

No. 88 August 2023

lhp bulletin



The state as employer: prisoners working at Officers Point, Lyttelton – Lyttelton Museum

**Problems of the state
plus
the Bert Roth Report.**



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For more information on LHP membership, activities, publications
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Editorial

Kia ora koutou,

As this Bulletin coincides with our AGM and the announcement of the winners of the Bert Roth Award, it is useful to take a moment to reflect on labour history. In our retiring chairperson's report, Emma-Jean Kelly reflects on the genesis of the LHP organisation which, in the midst of union restructuring caused by the neo-liberal revolution, responded to the need to record the organisational history which that restructuring was either casting aside or amalgamating.

The organisation was initially then, driven by a sense of loss and it is necessary to return to that theme as an election looms and as the content of this edition resonates around the theme. There remains the loss of a predominantly unionised workforce able to lead or support major campaigns, there is the loss of the political strike in support of other workers or in support of a major political campaign, there is the loss of the expectation of an economically fair society without extremes of wealth or poverty and there is the loss of an effective Communist Party. Of course there have been the major gains during this same period, of gender, sexual and ethnic rights together with the Maori renaissance and attempts to honour the treaty.

Central to this historical trajectory is consideration of the role of the state, which has also been central to the struggle against capitalism: whether the task is to take over the state and transform

it, or whether to seek immediate, localised transformation which then resonates. This debate remains important to the union movement, with its anarcho-syndicalist inspired beginnings in the first decade of last century and the occasional shop-floor-led revolt standing out in the more plodding parliamentary struggles for compromise.

In this edition's feature articles, Russell Campbell contributes two chapters from his upcoming book on the portrayal of strikes in films; one centred on the events of 1951, the other on the amazing walk off by the Gurindji mob in the Northern Territory (the film is available on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tWBmqZVSTg>, and well worth a watch), Jared Davidson reveals the early colonial state as slave master, and Peter Clayworth celebrates West Coast wobbler, Pat Hickey and his refusal to honour the coronation of a new sovereign.

Cybèle Locke's study of communist, Bill Andersen is an important work, causing us to reflect on the loss of the revolutionary party, no matter how modest. It is useful then to also review a new work by French communist, Isabelle Garo, on theoretical developments since the fall of the USSR, along with a study of state hegemonic manipulation of the ANZAC myth.

**Enjoy and stay warm,
Paul Maunder**

Chair's report for LHP AGM 17th July 2023

Tēnā tātou katoa,
Ko Emma-Jean Kelly tōku ingoa.

It seems like a good time to have our AGM, in the depths of winter, at Matariki or Puanga. A time for remembering those who have passed, a moment for pausing and sharing time together, and having something good to eat.

Karakia Pōhutukawa (Rangi Mataamua)
E tū Pōhutukawa
Te kaikawe i ngā mate o te tau
Ruiruia ngā mate ki te uma o Ranginui
Anā! Kua whetūrangihia koutou

(Behold Pōhutukawa/Who carries the dead of the year/Scatter their spirits into the cosmos/You have now become stars)

This is my first and last Chair's report – I put my hand up to lead the Committee as an interim measure, and although it's been a great experience for me, I'm happy to be handing over the reins tonight. All other members of the Committee are staying on board I'm pleased to say, and they've been a great bunch to work with. So thank you and please wave your hand if you're in the room -

- Claire-Louise McCurdy (Secretary)
- Russell Campbell (Treasurer)
- Paul Maunder (Bulletin editor)
- Cybèle Locke
- Ciaran Doolin
- Gordon Andersen
- Ross Teppett
- Sue Bradford
- Grace Millar
- Mary Roberts-Schirato
- Peter Clayworth

We also have some new faces offering to join the Committee, and we'll vote on that tonight.

Sue Bradford was new to the Committee last year, and so she asked those excellent questions which every organisation needs to answer periodically:

What is the Labour History Project for? What do we want to achieve?

Most of you probably know that the Labour History Project came out of that dark and tough time at the end of the 1980s: a time when unions were collapsing or amalgamating as legislation changes made it increasingly difficult to function. Every one of those unions had a history, and stories of the people who were involved in it. The original founders of the then Trade Union History Project set out to capture those stories, to ensure the records of those unions went into the archives, and that the histories of those unions were shared and told. We are grateful

for the work of the wonderful archivists and curators as well as oral historians and public programmers and outreach teams here at the Alexander Turnbull and National Library for the work you have done to help this important kaupapa over the last quarter of a century or so, and to members of the Committee past and present. The ongoing support of the Library to host the AGM is also gratefully acknowledged.

We see the ongoing benefits of the archiving work today, with Cybèle Locke publishing a new and extraordinary book in the last year *Comrade: Bill Andersen – A Communist, Working-Class Life* (Bridget Williams Books) and Therese O'Connell and I publishing an article in the National Oral History Journal of New Zealand on the story of the Clerical Workers Union, using oral histories recorded by Grace Millar. Both projects used archival sources including oral histories (Cybèle also recorded new oral histories for her book). These are a really important source for working class stories, and again, oral histories are housed here at the National Library in Wellington and in other archives and libraries across the country. We'll hear about other extraordinary books, many also using archival sources, in the much anticipated announcement of the Bert Roth Awards for Labour History later tonight.

In the last year we have held a Cost of Living Symposium over the road in the Loaves and Fishes Hall, where many historians and activists came together to learn from each other, sharing ideas about what worked well, or didn't work in the past, and how we can do better now to create change and honongotanga (connection) across communities during a time of perceived, or real, social fragmentation. A special issue of the Bulletin, edited by Cybèle, came out of that Symposium.

We have supported a new publication on Harry Holland this year, as well as work on the history of social housing, and we have also beavered away to have Wellington Communist Party member Selwyn Devereux's papers considered for deposit here at the ATL. Thanks to Ben Thomas of Unions Wellington for bringing these to our attention, Richard Hill for his expertise in assessing the papers and the Devereux family as well as Sean McMahon for their work on this.

Two further issues of the Bulletin were edited by Paul Maunder this year, and we hope you enjoy that regular publication of the Labour History Project, one of the many benefits of your membership.

In regards to our own records, the LHP Committee is working on setting up a continuous process for collecting, storing and ensuring accessibility of our own archives. Anyone who wants to help with this particular area is most welcome to let us know.

Last year, the winner of the Bert Roth Award for Labour History Julia Laite, (politely) refused her \$500 prize, requesting instead that it support a project on working women's history. We made

a call for applicants, and awarded the funding to Suddhabrata Deb Roy for her work on "The Women Migrant Workers and the Unions: Studying the Dynamic History of Class, Gender and Ethnicity in New Zealand." Thank you to Julia for your generosity in supporting the work of others in this field.

This year we've seen most tertiary institutions under threat of redundancies, and we acknowledge the stress this is causing academics and general administrative staff across the motu. Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington is of course very much in our thoughts, with both staff and students of that institution here tonight. Please keep us informed so we can support you in the most appropriate ways in your struggle to ensure high quality tertiary education is sustainable in Aotearoa, and that workers who have invested so much in education are not left out in the cold.

We have also seen pay rises across some industries as unions came together to fight for fair pay agreements. It has felt in some ways like coming back round to discussions of industry which is pretty new territory for those of us who have lived under the shadow of neoliberalism our entire working lives. Some social workers are now receiving pay equity settlements which in some cases have seen individuals' pay packets go from \$40k to \$80k per year. A Public Service Pay Adjustment campaign led by the PSA has led to pay increases for all union members. Unsurprisingly, an

extraordinary increase in union membership accompanied that campaign (so the PSA now has about 90,000 members, having experienced roughly a 5,000 person increase over the last year). My own workplace, Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage, now has 70% union density, up from about 50% a couple of years ago. Well done to union organisers thinking strategically across unions and industries to support one another, and the fight for pay equity for all.

Of course it's not all rosy, but it's important to acknowledge the gains as well as the ongoing struggles, and I've certainly seen a shift in my working life over the last 30 years (I started work at 15 at Foodtown, the year the Employment Contracts Act kicked in). My experience of seeing little to no union presence in my early workplaces, to working alongside active union members spanning the generations over the last couple of years is really encouraging to me.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou, it's wonderful to see you all, and those online. Thank you for supporting the Labour History Project, and for all your various contributions.

Dr Emma-Jean Kelly.

The Bert Roth Award for Labour History 2023

Jared Davidson

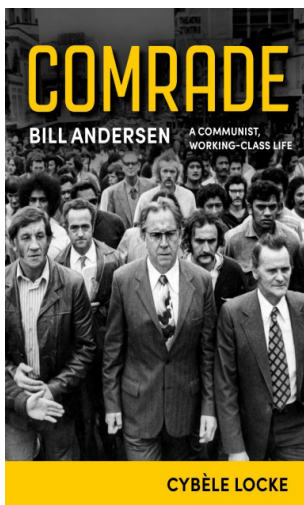
The Bert Roth Award for Labour History, named for the late historian Herbert Roth, is presented annually by the Labour History Project. It is awarded to the work that best depicts the history of work and resistance in New Zealand published in the previous calendar year.

The judges this year were Claire-Louise McCurdy, Mary Roberts-Schirato and Jared Davidson, with support from Grace Millar (who abstained from any decision making).

We take a broad perspective on the definition of labour history, including non-paid work, and pose the following questions:

- How well does the work reveal exploitation and people's efforts to challenge exploitation?
- Does it give voice to those whose histories remain out of view or marginal to mainstream history?
- Is it well written or presented and is the work accessible to the public?

2023 SHORTLIST



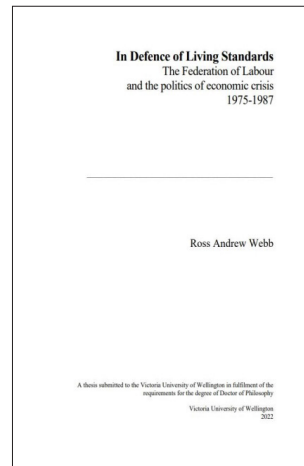
Comrade: Bill Andersen – A Communist, Working-Class Life by Cybèle Locke (Bridget Williams Books)

A union member as a teenager and Communist Party member by his twenties, Bill Andersen played a significant role in both union and national politics from the 1960s to the 1990s. Cybèle Locke's *Comrade* draws a detailed picture of how his political convictions developed, informing both his working and private lives. The

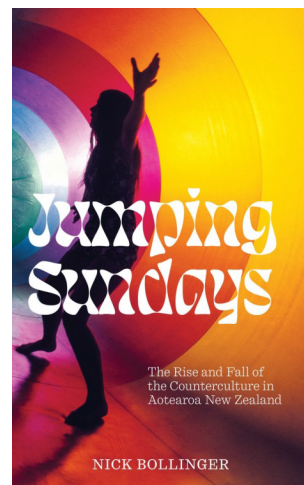
forces that shaped Andersen's life as a working-class communist in New Zealand are gone but the story is an important one, both in relation to its own historical time and as a way of thinking about the politics of labour today.

In Defence of Living Standards: The Federation of Labour and the Politics of Economic Crisis, 1975-1987 by Ross Webb (Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington).

https://openaccess.wgtn.ac.nz/articles/thesis/In_Defence_of_Living_Standards_The_Federation_of_Labour_and_the_politics_of_economic_crisis_1975-1987/20304423/1 "



Departing from existing accounts of the Federation of Labour in novel and important ways, this thesis charts the FOL's response to economic crisis as it unfolded. Rather than viewing the period as having an inevitable outcome, Ross Webb threads archival research and oral history together to highlight the debates, ideas and struggles as an open-ended labour history – one that sheds new light on a well-canvassed story while emphasising the importance of participatory union politics.



Jumping Sundays: The Rise and Fall of the Counterculture in Aotearoa New Zealand by Nick Bollinger (Auckland University Press)

Jumping Sundays is an extremely readable social history of the counterculture in Aotearoa New Zealand. Weaving together multiple types of sources and experiences while attuned to the international context, Nick Bollinger charts a period of rapid social change –

including feminist movements, the class politics of the Progressive Youth Movement, anti-war marches, numerous communes (and the question of Māori land rights), local music, and much more. Its design and visual aesthetic complement the content perfectly.



Keystrokes Per Minute by Storycollective (Podcast series)

This nine-episode podcast tells the story of workers in the Public Service typing pools – work that has been transformed by technology and economic restructuring.

The podcast originated out of an oral history project and centres workers' voices and stories. The podcast gives a visceral sense of this work with the combination of people's own voices and the sounds of typewriters.



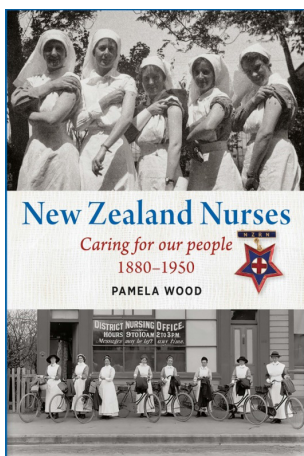
Making Space: A History of New Zealand Women in Architecture edited by Elizabeth Cox (Massey University Press)

Making Space is a great contribution to two aspects of New Zealand history: the history of architecture as a profession and the history of architecture as a presence in the built environment. In

addition to these histories, this beautifully produced book edited by Elizabeth Cox (who also contributed 13 of the 48 chapters), provides us with a detailed and fascinating account of how women slowly, and often with difficulty, became significant contributors to this field as it rapidly professionalised throughout the twentieth century.

'Māori Workers in Colonial New South Wales, c.1803-1840' by Rohan Howitt (paper, *History Workshop Journal*, 2022)

In this excellent paper, Rohan Howitt complicates the histories of indigenous mobility by charting the lives and relationships of Māori workers in colonial New South Wales. Rather than approaching these workers as individuals (such as travellers or seamen), Howitt examines the experiences of working-class Māori as a subaltern collective, highlighting the long-term nature of this community and their presence in places like The Rocks in Sydney. Rich with examples drawn from the colonial press, this paper considerably adds to our knowledge of expatriate Māori labour in the pre-Tiriti period.



New Zealand Nurses: Caring For Our People 1880-1950 by Pamela Wood (Otago University Press)

The changing relationship of the British Empire to 'its southern edge' as the imported Nightingale nursing system became a distinctive and autonomous New Zealand nursing profession, is central to this book. It is manifest in the increasing tension between the public's view of 'heroic, self-sacrificing,

ministering angels' and the nurses' self-definition as 'well-trained professionals'. Their voices are used to convey the unrelenting emotional work, physical labour and professional knowledge and

skill called for in hospital wards, back block farms, city slums, and the natural and man-made disasters of earthquakes and war.



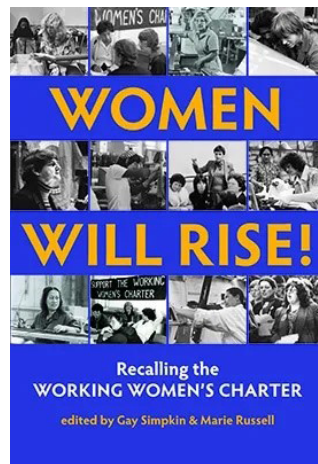
Takeout Kids directed by Julie Zhu (Documentary series)

These 15 minute 'fly-on-the-wall' videos document the everyday lives of four young people growing up in their

immigrant parents' restaurants and takeaway shops. Their parents work long, hard days, seven days a week. They all juggle shop work, schoolwork, homework and housework, and multiple languages. The director leaves it to the viewer to ask whether these 'takeout kids' will have different lives than those of their parents.

'Women and the New Zealand office, 1945-1972: Keystrokes to a rewarding life?' by Sarah Christie (Thesis)

Sarah Christie's thesis opens with a clear statement of the importance of the work she is writing about: 'The work of female clerical staff of the post-World War II decades is obvious within the historical record. Screeds of immaculately typed pages, with their neatly justified margins and carefully tabulated lines of figures, are the historical artefacts of government departments and commercial enterprises'. The strength of this thesis is that it shows how the limited work options for women in this period structured their lives and how women navigated these limited options to build the lives they wanted.



Women Will Rise! Recalling the Working Women's Charter edited by Gay Simpkin and Marie Russell (Steele Roberts)

This collection of essays shows the value of a charter as a campaigning tool and the importance of this Charter's addressing of the implications of domestic and reproductive labour for conditions of employment. It details, clause by clause, what has changed since 1980

when the Charter was accepted by the Federation of Labour, with particular attention to the histories of sexual harassment and pay equity. It also documents how feminists fought for change, the time and work that went into firstly articulating, then communicating 'a collective strategy to fight for a better world', and the effectiveness of unions as a context for organizing.

WINNING COMMENTS

As you can see, the shortlist is a stellar one and was especially hard to judge. However, there were two works that especially fit the award criteria. One is a more traditional labour history – a

biography of a trade union leader no less – but brimming with scholarship, story and collective struggle. Its use of oral history and the ability to place people in their wider context is a hallmark of great social biography. The second falls into the activist and History Workshop tradition, where the participants who made history come to reflect on, and intimately document, that history. Filling a gaping hole in the literature, this book stretches back and forward across time in evocative and important ways. Both of these works showcase the rich approaches to labour history, and people’s efforts to challenge exploitation.

With this in mind, we are pleased to announce that the joint winners of the 2023 Bert Roth Award for Labour History are Cybèle Locke for *Comrade*, and Marie Russell and her fellow contributors for *Women Will Rise!*

Both will also receive the full amount of the award courtesy of the LHP Committee, who recognise the outstanding nature of these two books.

Articles

State of Emergency

New Zealand, 1940s-1950s

Russell Campbell, from his upcoming book: *Down Tools! Strikes on Screen.*

In April 1949 the Canadian Seamen's Union global strike reached New Zealand. When the crew of the *Tridale*, berthed in Wellington, refused to take the ship to sea, they were fined and then, under the centuries-old British Shipping Act, jailed for four weeks at hard labour. None of the men buckled. In solidarity, New Zealand seamen would not man the blacked vessel, and watersiders would not load her. The *Tridale* was tied up for five months before the strike was called off.

Amidst mounting Cold War anxieties, the dispute brought home to the authorities the nation's vulnerability to disruption on the waterfront. The episode afforded government and big employers the opportunity to step up their anti-communist rhetoric, and undoubtedly hardened their determination to crush trade union militancy. In that year a record number of days were lost through strikes, including 28 stoppages on the wharves. The outbreak in 1950 of the Korean War, to which New Zealand sent troops, served to heighten the tensions. The following year, industrial conflict was to reach a climax which engulfed the nation.

The Auckland carpenters' dispute of 1949 was triggered by an Arbitration Court award which granted a minimal wage increase along with the abolition of an established traveling time allowance. The ruling was clearly influenced by the stabilization policy of the Labour Government, in power since 1935 and hand-in-glove with the conservative leadership of the Federation of Labour (FOL). The policy clamped severe constraints on wage increases while failing to contain price inflation, and led to growing anger among workers as their purchasing power was eroded.

The Auckland branch of the NZ Carpenters' Union, led by Roy Stanley, a member of the Communist Party (CPNZ), found the ruling unjust. The great majority of the 900 employers in the area agreed, paid the wage increase claimed by the union and retained the travel allowance. But some thirty, the bigger firms, balked. With discussions between the interested parties failing to resolve the issue and the Minister of Labour refusing to set up a tribunal to consider the case, the carpenters began a go-slow in February against the recalcitrant companies. In retaliation, the Master Builders' Association, backed up by the Chamber of Commerce,

the Employers' Association, and the Manufacturers' Association, instituted a total lockout against Auckland carpenters, the vast majority of whom, under the legislated system of compulsory unionism, were members of the union.

The dispute escalated further when watersiders, railwaymen, and drivers supported the carpenters by boycotting firms which refused to employ Carpenters' Union members. For a short while, the nation witnessed the greatest display of industrial solidarity since the massive maritime dispute of 1913. But under pressure from government and without endorsement from the rightwing FOL executive, which denounced the strike as a communist plot, the movement could not be sustained. Towards the end of March the Carpenters' Union in the Auckland area was deregistered, and a strikebreaking union with scarcely disguised employer backing set up.

Loyally committed to their own organization, the carpenters fought on, vowing to continue the go-slow. But action tailed off. The coup de grâce came in October, when legislation was passed which had the effect of compelling all Auckland carpenters to join the new union. A communist leader had been forced out of office and a militant organization smashed.

Fighting Back (Cecil Holmes, 1949, 26 minutes) was shot and released during the struggle. Holmes was a National Film Unit director who had been fired the previous year after being publicly exposed and denounced by the government as a communist stirrer in his union, the Public Service Association. *Fighting Back*, "produced by the workers of Auckland for workers everywhere", was the first New Zealand film to document an industrial dispute.

Equipped with a punchy, partisan commentary and utilizing dramatization and re-enactment as well as on-the-spot reportage, *Fighting Back* presents the carpenters' dispute as one more episode in the long-running class conflict between bosses and workers. Like the gold miners of the 1912 Waihi strike, a veteran of that legendary battle argues, the carpenters are up against a government that is assisting employers to cut wages and form a scab union. This is all the more deplorable in that it is a Labour Government, with

ministers who were once militant socialists.

Juxtaposing images of a wealthy Auckland suburb with slum housing, quantifying soaring company profits, exposing the nefarious tactics of the employers, and documenting the work of carpenters' organizers and the boycott actions taken in solidarity by other unionists, *Fighting Back* reveals the forces at play in the conflict and honours the rank-and-file workers who took on the might of the State. "It is struggles like these," the narration defiantly concludes, "that shall reshape the world."

In the general election of November 1949, the Labour Government was defeated, to be replaced by a rightwing National Party administration led by Sidney Holland.



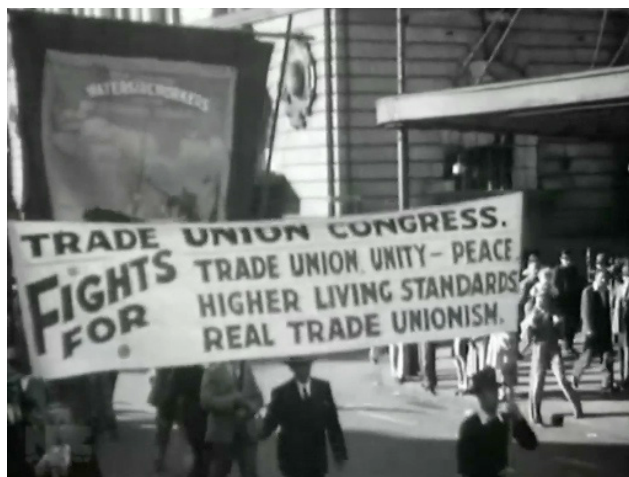
Sid Holland

This did not affect the position of the FOL executive, dominated by its ex-communist vice-president Fintan Patrick Walsh, which aligned itself with the new government in a continuation of the campaign to stamp out militancy in the labour movement. The crushing of the carpenters was to serve as a dress rehearsal for an assault on the NZ Waterside Workers' Union (WWU), under the combative leadership of president Jock Barnes and secretary Toby Hill.



Jock Barnes and Tony Hill

Forestalling their expulsion, the WWU and other leftwing unions withdrew from the FOL in April 1950 to form a rival organization, the Trade Union Congress (TUC). Predictably, the rebels were denigrated as communists, although neither Barnes nor Hill were Party members. The split in the union movement afforded the government and the shipowners the opportunity they craved to strike a killer blow against the wharfies and their militant allies in the TUC – but it would not be easy.



TUC banner

In February 1951 the WWU was offered an unacceptably low pay rise, and the employers refused to negotiate. The watersiders began an overtime ban in protest. The shipowners retaliated by instituting a lockout at ports nationwide. When the union did not back down, the government defined the workers' action as a strike and declared a state of emergency. Draconian regulations infringing civil liberties were passed. The WWU was deregistered and its assets seized, and servicemen brought in to work the wharves. Other unions took strike action in protest and solidarity – seamen, cooks and stewards, miners, drivers, cement workers, hydro construction workers, meatworkers, railwaymen – but the government, backed by the FOL, remained obdurate. All approaches by the WWU to reach a settlement were rebuffed. New port unions – scab unions – were set up. After five months, the wharfies' resistance was finally crushed and the country's greatest industrial upheaval of the twentieth century came to an end. Barnes and Hill, along with many other militant watersiders, were blacklisted, and the once-powerful national union annihilated. The TUC faded away. Holland's Government was returned after a snap election, and Walsh's domination of the union movement consolidated for a further twelve years.

Locked Out: Jock Barnes 25 Years On (George Andrews, 1976, 32 minutes) is a television personality profile which concentrates on the events of 1951. While allowing Barnes ample opportunity to state his point of view, it is by no means hagiographic: the anonymous narrator opines that "the attitudes he represented did little to soften the bitterness or the drawn-out nature of the struggle" and "that same unyielding quality distanced Jock Barnes

from the men he represented.” Revealingly, a port employers’ representative virtually admits that the union was provoked into taking action that would lead to its destruction: the “chaos” on the waterfront “couldn’t be allowed to continue” and “the strike was rather like a surgical operation – it was necessary and painful, but it to a large extent did correct the problem.”

A measured assessment is offered by Jim Knox, a locked-out wharfie who by the time of filming had become secretary of the FOL. Barnes, he asserts, “was hard to talk to then. He had set his mind on getting what the watersiders had claimed... And if you spoke to Jock about it, and he felt that you were sort of ready to walk away from the struggle, then he severely criticized you, criticized your loyalty.” Barnes’s leadership qualities, in Knox’s view, represented a direct threat to Walsh, a man driven by power and known for his vindictiveness: “If Barnes led us to receive what we believed was a fair and justifiable wage increase, then Barnes would be looked upon as a strong trade union leader in the trade union movement of New Zealand. That didn’t do Walsh’s mind any good, because he wanted to be the one and only leader in this country, in the national trade union movement.” Walsh, Barnes tells us, “would be the biggest gangster, rat and renegade that the trade union movement in this country has ever seen”. (Having

died in 1963, Walsh was deprived of the opportunity to respond in kind.)

Walsh was the president of the New Zealand Seamen’s Union, and his role in the 1951 conflict is again pinpointed in *A Century of Struggle* (Rod Prosser, Alister Barry, Russell Campbell, 1981, 40 minutes), a history of that union. As the documentary recounts, seamen took strike action and remained solid to the end even though their own leader “was collaborating in the repression”. In the segment of the film devoted to the dispute, emphasis is placed on stipulating the details of the emergency regulations, which amounted to the imposition of a police state: “Police could arrest without warrant, prohibit meetings. They had unrestricted power of entry. Trial by jury was jettisoned. And under the regulations you were guilty until proven innocent. It was illegal to picket, to distribute leaflets, to report the workers’ side of the dispute, against the law to give food to the families of strikers.”

The story told in *Shattered Dreams* (Dean Parker and Francis Wevers, 1990, 46 minutes), like that in the Canadian *Betrayed*, is one of disappointed expectations for ex-servicemen in the postwar world. The defeat of fascism had brought hopes of peace and plenty, which were to go unfulfilled. The documentary outlines the background to the 1951 upheaval in some detail: the continuation



Confrontation in Cuba Street, Wellington.

of wartime stabilization measures, support for the government and moderate unionists by the FOL executive, US influence and intensifying anti-communist rhetoric, and in response, the carpenters' strike and the wave of union militancy associated with the formation of the TUC.

A particular strength of the film is its depiction of the WWU as a powerful grassroots union, with decisions made by the rank and file at mass stopwork meetings ("It's then my job to carry out their policy," says Barnes). Collective solidarity in the union is enhanced by its cultural and sporting activities – the annual picnic (we see footage of one attended by 11,200 people), theatrical groups, Highland pipe bands, cricket teams. The union's monthly paper, the *Transport Worker*, is a lively publication with contributions from members. Women are actively involved, too: "Yes you're right, Mrs Watersider!" declares the enthusiastic commentator, in a clip from a newsreel of the time.

In coverage of the climactic dispute, interviewees are given scope to question the WWU's decision making. Bill Richards, the leftwing Dunedin Tramways Union president who had unseated Walsh in the vote for the FOL vice-presidency in 1947 (only to be defeated the following year), argues: "We could see that the wharfies were making a lot of mistakes, which they were tactically, and with Jock Barnes you had to live with that, Jock was so unpredictable, and felt he was not answerable to anybody and everybody...." Dick Scott, the *Transport Worker* editor (and at the time a CPNZ member), contends that numerous people would have made the suggestion that it was time to pull back, but "Jock really wasn't a person you could easily broach that subject to" – he would consider it "traitor talk". (In his history *151 Days*, Scott asserts that "given Communist leadership, the lockout and supporting strikes would have ended months earlier than they did".)



Dick Scott

Bates, 2001, 72 minutes), made for the 50th anniversary. Its interpretation of events differs little from that of earlier films, but the narrative is enriched by the incorporation of interviews with a wide array of people who took part, their memories still vivid and feelings raw. There are watersiders from Auckland, New Plymouth, Whanganui, Wellington, Lyttelton; miners from Ōhura and Huntly in the north, Stockton and Denniston in the south; journalists, photographers, Navy men, wives and daughters.

But Barnes is granted the last word. "The alternative," he argues, with passion, "was to see your conditions go overboard"; the fight was essential, "otherwise we were going to give them a completely bloodless victory".

The most substantial documentary on the dispute is *1951* (John

The emotion-laced anecdotes they tell breathe life into the historical record. The hurt felt by a New Plymouth wharfie, being labelled traitor by his prime minister. The outrage of Mangakino hydro workers, told that the Auckland watersiders' delegate come to ask for their support would be arrested if he opened his mouth (they voted to strike immediately). The pride of the underground artist, recalling his linocut caricature of Walsh – with a head made of rats. The gratitude of the striking Huntly miner, getting up in the morning to find a bag of spuds on his doorstep. The terror and relief of Toby Hill's daughter, recounting the sabotage of their car that almost killed the family. The amusement experienced by the Navy rating observing his captain declare, "In the name of King George the Sixth, I commandeer your lorry for the duration of this present emergency." The quiet satisfaction of the then 18-year-old meatworker, relating how she wasn't frightened speaking in both Māori and English to a crowd of 17,000 in the Auckland Domain, with a speech written for her by her father.



Bill Andersen

It is the communist wharfie Bill Andersen, later to become a prominent union leader, who provides the overall perspective. "There was no way back," he argues, implicitly vindicating the stance taken by Jock Barnes. "There was no way the waterside workers would have anything to do with the Federation of Labour after what they did to us. ... And I think that the

government knew that, and the shipowners knew that. So it was a matter of whether we just lay down and let them walk over us, use our face for a doormat, or whether we took them on." The 8,000 men of the WWU took them on, 7,000 other workers supported them in solidarity strikes, and the documentaries devoted to their struggle pay tribute to their defiance.

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From Crew to the Chain Gang: Seamen, Prison Labour and 'Improvement' in Nineteenth Century New Zealand

Jared Davidson



Lyttelton in 1865. At Officers Point, seven of the *Tudor's* crew scratch at the cliff face, the dust and scree a constant companion, their tools a rudimentary set of pickaxes, carts and dynamite. The men had signed on in Liverpool, refused duty on board and were sentenced to hard labour in Lyttelton, where they found themselves improving a harbour.² Two years earlier, a commission of inquiry had recommended the construction of a breakwater – increased shipping would bring prosperity to the province. So, for close to a decade, gangs of imprisoned men were marched out of gaol and put to work bludgeoning a headland. By September 1866, imprisoned workers had moved over 21,000 cubic metres

of earth, used 2,000 kilograms of explosive powder and fired 877 shots into the hillside. The rubble became a breakwater, and the breakwater became Gladstone Pier in 1874. Today it services a major international port.

That imprisoned crew of the *Tudor* were part of the hard labour gang is unsurprising. In the maritime world that was nineteenth-century New Zealand, much of its Pākehā population were seamen. Around 1,500 overseas ships visited New Zealand ports in the 1840s, 3,000 in the 1850s, and over 8,000 in each decade of the 1860s and 1870s. That's around half a million seamen.³

For the New Zealand state, this transient motley crew performed an additional service in the form of unfree labour. Barred from importing convicts by the British government and faced with an 'idle' environment that, from a colonial-capitalist viewpoint, demanded 'improvement', the state forced prisoners out of gaol and onto the colony's nascent streets and public works.

In this paper I touch on how imprisoned seamen contributed to the making of nineteenth century New Zealand, from their class struggle on board to their unfree labour on land. The shift from crew to the chain gang (and back again) also shows how labour is a continuum of coercion rather than separate worlds of free and unfree. A key thread within this continuum is the capitalist imperative of improvement and its injunction against idleness.⁴

Improvement

As a social relation that is premised on (and reproduced through) a

accumulation-capital, ed.) to colonialism. Land, prison labour and the ideology of improvement is crucial to this reproduction.

Today, when we think of improvement we usually think of gradual betterment – of making something better. Its original meaning was very different, and points to the dialectical nature of capitalism and prisons. Both were deeply concerned with the inverse of improvement: *idleness*. Rooted in the Germanic word for *worthless*, to be idle is to squander something that could be turning a profit. In England during the sixteenth century 'improvement' meant to do something for profit, especially to make profit from land.⁵ According to one dictionary published in 1613, *improve* meant to raise rents and an *improver* made land productive and profitable.⁶ As Brenna Bhandar writes, improvement 'produced and reflected new conceptions of value in relation to land, goods, commodities, and the value of human life.'⁷ This imperative to create and constantly improve property is evident in the birth of agrarian



Improvement – convicts awaiting transport

logic of separation, capital must turn all of life into work for its own reproduction, from care work to cheap nature (for explanation of this term see <https://www.historicalmaterialism.org/book-review/resuscitating-dialectic-moores-capitalism-web-life-ecology-and->

capitalism and in ongoing settler colonialism. Land and territory outside of capitalist social property relations were deemed to be waste, and in need of improving. So, too, was idle labour power.⁸

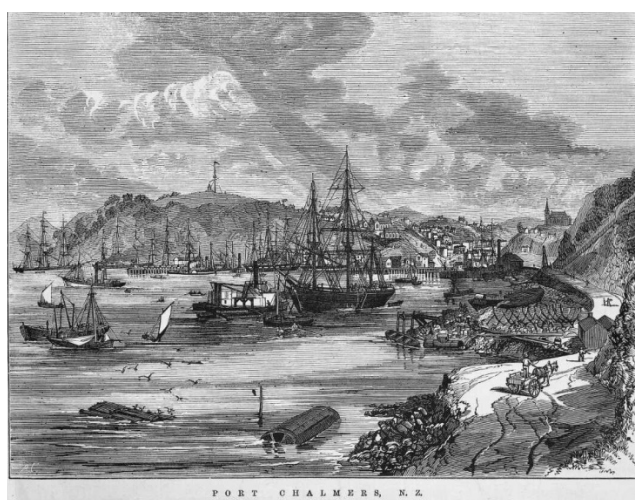
Hence the attack on idleness and waste. As Jessie Goldstein

argues, waste ‘became a dual injunction against not working for a wage in the case of people, and not being worked upon by wage labourers – not being improved – in the case of land.’ In nineteenth-century New Zealand, so-called unimproved spaces were simultaneously landscapes of wasted potential and pregnant with the possibility of profit. At the same time, ‘idleness in prison meant waste’, and according to the criminologist John Pratt, ‘waste, in this early colonial society, was more criminal than crime itself.’⁹ The gendered use of unfree labour outside of the gaol – and the gendered work of women within it – addressed both.¹⁰

The use of prisoners for colonial improvement was also heightened by labour shortages, inadequate and overcrowded gaols, and a prohibition on importing convicts set by the Colonial Office. So, to meet the needs of New Zealand’s commodity frontier, incarcerated men shuffled out of gaol, were harried onto hulks or ferried by rail to a range of prison worksites. ‘There was too much to be done on the frontier fringes to think of leaving untapped labour behind some hastily erected fences,’ wrote the historian Robert Burnett.¹¹ In colonial New Zealand, the insatiable need for outdoor labour was the overriding imperative.¹² And that included the labour of imprisoned seamen.

From crew to the chain gang

Seafarers were prominent among the state’s early prison population. Between 1841 – 1844, an average of 300 prisoners passed through New Zealand gaols each year.¹³ If they weren’t unpicking the oakum needed to plug the hulls of ships, then they were put to work outdoors. A Wellington gaol return for July 1842 recorded 18 hard-labour prisoners, nine of whom were seamen making and widening drains and forging roads from Lambton Quay to The Terrace.¹⁴ An 1844 return for Auckland Gaol showed eight seamen at work building stone jetties – an entire pirate crew, in fact. The *Hannah* was being fitted up for a whaling expedition in the Chatham Islands when it was seized in a blaze of gunfire. The pirated ship was eventually captured off the Coromandel coast and its crew imprisoned – including the carpenter John Bacon, a native of Kennebec County in Maine who claimed no part in the mutiny.¹⁵



Busy maritime scene – Port Chalmers

The number of seamen in gaol remained steady as the volume of transnational shipping increased and the Merchant Shipping Act 1854 came into force. Seamen made up a fifth of the country’s prison population between 1860 and 1864 (2,810 of the 12,938 people committed to gaol, or 21.7 per cent).¹⁶ In the southern port of Dunedin between 1851 and 1861, 355 of the 677 prisoners were seamen.¹⁷ Lyttelton also experienced high numbers of detained deckhands. In August 1858, its prison was overrun with crew from two recently arrived ships. In a gaol designed for a maximum of 21 prisoners, the 18 seamen brought the number to 34.¹⁸

The unfree labour of seamen was extremely useful for the developing colony. They joined other prisoners making roads, levelling hills, draining swamps, diverting waterways, building bridges and retaining walls, creating foundations for schools and universities, forging harbour forts, planting trees and maintaining cemeteries, reserves and botanical gardens. In the soon-to-be capital of Wellington in April 1861, progress was attributed to ‘the wholesale criminality of the crew of the *John Bunyan*. They have been made very serviceable in forming and repairing much of the streets.’¹⁹ In 1863, over half of Lyttelton’s 335 inmates were seamen at work on its main roads, drains and retaining walls, while in Auckland, nine of the 30 hard labour prisoners recorded in October 1851 were sailors making roads.²⁰ Two decades later, seamen from the *Carisbrook Castle* were quarrying at Auckland’s Mount Eden Stockade, where they were joined by crew of the *John Rennie* who’d refused to obey a lawful command.²¹ The stone they quarried was used for buildings, ballast for train tracks and rubble for roads, all sold to local councils, private contractors and government departments at reduced rates.

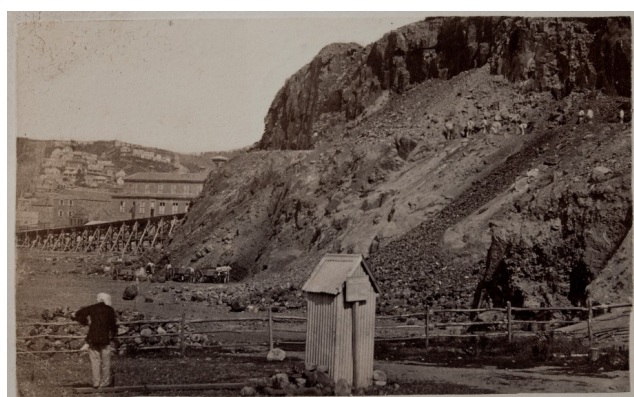
In Dunedin, gangs were based on prison hulks that could be moved about Otago Harbour. The hulk *Sarah and Esther* was declared a prison in December 1874 and fitted up especially for runaway seamen. Not only did they make roads on both sides of Otago Harbour that are still used today, they also formed the massive Aramoana Mole, protecting shipping and adding to the city’s commercial viability.²² From October 1867, imprisoned seamen also manned Dunedin’s dredge, whose work reclaimed a harbour and made way for a thriving portside city.²³ As well as their work at Officers Point, in Lyttelton imprisoned crew like those of the *Westland*, charged for desertion and embezzling cargo, made roads, reclaimed land and laboured on other harbour works in the 1870s and 1880s.

As late as the 1890s, seamen were forced to forge roads and the colony’s harbour forts. Irish seaman Edward Williamson laboured at Devonport’s North Head, digging gun emplacements and underground bunkers; an Italian seaman named Emanuel Silva and an African-American seaman named John Williams helped establish a track at Milford Sound, now the shopfront of New Zealand tourism and billed as the finest walk in the world; Nils Jacobsen, a red-bearded seaman from Finland, battled heavy seas and loose scree to build Rocks Road in Nelson.

A continuum of coercion

Improvement and the imposition of carceral spaces and carceral work regimes point to ‘unfree labour as a relational category’, one that forms a wider continuum of coercion. As Jairus Banaji put it in ‘The Fictions of Free Labour’, wage labour is also subject to coercion. This springs from the reproduction of capitalist social relations and a ‘set of legal rights, privileges and powers that place one person in a position to force another person to choose between labour and some more disagreeable alternative.’²⁴ For Robert Steinfeld, free and forced labour don’t exist in separate worlds. ‘It is more accurate to think about labour relations in terms of degrees of coercive pressure that can be brought to bear to elicit labour.’²⁵ A growing body of literature explores how all forms of capitalist labour – whether free, indentured or unfree, waged or unwaged – involve a set of disagreeable alternatives that are pervasively shaped by law, gender and racialized violence.

The working lives of seamen are a good example. As well as their onshore experience of class and crimping (being impressed into service), many seamen were ex-convicts that had already rubbed up against the carceral state in Europe or its colonies. As David Haines and Jonathan West note, convicts and seamen in the Tasman world shared multiple overlapping identities. ‘All transported convicts knew something of the sea, and of ships and sailing. One in five early convicts was a seaman’, and ‘seafaring skills were in demand in Sydney, so former convicts possessing them rose to prominence.’²⁶ Indigenous seafarers and crewmen of



Bell Hill

colour also brought their own experiences of coercion with them.²⁷

This broader experience was compounded by the nature of maritime labour. Historians such as Marcus Rediker illustrate how seamen were not only subjected to the discipline of the wage – prefiguring the industrial factory – they also experienced legal and extra-legal punishment specific to their industry.²⁸ Because of a ship’s articles, the fixed-term employment contracts that bound seamen to the ship’s master or owner, the enacting of workplace perks (otherwise known as theft), as well as assault, disobeying orders, withdrawing one’s labour through desertion, strikes and other forms of work refusal were all punishable by hard labour. As ‘the judicial dice was usually loaded against them’, resistance to drunken captains, dangerous working conditions or long, tedious hours were

punished in the courts with vigour.²⁹ Resistance also met swift retribution onboard, through violence, manacles and confinement. Class struggle contributed to the regular imprisonment of seamen, complicating tidy divisions of free and unfree.

Another blurring of the free/unfree binary was the use of prisons as labour clearing houses. Neill Atkinson shows how captains and local merchants, fearing their crew would jump ship, favoured imprisonment due to the difficulty of finding replacements and the potential for costly delays.³⁰ A crew’s stint at hard labour matched the time needed for a ship to refit and make ready to sail: indeed, a rider added to the terms of a seaman’s sentence allowed captains to collect his imprisoned crew when required.³¹ Take the hands of the *Indiana*, whose work refusal in 1858 saw them landed in the Lyttelton gang until their ship was reprovisioned.³² Or the eight men of the *Isabella Hercus* who refused to leave port until their seriously undermanned vessel found more crew. Sent to Dunedin Gaol in February 1856, four of the prisoners went aboard a month later when the ship was ready to sail. However, four refused and served out their three-month sentence.³³

These acts of working-class self-activity highlight the scope for agency within a world of coercion.³⁴ For example, a crew’s dislike of a particular captain, the desire to seek better wages and conditions under a different master or article, or to migrate by jumping ship meant some took their chance with the temporary hardship of hard labour. In December 1852, the commander of the government brig *Victoria* complained that all but one of his crew had deserted in Auckland, ‘in consequence of the high wages given to seamen out of this port.’³⁵ The colonial secretary fired off an urgent letter to the sheriff of Auckland Gaol: were there any imprisoned seamen willing to ship out? The two seamen in his charge preferred prison and declined, forcing the brig’s commander to raise his rates.³⁶ Likewise, five imprisoned seamen in Wellington Gaol were offered the chance to return to their vessel and shave two months off their sentence. The men refused.³⁷ In Napier, five crew of the *Winchester* chose forced labour over returning to their vessel; three months later, six of the *Bebington’s* crew also defied their captain and rebuffed the offer to reboard. ‘Napier seems to present wonderful attractions to English sailors’, quipped a reporter.³⁸

Conclusion

Prisons were said to be run like a ship for good reason. Hierarchy, violence and coercion stalked the decks and shaped the seagoing experience of sailors. As Peter Methven notes, prisons like Wellington’s Terrace Gaol were managed as though they were ships, ‘with strict adherence to the regulations and heavy punishment for infractions.’³⁹ The work refusal of prisoners were known as mutinies not strikes, and like seamen, prisoners were confined and flogged for insubordination.

Yet as I hope this paper has shown, such comparisons mask a deeper relationship embedded in the imperatives of improvement and a continuum of coercion. Prisons and their unfree work regimes were part of colonisation’s quest to bring unruly bodies and the land itself to order – to transform and ‘improve’ Indigenous space. As

Clare Anderson, Hamish Maxwell-Stewart and Michael Quinlan, and others note, 'by appreciating the importance of convicts for expansion and colonization,' the history of punishment 'was not so much characterized by a developing immobilization of prisoners within the walls of jails but by their ongoing geographical mobilization as forced labour.'⁴⁰ Faced with coercion on and off the ship, the example of seamen shows how this labour was fluid, not fixed.⁴¹

Despite its absence in New Zealand historiographies, the use of prison labour was crucial to colonisation, stamping an indelible mark on the social and material development of the colony and its infrastructure. Like the prisoners peeking out at us from the edge of this Napier scene, it may be a hidden history, but prison labour is deeply connected with the flow of people and profit through the modern-day city or port, as well as the productive force of the sea itself.

² The men's names were John King, George Smith, Robert Moore, James Henry, William McKenzie, William Stirlick [?] and Thomas Farley. They were sentenced to six weeks imprisonment with hard labour except for James Henry, who received 12 weeks. See the entry for 14 October 1865 in 'Lyttelton Record of Proceedings', CAHX 20591 CH132 Box 640/ 640, Archives New Zealand Christchurch Office.

³ James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century*, Penguin, Auckland, 1996, p.428.

⁴ For more on these themes, see Jared Davidson, *Blood and Dirt: Prison Labour and the Making of New Zealand*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2023. For more on seamen and coercion in a New Zealand context, see Conrad Bollinger, *Against the Wind: The Story of the New Zealand Seamen's Union, Seamen's Union of New Zealand*, Wellington, 1968; Neill Atkinson, *Crew Culture: New Zealand Seafarers Under Sail and Steam*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, 2001; David Grant, *Jagged Seas: The New Zealand Seamen's Union, 1879-2003*, Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 2012; Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2012, especially Chapter 6, 'Sealers, Whalers and the Entanglements of Empire'; David Haines and Jonathan West, 'Crew Cultures in the Tasman World', in Frances Steel (ed.), *New Zealand and the Sea: Historical Perspectives*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2018. Not to mention an older historiography on whalers and sealers, such as work by Robert McNab and others. James Belich has also written about crew cultures and their work on the colonial frontier in *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century*, Penguin, Auckland, 1996. For women aboard whaling vessels in New Zealand waters, see Joan Druett, *Petticoat Whalers: Whaling Wives at Sea, 1820-1920*, Collins New Zealand, Auckland, 1991.

⁵ Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View* (London, New York: Verso, 2017), p.106; Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement: Information and Material Progress in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford University Press, 2015), p.4; Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford University Press, 2015), p.114.

⁶ Slack, *The Invention of Improvement*, p.5; Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism*, p.106. Improvement, wrote cultural historian Raymond Williams, was a keyword in the development of agrarian capitalism and its market compulsions. Williams, *Keywords*, p.114.

⁷ Brenna Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land and Racial Regimes of Ownership*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2018, p.72.

⁸ This radical upheaval in social property relations not only divorced people from their means but contributed to the rise of houses of corrections, prison hulks and penal transportation. Contrary to Foucault's 'Great Confinement', houses of correction and the prisons that followed didn't just confine the poor, they mobilised them to offer their labour power for sale on the market. As Marc Neocleous writes, their 'mobilizing work was the mobilization of work.' Neocleous, *The Fabrication of Social Order*, p.20.

⁹ John Pratt, *Punishment in a Perfect Society: The New Zealand Penal System, 1840-1939*, Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1997.

¹⁰ Much more could be said about the role of gender in this paper. For example, the public work of male prisoners was simply not possible without the domestic work of incarcerated women. Confined indoors and given the dreary work of washing, mending and making, cleaning, sweeping and scrubbing, women prisoners kept the place in order but, more importantly, saved gaolers from having to hire cleaners or hold male prisoners back for domestic chores. In other words, their work reproduced the labour power needed for outdoor labour.

¹¹ Robert I.M. Burnett, *Hard Labour, Hard Fare and a Hard Bed: New Zealand's Search for Its Own Penal Philosophy*, National Archives of New Zealand, Wellington, 1995, p.66.

¹² Pratt, *Punishment in a Perfect Society*, p.85.

¹³ Nationally there were 309 prisoners in gaols in 1841, 385 in 1842, 305 in 1843 and 231 in 1844. *Blue Books of Statistics, 1841 and 1842*, ACGO 8344 Box 2 and

3, Archives New Zealand. For a vivid description of Auckland's early gaols, see Mark Derby, *Rock College: An Unofficial History of Mount Eden Prison*, Massey University Press, Auckland, 2020.

¹⁴ Return of prisoners confined at the gaol in Wellington, 31 July 1842, enclosed in ACGO 8333 Box 15/ 1842/1537, Archives New Zealand.

¹⁵ 'From: Percival Berry, Sheriff, Auckland Date: 30 June 1844 Subject: Petition from John Bacon 'Hannah' [Schooner] for release from gaol', ACGO 8333 Box33/ 1844/1298, Archives New Zealand. Bacon claimed to be a Baptist by profession and that he left behind a wife and children in Adelaide.

¹⁶ Statistics of New Zealand for 1860-1864, available online at <https://www.stats.govt.nz/indicators-and-snapshots/digitised-collections/19th-century-statistical-publications#statistics-of-new> (accessed March 2023)

¹⁷ Neill Atkinson, *Crew Culture: New Zealand Seafarers Under Sail and Steam*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, 2001, p.102.

¹⁸ Sheriff to Provincial Secretary, 23 August 1858, CAAR 19936 Box CP6/ ICPS 939/1855, Archives New Zealand Christchurch Office.

¹⁹ *Wellington Independent*, 9 April 1861. Said to have launched a mutiny near the New Zealand coast that ended in violence, eight of the crew were imprisoned with hard labour for six months while two of them received a further eighteen months' imprisonment for piracy. Yet their captain, who was charged but never convicted for manslaughter, got away with shooting crewman Daniel McDonald in the forehead and killing him. Addressing the discharged captain, the judge proclaimed: 'I think that the owners of your ship, as well as your passengers have every reason to be grateful for the manner in which you have acted.' *Wellington Independent*, 5 March 1861.

²⁰ Weekly gaol return, 6 October 1851, ACGO 8333 Box 98/ 1851/1964, Archives New Zealand.

²¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 14 September 1875.

²² Mutiny aboard the prison hulk in April 1885 brought an end to this floating prison. See Davidson, *Blood and Dirt*, 77-78.

²³ For more on the development of the harbour, see Heritage New Zealand, 'Dunedin Harbourside Historic Area', *The New Zealand Heritage List Rārangī Kōrero*, <https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/7767> (accessed May 2021).

²⁴ Robert Steinfeld, *Coercion, Contract and Free Labour in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, p.19

²⁵ Steinfeld, *Coercion, Contract and Free Labour in the Nineteenth Century*, p.8

²⁶ David Haines and Jonathan West, 'Crew Cultures in the Tasman World', in Frances Steel (ed.), *New Zealand and the Sea: Historical Perspectives*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2018.

²⁷ See, for example, Lynette Russell, *Roving Mariners: Australian Aboriginal Whalers and Sealers in the Southern Oceans, 1790-1870*, SUNY Press, 2021. For more on Māori involvement in the maritime industry, see Michael J. Stevens, 'Māori History as Maritime History: A View from the Bluff', in Steel (ed.), *New Zealand and the Sea*; Rachel Standfield and Michael J. Stevens, 'New Histories But Old Patterns: Kai Tahu in Australia', in Victoria Stead and Jon Altman (eds), *Labour Lines and Colonial Power: Indigenous and Pacific Islander Labour Mobility in Australia*, ANU Press, Canberra, 2019.

²⁸ Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, p.83.

²⁹ Atkinson, *Crew Culture*, p.105.

³⁰ Atkinson, *Crew Culture*, p.102.

³¹ Atkinson, *Crew Culture*, pp.102-3.

³² *Lyttelton Times*, 11 December 1858.

³³ Atkinson, *Crew Culture*, p.104.

³⁴ As Hamish Maxwell-Stewart and Michael Quinlan note, 'the question of agency and resistance is not just something to be added to the narrative of unfree labour, its nature and extent can shape fundamental understandings of labour history, if not history more generally'. *Unfree Workers: Insubordination and Resistance in Convict Australia, 1788-1860*, Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore, 2022, p.12.

³⁵ Commander of "Victoria", Auckland to Colonial Secretary, 15 December 1852, enclosed with ACGO 8333 Box 111/ 1852/2821, Archives New Zealand.

³⁶ Sheriff, Auckland to Colonial Secretary, 15 December 1852, enclosed with ACGO 8333 Box 111/ 1852/2821, Archives New Zealand.; Commander of "Victoria", Auckland to Colonial Secretary, 15 December 1852, enclosed with ACGO 8333 Box 111/ 1852/2821, Archives New Zealand.

³⁷ Letter from the Wellington Gaoler, 6 January 1870, ACGS 16211 Box 93/ 1870/38, Archives New Zealand.

³⁸ *Hawkes Bay Times*, 1 September 1874; *Hawkes Bay Times*, 25 December 1874.

³⁹ Peter Methven, *The Terrace Gaol : a short history of Wellington's prisons, 1840-1927*, Steele Roberts, Wellington, 2010, p.33.

⁴⁰ Clare Anderson, 'Introduction: A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies' in Clare Anderson (ed.), *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies*, Bloomsbury, London, 2018, p.9.

⁴¹ Maxwell-Stewart and Quinlan, *Unfree Workers*, p.12.

Pat Hickey, Red Runanga and the Death of King Edward VII

Peter Clayworth

On Saturday 7 May 1910, New Zealand's evening newspapers announced King Edward VII had died the previous midnight. Most residents of the West Coast's Grey Valley were monarchists who regarded the death of the sixty-eight year old King as a significant and solemn occasion. A large number of scheduled public events were postponed and a series of memorial services held. The towns of Runanga and Dunollie, homes to most of the State Mine's workers, were reputed to be hotbeds of militancy. Despite this reputation, many Runanga and Dunollie residents attended a service conducted by local clergymen at the Runanga Miners' Hall.⁴²

A good proportion of miners and other unionists clearly felt a degree of loyalty to King and Empire. These sentiments were not shared by Pat Hickey and his fellow socialist activists, who chose not to participate in the public expression of grief over the King's death. The grief and outrage of the socialists *was* aroused by a mining disaster in England, which occurred only a few days after the death of the King. On Wednesday 11 May an explosion and fire ripped through the Wellington Pit, in Whitehaven, Cumbria, killing all 136 men and boys working below. The State Miners' Union and the General Labourers' Union General (a.k.a. the West Coast Workers' Union, of which Hickey was secretary), along with the Runanga Socialist Party branch, called a meeting at Runanga to set up a fund for the Whitehaven families. The fund would be administered by the New Zealand Federation of Labour executive. The meeting advertisement referred to accusations against the socialists, following their refusal to mourn for the King: "Are We Disloyal?... A meeting under the auspices of the Organised Labour. Loyalty to the Living! Humanity's Plea for the sufferers of the Whitehaven Disaster! Practical sympathy wanted; hands across the seas...Be loyal to suffering humanity."⁴³

The meeting, held at the Runanga Miners Hall on Saturday 22 May, drew a capacity crowd. Hickey moved a motion expressing condolences to the people of Whitehaven and setting up a distress fund. Hickey referred to the recent criticism levelled at the socialists for refusing to mourn King Edward's death. He dismissed the public grieving of the King's death as "cant and nonsense," arguing that the money spent on memorial services should have gone to feed the hungry. He had no quarrel with King Edward as a man, but as a monarch the King was a class enemy. Workers should be loyal to their class and concerned for the living, not for dead Kings. Tim Armstrong, Paddy Webb, Bob Semple and other speakers followed in a similar vein. They called for support for the people of Whitehaven, while condemning the monarchy and what they

saw as a hypocritical reaction to the King's death. A number of speakers singled out the local clergy for criticism over the role they had played in Royal memorial service.

Runanga's Anglican minister, Reverend T. F. "Tommy" Taylor, was shocked by these remarks and responded condemning the speakers' attacks on the monarchy. He expressed regret that he had encouraged his flock to attend this Whitehaven fund meeting, only to find it was an excuse for airing anti-monarchist sentiments. Taylor argued that the clergy and the middle class were not enemies of the workers. He would soon be leaving Runanga and regretted that he had not been able to convince the socialists of his own sincerity. The meeting voted unanimously in support of Hickey's Whitehaven motion. The crowd attending donated £9 for Whitehaven and subscription lists for the distress fund were sent to unions around the country.⁴⁴

In an age when the large majority of New Zealanders saw themselves as loyal to God, King and Empire, the Runanga meeting sparked letters and editorials criticising the speakers' republican sentiments and attacks on the clergy. The writers argued that the British Empire guaranteed freedom and justice for all its subjects, including the Runanga socialists. It was therefore treason for them to condemn the monarch who reigned over that empire. The writers also contended that Edward had been a particularly good and liberal King who worked for peace in Europe. Such disloyalty would only harm New Zealand's labour movement.⁴⁵

Hickey responded, stating that his monarchist opponents had failed to see that the socialists were attacking the monarchy as an institution rather than King Edward as a man. Hickey pointed out that his own speech condemned monarchy as "an institution which is, I contend, a bar to human progress...." Hickey believed that workers around the world were calling for capitalism and monarchy to be replaced by a collective economic system "where the voice of the people will be the determining voice in Society and reason the only King." He noted that the King was 68 years old at the time of his death, an age most workers would not reach. Socialists respected those family and close friends of the King who were genuinely sad over his death, but they were contemptuous of "the morally hypocritical crowd who are filling the world with their crocodile tears and fashionable lamentations."⁴⁶

Hickey noted that monarchies had been established by "butchery and plunder" rather than the Grace of God. The British Empire was an instrument of oppression and exploitation rather than a force for freedom and justice. King Edward's peacemaking had

Questions and discussion invited.
SILVER COIN ADMISSION.

NEW ZEALAND'S ORATOR.

MR. R. F. WAY, Organiser of the
New Zealand Socialist Party,
will LECTURE as under:—

BLACKBALL—TO-MORROW (Sun-
day) **EVENING**, at 7.30 in Stevens'
Hall.

ARE WE DISLOYAL?

MINERS' HALL, RUNANGA.
SUNDAY, MAY 22nd., 8 p.m.

A MASS MEETING under the
auspices of the Organised Labor.
Loyalty to the Living! Humanity's
Plea for the Sufferers of Whitehaven
Disaster! Practical sympathy wanted;
hands across the seas. Prominent
speakers will address the meeting.
Ladies and gentlemen come—be loyal
to suffering humanity. Open platform.

**GREYMOUTH CO-OPERATIVE
SOCIETY.**

A SPECIAL MEETING of Share
holders of the above Society will
be held in the Lyceum Hall on **MON-
DAY EVENING NEXT** at 7.30 sharp.
Business: To make a selection of a
BAKER and **CARTER** for the bakery
business.

Newspaper clipping.

not prevented the brutal class warfare of the current age. Any idea that loyalty to the monarch would help the working class was false as the King stood for "the perpetuation of the existing state of affairs". Hickey noted that if any British monarch made a real attempt to change things he would be stopped by "the real rulers, by courtesy called his 'advisers', themselves members of the exploiting class." Hickey's socialism and his Irish background led him to oppose monarchs, as "I see in them the personification of the fact in which my race and my class have been subjected to the most cruel treatment." He closed by quoting Karl Marx: "Workers of the World unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains; you have a world to gain."⁴⁷

In a second letter, replying to the editors' comments, Hickey condemned the idea that monarchs were especially suited to the role of head of state, given that they achieved their status by an accident of birth. He set out the examples of mad King Otto of Bavaria, the atrocities committed by the Belgian King Leopold in the Congo, the repressive rulers of Russia, Turkey and Spain, along with the British Empire's own exploitation of India in the name of the King Emperor. Hickey went on to outline some of the more unsavoury episodes in the history of the English monarchy and closed by suggesting that the constitutional monarch who could not express political opinions was little better than a puppet. The editor of the *Greymouth Evening Star*, having had enough of socialist attacks on the monarchy, declared the correspondence closed. Hickey's views were no doubt applauded by many of his comrades, but the majority of loyal citizens would simply have been confirmed in their view that he was a dangerous and disloyal radical.⁴⁸

⁴² Greymouth Evening Star, 7 May 1910 p. 3; 9 May 1910, pp. 1, 2; 21 May 1910, p. 6.

⁴³ Greymouth Evening Star, 21 May 1910, p.1.

⁴⁴ Greymouth Evening Star, 25 May 1910, p.8.

⁴⁵ Greymouth Evening Star, 26 May 1910, p.28; 27 May 1910, p.8; 28 May 1910, p.4.

⁴⁶ Greymouth Evening Star, 31 May 1910, p.3.

⁴⁷ Greymouth Evening Star, 31 May 1910, p.3.

⁴⁸ Greymouth Evening Star, 2 June 1910 p.8.

Walk-Off Australia, 1960s

Russell Campbell

John Goldschmidt's documentary *The Unlucky Australians* (UK/Australia, 1973, 52 minutes) opens with an arresting montage of Aboriginal individuals, in close-up, looking directly at camera. They are members of the Gurindji tribe, located in the Northern Territory south of Darwin. Over the images we hear a song being sung, with a driving beat:

Poor bugger me, Gurindji
Me bin sit down this country
Long time before Lord Vestey
All about land belongin' to we
Poor bugger me, Gurindji.

Poor bugger blackfeller, this country
Long time work no wages, we,
Work for good old Lord Vestey
Little bit flour, sugar and tea
For Gurindji, from Lord Vestey
Oh poor bugger me.⁴⁹



The words, in pidgin, to Ted Egan's "Gurindji Blues" were written in collaboration with Vincent Lingiari, the first of the individuals featured on screen. In 1966, Lingiari led Gurindji cattle stockmen out on a strike that was to shake the foundations of race relations in Australia.

For eighty years white pastoralists had run their cattle on land leased from the government in the Victoria River District. The local Aborigines, made wards of the State, were coerced into working as stockmen at the cattle stations. Pay was abysmal (and frequently comprised only food rations), conditions appalling. Strikes and protest actions broke out, at Coolibah Station in 1947,

at Victoria River Downs Station in 1947 and 1948, at Wave Hill Station in 1949, 1952 and 1955.

By government ordinance Aboriginal cattle workers were ineligible for the award wages paid to white stockmen. In 1964 the legal position changed, and the Northern Territory Council for Aboriginal Rights pressured the North Australian Workers' Union (NAWU) to make the case for equal pay. NAWU appointed an Aboriginal organizer, Dexter Daniels, and applied in 1965 to vary the Cattle Station Industry (Northern Territory) Award to include Aboriginal pastoral workers. After hearings during the year, the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission brought down its decision in March 1966. The variation was agreed to, but implementation was to be deferred until 1 December 1968.



Dexter Daniels – union organiser

Angered at the delay, and with the support of Daniels and the NAWU, stockmen at Newcastle Waters Station forthwith went on strike. Their action brought results. In August, militancy spread to Wave Hill Station, 200 miles to the west. The station was one of many meat industry enterprises owned by the global Vestey Group. Under Lingiari's leadership, the Gurindji stockmen and their families, about 200 people in all, walked off the station and trekked to the Victoria River bed, where they set up camp.

Fearing that the union lacked the resources to provision the Gurindji, NAWU secretary Paddy Carroll initially refused to sanction the strike. But as support flowed in from other unionists and the Rights Council, he changed his position, and the union got in behind the struggle. Demands were formulated – equal wages, better food, improved housing. By September Carroll had negotiated an agreement he believed was satisfactory. But



The walk off

the Gurindji, disdaining now to work for the Vestey's under any conditions, did not budge. In November, driven from the Victoria River by torrential rain, they moved to higher ground near to the Wave Hill Welfare settlement. And then in March 1967, they moved again, and this time it was definitive. Settling their community at a tribal sacred site, Wattie Creek (Daguragu), they declared their intention to reclaim all the territory traditionally held by the Gurindji. It was no longer – perhaps had never simply been – a strike of cattlemen for better wages and conditions. The Wave Hill Walk-Off and the illegal occupation of Vestey leasehold land at Wattie Creek were the beginning of a determined, unprecedented Aboriginal land rights campaign.

A staunch ally of the Gurindji people in their struggle was the author and journalist Frank Hardy. A prominent member of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), Hardy had good connections with liberal and leftwing organizations as well as trade unions. His networking and his newspaper articles were instrumental in securing crucial moral and financial support for the beleaguered Gurindji, and his book *The Unlucky Australians*, published in 1968, brought the issue to the attention of the nation.

When British filmmaker John Goldschmidt came to Australia

in 1973 to make a documentary about Aborigines, he contacted Hardy, and a collaboration ensued. Goldschmidt, whose work included a report on the civil rights struggle in Northern Ireland (*Bernadette Devlin*, 1969), was in sympathy with Hardy's political commitment to the Gurindji struggle, and they worked together



Crossing Wattie Creek



Frank Hardy

in evolving the script. In the resulting film, shot in twelve days in and around Wave Hill, Hardy acts as narrator, both on- and off-screen, while members of the Aboriginal community recount and re-enact the walk-off.

In an early scene of the documentary, the filmmakers are welcomed to Daguragu at a relaxed gathering of Gurindji. Captain Major (Lupgna Giari), sporting a luxuriant gray moustache under his cowboy hat, declares: “Our friend from Sydney, and few visitors from London, they come here, and we bloody pleased to see them people come here, we bloody pleased. What a wonderful friend they are.” Hardy explains the idea of re-enactment: they will “make the story and put him together in one big film, and they show him in England on the television, maybe in America, and that Lord Vestey been living in England, he switch on his television one night later on, and he say that bloody Gurindji mob again, I can’t get rid of them! There they are again on the television!” There is laughter and applause.

The film stresses the eons the Gurindji have been on the land. It depicts the religious rituals performed at Seal Gorge, a sacred site, and has a dig at the Christian missionaries: “The white man lived by a Christian ethic long since adapted to trade and profit. ... He tried to teach him his 2,000 year old religion, but made not one convert amongst the Gurindji in 80 years. For the Gurindji had a religion of their own, extending back 30,000 years, and they continued to practice it.”

Captain Major, with Hardy’s help, tells a humorous tale of the tribe’s first encounter with the white man’s cattle. There is nothing funny, however, about the aftermath: the ground and waterholes polluted; the people afflicted with malnutrition, birth deformities, and a raft of new diseases (bronchial infections, trachoma, ear infections, beriberi, rickets, VD...); the imposition of what amounted to slave labour, the men with the cattle, the women in domestic service. Hardy explains the practice of “nigger farming”: “The Government also paid the station owners money every year for the upkeep of the Aborigines. So it became as profitable to run Aborigines on your property as to run cattle.... And this money

of course never in any form found its way into the pockets of the Aborigines.”

The Vestey Group leased its vast land holdings (6,000 square miles) at Wave Hill for a derisory rental. The film drives home the extraordinary reach of this enterprise by superimposing on shots of the local airstrip a rolling title list of companies attached to the group – a staggering 127, from the UK to Australia, Barbados to Belgium, Germany to India. It is this capitalist juggernaut and its mode of operation that the Gurindji will reject, lock, stock and barrel. As Hardy will conclude, disclosing his communist credentials, “Not for him the pattern of boss and worker, of price and profit, of command and obedience. For the Gurindji way is the tribal way. From each person according to his ability and the tribal obligation, to each person according to his need and the tribal resources.”



Captain Major

In 1966, Hardy tells us, the stockmen were ready to walk out everywhere. At Wave Hill, the decision to take action was made after a meeting between Vincent Lingiari and Dexter Daniels, who had been traversing the region as an organizer in fear of his life. “I was really scared at that time,” Daniels says. “I thought I was going to get shot by some of the managers of the stations.” But despite union involvement, as the strike got underway the shots were being called by the Gurindji themselves. Hardy goes on to recount how the group survived the early months of the struggle, with assistance from Southern sympathizers and an insubordinate Welfare Officer named Bill Jeffrey.

The turning point is the move to Wattie Creek and, for Hardy, the dawning realization that the strike was really about land – a development he dramatizes in a short re-enacted dialogue sequence. The film goes on to outline subsequent developments in the struggle: the formulation of a land claim and an appeal to the Governor-General; intimidation by the authorities at Wave Hill; the construction of new houses at the welfare settlement, which the Gurindji help build but refuse to live in; a proposal developed at Canberra for the leasehold grant of eight square miles of land,

defeated by pastoralist lobbying; fencing and the building of a cattle stockade, with money (\$10,000 in fact) donated by the Waterside Workers' Federation (WWF); the massive solidarity march on Vestey's head office in Sydney, in July 1970.

Through all the hard times, the Gurindji, so Hardy tells us, remained unified. For white Australians and others there is much to be learned from that simple fact: "the Gurindji survived here, because there was no class division, no exploitation, no greed, no one group battering on another."

The Unlucky Australians offers an accurate and powerful history of the walk-off, but there are aspects of the struggle and its background that the film downplays or omits. For generations the Gurindji had been subjected to murderous violence: in his book Hardy cites accounts of "natives chained to trees to die of thirst; of Gurindji and Mudbara people 'shot like dogs...'"⁵⁰ The tribe's womenfolk were routinely subjected to sexual exploitation by the white stockmen. "Half-caste" children were removed from their families under state and federal law. Aborigines were patronized by the welfare authorities and habitually treated as less than human by their bosses and other white Australians. It is all these factors, historians have convincingly argued, not simply anger at unequal pay, which fuelled the strike.

With relation to the action itself, oral historian Minoru Hokari makes the case that its true progenitor was Gurindji elder Sandy Moray Junganaiani, who handed over to Vincent Lingiari as events unfolded.⁵¹ The film also pays little attention to developments beyond Wave Hill, such as the conflict which erupted between NAWU and the Rights Council.⁵² In keeping with the local focus, there is only brief acknowledgment of the massive nationwide solidarity campaign, which as well as helping sustain the Gurindji at Wattie Creek exerted significant pressure on the government in Canberra.

These caveats aside, *The Unlucky Australians* is an impressive achievement, and an immensely valuable document of a key episode in the historical struggle of the Aboriginal people. Over the end credits, we hear again the defiant strains of "Gurindji Blues":

Poor bugger me, Gurindji
My name Vincent Lingiari
Me talk all about Gurindji
Daguragu place for we
Home for we, Gurindji....

Postscript. In 1973 the Murrumulla Gurindji Company was granted a lease of 1,250 square miles, which included sacred sites. In 1975, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam travelled to Daguragu and ceremonially poured soil into the hand of Vincent Lingiari, acknowledging the tribal rights. Following the passage of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, the Gurindji gained freehold title to Daguragu in 1986. In 2020, the Federal Court of Australia recognized the native title rights of the Gurindji people to 1,900 square miles of the Wave Hill Station.

In 2016-17 *The Unlucky Australians* was rediscovered, restored, and shown on Australian television for the first time, 44 years after it aired in the UK.

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⁴⁹ "Gurindji Blues", © Ted Egan.

⁵⁰ Hardy 1972, 181.

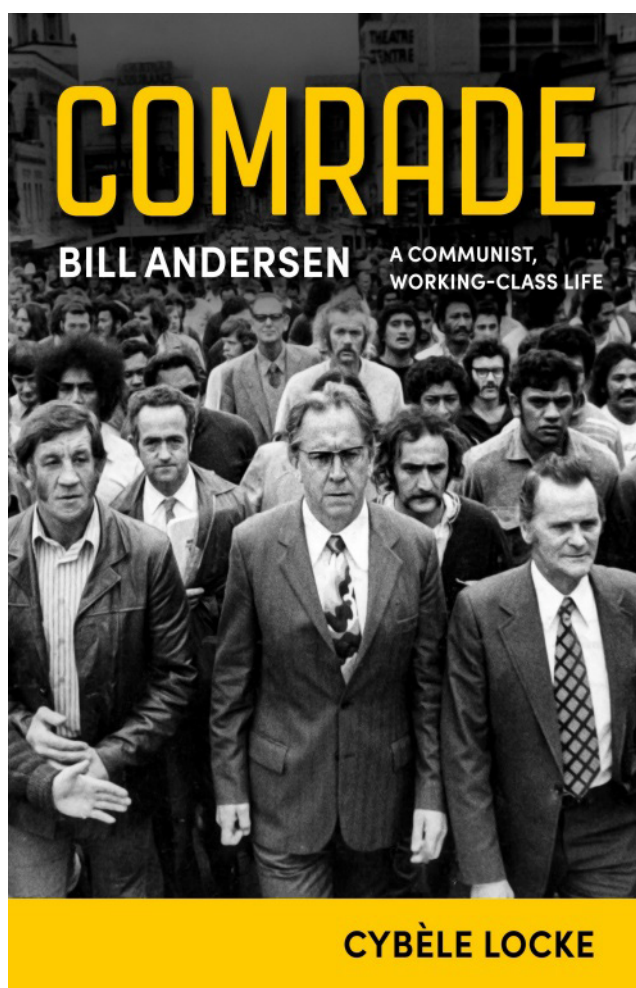
⁵¹ Hokari 2000, 102-104.

⁵² See Hardy 87-88, 269-70.

Review

Comrade: Bill Andersen – A Communist, Working-Class Life by Cybèle Locke, Bridget William Books, 2022

Emma-Jean Kelly



Dr Cybèle Locke foregrounds twentieth-century working-class narratives in her research. Her first book, *Workers in the Margins: Union Radicals in Post-War New Zealand*, drew on case studies of the unions of freezing workers, clerical workers, and unemployed workers to explore how women, Māori and Pasifika workers

transformed union cultures. A Pākehā historian, Cybèle is a senior lecturer in the History Programme at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington and is active in her trade union, and particularly active during this time of funding cuts to the university system as a whole.

Cybèle's recently published biography of Bill Andersen, *Comrade*, examines labour activism, communism and social change from the 1930s until the turn of the twenty-first century.

When I first heard Cybèle was writing about Bill Andersen, I wondered 'why Bill in particular?' But reading this fascinating story, which includes oral history recorded by Cybèle (and which will eventually be offered to the archive at ATL), we learn of a deep and rich workers' story. Bill's early life as a seafarer, the injustice he witnessed which led him to active involvement in his union, in turn leading to his learning about Māori workers' struggles with racism in their workplaces, As an organiser for the Drivers' Union, Bill was involved with the struggle at Takaparawhau Bastion Point through his relationships with Ngāti Whatua o Orakei. Syd Keepa was a close ally too. And there is so much more than that to learn – this is a tale of Pākehā and Māori, Pacific peoples, workers of Aotearoa trying to win a fairer and healthier working life through collective action.

One of the many aspects of Bill's story I enjoyed was learning about his tattoos and the story they tell about his wider life. Bill Andersen had two tattoos. In classic 1940s/50s style, one was a tombstone and one a ship (we'd probably assume they were 'flash' these days – something you choose off the wall at a tattoo parlour). Cybèle writes that Bill had the tombstone tattooed for his mother, who died when he was young, and the other piece was a rather beautiful barque called the *Pamir*, the first vessel he sailed on after his mother died, when he became a member of the Seamen's Union and joined the Merchant Navy.

According to NZHistory Today in History entry, Finnish sailing ship seized as war prize | NZHistory, New Zealand history online, New Zealand seized the *Pamir* when it docked in Wellington soon after Nazi Germany invaded the USSR in mid-1941.

During its six years of service as a New Zealand merchant ship the *Pamir* made a huge impression, as it was one of the last large commercial sailing ships still operating in the world. There's a plaque remembering the *Pamir* which you may have walked past on the Wellington waterfront.



Bill Andersen proudly displays his tattoo of the Pamir. Courtesy of NZ Trade Union Moments and Memories Facebook page.

At the end of his life, Cybèle tells us Bill talked to his family about his tattoos as he lay dying. This is just one of the interesting threads that run through *Comrade*, linking the personal and particular story of Bill to the wider struggles of the workers of Aotearoa and the world.

Much of Bill's understanding of class struggle and workers' rights was developed during his time on ships (from the 1940s onwards), when he saw young men being exploited and began helping fellow crew members challenge bosses on their treatment.

Biography can offer a window into a time and movement through one individual which can in turn lead to wider stories of communities and struggles. This work does this in spades.

Biography also offers the opportunity to hear someone's unique

voice. For example, I was delighted to see Bill had written in his own (unfinished) memoir –

A unionist or union leader can be as militant as a 'bull with a bum full of pepper' but unless he/she understands the laws of development of society and the need for a socialist strategy then she/he will not be in a position to take the struggle 'all the way'.

I think that gives you a certain sense of the flavour of Bill's language and his politics in the best possible way.

Cybèle Locke's *Comrade* is a great story which fills important gaps in our historiography – it offers insights into the thinking of a union leader and communist who believed, no matter what, that supporting working people was the most important job he could do.

Communism and Strategy, rethinking political mediations, Isabelle Garo, translated by Gregory Elliott, Verso, London and New York, 2023.

Paul Maunder



French theorist, Isabelle Garo's book, *Communism and Strategy* begins with the question: Is there still time, or indeed, is it already time, to revisit communism. She writes that the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disappearance of the communist bloc helped free the term from the charge of totalitarianism, while serving as well, 'to bury the idea of an alternative to capitalism more deeply than ever.' Nevertheless, there have been, since the 1970s a series of critical theoretical works seeking to explore and redefine the Marxist

oeuvre in a striking and imaginative manner.

She summarises some of these, beginning with the work of Alain Badiou, who both 'rejects the state and everything attached to it', but also the usefulness of history, except for certain sequences of events. For Badiou, communism becomes an ideal, 'a possible miracle', occurring on the factory floor or housing estate. After an engaged youth during the Algerian War he began an academic career, at the same time belonging to Maoist groups. But with the failure of Mao's cultural revolution and the French May revolution of 1968 and with a general decline of the traditional left, he, along with other philosophers, tried to hold the vitality of resistance through theoretical, almost theological work. Marginal to mainstream academia they became media figures rejecting state representation and political programmes, seeing themselves as living in a world of multiple overlapping identities, seemingly incoherent except when an event clarifies for a moment, the direction of history.

During this period Guy Debord unpacked the society of the spectacle and a working class bemused by global sporting events and celebrity scandals, Baudrillard revealed the unreality of the digital world in which we are increasingly immersed, Foucault plotted the way politics is engraved on the body by the state and bureaucracy through different historical periods, while Negri and Hardt populated our increasingly dysfunctional society with a *multitude* struggling against the multinational network of nation states, in order to repossess a commons. Behind these innovations lurks the shadow of Deleuze and Guattari and their analysis that the structure of late capitalism with its flows of capital and free association is essentially psychotic.

Garo, while admiring these brilliant theoretical adventures which are almost aesthetic in nature, decides that they both remain on the margins of the academy and are well removed from the factory floor or the housing estate. To seek clarity, she goes back to Marx's life and writing - from the failed revolution of 1848 to the Paris Commune of 1871 - plotting his ideological and activist journey through this period. She finds that Marx seldom used the term *communism* but often used the term *communist*, the communist being an activist of radical and uncompromising intent: the intent being the overthrow of capitalism. The programme is

always developing rather than something fully formed (he was contemptuous of representative political party promises) and is best described by the term *socialism*, being essentially about the future equitable distribution of resources. *Strategy* lies at the intersection of ideology and activist practice in working class organisations and workplaces. One without the other is futile.

The *state* has always been a contested term and utopian and spontaneous interventions at the community level have their merit but usually founder upon the bedrock of the capitalist state reaction. The aim of revolution is to totally restructure state function and representation into the shapes of direct democracy and this is a necessary act or the state will be used to discipline the spontaneous life of the working class. At the same time, innovations like co-operative factories are useful models and colonised indigenous peoples often retain communal social forms capable of nurturing alternatives to capitalism.

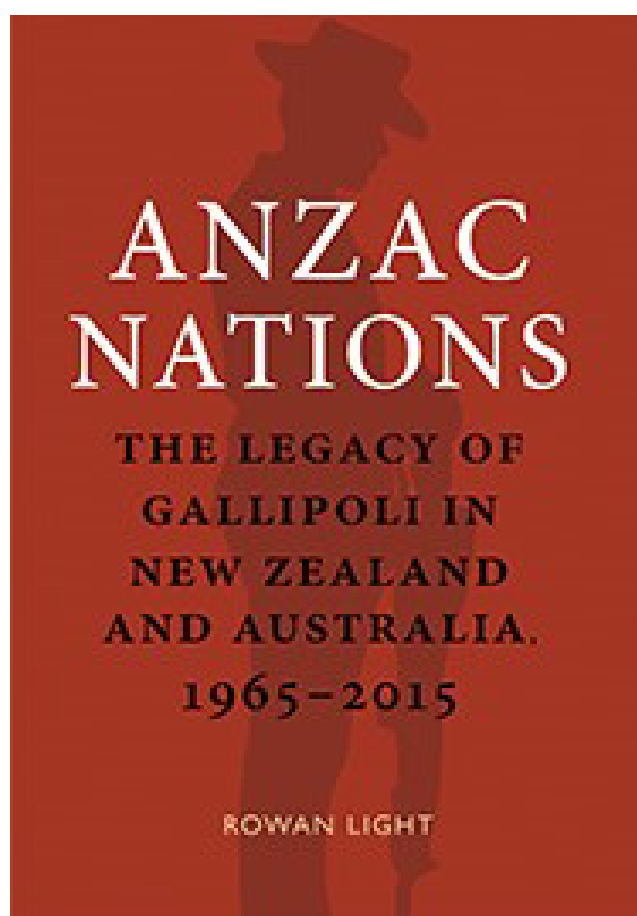
Based on this return to Marx, Garo then looks at possible strategies for the current communist: to heal the rift between those intent

on bypassing the state and those advocating the electoral path by specific action in key areas of health, education and other judiciary – action for example that could involve the forming of collectives within the state bureaucracy. She takes as an example the health innovations that occurred in Greece during the austerity period.

She argues that poverty and exclusion must be returned to the framework of class struggle and capital accumulation; that the climate emergency creates the imperative to supersede capitalism; that gender and race struggles are intertwined and should not be argued from the basis of closed and exclusive identities but instead, form a flexible connection with all the key sectors of strategic renewal and critique. In this way a class subjectivity with specific characteristics will form – immediately anti-neoliberal, internationalist, anti-racist, feminist and anti-capitalist. From this basis strategically harmonious emancipatory struggles ‘will have life within everyday solidarities and reconstruct a creative culture that is shared and multiple.’ It is not an easy read but a worthwhile one.

Anzac Nations, the legacy of Gallipoli in New Zealand and Australia, 1965-2015, by Rowan Light, Otago University Press, Te Whare Tu o Te Wananga o Otakau, 2022.

Paul Maunder



This account of two colonial states forging national identities through the remembrance of a military disaster while supporting the mother country, begins with the 100th centenary of the event (2015), when a second invasion of the Gallipoli peninsular occurred, as politicians, royalty, celebrities, descendants and general public met at Anzac Cove. Australian Prime Minister, Tony Abbot stated in his address, that the failed invasion a hundred years ago, 'had forged modern Australia and New Zealand'. New Zealand PM, John Key argued that 'Gallipoli is a byword for the best characteristics of Australians and New Zealanders, especially

when they work side by side in the face of adversity.'

Rowan Light then sets out to map how remembrance of the Gallipoli saga has been used to forge a social and political consensus of nationhood beyond the particularities of any one government. Remarkably, the annual commemoration of this battle at ANZAC Cove has been evoked as the beginning of nationhood, rather than the arrival of the first fleet or the federation of Australian states or the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. And how is it that this means of forging nationhood is shared by the two countries, albeit it with some differences?

The narrative then goes back to the fiftieth anniversary in 1965, when, because of the passing of the veterans, the commemoration which had been, up to then, a witnessing of the personal and social sacrifice made by these men for the British Empire, was in danger of dying out. Since then, the occasion has been reinterpreted and manipulated in the interests of two young nations finding their more independent place in the world. It becomes a fascinating tale of governments manipulating memory in order to recreate hegemony, with statehood perhaps inevitably based on violence. There are many themes explored: for instance, whether the ANZAC tradition provides a secular religious experience and whether this experience has become commodified in the form of ANZAC tourism, which is nevertheless a pilgrimage for young men as they sanctify the brutality of war. Over the last fifty years there has been a new political commitment to the event, with Prime Ministers keen to participate in a leading role. This 'political diplomacy' began with Bob Hawke, was taken up by Keating and John Howard, and surprisingly, by Helen Clark. The political rhetoric has become one of 'young and innocent colonial soldiers being swept away by forces beyond their control to become heroic victims of imperialism and the machinery of modern warfare, but in doing so enabling the current values of liberal democracy.'

But as well, the ANZAC story serves to dissolve the legacy of the British Empire; necessary as Britain entered the European Union. The 1970s and 1980s were a period of crisis for Australia and New Zealand – economic, cultural and even constitutional (the sacking of the Whitlam government) – requiring the forging of new alliances, e.g. ANZUS, and the creation of new national days: Australia Day and Waitangi Day. But this forging of new national

identities had to cope with the anti-war ethos focused on Vietnam, a new feminist movement rejecting patriarchal militarism, and an indigenous resurgence in both countries.

Rowan Light tells a detailed and fascinating story of how the two governments' celebrations of the day shifted their emphasis to incorporate these stresses – from allowing feminist anti-war protest, to acknowledging and celebrating Māori and Aboriginal participation in the wars and to incorporate new generations of young people. This involved of course, cultural efforts by filmmakers and writers, such as Peter Weir's highly influential film, *Gallipoli*, the building of new memorials, the bringing back

of the remains of an unknown soldier, and the use of indigenous media, for example Māori Television taking over the task of celebrating ANZAC Day in Aotearoa. It is a very useful study of how hegemony is consciously created by politicians, bureaucrats and cultural workers.

But as well, it reveals how the differences of national response resonated to meet national challenges and to reforge the alliance. Finally, the myth is being used to justify and articulate the two nations' roles in the Pacific. We can wait to see how it is used to mediate our relationship with China. All in all, a valuable and detailed study of the games of government.



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