

TRADE UNION HISTORY PROJECT

# Newsletter

Issue No. 39

March 2006

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*8 March 2006: Website goes live!*

Waterside Workers' Union between 1946 and 1951. Wevers and Dean Parker had already applied to the Short Film Fund of the New Zealand Film Commission for funding for the project. The TUHP took the project on board. The Short Film Fund provided an initial \$5,000 and, subsequently impressed with the video extracts, it granted another \$76,000 for the project to be completed. Thus *Shattered Dreams*, a 46-minute documentary focusing specifically on the 1951 waterfront lock-out, written by Dean Parker, produced by Francis Wevers.

[www.tuhp.org.nz](http://www.tuhp.org.nz)

Wevers directed by Dean Parker. It was released in 1991 as the TUHP's first major production. This documentary has since become an iconic record of the lockout and events that caused it. Paul Chalmers became the first recipient of a TUHP grant when he was given \$100 to fund videotaping Peter Purdue, long-time trade union activist who had retired from his position as secretary of the New Zealand Carpenters Union in 1984. By the end of 1988 with membership close to 120, the TUHP had run a seminar on recording oral history and subsidised its first book — a \$5,000 grant to Dunmore Press to subsidise its publication of *The Lumsifer*, a book on the 1932 tramway industrial dispute in Christchurch, written by local bus driver Dave Welch. The TUHP also



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## Tom Barker : Revolutionary

Extract from: 'Self-portrait of a Revolutionary', *Journal of the Society of the Study of Labour History*, No 15, Autumn, 1967.

*The job that I took on immediately in New Zealand was to work as a conductor on the Auckland Electrical Tramways, which was actually an American company. It was there that I achieved one of the triumphs of my life, as I always think. I was able to join a Trade Union. It was the Tramway Union in Auckland, and everybody who was on the job in those days had a card, or they were out. And of course the moment I joined I was actively into trade union life.*

I left (New Zealand) in about March 1914. It was just before *World War I*. With oth-

ers I had been involved in a 'General Strike' over conditions that were controlled largely by the Arbitration Court that had been set up.

There were very many evils that had grown up over the years, largely because New

Zealand was not an industrial country. It was mainly a provider of bacon, butter and cheese to the United Kingdom; in short, it was an agrarian society and there were

they never gave me just quite enough time for that. In this case I had been charged with sedition in the general strike (there were a number of us, of course), and as the trial went

on we were placed under bonds and you had to produce the bonds, otherwise you couldn't get out of custody. Perhaps I didn't feel kind enough towards my sponsor. At least he got the wind up, and he said to me, "Look, I don't want to hurt you in any way, Tom", (he was a shoemaker, actually), "but the way you're going on, I'll get landed for the 1500 pounds they've put on your head." And so I said



deep splits between the interests of the farmers, whom they called 'cockies', and of the ordinary trade union member. In my life there are plenty of places where I would have stayed — probably got married and settled down — but

to him that in that case I don't want to go back in the cooler but I'll leave the next time the *Maheno* comes in and go across to Sydney. It was the pressures of this particular matter that made me shift from

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New Zealand to Sydney.’

*Tom Barker was one of the most colourful and uncompromising figures in New Zealand labour history.*

When the Great Strike broke out in Wellington in October 1913, he was placed in charge of organising the round-the-clock roster of speakers, musicians and other performers and propagandists in Post Office Square, directly opposite the wharf gates. Later he returned to Auckland where he led the local branch of the Industrial Workers of the World (the IWW or

‘Wobblies’). On his arrest for sedition, Tom was returned to Wellington and held in the now-demolished Terrace Gaol until freed on bail, as he describes above.

After jumping bail and leaving for Sydney, Tom headed many Wobbly free speech and anti-conscription campaigns. In 1918 he was deported from Australia, and his ship stopped briefly in Wellington, “one of my favourite stamping grounds... Strange to say they feared we’d escape and we were taken to the Buckle St barracks where I met the man who’d arrested me first in Auckland. He told me then;

‘Well, Mr Barker, it’s a different place to the one it used to be when you lived in it. It used to be a free country then and it’s not damned well free today.’”

Tom went on to work with labour organisations in South America, the Soviet Union, New York and elsewhere, finally returning to his homeland in the UK. He served in the mid-1950s as mayor of the London borough of St Pancras where a street, Barker Drive, was recently named after him.

Mark Derby

## Book Launch

The Great Strike of 1913 is the subject of a new book edited by TUHP executive member Melanie Nolan, with contributions from several New Zealand labour historians. (see page 5). **Revolution: The 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand** is published by Canterbury University Press in association with the TUHP. It will be launched at the *Museum of Wellington City and Sea* (which is housed in a building central to many of the events of the strike itself) on May Day — Monday 1 May, at 5.30pm.

*In June 2006 an exhibition on the ‘1913 strike’ in Wellington will open at the Museum of Wellington City and Sea. ‘Strike: War on the Wharves’ is curated by TUHP executive member Mark Derby.*

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# *New Zealanders in the Spanish Civil War*

*This year marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, a tragic prelude to the world-wide conflict which began three years later. The Trade Union History Project will hold the first-ever seminar on New Zealand's role in the Spanish Civil War on 3-4 November this year.*

The seminar is supported by the History Department at Victoria University and is accompanied by a two-week festival of Spanish Civil War films at the NZ Film Archive. A range of presenters, academic and otherwise, will talk on subjects ranging from New Zealand's foreign policy and the role of the Quakers and the Catholic Church, the Labour and Communist Parties, to the various New Zealand medical staff and combatants who were on the front lines in some of the worst battles of the war.

For more information about the seminar, or to offer advice and support, contact the convenor of the organising committee, Mark Derby,

on (home) 04-973 8900 or [markderby@paradise.net.nz](mailto:markderby@paradise.net.nz)

Wellington historian Michael O'Shaughnessy has researched archives in Spain, Russia, the UK, Australia and elsewhere to piece together the so-far untold story of New Zealanders in Spain during the civil war. Some of his findings are summarised below.

## ***Bernard Gray***

*Bernard was working in London as a chef when the war broke out, and he apparently volunteered to make money so he could marry his fiancée.*

He made no money, but proved to be a daring guerrilla fighter, at one point capturing an Italian tank. He painted murals in the hospital villa at Benicassim, near Valencia. He deserted to Britain in 1938 where he continued working on fundraising campaigns for the Republican cause.

## ***William MacDonald***

*Was the son of a prominent Dunedin doctor. He robbed a bank in Palmerston North in 1933 and left New Zealand in disgrace.*

He transported a plane into Barcelona and decided to stay and join the American Lincoln Battalion of the International Brigades. He joined the SAS in WWII and was captured and held prisoner for a long time.

## ***Griff MacLaurin***

*An upper-middle class lad from Auckland, converted to communism and left-wing politics by witnessing Nazism on a visit to Germany.*

He set up a leftwing bookshop in Cambridge and was asked to go to Spain by the head of the Communist Party of Great Britain, because his New Zealand school cadet training in-

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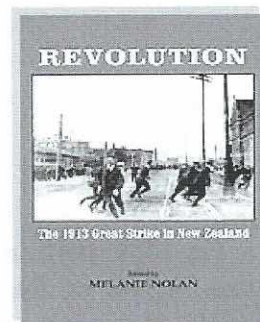


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# Coming soon!



## Revolution:

The 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand

*Edited by Melanie Nolan*

**DUE APRIL 2006**

RRP \$37.95 : ISBN 1-877257-40-0

*Paperback, 228 x 152 mm, 320pp, b/w photos & illustrations*

Many of New Zealand's leading historians came together in a 2003 conference to re-explore the 1913 Great Strike.

The result is a challenging clash of views: the reader will see this strike through the eyes of the state, the police, the strikers, the militants, the moderates, the ruling and working classes.

The contributors debate the issues with a vigour that sometimes matches the event itself. Nevertheless, despite the differing takes on it, no one doubts that 1913 remains the most violent strike in New Zealand's history: the military with naked bayonets and machine guns on our streets for all to see.

Each chapter leaves us with plenty to think about, in particular, the nature and history of democracy itself.

This collection will be of vital interest to those concerned with New Zealand history, law and order, class relations, the gender order and revolution.

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Donald Anderson, John Crawford, Mark Derby, Miles Fairburn, Peter Franks, David Grant, Richard S. Hill, Jim McAloon, Donald M. MacRaid, Melanie Nolan, Erik Olssen, James Taylor, Kerry Taylor.

THE EDITOR of this collection, Melanie Nolan, is an Associate Professor in History at Victoria University of Wellington. She is the author of *Breadwinning: New Zealand women and the state* (2000) and *Kin: A collective biography of a New Zealand working-class family* (2005). Melanie is a long-standing committee member of TUHP



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cluded the use of machine-guns.

He took part in the famous arrival of the International Brigades as they marched up the Madrid's main avenue to the frontlines in the University City. On their first night both Maclaurin and fellow NZer **Steve Yates** volunteered for a mission from which they never returned. It has been claimed that their group took a nearby town but had to retreat in the face of a fierce counterattack and that Maclaurin and Yates were killed at their machine-gun post whilst allowing others to get away.

### **Alex MacLure**

*Alex was a Canadian student studying at Otago University's School of Mines at the outbreak of the SCW.*

He sailed to Spain in March 1937 with a large group of Canadian volunteers, and having military training he was posted to a fighting unit of the Canadian MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion. He was killed in the first action of the new Canadian battalion at Fuentes del

Ebro in Aragon on 10 October 1937.

### **Charlie Riley**

*Was a cockney who immigrated to NZ in 1913. He joined the Royal NZ Dragoons in 1915, and was wounded in France in WWI.*

In the 1930s he was active in the Christchurch unemployed workers' movement and imprisoned. After his release, Riley moved to Australia where he worked as a miner. Highly committed to the international working class cause, he entered Spain by making the night climb over the Pyrenees. He joined the British Battalion and fought in the Battle of the Ebro, where he was again wounded. Back in Australia, he campaigned on behalf of various groups of International Brigade veterans, and in 1939 moved back to NZ.

With the outbreak of WWII Riley, aged well over 40, volunteered for the NZ First Echelon and served in the Middle East. For a third time he was wounded and repatriated to NZ. He died in the early 1970s in Naenae, Wellington, an almost indestructible working class battler.

### **Eric Griffiths**

*Eric was an aviator who signed a mercenary contract as a fighter pilot. He is mentioned with high praise in the memoirs of the Republic's leading air ace of the war.*

Flying antiquated aircraft, Griffiths was severely wounded by an explosive bullet which smashed his right shoulder. Semi-conscious, he managed to return his plane to base and land it. Back in New Zealand, he had a special flying suit built for his shattered arm and went to Hollywood to see his friend Errol Flynn and seek employment as a stunt pilot. He then went to China to courier planes for Chiang Kai-shek against the Japanese.

In WWII he joined the RNZAF and was killed in Fiji while flying a new American plane, the Airocobra. Griffiths consistently identified with the underdog and was at all times popular with the local people around him.

*Mark Derby*



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## TUHP Achievements

### Conferences and seminars

**1988 seminar** *Recording Oral History*

**1990 seminar** *Development of Trade Unionism in New Zealand*

**1990 conference** *Culture and the Labour Movement* (including a re-creation of the first Labour History Parade in October 1890, an art exhibition and a film festival)

**1992 seminar** *Bert Roth's Contribution to Labour History*

**1993 seminar** *Dissenting New Zealand* (featuring Rona Bailey)

**1994 seminar** *The Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act*

**1995 seminar** *Trade Unionism in the Era of Fintan Patrick Walsh*

**1996 seminar** *A Commemoration of Max Bollinger's Life*

**1996 seminar** *The PSA and the Lewin Years: personalities, influences and events*

**1997 seminar** *Fifty Years of Struggle: the story of equal pay*

**1998 seminar** *Celebration to Mark the 100th Anniversary of Paul Robeson's Birth*

**2001 conference** *Lockout '51: fifty years on* (including a '51 reunion dinner, launch of Anna Green's book, *British Capital, Antipodean Labour: working the New Zealand waterfront* (Otago University Press), and, in association with the New Zealand Film Archive, an exhibition: 1951: lockout, strike, confrontation)

**2003 seminar** *1913 General Strike — 100 Years On: a laboratory or a battleground of democracy?*

### Exhibitions

**1988** *Woollen Workers' Strike of 1899*, Petone Settlers' Museum

**1990** *Art and Organised Labour*, Wellington City Art Gallery (toured other centres subsequently)

**1993** *Te Keiti E Mahi Ai (What Katy Did), Te Wahine Te Mahi (Women and Work) 1880s—1940s*, photographic exhibition at Wellington City Art Gallery and at Porirua, Auckland and Canterbury Public Libraries (funded by \$29,000 grant from Suffrage Centennial Trust)

**2001—02** *1951: lockout, strike, confrontation*, in association with New Zealand Film Archive, commemorating the 1951 waterfront lockout and displayed at venues in Wellington, Auckland, Palmerston North and Dunedin

### Publications

(This includes both books commissioned, funded and/or published by the TUHP, and others published by organisations or other publishers with the assistance of a TUHP subsidy.)

**1988** *Annotated Guide to the Archives of the New Zealand Federation of Labour 1937-1988*, Cathy Marr (collator and editor), Dunmore Press, Palmerston North

**1988** *The Lucifer: a story of industrial conflict in New Zealand in the 1930s*, Dave Welch, Dunmore Press, Palmerston North

**1989** *Strike: trouble at t'mill* (story of the 1899 Petone wool-

len workers' strike), Barbara Fill, GP Books, Wellington

**1990** *Days of Action*, Bert Roth, TUHP, Wellington

**1990** *New Zealand Working People 1890—1990*, Steven Eldred-Grigg, Dunmore Press, Palmerston North

**1990** *The Forgotten Worker: the rural wage earner in nineteenth century New Zealand*, John Martin (editor), Allen and Unwin, Wellington

**1991** *Culture and the Labour Movement: essays in New Zealand labour history*, John Martin and Kerry Taylor (editors), Dunmore Press, Palmerston North

**1991** *Born Hunger, Pain and Strike. 50 years of struggle against change in New Zealand*, Auckland Unemployed Rights Centre, Auckland

**1992** *Through the Mill and Other Stories* (2nd edition), Frank Collins, Dunmore Press, Palmerston North

**1993** *From Wheelbarrow to Carryall: a story of some Public Works communities in New Zealand 1904-1956*, Charles M. Herbert, TUHP, Wellington

**1994** *Pioneering New Zealand Labour History: essays in honour of Bert Roth*, Pat Walsh (editor), Dunmore Press, Palmerston North

**1994** *Trade Unions, Work and Society: the century of the arbitration system*, Pat Walsh (editor), Dun-

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more Press, Palmerston North

**1994** *Working Class Son: my fight against capitalism and war*, Ron Smith, self-published, Wellington

**1996** *Disaster at Brunner. the coalmine tragedy at Brunner, New Zealand*, Brian Wood, self-published, Greymouth

**1997** *Worker Holidays in New Zealand a brief history*, TUHP, Wellington

**1997** *To Labour with the State: the Fiji Public Service Association*, Jacqueline Leckie, University of Otago Press, Dunedin

**1997** *Fifty Years of Struggle: the story of equal pay*, TUHP, Wellington

**1998** *She Dared to Speak. Connie Birchfield's story*, Maureen Birchfield, University of Otago Press, Dunedin

**2004** *The Big Blue: snapshots of the 1951 waterfront lockout*, David Grant (editor), Canterbury University Press, Christchurch

**2004** *A Celebration of the Literature of Organised Labour: an annotated New Zealand trade union bibliography*, Paul Corliss, Canterbury University Press, Christchurch (in press)

### Scholarships

(From 1995 onwards known as Bert Roth Scholarships)

**1993** John Leckie: \$2,500 for research into researching the history of the meat export industry in New Zealand until 1921 for a PhD at Auckland University

**1995** Shaun Ryan: \$2,000 towards research into the Otago branch of the Engineers' Union

for MA at Otago University

**1997** Stephen Robertson: \$2,000 towards research on the Wellington branch of New Zealand Socialist Party 1901—2 for an MA at Victoria University of Wellington

### Oral history funding

**1989** Cath Kelly: for interviews with older union officials and members of their families

**1991** Cathy Marr: for interviews with South Island trade unionists

**1992** Waikato District Committee, Historic Paces Trust: for interviews with workers and their families who worked and lived in the Huntly coalfields

**1993** Robert Paton: for interviews with long-time trade union and Labour Party activists

**1993** Jane Tolerton: for Margaret Thom's reminiscences

**1994** Kerry Taylor: for interviews with veterans of the 1951 waterfront lockout

**1994** New Zealand Nursing Educational and Research Foundation: for interviews with New Zealand nurses

**1995** New Zealand Educational Institute: for interviews with women involved in Early Childhood Workers' Union and Kindergarten Teachers' Association

**1996** Elayne and Ian Robertson: for interviews with Wellington City Transport employees

**1997** Peter Franks: for interviews with Printers' Union activists

**1997** Shaun Ryan: for interviews with working and retired trade union officials

**1999** Shaun Ryan: for interviews with ten working women trade unionists (supplemented by grant from an 'Award in Oral History' from the Australian Sesquicentennial Trust, Ministry for Culture and Heritage)

### Research grants

**1993** \$500 to Blackball History Group to produce a pamphlet on a history of their community

**1997** \$1,200 to Brian Wood to revise and extend *Disaster at Brunner*

**1998** Grant to Glenda Northey for bibliography on the 1951 lockout: *Is No News Good News?: the effectiveness of restrictive government measures on representations of watersiders during the 1951 waterfront dispute within the Auckland region*, Master of Library and Information Studies thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2001

**1998** Grant to Andrew Cooper for *The 1951 Waterfront Dispute in Canterbury: a select annotated bibliography*. Master of Library and Information Studies thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2001

### Video/film grants and production

**1987** Paul Chalmers: \$100 grant to videotape long-time union leader and activist Peter Purdue 1990 *Shattered Dreams*: video produced by Francis Wevers and Dean Parker dealing with New Zealand industrial history 1946—51, culminating in the 1951 waterfront lockout (with

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the help of two grants from the Short Film Fund of the New Zealand Film Commission)

**1992** Vanguard Films (Gerd Polhman): \$2,000 grant to transfer six documentary films on New Zealand labour history onto video. These films were *The Hammer and the Anvil*, 1980 (a documentary history of New Zealand trade union movement told through the lives of the workers); *A Century of Struggle*, 1981 (a chronicle of the 100-year history of the New Zealand Seamen's Union); *Wildcat*, 1981 (the struggle of timber workers to bring democracy to the union);

*Kinleith '80*, 1982 (an account of the successful twelve-week strike at New Zealand Forest Products and its part in bringing down Prime Minister Robert Muldoon's Remuneration Act); *The Bridge/Men in Dispute*, 1982 (an account of the industrial dispute at the Mangere Bridge construction site in 1978); and *The Hatred Campaign* 1985 (a documentary showing how the bombing of Wellington Trades Hall in 1984 and the death of caretaker Ernie Abbott was an inevitable outcome of Muldoon's long-standing hostility towards trade unions)

**1997** Spiral Productions:

\$3,000 grant for documentary film on life of Irahapeti Ramsden, *Something for My Grandchildren to Hold*

**1998** Gaylene Preston: archival video on seminar to commemorate the life of Max Bollinger

**1999** Gaylene Preston: \$5,000 grant to film documentary on Trade Union Women's Choir *Choir, Choir, Pants on Fire*, plus promotional CD

**2001** Gaylene Preston and John Bates: Archival videos recording the proceedings of the Lockout '51 conference.



## TUHP Online

The TUHP's brand new website is now online at [www.tuhp.org.nz](http://www.tuhp.org.nz). We urge all members to check it out — and spread the word.

Although the TUHP has been a bit of a late-comer to 'cyber space' we are making up for lost time with a range of valuable features for our members and other interested browsers. Alongside the usual information (*contact details, membership forms, a list of committee members and the TUHP's rules*) the site offers a short history of the organisation; a record of its numerous seminars, publications, exhibitions and other achievements; electronic copies of recent TUHP Newsletters; a list of recommended reading on New Zealand labour and trade union history; links to local and overseas history, union and related websites; and a detailed timeline of New Zealand labour history. And that's just a start — more features will be added to the site over the coming months.

The front page highlights upcoming events, including the launch of the TUHP's new book, *Revolution: The 1913 Great Strike in NZ*, edited by Melanie Nolan, on 1 May, the *1913 Strike* exhibition which opens at the *Museum of Wellington City and Sea* in August, and the TUHP's seminar on the *Spanish Civil War* in November this year. Be sure to check the site regularly for updates on these and other events.

If you have any comments or spot any mistakes in the site please contact us by email: [contact@tuhp.org.nz](mailto:contact@tuhp.org.nz)



# TRADE UNION HISTORY PROJECT



## *Membership Subscription Form*

Application or Renewal  
2005/2006

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