

Prime Minister Launches "Revolution"

On Monday 1 May 2006 the Rt Hon Helen Clark, Prime Minister, kindly attended the Museum of Wellington City and Sea to launch "Revolution: the 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand", edited by Melanie Nolan, and published by Canterbury University Press. The following is a text of the Prime Minister's speech:

"May Day, the first of May, is a very appropriate day to launch this important volume of essays on the Great Strike of 1913. On this internationally recognised day commemorating the achievements of the labour movement, we can also acknowledge a significant chapter in the history of organised labour in New Zealand.

The 1913 strike was a very significant event in New Zealand's industrial relations history. Along with the 1890 maritime dispute and the 1951 waterfront lockout, it stands as one of the three major industrial confrontations in our history.

This important collection of essays came out of a Trade Union History Project conference in November 2003 to commemorate the ninetieth anniversary of the 1913 strike. The book addresses a major gap in New Zealand's historical writing. Despite its importance, 1913 has hitherto been largely



neglected by historians. James Belich noted in his general history that while 1913 was not the Russian Revolution, it does seem to have been something rather closer to a class war than most historians allow.

Only four days ago I launched a book from the other side of the industrial fence - the history of the first 120 years of employer organisation in Auckland. Publicity about the book

by its promoters suggested that it "helps correct a long bias of history writing in favour of government and unions."

While the assertion of such bias is not a view I share, it is useful to have different perspectives on our industrial history, and I commend Melanie Nolan on editing this important work.

The 1913 strike involved a higher proportion of the workforce than did either the 1890 or the 1951 disputes. The strike lasted eight weeks and involved 16.7 per cent of unionists. Few would have predicted that New Zealand's workers would beat their British equivalents to a national stoppage. But fully thirteen years before the British General Strike of 1926, much of New Zealand was brought to the eight-week stand still which became known as the 'Great Strike' in Wellington and the 'General Strike' in Auckland.

1913 is also very significant because it was one of the seminal events that led to the forma-

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David Grant presents Helen Clark with flowers

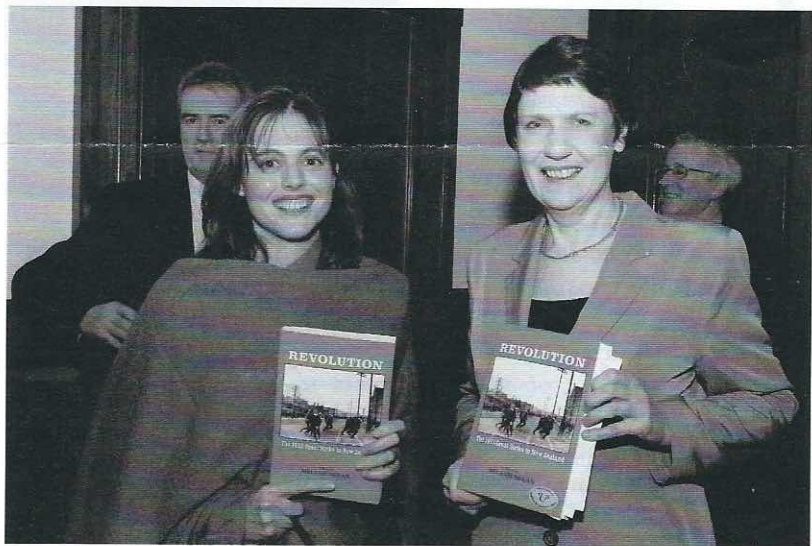
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tion of the New Zealand Labour Party in 1916. The strikers were defeated, but as Peter Fraser said, “the militants might lose every battle but they won the campaign.” The excesses of the Massey government – particularly its use of the special constables, Massey’s Cossacks, against the strikers, helped unite the various labour factions into one party. Leaders of the 1913 strike like Fraser, Harry Holland and Michael Joseph Savage learned the hard lesson that the labour movement could not achieve its goals through industrial action alone. When the Labour Party was formed in 1916, the party was united in seeing the importance of political action and parliamentary politics in achieving economic and social change. That insight of ninety years ago remains highly relevant today.

This book is not a romantic story, but rather a clear-headed account of the broad social im-

plications of what was much more than an industrial dispute: it was a battle over democracy itself.

It is most appropriate that this book is launched at the Museum of Wellington City and Sea. Here we are surrounded by the history of the 1913 strike.



The museum building housed the offices of the Wellington

Harbour Board, a strong supporter of the Wellington Employers, Farmers, and Citizens Defence Committee which mobilised opposition to the strike. Across the road is Post Office Square. On 24 October 1913, 1500 watersiders gathered there and moved across to break through the barriers stopping them entering the waterfront. At that moment, The Dominion reported, “the demeanour of the strike had completely changed.” It had become an issue of law and order and class conflict. Extraordinary scenes followed on Wellington’s streets. The 1913 strike was one of the most turbulent and violent industrial disputes in New Zealand’s history. Later in the year, the Museum will display an exhibition of the 1913 strike which has been curated by Mark Derby, one of the contributors to this book. Strike 1913: War on the Wharves will

The Prime Minister and Melanie Nolan open in August and run to No-
(Continued on page 4)



Len Gale recalls



Men and Women of '51

The Trades Hall in Hobson Street was the daily meeting place for the locked-out watersiders. The hall was always full, smoke coiled above the men as they sat on the hard forms. The union officials gave their members the latest news from the different ports and the state of negotiations with the government; resolutions were put, defeated or carried on a

show of hands. But the foyer was where the day-to-day decisions were made. You could feel the energy, electric, as small knots of men and women huddled and conversed. Now and then one would cross to another group to check on a detail and report back to his or her comrades. Much of the work of these groups was hush, hush. The Regulations hung heavy.

It was here that Johnny Mitchell, in charge of publicity coordinated his team. The typist, the artist, the office where he could print the bulletin. Here too Frank Barnard and Ossie Osman sorted out the nights' roster for the butchers. Check with farmers for available beasts. Check with transport for delivery to depots. Tom Spiller ready for the fray and 'Pincher' Martin with his shipmate, born fighter

Ronny Black. Placards to be made. Marshal's armbands to be sewn, who has the skills and a machine? Food and drink for those on picket duty. Collect baby food from Patel in Glen Eden. Rally a team of fruit pickers to go to Oratia. A hundred details to be acted on to bind the union folk together. No one afraid, yet all aware that this time they had their backs to the wall. It has to be said that a person's character is tested in moments of great crisis and this was one. That's where I met Bill Andersen. His main job I learnt later was to get printing done, no easy task, as 'illegal' printers were likely to end up in jail. Bill was a fine looking man, strong yet quiet in his manner. He was on good terms with the other activists and when he spoke, those he was involved with

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show, the events of 1913 had profound and lasting consequences. The defeated labour movement turned to the ballot box, its leaders became Labour MPs and in 1936 one of them, Michael Savage, became Prime Minister. He was followed by Peter Fraser, whose wartime armed forces commander was a former special constable, Bernard Freyberg.

The exhibition will be curated by Mark Derby, who is a

contributor to a forthcoming book on the strike and appeared recently on the TVNZ historical series *Frontier of Dreams*. The concept designer is Julia Holderness, the graphic designer is Dave Kent, and an accompanying short film will be made by The Film School, directed by Tommy Honey.

A comprehensive education programme will include a kit for secondary students and walking tours of the key events of the strike.

For more details, or to contribute materials or information for this exhibition, contact: Laureen Sadlier ph. 472 8924 or laureen.sadlier@wmt.org.nz

Another TUHP Initiative!



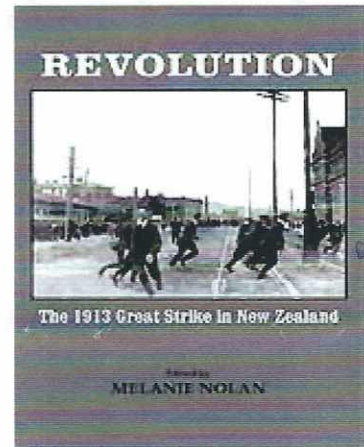


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vember. The exhibition will be a fitting companion to this publication. I hope that a large audience, particularly young people, will get the benefits of this cutting-edge labour history research.

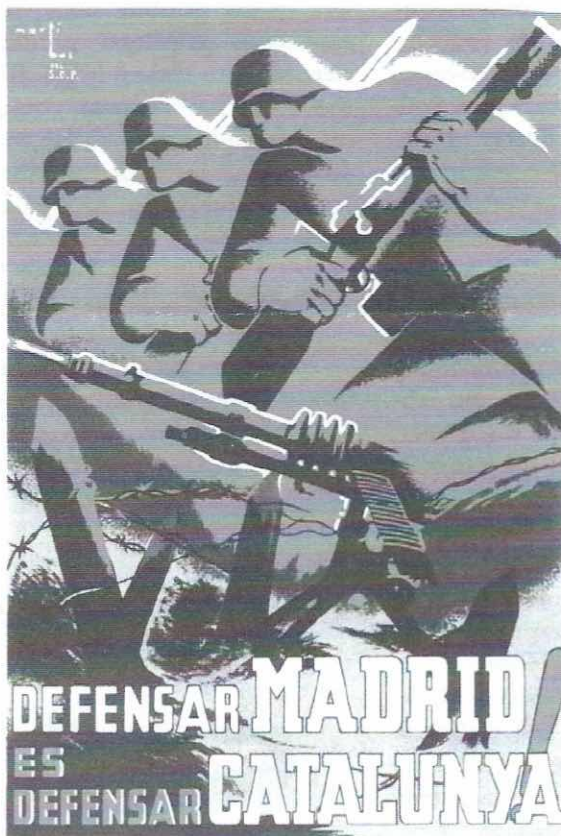
This book is the product of a great deal of voluntary effort by those who have worked on it, particularly by the editor, Melanie Nolan. Edited volumes are, by their very nature, a compilation of the insights of different minds on aspects of an issue. The common purpose of the thirteen contributors has been to tease out the various aspects of what was a turning point in New Zealand history: The reader will learn about the

strike as it affected the state, the police, the strikers, the militants, the moderates, and the country's rulers. The role played by women and men is also considered. This is a very rich and well presented history."

Special thanks are due to Melanie Nolan. It was her idea to transform the contributions to the 2003 conference into a book. Her enthusiasm and dedication have been crucial to making the book happen. I congratulate Melanie, the contributors, the Trade Union History Project and Canterbury University Press on a very fine effort. It is with great pleasure that I launch *Revolution: The 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand*.



(TUHP are most grateful to Victoria University of Wellington, Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui, for their kind permission to use the photographs taken by Gerry Keating at the launch of "Revolution" on 1 May 2006. Ed.)



TRADE UNION HISTORY PROJECT



SEMINAR

"NEW ZEALAND AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR"

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Audited Accounts

TRADE UNION HISTORY PROJECT:

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE. For Year Ended 31 March 2006.

INCOME:	2006	2006	2005	2005
Subscriptions	2,170.00		1,630.00	
Grants	0.00		5,000.00	
GST Refunds	0.00		668.36	
Income tax Refund	0.00		148.48	
Interest	0.00		15.85	
Sales	0.00		0.00	
Sundries	0.00		919.89	
Donations	960.32		558.04	
Royalties	<u>1,936.12</u>		<u>0.00</u>	
<u>TOTAL INCOME:</u>		\$5,066.44		\$8,940.62
EXPENDITURE:				
Bank Charges	101.30		80.55	
Donations	0.00		0.00	
Grant	1,125.00		0.00	
G.S.T.	544.40		0.00	
Newsletter/Printing	616.51		331.88	
Postages	456.00		103.00	
Sundry Expenses	1,235.09		655.70	
Website	67.44		0.00	
1913 Book Subsidy	5,625.00		0.00	
1913 bBook Project Payments	286.50		0.00	
1951 Book Project Account	<u>0.00</u>		<u>6,265.26</u>	
<u>TOTAL EXPENDITURE:</u>		\$10,057.24		\$7,436.39
<u>EXCESS INCOME/(EXPENDITURE):</u>		-\$4,990.80		\$1,504.23

The attached notes form part of and should be read in conjunction with the Financial Statements.



TRADE UNION HISTORY PROJECT:

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION.
As At 31 March 2006.**

	2006	2006	2005	2005
CURRENT ASSETS:				
BANK ACCOUNT	7,264.03		12,254.83	
BNZ TERM DEPOSIT	<u>0.00</u>		<u>0.00</u>	
NET CURRENT ASSETS:		<u>\$7,264.03</u>		<u>\$12,254.83</u>
ACCUMULATED FUNDS:				
BALANCE 1 APRIL	12,254.83		10,750.60	
SURPLUS(DEFICIT)	<u>-\$4,990.80</u>		<u>1,504.23</u>	
TOTAL ACCUMULATED FUNDS:		<u>\$7,264.03</u>		<u>\$12,254.83</u>

The attached notes form part of and should be read in conjunction with the Financial Statements.

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Note from Treasurer

For the umpteenth time our honorary auditor, Dave Diggins, has examined our financial accounts and on this latest occasion has given us an 'unqualified opinion' — that our "financial statements comply with generally accepted accounting practice; and give a true and fair view of the financial position of the organisation as at 31 March 2006 and the results of its operations for the year ended on that date."

For many years Dave was a member of the former Post Office Union, and he has been a strong supporter of TUHP since its formation. We are most grateful to Dave for his time and dedication, and his oversight of our financial affairs, and for the sound advice we receive from him.

Dave keeps himself busy these days assisting school Boards of Trustees manage finances, and taking a strong interest and involvement in community affairs on the Kapiti Coast.

Colin Hicks



TRANS-TASMAN LABOUR HISTORY CONFERENCE

Auckland University of Technology: 31 January—1 February 2007

Theme: 'Trans Tasman Labour History: Comparative or Transnational?'

Call for papers: Papers are invited on Australian and New Zealand labour history. Comparative approaches are particularly encouraged.

In order to encourage a comparative approach, a special stream has been organised with invited mirror papers – one each from Australia and New Zealand – on a range of topics covering key institutions (trade unions, cooperatives and parties) and social, cultural and industrial formations (nature of work, gender, race, ethnicity, working class culture). It is proposed that subsequent to the conference the mirror papers be merged into transnational joint papers for publication in a special thematic issue of Labour History in 2008.

Keynote addresses will be offered by: Ann Curthoys and John Docker on 'Is Labour History Fact or Fiction?', Fotu Fisi'iahi, on Tongan unionism (a leader of recent Tongan public sector strike), Shelton Stromquist, offering broader international perspectives.

Other contributors include James Bennett, Rae Cooper, Bradon Ellem, Rae Francis, Heather Goodall, Anna Green, Sarah Gregson, Stuart Macintyre, Ray Markey, Melanie Nolan, Erik Olssen, Peter Franks, Greg Patmore, Evan Poata-Smith, Michael Quinlan, Bruce Scates, and Kerry Taylor.

Organising Bodies: Centre for Work & Labour Market Studies and School of Social Sciences, AUT.

Registration fees: 'Early bird' rates payable by 1 November 2006: NZ\$250 full rate NZ\$100 low income rate. Late rates post 1 November 2006: NZ\$300 full rate NZ\$150 low income rate

Conference dinner, not included in registration fee: \$75 cheques payable to 'Trans Tasman Labour History Conference', c/- Ray Markey at address below.

How to contribute: You have three options.

1. Papers submitted for formal, academic refereeing & publication in proceedings. Initial deadline: 31 August 2006 for refereeing. Please email 2 electronic copies, 1 with all identifying marks removed to ensure blind refereeing, as Word documents or in rtf format, to rmarkey@aut.ac.nz Final deadline after refereeing: 1 November 2006.

2. Non-refereed papers. Deadline for full paper: 1 November 2006. Please email 1 electronic copy, as a Word document or in rtf format, to rmarkey@aut.ac.nz

3. Abstracts only Deadline: 1 November 2006, to be printed in Proceedings. Please email 1 electronic copy, as a Word document or in rtf format, to rmarkey@aut.ac.nz Participants who take this option are free to distribute copies of their full paper at the conference.

Paper layout and submission Papers for publication, refereed or not, must be no longer than 10 pages, including references, single spaced, in Times New Roman 12 point font. References should be presented as endnotes in the format used in the journal, Labour History. You should also include a short abstract of no more than 100 words, and any biographical details about yourself you want included in the conference program and publication. Deadline for Powerpoint presentations: 1 December 2006 to: rmarkey@aut.ac.nz . After this date you may need to rely on overhead slides, and you should regardless be prepared for this option in case of technology failures.

Contacts: Associate Professor Anna Green, Head, School of Social Sciences, AUT University, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1020 New Zealand. Ph: +64 9 921 9693 Email:

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May Day 1986



Leaders of the Auckland May Day march, 1986. From Left: Johnny Mitchell, Jim Knox, Colin Hicks, Don Farr, Bill Andersen

May Day, wrote Peter Fraser:

*“Forever will pass war's madness,
And men will have work and mirth,
And there shall be little of sadness
And nothing at all of dearth.
But leisure, and love, and gladness,
In all the ends of the earth.*

*When can that glory come glowing?
Not till the people are lords;
Lords of their coming and going
And burst asunder their cords,*

*And full and free in their knowing,
And shattered and broken the swords.*

*All save the sword of the spirit
Of Freedom which flameth afar,
And all who beholdeth its merit
Shall follow its gleam like a star.
The hearts of the world shall bestir it
For a cause which wins without war.”*

1917

Photo and poem reproduced from Roth, Bert (1990)
Days of Action: May Day; Eight Hour Day; Labour Day,
Trade Union History Project, Wellington.

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STRIKE 1913 – War on the Wharves

**Opens 23 August 2006 at the
Museum of Wellington City and Sea**



'A system of Mexican revolt and civil war', is how the then Leader of the Opposition described the general strike of late 1913, which paralysed the Wellington wharves and spread to other port cities.

In central Wellington thousands of angry strikers and their supporters fought with sabotage, bricks and revolvers against the police and volunteer 'special constables'. No other event has brought this country so close to a collapse of civil order, and yet the 1913 strike scarcely features in our knowledge of New Zealand history.

In August 2006 the Museum will open a major exhibition on how the 1913 strike affected Wellington. It will describe the progress of the strike from its origins to its remarkable aftermath, and will include a specially produced short film.

Some of the buildings on the Wellington wharves, including the one housing the Mu-

seum, look much as they did in the days of the strike, but at that time the wharves were a vast and bustling workplace.

More than 1500 wharfies laboured by hand to load the country's export butter, meat and wool onto ships, and the Watersiders' Union was the strongest in the country. When a dispute arose, 'the hook was left hanging in the air', and that's what happened one morning in late October 1913, when a minor pay dispute flared into a lockout of the whole workforce.

For two weeks the strikers gathered at Post Office Square outside the wharf gates to listen to fiery speeches and rousing music, while the harbour became choked with ships unable to load or unload their cargoes. When Harbour Board employees tried to work the wharves themselves, the strikers stormed the wharf gates to stop them. Local police were reinforced

with thousands of civilian volunteers, called 'special constables'. Office workers, such as the ethnologist Elsdon Best, were based at the Wellesley Club, while farmers from the Wairarapa and Manawatu arrived on horseback and were billeted in the brick Defence Force buildings in Buckle Street.

Almost every day saw riots between strikers and the 'specials', who were armed with long wooden batons. Both sides also carried firearms and several people, including a nine-year-old boy, received bullet wounds. Gradually the police and 'specials' took control of the city, and the wharves were reopened and the stockpiled produce loaded for export. The death-blow for the strike was the overnight arrest of its leaders, including Peter Fraser and Bob Semple.

But as the exhibition will

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