraph boy. Liverpool was for many European migrants the gateway to America. In telegram delivery boy's uniform one day, Dad met an old German who told him: 'Never wear a uniform my son! It is the badge of slavery'.

An apprenticeship with the Cunard Line began his life as a rigger and sail-maker on a variety of vessels. He spent a month at sea each year on steamers and square-rigged ships on the Atlantic crossings.

Waves of political and religious ideas swirled around Liverpool. Ireland was in revolt, rightly supported by the strong Irish Catholic presence in and around Scotland Road. Strikes for union recognition were common. My parents met in the Methodist chapels that sprang up preaching a religion of the people. My mother, Josephine Ridgway, and her sister Gertrude supported the call for equal rights for women and with their mother's support became suffragists. They wore men's jackets and loosely-knotted ties; not unlike schoolgirls today. Gertrude worked in the office of the Liverpool Cooperative Society. When typewriters were first introduced male clerks became typists but since that skill led to limited promotion, the machines were passed over to the young women. My mother worked in shoe shops, advocating equal pay and conditions. She and my father only met when he was 'home' from the sea, so it was a long-drawn-out courtship.

At 18, with an eagle and an anchor tattooed on his left arm, a union jack and the three Legs of Man on his right, Dad was ready to face the world. His tattoos said who and what he was anywhere around the world. Dad was of average height: 5'8" (1.73m) – and strong.

'I joined a full rigged sailing ship called the 'Vincent'. She was a fine ship and, in relation to the times was not so bad for food. The crew were real sailormen and used to sing shanties at their work. We had a pretty bad start as, on leaving port, we stuck a gale. I will never forget that night, pitch dark, waves sweeping the deck. Two men were at the wheel and up aloft sails tore to pieces, cracking and banging like whips. Finally the mate took charge. 'Up aloft! Everyone take in sail'. Wet, sodden and cold we climbed up and started to fight the sails. Some we cut clear and they whizzed out of sight into the screaming blackness. Others were so full of air that men had to jump on them to enable their mates to get a grip. Finally, we got her under lower topsails, foresail and jib. The ship was sold to an American company at Buenos Aires and I went to Montevideo where I met up with a man who wanted to explore the Chaco in the expectation of finding gold.'

This began a period of adventure and hardship. Gold eluded them but they found work on various estancias which were run on the old feudal lines of the early Spanish settlers. Their main tasks were chopping down coperache trees and herding cattle. Dad's mate decided to stay and married one of the cooks. Dad met up with another man who agreed to go further into the Chaco. They tried to enter Paraguay but were turned back. There was a civil war on and some brute had the idea that if he killed the enemy's

women off, there would be no more potential revolutionaries born! They saw numerous women, young and old, hanging from trees. They became lost and it began to rain heavily. They abandoned their gear except for their Bowie knives. Jack became very quiet, and he just died. The 25cm Bowie made a good grave-digging tool.

Eventually after stealing a canoe, Dad paddled and drifted until he was clear of the green, stinking region of the Chaco. He somehow made it to Corrientes where the railway brought him to Paysandu and he resumed his life as a sailor on a two-masted schooner named La Palma. And so back to Buenos Aires, where things were pretty tough at the time. Gangs of unemployed seamen, 'on the beach', roamed the streets. Some of them, especially the Germans, were like wolf packs and would kill any lonely person at night, for small gains.

'I landed in Buenos Aires at night, pretty hungry and I walked into one of the worst of these gangs having a meal by some lumber stacks. Seeing they were sailors, I took it for granted that I would be welcome. They had a big kid of stewed liver, meat and potatoes. I thought they were Scandinavians. With my big knife I fished up a chunk of meat and said 'Skoal!' before eating it. One fellow asked me in guttural English if I had any money. I replied that all I had was my knife and held it up for all to see! They thought this a great joke, slapped me on my back and made me welcome. That night we all slept together, snug between the timber stacks.'

My father began working ashore as much as he was at sea. On one Barque he and his shipmates found it leaked like a basket so they lowered a lifeboat and rowed ashore. The captain had the crew jailed for mutiny. This happened off the coast of Yucatán, Mexico. One of their jobs, as prisoners, was to attend the bull fights and drag the dead bulls and horses from the arena. After six weeks and no trial in sight, they were asked by a captain of some soldiers who were using the jail as a barracks if they would like to join the army. The regiment was called Caballeros de la Provincia de Yucatán. It was a cavalry regiment but there were no horses. Only the seamen had boots. They were put in charge of an old English twelve-pounder drawn by a mule, at 20 gold dollars a month which they never received. At the first chance they deserted.

Dad joined a stump t' gallant Barque owned by the Boston Lumber Company. The Yankee mates began to haze the crew as soon as they set sail. The food was bad and unnecessary work was invented. The afterguard decided to do away with the afternoon watch below and make the sailors work when it was their time to sleep. The men refused and demanded to be put off at the Brazils. This led to mutiny (a strike). The ship was met at the nearest port by a posse of armed police; most of the crew was arrested and jailed for eight weeks in Barbados. Dad judged the Glen Dairy Prison 'a very poor place'.

Dad made it to New York, finding work first at the Erie Basin and at Kramps shipyard, Philadelphia, repairing ships. He then worked in a silkweaving

sweatshop splicing the cotton ropes that drove the looms. He joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) a union-based movement which was organising in Paterson, a weaving town near New York. The mill owners wanted the women to run more and more looms when two were considered enough per ten-hour day.

'As soon as the strike started, gun thugs moved in and occupied the factories. When the crowd of strikers did not attack them they lost patience and came out and attacked the strikers. They impartially bashed the heads of men, women and children, then arrested the victims who were then sentenced for rioting.'

Dad joined the Socialist Party and attended lessons on economics and philosophy. He said his Socialism was only skin deep because on the outbreak of war between England and Germany in 1914, he immediately went home to join up – thinking it would soon be over. Not for Dad the strict discipline of the navy battleships; he joined the minesweepers at Hull and became a deck hand on *HMT Columbia*, a fish cutter. The *Columbia* was hit by a torpedo, folded in two and sank. Those on deck leapt into the water only to be shot. Dad received a flesh wound in the leg and hid under an upturned life boat: the sole survivor. He recuperated and was sent to the White Sea on board *HMS Ganton* which was also sunk. He transferred to *HMT Bombardier* and was lent to the Russian navy with three other ratings to teach them the British style of minesweeping.

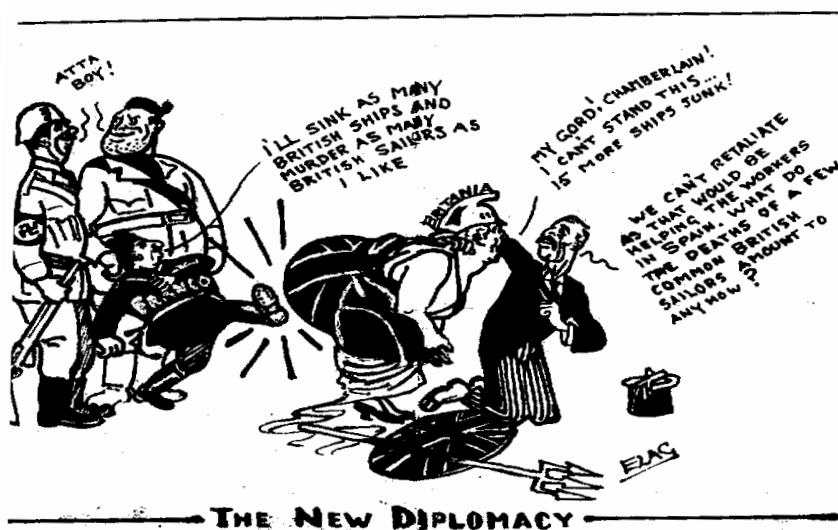
'There was a Bolshevik aboard and he used to teach the crew about Karl Marx. He taught me too. He had worked in the States for some years and spoke good English. I attended some of the meetings of the Bolshevik Party in Archangel and used to sketch cartoons on a blackboard on the instructions of my shipmate.'

Dad then served in the Q-boats which were disguised as sail-powered fishing boats, with hidden guns. But the Germans soon woke up to this ruse. The submarines simply rammed the Q-boats. When the war ended Dad worked around the English coast with an occasional trip across the Atlantic. In 1919 he crewed on a troop ship *India*, returning soldiers to Melbourne. By 1921 Dad had made up his mind to emigrate to New Zealand. He came as a passenger, via Panama on the *Ruapehu*. He went back to sea on the *Matua* and the *Navua* trading to Fiji, Tonga and Samoa; interrupted by the 1922 seamen's strike. Dad began work at the Newmarket Railway workshops and transferred to Otahuhu after new works were opened there in 1928.

Dad bought what was to become the family home in Kingsland, sent for his mother and several brothers and sisters. Finally he proposed to my mother and she sailed on the *Hororata*. They were married in 1925, both touching 30. Happily they were to have five children. Dad belonged to the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) and was elected assistant secretary to the strike committee in 1924. He joined the Communist Party of New Zealand in 1932 and formed a factory branch in the workshops.

The branch grew to about 30 and was divided into two, those who lived locally and the rest who came by train from various parts of Auckland.

During the depression, Dad convinced the manager to put men who had died on to the sick list so that when workers were to be sacked, the dead men's names were at the top of the list. He also designed a handle for La wagons to save the lives of shunters. The torchlight procession drawing attention to the Civil War in Spain and the coming World War Two went up Queen Street and into the Domain. The torches were made by the comrades at Otahuhu and passed as safe for use in a public place by the police. Dad was the secretary of the Movement Against War and Fascism, a broad-based organisation including churches, unions, political parties, writers and others. When Count Felix Von Luckner came preaching his brand of Fascism my father and Len Reid gave out leaflets inside the Auckland Town Hall meeting and were violently ejected.



LEFT: Thomas Gale was a gifted cartoonist. Here he commented on British inaction in the face of aggression by Franco, supported by Hitler and Mussolini.

Dad was a gifted cartoonist, but the bureaucratic methods that the CPNZ leadership adopted from the Stalinist model had no room for creative work. Every cartoon or leaflet had to be checked and counter-checked to the point that they were out of date by the time they were printed. Trade Union initiatives were compromised by unrealistic demands. When my father was expelled from the CPNZ (see documents in Alexander Turnbull Library 1938/39), most of the Otahuhu comrades resigned. Probably a quarter of the total New Zealand membership!

Dad's main campaign at Otahuhu was for the One Big Union embracing all the railway workers. It failed, but it raised the possibility of industrial unions. He was well regarded by his workmates when in 1945 he was elected Chairman of the combined strike committee for the workshops.

He was tough enough to survive a hard life. That and his inquiring mind made Thomas Gale the fantastic man he was. My mother lived on to her 94th year, having kept the memory of her Tom alive.

— Len Gale

REVIEW

Geordies - Wa Mental

Geordies- Wa Mental by David John Douglass. 2008.

ChristieBooks, PO Box 35, Hastings East Sussex TN34 2UX, £9.95 paperback.
christie@btclick.com

Geordies - Wa Mental is an extremely entertaining account of the life of a working class youth growing up in the North East of England in the 1950s and '60s. *Geordies Wa Mental: Wa Off Wa Fuckin Heeds!* to give the book its full title, is the first volume of an autobiographical trilogy *Stardust and Coaldust* by David John Douglass. Dave Douglass, a coal miner and National Union of Mineworkers activist, ran the Stainforth Miners' Advice Centre until the Hatfield Colliery closed in 2004. Dave's approach to politics and life has been described as *mixing and adapting his own versions of Bolshevism and Buddhism, syndicalism and hedonism, anarchism and vegetarianism, heavy theory and a wicked sense of humour*.¹ He is now a member of the IWW, the Industrial Workers of the World. Never afraid to hold unpopular opinions, Dave was with Arthur Scargill presenting the case for 'clean coal' to the climate activists at the 2008 UK Climate Camp, an action he later described as 'a bit like being the Salvation Army at a Hells Angels rally'.

Geordies - Wa Mental is a monument to the distinct culture of the North-East working class. The book is written in a mix of standard English and Geordie dialect, including 'Pitmatic', the terminology of the pitmen. Dave has provided a handy glossary of Geordie terms, explained so the non-Geordie reader, 'winnet feend it ower vexing'. He gives us a street level view of a working class world that has been transformed completely. The industries that were still at the heart of Tyneside male working life in the 1960s are now gone with the closure of the pits and most of the shipyards. In the course of the book our author is a working coal miner, participates in the birth of '60s rebel youth culture on Tyneside, becomes a veteran of numerous political causes, and marries Maureen, a fellow Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) activist. Yet at the conclusion of *Geordies* he has still to celebrate his twenty-first birthday.

Dave's tale begins with his birth in 1948 and his upbringing in the Tyneside pit village of Wardley, to the south of Jarrow ('Jarra'). His father was a coal miner and a Methodist of the 'Ney Swear, Ney Drink, Ney Smoke, Ney Gamble' variety. Despite his patriotic love of the Royal family, Dave's 'Da' was a socialist who regarded capitalism as the 'earthly tyrant'. Dave's 'Mam' was an Irish Catholic from a staunch nationalist background, who always refused to stand for 'God Save the Queen'. *Geordies* gives an evocative account of growing up in South Tyneside, including verses from Geordie songs and lullabies. Dave also describes the Irish aspect of his background,

1 – <http://greenmansoccasional.blogspot.com/2008/08/first-volume-of-autobiography-of-dave.html>



with participation in Tyneside ceilidhs, and his surprise at being regarded as full of 'English grandness' when visiting his rural Irish cousins in County Meath. Dave observes the changes that occurred as former pit villages became suburbs; the new estates bringing in the families of other workers to communities that had been exclusively made up of mining families. The richness of working class culture is shown through characters such as old Jonty, an expert pigeon-fancier and working class oral historian, who had his own version of North East history stretching back before Roman times.

LEFT: A street in Hebburn, typical of the pitmen's houses where Dave Douglass grew up.

RIGHT: A miner drilling a hole for shot firing, in a North East mine.

At first I assumed wrongly that *Geordies - Wa Mental* would be a simple tale of a lad following his Da down the pit and finding his way to socialist activism through the auspices of the miners' union and self-improvement. Instead Dave's father, like many miners aspiring for a better life for their sons, actively discouraged Dave from taking up mining.

Dave's resistance to the system began with youthful rebellion at school, where he was part of the C stream, a section of pupils regarded as too thick to be redeemed by education. As Dave went through the usual adolescent experiments with drink and sex, he also acquired an interest in socialism and nuclear disarmament through books from the local library; books that he had to hide from teachers who regarded the C stream as unfit to be trusted with anything resembling literature.

In effect we get a number of interconnecting streams of story in the tale of Dave's youth. On the one hand is a fairly typical story of the young working class rebel, indulging in a lot of partying and varied successes or failures of the sexual kind. In the process he moves from school, to unemployment, to a job in a cockroach-infested bakery. The distinctive settings of the North East: Newcastle, Gateshead, South Shields, and the Northumbrian coast, are brought to life through his adventures. Connected with this story of growing up is his account of the growth of 'youth culture' in 1960s Tyneside, the emergence of bands such as The Animals, the world of underground clubs, and the increasing police harassment of youth. Dave also became involved in new developments that may not have been so typical of Tyneside youth, such as meditation, beat poetry and a strong

involvement in revolutionary politics. His individual thinking is shown by his early rejection of the Geordie religion of football; an activity which he regards as a trick to keep young rebels in line.

Dave's reading led him to involvement with the CND and the Communist Party, which in turn led him to the Tyneside Committee of 100, the Tyneside Anarchist Federation and the 'Geordie Cong' (a loose group of young working class lefties known for chanting at police lines: 'Geordie Cong, Geordie Cong, Bring your hardest bastards on!'). The constant search for answers meant that Dave could not stick with any dogmatic political group. He evokes the vibrant chaos of the political scene of those times and describes many of the groups and individuals who made it happen. Groups such as the Socialist Labour League, the Tyneside Women's Socialist Action Group, the Angry Brigade and the Free Wales Army are once again given their place in history. Throughout his tale of '60s radicalism Dave reminds us that working class youth were an important part of these activities. Dave outlines many of the debates over issues such as the use of violence, the role of women, the value of leadership, and vegetarianism as a political stand. While always presenting his own views, Dave often repeats sympathetically the arguments others used against him.

The final part of *Geordies* has Dave, after being fired from his job at the bakery, deciding to follow his father down the pits. After training in the North East, Dave got a job in the North Yorkshire pit of Hatfield, near Doncaster. Life in a rural village in Yorkshire was a culture shock after the heady times on '60s Tyneside: 'Kids would shout "Gypsy" at us on the street because of our strange attire'. *Geordies* finishes with Dave, the Geordie commie outsider, fighting to establish himself among his fellow workers at the Hatfield pit; while Maureen his wife discovers feminism as a member of the Tyneside Women's Socialist Action Group.

Geordies- Wa Mental is a very funny book; a great account of Geordie life and working class culture. It is also an important reminder that the left wing politics of the '60s were not just the preserve of middle-class students. I thoroughly recommend it and look forward to reading the next volume of David John Douglass' memoirs, *The Wheel's Still in Spin*, an account of his life and activism in the 1970s.

— Peter Clayworth

REVIEW

Trust: A True Story of Women & Gangs

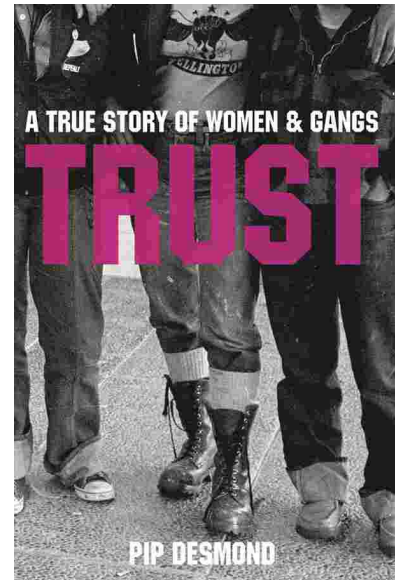
Trust: A True Story of Women & Gangs by Pip Desmond. Random House, 2009.

In 1977, Pip Desmond was involved in setting up the Aroha Work Trust. Taking advantage of the unemployment schemes of that time, which allowed groups of unemployed people to supervise themselves and get paid a subsidised wage, the Trust was set up specifically for women involved in gangs. Aroha Trust operated for three years, doing scrub cutting, painting, and building work, mostly for schools and councils. As well as providing work, and an alternative to the dole, Aroha Trust women lived together, travelled around the country together, even played in a local sports league.

Twenty-three years later Pip Desmond interviewed ten of the women she had worked with. She collected their stories about the Trust, and also asked them about what their lives had been like before and after. Those interviews became this book through an extraordinary process which is documented in the book itself. The women Desmond interviewed each had power of veto over the book as a whole, and it was an act of great faith for Desmond to put such energy into writing a book that might never be printed. The book is well worth that faith.

Trust interweaves many different threads into a single narrative. The story starts in the recent past, when those in the book are reading it for the first time. Then it goes back to the beginning, and the history of Aroha Trust is told from Desmond's point of view, with other women's memories included. But inter-spliced with the narrative of Aroha Trust are individual women's stories. Desmond describes interviewing each woman in 2000, as well as telling the story of their childhood, and what brought them to Aroha Trust.

In *Trust* the past and present tumble all over each other and certain themes about the lives of the women of Aroha Trust become clear. Colonisation is an open theme in this book, and the lives of the women in it. Most of the women in Aroha Trust grew up with no knowledge of Te Reo or Tikanga; their parents had moved away from their whānau to towns and cities for work. The women involved in the Trust did not even know how to pronounce 'Aroha', or that it should be 'Te Aroha', let alone the protocol on a Marae. This dislocation was exacerbated by systematic racism from schools, social workers, and internalised by the women's parents, who frequently discouraged them from being Māori in any way. One of the strands of hope in the book is that by the time they were interviewed, many of the women had reclaimed what had been denied them through the process of urbanisation, and were finding a way to be Māori.



Many of the threads woven into *Trust*, and the lives of the women it documents, involve violence. The violence that institutions of the state meted out to young, vulnerable, Māori women, who had already experienced extreme violence in their personal life, is horrific. Many of the women had been placed in group homes or borstals as young girls. One of the girls eventually talked to Social Welfare, after her father had been physically and sexually abusing her for years. When her father left the country (voluntarily; he does not appear to have been prosecuted) she was put in Miramar Girls' Home. Here new girls were routinely placed in isolation for extended periods of time, before they were allowed into the main house. Theoretically they had been placed there for care, but the reality was extreme punishment and deprivation, locked up with no company, reading material, or even a mattress during the day. By the time Aroha Trust was running, the women had largely escaped from the clutches of these homes and borstals, but that didn't mean violence from the state ceased. One of the women was arrested because the police claimed she was a runaway from Miramar Girls' Home (which she was not). She was locked in a cell with a Mongrel Mob member, to whom the police described her as Black Power bitch. He was passed out, and so did not beat and rape her as the police were trying to incite him to do.

I'm emphasising the structural and institutional abuse, because it could have been easy to ignore. It would have been easy to write a story of the horrific experiences women suffered at the hand of individuals, sometimes family members, or gang members, sometimes not. That's not the story the women tell, but it's a story some people want to hear. Desmond tells of taking a plane to Dunedin and the person sitting next to her wanting to hear grisly stories of individual abuse. One of the women, Charmaine, said she wouldn't be part of anything that fed into middle-class preconceptions about gangs.

*'Where was the middle class when I needed someone to take me in?
The gangs gave me food and shelter. Yes, the men were violent, but they
also protected and looked after me. They became my whānau.'*

Desmond's concerns and judgements do come through, sometimes inappropriately, as when she says 'but it wasn't always girls who behaved badly who got blocked' (gang-raped). Despite the prominence of her own voice, she lets the women's stories speak for themselves.

Some of their stories are hard to tell – there is silence around sexual violence in the book. One woman describes her stepfather as abusing her 'not just physically'. Another woman described herself pinching her child so that the cries would scare off a potential rapist. Later she rang back to say that he had raped her, while her child slept next to her. Another of the women, Jane, disclosed a litany of sexual assaults going back to her early teens, from prominent artists, church members, and people who had responsibility and power over her. To put such horrific stories to paper is both brave and generous.

But *Trust* is not a litany of oppressions. It is also a story of resistance and women building their strength together. The most powerful scene is when Aroha Trust confronts Wellington Black Power. After a member of the Trust was blocked, the Trust girls went to a local Black Power meeting. They stood up to the men, and got a grudging acknowledgement that Aroha Trust women, but only Aroha Trust women, were safe from the block.

Desmond had a near impossible task in structuring this book. There are three different versions of each of the ten women. When the women were working at Aroha Trust together they never discussed their past, so there is very little connection between the story of each woman growing up, the story of their life during the Aroha Trust days, and the story of their later life – although the first and last of these are told together. The book might as well have 30 characters as ten, and it is difficult for the reader to keep all of them straight. There are individual instances where the connections between people could have been drawn more clearly. In the end I don't think it matters – the pattern people's lives make comes through even if you lose individual threads.

Trust is an amazing book, about an area of history that too often remains hidden. I cannot recommend it highly enough.

— Grace Millar

REVIEW

The Prophet and the Policeman

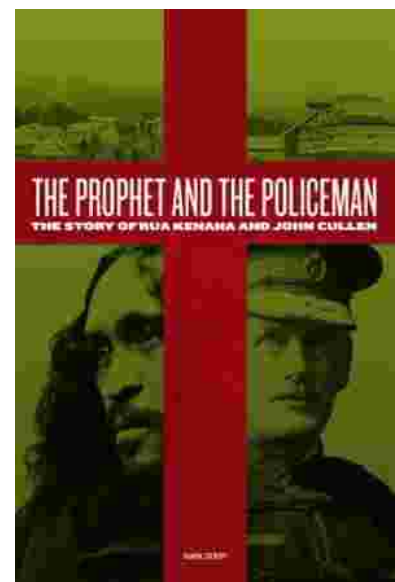
The Prophet and the Policeman: the story of Rua Kenana and John Cullen, by Mark Derby, 2009. Craig Potton Publishing.

This review by John Wilson first appeared in the Christchurch Press on 21 November 2009 under the title 'Enlightening look at raid', and is reproduced with permission.

Knowing that a book had its genesis – as this one did – in research to support a claim to the Waitangi Tribunal rings an alarm bell. What is to be feared is not bias in favour of the claimants but obscurity. The exhaustive reports on claims often bemuse even diligent readers.

Happily this hybrid book – it is a dual biography and a historical narrative – has been written by a historian who understands that to paint a historical picture that is comprehensible as well as true, it is necessary to omit as well as include.

In all historical writing, the evidence is filtered as the historian decides what is significant. Mark Derby has the skill to focus on the telling detail and to omit the interesting but irrelevant fact. The book is refreshingly



succinct, but not slight.

The central incident of the book is the 1916 police raid on Maungapohatu, the remote Urewera settlement of the Māori prophet Rua Kenana. The raid was led by the Commissioner of Police, John Cullen. Besides describing the raid, the book traces the lives of the two protagonists before and after the raid and describes the development and decline of Maungapohatu.

The book is also proof that it is possible to combine objectivity with moral judgement. A historian does not have to avoid taking sides to write sound as well as engaging history. Here, the author's sympathies lie with Rua.

He is not blind to Rua's shortcomings, but his account of the lives of the two men, his history of Maungapohatu and his description of the 1916 raid establish clearly that the policeman violated the human rights of the prophet and Maungapohatu residents. Previous historians have written biographies of Rua Kenana and accounts of Maungapohatu. The interest of this book to readers familiar with these earlier books lies in what Derby tells us about Cullen. It is tempting to relate his bigotry and self-righteousness to the character and role of another New Zealander of Northern Irish Protestant origins, Cullen's political superior Massey.

To have Cullen's role in the 1916 raid set in the context of his earlier actions in labour disputes and his later spreading of heather on the central plateau of the North Island sets the raid in an enlightening new context.

This book has appeared while charges are still pending against those arrested in a much later 'raid' on the Urewera, the 2007 police 'anti-terrorist' operation. Readers of *The Prophet and the Policeman* will be able to set this later incident in the long, and often troubled, history of race relations and human rights in New Zealand.

— *John Wilson is a Christchurch historian.*

Commentary

What a book! Mark Derby's *The Prophet and the Policeman: the Story of Rua Kenana and John Cullen* has a would-be saviour of his people enrol in fantasyland, and a would-be dictator enlisted by a far-right conservative government for brutal supervision of the public.

Rua's story opens as a farm worker for a Pākehā farmer, who gained a reputation for healing that elevated 'the mythology of his faith' to leadership of a large section of the Tuhoe people. His settlement at Maungapohatu in the heart of the Urewera country became a model village. His acquisition of ten wives, all living in luxury with a fleet of cars, required the sale of Māori land, denting a positive career.

Cullen as a nineteen-year old was trained by harsh discipline in the

Royal Irish Constabulary which operated more as soldiers than policemen. The officers were all Protestant and Cullen was among the Catholic constables denied promotion.

Joining the New Zealand police force up-ended his role. Reaching Police Commissioner status, he became 'notorious among his men as a martinet who objected to such indulgence as sick leave'. His armed invasion of the Waihi Miners' 1912 strike – one miner shot dead – was topped by the 1916 invasion of Rua's Maungapohatu: two shot dead with Rua among the wounded.

In retirement from the police Cullen managed to occupy such government postings as enabled him to persecute Dalmatians and for ten years he defied environmentalists by planting heather over National Parks. It is clear without this book we would have remained largely ignorant of a vital period in our history.

— Dick Scott

WORK IN PROGRESS

Joe Hill's ashes in New Zealand

On November 19 1915, Joe Hill – songwriter, union organiser and member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) – was executed by firing squad. True to his last words, his ashes were distributed to every state in the United States (except Utah) and to various IWW locals around the world, including New Zealand.

In *Tom Barker and the IWW* Eric Fry sheds some light on what happened to the ashes in Australia, yet information on New Zealand is scarce. Tom Barker writes:

"After Joe had been executed, one Saturday much to my astonishment, I got a parcel from the I.W.W... containing a portion of the ashes of Joe Hill. We decided we would have a ceremonial depositing of the ashes on the following Sunday in the garden near the Domain, so that we could say we had Joe firmly planted in Australia. The plan would have worked except for one thing - about two hours after the police raided us. We were all thrown out, the police went through the place and took away Joe's ashes."

LHP member Jared Davidson is currently researching what happened to Hill's ashes in New Zealand, and would greatly appreciate any information.

Please email: garage.collective@gmail.com



ABOVE: Joe Hill, linocut by Carlos Cortez.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Waihi 1912 centenary: Underground army



ABOVE: Tunnellers (supplied by Sue Baker Wilson).

One of the least glamorous and most risk-ridden of New Zealand units in World War One was the Tunnelling Company men, who were trained to conserve life rather than take it. Failure to complete a job before being discovered could lead to a counterattack and death. Buried men would wait in silence, afraid any noise might compromise the safety of others but confident that their comrades were working to rescue them.

Tunnellers were recruited from mining districts throughout New Zealand and the second-highest number of enlistments came from the goldmining area of Waihi. Many others from Auckland, the region with the highest number of enlistments, may also have had links with Waihi until they were forced to leave town after the prolonged and bitter strike of 1912.

As a result the Tunnelling Company earned the nickname 'the Red Feds'. Eleven members were former union secretaries and over 40 are said to have been on their union committees. One of these was Ernest Worth, a Waihi striker who was jailed during the strike.

This information, and the photo, have been supplied by Sue Baker Wilson, a Waihi historical researcher who is part of an informal nationwide group planning the centenary of the Waihi strike in November 2012. Also in the

group are Green MP and Coromandel mining activist Catherine Delahunty, whose two great-uncles were Waihi miners, and Wellington artist Bob Kerr, who is developing a major exhibition based on the strike. His portrait of Waihi union leader Bill Parry is a finalist in the 2010 Wallace Art Awards.



We welcome more input into the Waihi Strike centenary planning group. Contact the coordinator, Mark Derby, markderby@paradise.net.nz

ABOVE: Bill Parry: portrait by Bob Kerr.

— Mark Derby

YOUR OPINIONS, PLEASE

Union and worker films

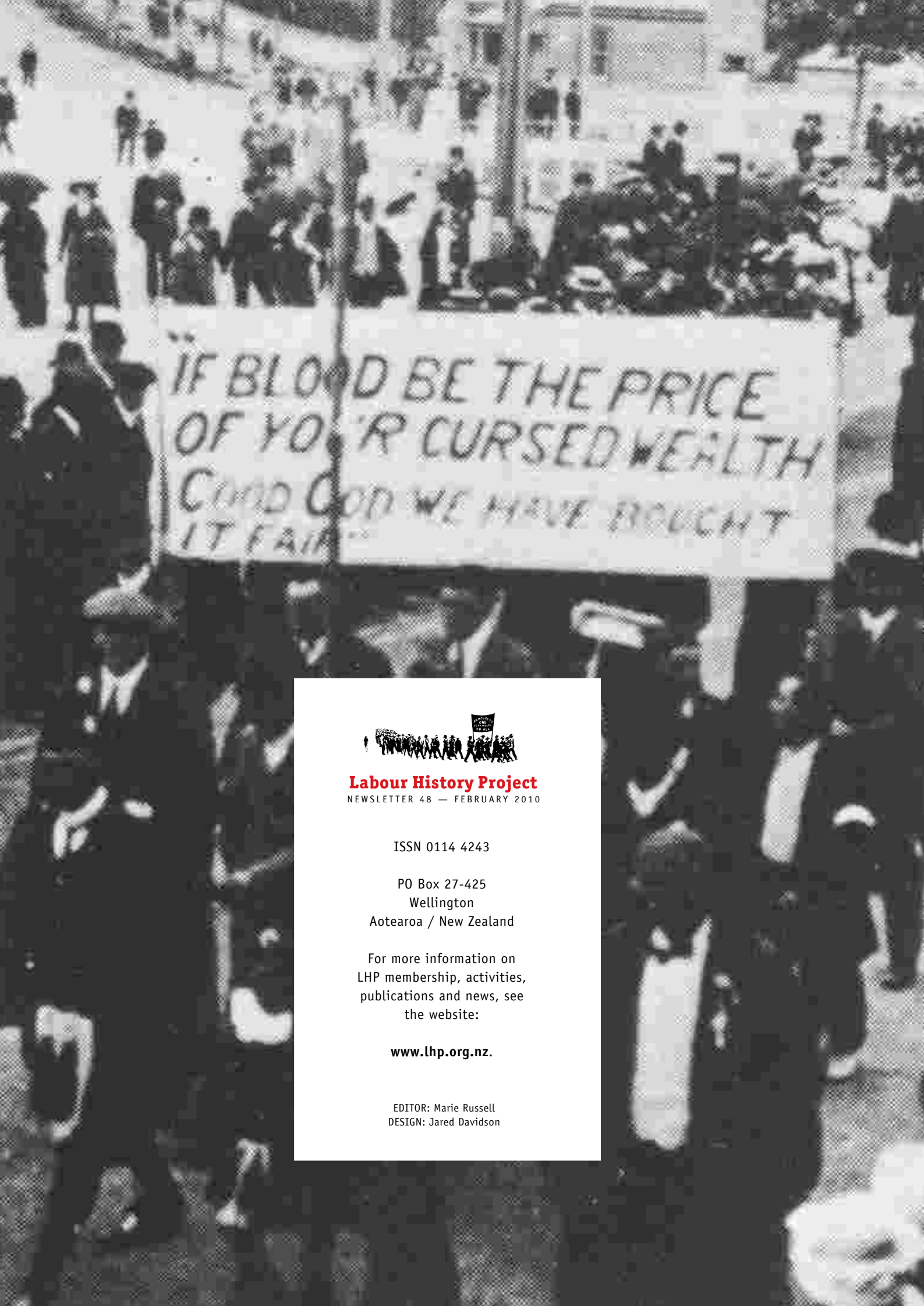
Watching films is an enjoyable and powerful way to learn about labour history. LHP Newsletter invites you to help us compile a short, annotated list of recommended feature films and documentaries about people's movements, unions, work, human rights and workers' struggles. We will edit and publish the list in the *Newsletter* and on our website. It will form a useful reference for schools, unions, libraries and other groups, as well as individuals interested in labour history.

As an incentive, if you send information as outlined below, your name will go in the draw for a \$20 voucher from the excellent Aro Video store in Wellington which offers nation-wide lending and sales service (see www.arovideo.co.nz). The winner can use the voucher to borrow or purchase DVDs or videos of their choice.

To enter: send the title, director and date of each film, plus a short statement (no more than 100 words) on what the film is about and why you recommend it.

Email: newsletter@lhp.org.nz

Or post to: Union and worker films
Labour History Project Newsletter
PO Box 27 425
Marion Square
Wellington 6141



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OF YOUR CURSED WEALTH
GOOD GOD WE HAVE BOUGHT
IT FAIR



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