PAPERS IN LABOUR
HISTORY No. 9

EDITORS: LENORE LAYMAN and CHARLIE FOX

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Bob Hartley 1897-1991 : A Tribute

Stuart Reid *

One of the hazards (or virtues) of dying at a 'ripe old age' is that you've outlived those contemporaries who might remember what you've done. They're not around to wax lyrical to the writers of newspaper obituaries or pen a few words for the relevant journal (but then, nor do they get to dance on your grave).

It's possible then, for once important public figures to pass unnoticed 30 years after the end of their illustrious career. Today's newspapers overcome this problem to an extent by preparing obituaries and even retrospective features on prominent people before they actually die - sometimes a long time before!

But in the case of the labour movement, it falls to people within the movement to seek out and remember our own heroes of the past. In doing so we can sometimes unearth a treasure house of information, stories and anecdotes which help to tell us how the movement became what it is today.

It was a Trades and Labour Council project aimed at recognising the achievements of labour movement leaders through which I first met Bob Hartley in the kitchen of his home in Inglewood. We were to spend many a pleasant morning over cups of tea in that kitchen, sometimes with the tape running but more often just talking.

Mr. Hartley was already over 90 at that time but he was well able to recount stories of early days in the union movement as Secretary of the Cleaners' and Caretakers' Union (1938-43) and his time as Secretary of the Metropolitan Council of the ALP and Perth Trades Hall, Incorporated (a mouthful of a title which he rarely abbreviated and which spilled off his tongue like one long word).

He, and probably those of his contemporaries who knew him, would not be comfortable with the term "hero" of the Labor movement. Bob Hartley would be more accurately described as a 'stalwart'. Nowadays the word has a kind of old fashioned, almost pedestrian ring to it, but in Bob Hartley's day, with the Labor party under attack from the DLP and the Communist Party as well as its traditional enemies, a "stalwart" in the sense of a "resolute uncompromising partisan" was very much what was needed. And that was the role he played.

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* Stuart Reid is a freelance oral historian, who works for the National Library and the Battye Library. He has completed several projects for the Trades and Labour Council, and is a regular contributor to Papers in Labour History.

Although resolute, uncompromising and partisan about the Labor Party and the labour movement (which he saw as pretty much one and the same thing) he was not an ideologue. He didn't seek to move the Party to one position or another. Rather, he sought to strengthen the Party, promote and defend Party policy, and to stave off the attacks on the Party.

He was a stickler for the rules (as for the rules for conduct of meetings, he helped to write them!) and his vigorous defence of party policy gave him a reputation for being conservative, unwilling to change but when change to policy came from the Party conference he'd be just as vigorous in defending the change.

If party policy was gospel; the reverse was not true. Although a devout, church-going Catholic Bob Hartley firmly believed that politics and religion were totally separate realms and he resisted the pressure from Catholic clergy on issues of the day like nationalisation of the banks and state aid for church schools. His Catholicism must have raised some suspicion in a party in which the Catholic Church had played the role it did, but amongst those of his contempories to whom I've spoken, Bob Hartley's unswerving loyalty to the Labor Party is never questioned. In fact, if he hated anything, it was the DLP and the Communist Party, which he opposed in equal measure.

In 20 years as Secretary of the Metropolitan Council from 1943-1963 he was respected for his hard work, his efficiency and for his fairness. Even by the standards of those days, prior to the faction system of today, he was also respected for neutrality. He didn't have a clique of supporters or a block with whom he voted. He kept his job for 20 years basically because he was good at it.

One man who had a very great admiration for Bob Hartley was Rev. Keith Dowding, himself a controversial Labor figure in W.A. in the 50's -

> "Bob Hartley was an absolute gem as a Labor man. He avoided controversy. He was not partisan but if the Metropolitan Council decided to do a thing, Bob Hartley would execute the decision whether he approved of it, or not, and he was absolutely impeccable in his objectivity in any argument in the Party. I think he did a marvellous job for the Labor Party. Bob was a good man .....".[1]

People generally found him helpful, especially if they were new to the Labour movement and were finding their way.

In meetings Bob Hartley's role would, more often than not, be to explain some action of the executive or to clarify and elaborate on some aspect of party policy. He was a fluent and articulate speaker with a lively sense of humour.

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[1] Oral History Interview with Rev. Keith Dowding, Battye Library.

He retired when the Metropolitan Council was replaced by the Trades and Labor Council. He shared Joe Chamberlain's misgivings about the effect on the Party's finances of a TLC independent of the Labor Party and was one of those who was influential, in recommending that ownership of the Trades Hall should remain with the Party rather than going to the unions; a decision which has ramifications echoing down through the years, even to the present day. In his retirement though, he was a delegate to the TLC as a result of his continuing to work part-time as Secretary of the Watchmaker's Union for several years.

There was an element of sadness in Bob Hartley's latter years. The loss of his wife, herself a tireless worker and member of the Metropolitan Council in her own right, was a heavy blow. It was the first of a series of misfortunes. Another was the loss of an irreplaceable collection of records and memorabilia collected over a lifetime in the labour movement. A young kid broke into his garage and when he couldn't steal the car, set fire to the place. The records had been the back-up to Bob Hartley's memory and without them, nagging doubts about his ability to remember accurately became an ever-present worry. In fact his memory of historical events remained prodigious - and as far as remembering recent matters like where we were up to in the interview he was often clearer about that than I was!

Then there was the car accident which laid him up for a few months but from which he recovered. But perhaps the most severe blow of all had been coming on more gradually. It was the eroding away of some of his faith in the Labor Party. Not that he ever gave up on the Party entirely but so many of its basic tenets and some of it's great achievements had been abandoned. When Peter Dowding was ousted as leader he was completely disgusted, not just about the dumping but about the way it happened. It was the closest he would ever come to handing in his life membership of the Party, but, in his own words, "I realise that would be an unsensible thing to do, because I'm still a Laborite and I'll remain a Laborite as long as I live".

Right to the end he kept up his Branch membership and made donations to the Party at election time.

In early 1991, Mr. Hartley went into hospital for a "minor" operation. But at 94 years of age there is no such thing as a "minor" operation and he never fully recovered.

The three things which mattered most in his life had been his family, his church and the Labor Party; and it reflected the realities of his life as much as his sense of humour when he added "and not always in that order".

It seems fitting that Bob Hartley himself should have the final say :

"My wife passed away in 1979 on Anzac Day. She was the best wife ....I wish I had her alive today. I have three daughters and they're wonderful daughters. I've eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild. They're all good to me. I admire them all.

I've had a very good life and a well-satisfied life. I believe in God and I believe in Christianity and I thank God for the kind of life I've had. There was a saying by Shakespeare about "there is a divinity that shapes the lives of men, rough hew them though we may" and there might be something in it, I'm not sure. However, I believe in God and I believe in Nature, and most of the people I've met in the course of my life have been good to me. I'm very grateful for it; both in the Trade Union movement or in all the other activities I've been associated with".

Bob Hartley's Story

Stuart Reid

Bob Hartley (Secretary of the Metropolitan Council of the ALP and Trades Hall Inc. 1943-63) had a life-long commitment to the Labor Party and to the Labor movement.

In 1988, when Mr. Hartley was 90 years he began a series of interviews for the Trades and Labor Council about his life. The interviews were interrupted by a serious car accident in 1989 (Mr. Hartley was still driving his own car up until a few months before his death in 1991).

The Battye Library arranged for interviewer; Stuart Reid to complete the interviews in January and February of 1990.

What follows is an edited transcript of part of those interviews. The complete transcript of the Battye interviews and a synopsis of the TLC interviews (and of an interview he gave for the Red Cross) are held in the Battye Library's Oral History collection. Access to the transcript is open to interested readers.

The extract begins around 1938, prior to his becoming Secretary of Trades Hall. The language is a little formal at the beginning as Mr. Hartley was reading from prepared notes for the first few minutes of the interview.

1940 - 1943

"I'd become a fairly well known identity because of my talks during the previous three years as a guest speaker on Radio 6KY, on it's Workers' Digest session. I think that was a part of my being noticed.

6KY at that time, was owned by the Australian Workers' Union and also in addition to this activity, I had been constantly active on the Metropolitan Council and State Executive of the ALP and obviously kept me before a number of people who were associated with the various unions. At any rate I was appointed as the Secretary. I retained the position until 1943.

During those years in addition to my union work I continued my association with 6KY as guest speaker on union affairs, two nights each week, and the other speakers on the session were Herbert Graham, Tom Burke and Fred Schnaars. Fred Schnaars later became an Industrial

Commissioner in the Arbitration Court. Tom Burke became the Member for Perth, and Herbert Graham carried on his position as the President of the Metropolitan Council.

Joe Chamberlain - 1st contact

It was during these years that I first met F.E. Chamberlain. He was employed as a night watchman at Woodman Point explosive reserve on the seafront at South Fremantle. I was called in by the Fremantle Trades Hall to investigate a dispute in which Chamberlain and one other worker were involved. It was a trivial affair. On investigation I concluded that they had a justifiable grievance and I met the O.I.C. to settle the affair because the work involved three nightly visits to five explosive magazines on the government land at Woodmans Point explosive reserve. This involved visiting each of these magazines at least twice during the night; and they were a fair distance apart. They had to carry a key with them to wind a clock on the tape, which registered on the tape and was read the following morning at the headquarters in Perth. So there was no possibility of them not doing their work properly. I can tell you, I went down to have a look at it and on the seafront during the winter months, on pretty rough ground, with the distances apart - in the dark - between the reserves, it was pretty rough work.

What they really wanted was the provision of a small shack or area with an electric light point in it to make a cup of tea, for a fifteen minute spell during the night, which sounded to me to be reasonable. But Mr. Kirton, the Department Controller, wouldn't budge. So he and I indulged in pretty straight talking and finally I challenged him to go with me and to do the rounds of one of these men.

Well it took some time and then he finally agreed. So I drove him down to the reserve one night later on and we had many angry words because he was so adamant that he wouldn't agree to this thing. Well finally we set sail on this round that we'd both agreed to do. After doing one round, he said to me, "Well," he said, "I have to agree that you're right. I didn't think the job was so arduous as it is, particularly in the winter months of the year, because the ground is very rough and it's in the dark and it's only about 100 yards from the edge of the ocean. I can understand what they want."

So finally the case was agreed to but it appeared that Kirton only agreed in a bad mental mood and I rather suspected that he would be victimising these two men in some form or another as soon as the case concluded. So I suggested to Chamberlain about a week later after I met him in Perth, that I should try and find him alternative employment. He finally agreed and the employment included several positions but the one I least expected him to accept was a job on the tramways as a conductor of the tramways.

However, he did accept it and he and his wife moved up to Perth, and he took over the job and he became very interested in it, and well, at a later stage his activities in the union led him finally to become the Secretary of the ALP. I knew quite a lot of him later on in that capacity.

Union Work

However, my work with the union involved a number of similar cases and they weren't very easy because, although the membership was a reasonable size (not very big) it was a state-wide award and in the average case there would only be two or three people employed, either as a caretaker, or watchman, or cleaners.

There was one case which left a nasty taste in my mouth. It involved a female office cleaner who was employed at Burns Philp in a warehouse at Fremantle. She was claiming overtime for working on Saturday afternoons when she was actually at the Trotting Club.

During the investigation I obviously called for the Time and Wages book and I could see where she had claimed that she worked this time and entered it up in the Time and Wages book. Also the times involved. I spoke to the Accountant about it; why he hadn't done something at all. He said, "Well we're just treating it as a joke. We know that she doesn't work the time, but we don't want to create any difficulties......."

So then I saw the General Manager, Harvey Pugh, and he called me all the names under the sun, I said, "Well, Mr. Pugh , you can call me all the names you like, but in the long run, someone else is going to decide this dispute and it won't be you or I, because if I call for the production of the Time and Wages Book, I must win the case." "Oh," he said, "You couldn't." "Well," I said, "you ring the Employers' Federation and tell them I'm here with you and I'll speak to them," which I did. My counterpart in the Federation was a Mr. Joe Otto, and when I explained things to him he said he could see that Burns Philp had done the wrong thing by not telling the woman to cease making these entries. But they hadn't done so. So there it was. Finally, after a few visits down there, I convinced Pugh that he would have to pay. The amount wasn't very big - well it was reasonable for those days - 1943. It was 26 pounds.".

Joe Otto, the Employers' Federation's counterpart, he knew of the dishonesty that had taken place and he pointed out to me: he said, "Well, Burns Philp are very good customers of ours and I'd appreciate it very much, Bob, if you could cut the claim down a little bit. That would let them see that at least we'd done something to help them. "So over the phone, I said "Righto, Joe, I'll do that and I'll explain the position to Mr. Pugh." So he said, "Righto".

So on explaining the matter to Pugh, he understood very well just now what had happened. I cut the claim down by about a third. I just forget what the actual amount was. Then I reported back to the Union, the claim was paid by Burns Philp and then Pugh called me in and he said to me, "Well look, it's my first experience of talking with a Union Secretary like you and I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to send out recommendation to every member of the staff employed by Burns Philp in Fremantle, and whatever their occupation - whatever award covered the occupation they're working at - I'm going to ask them to join that particular union." "Oh," I said, "thanks very much." So he said, "Well, every time you come down to Fremantle, there's a bottle of whisky there in my office, come and help yourself." "Well," I said, "okay, That's very nice of you, but don't forget this : when I accept the offer, and I have a drink of whisky, you're not buying me. In future our relation will be strictly on a business basis." He laughed and we shook hands and that ended the case. They paid the money over to this lady (I won't mention her name, although it's so long ago, I think she's dead now) but however, the case was finally settled.

However, although the years were interesting , it was not a very satisfactory position because really the strength of the union was so weak. Industrially they had no pull at all, but it did enable me to keep up my position both on the State Executive and on the Metropolitan Council, of which I finally became, towards the end of 1942, the Vice-President.; and the first appointed member from all the councils in Western Australia to the State's Disputes Committee, which was run by the State Executive. At that time the General Secretary was Tom Davies, and prior to him taking it over he was with the Clerks Union as an organiser. But however, that was my training in the meantime.

War Loans

Incidentally, too, there was a lot of time spent during this period on my War Loans activities. This involved going round to address factory meetings; addressing large crowds in Forrest Place - lunch hour meetings between twelve and two o'clock - and here again, I think this more or less helped to keep my name before the public. I think that was one of the reasons why I occupied very many of these positions, which apart from my own personal activities, was the publicity that I got from those that kept me before the eye of those that mattered.

I well remember on one occasion in Forrest Place - I think it was about the last time that I spoke there - I had to speak with Mrs. Cardell-Oliver from the Liberal Party, Rabbi Freedman from the Jewish congregation and I think one other member of the Liberal Party . I realised at the time that I had to make a special effort because well, my effort would be compared - from a Labor point of view - with the other political parties. Although I was a little bit dubious about my ability, I called on my previous war experience in the First World War, the conditions in

Egypt which our troops were then being faced, with in a similar position if not worse than the First World War, and I dramatised the whole issue, obviously with the purpose of trying to get people to invest money in War Loans.

But to conclude the matter before this great crowd - there were about 2000 people present in Forrest Place - and to conclude the matter I had this Miss Place, this office assistant of mine - and she was a very good soprano singer, amateur but she was very good. As an afterthought a brilliant idea occurred to me. I asked her if she would sing Land of Hope and Glory at the conclusion of my efforts. "Yes", she said, "I would." So she did and that really brought the crowd to their feet. Old Teddy Needham, who was then the Member of Perth, he was standing at the back of the rostrum - we were on a raised dais - and I felt someone tugging my coat. I turned round and it was Teddy Needham. I said, "What's the matter, Teddy?" There were tears running out of his eyes. He said "I never knew you could speak like that." I said, "I didn't know I could speak like it myself." [Laughs] So anyhow that was the kind of thing - it was really a dramatic effort. That's all it was.

Did you have much success in raising money, do you think, for War Loans then?

Yes, we did, we did, and finally because of the success that we had, and other people as well, I received a certificate from the Commonwealth of Australia on the 10th November 1945, from the then reigning Prime Minister of Australia, the Honourable J.B. Chifley - Joseph Benedict Chifley - and I'm very proud of it and I've got a copy of it here, and I intend to keep that copy as long as I live.

But, our efforts were very, very successful and [it was] generally accepted, both by the business community and with everyone concerned, that the Trade Union movement had pulled their weight in almost every area that they'd been called upon to do so during the whole course of the War. This was very gratifying to me.

Curtin

So that brings us how you came to be the Secretary of the Trades Hall Incorporated...

Yes. Well that would automatically lead up because just about that time - the War wasn't finished by any stretch of the imagination - but the troops had been called back from Egypt on Jack Curtin's request to the old fellow in England. Old Churchill didn't like it, but John Curtin stood his ground, and he said that we must have our troops back here from Egypt to defend Australia. It was no good trying to defend Australia with our troops in Egypt. Then John Curtin also went further; he addressed the Congress of the ALP in each State of Australia on

the grounds that he wished to use the voluntary membership of the AIF in any overseas area that the War called for their service. He was very successful and I seconded him. I seconded the resolution in the Congress that was called in Western Australia, in Perth. A lot of people thought I was doing the wrong thing but I thought that in my heart I was doing the right thing, for the simple reason it was only just common sense to realise that these troops couldn't be held for home defence when the Japs were starting to come down from Malaya and all these places; and the trouble was brewing in New Guinea. Our troops were brought back from Egypt and diverted to these other areas.

So Curtin's effort became very successful and I think it was generally accepted all over Australia that he was one of the greatest statesmen that we ever had.

Did you have much experience working with Curtin?

No, I didn't because he was ....well, I did and I didn't. Prior to him becoming the Member of Fremantle for the second time, he was employed by the *Worker* newspaper. It was owned by the Australian Workers Union. He also used to adjudicate the efforts of the ALP branches, particularly Maylands/Inglewood, in the [debating] competition. I met him very often and I also met him very often on the Metropolitan Council. But that time I was not the Secretary of the Metropolitan Council, I was merely a delegate, that's all. But I could see that Curtin was an outstanding man by any judgment whatever, and my judgment proved to be correct.

He was also followed by another most able man, that was Ben Chifley. Both of them were ordinary men which proved conclusively to my way of thinking that the Australian Labor Party could find ministers as good as any other party could find, especially in times when it needed an effort of the entire community. This is exactly what happened. So my personal association with John really occurred more after I became the Secretary of the Council. Then I had to go and see him on numerous occasions to find out different things.

On one occasion, I remember, I went over to the Federal Members' room - he was in Perth at the time, I wanted to see him on something and when I was admitted into the room, his head was down on the desk, and when I saw him raise his head, he had been crying. I said to him, I said, "What's the matter, Jack?" He said, "Here, read this. I've just received a communication about the Japanese Kamikaze pilots who made an attack on one of our warships and killed a lot of good men by their Kamikaze efforts. It's a shame that this should happen to such fine men who are only defending their own country." Here again, it proved to me how sincere Jack was. In the whole of my association with him, both then and on future occasions, right up to his death, I realised what a fine man he was.

What were the issues that you had to deal with when you were talking to him?

No, I can't remember. It was something to do with the A.C.T.U. but I can't just remember what the business was. At that time we were not affiliated with the A.C.T.U. and I thought that Jack could pull the strings sufficiently to get the A.C.T.U. to agree to one of the propositions that we were putting up at the time. I just forget what it was. This proved successful. He sort of negotiated with Percy Cleary who was then the President; and Albert Monk who was then the Secretary. So he was very helpful one way and another.

Why was it that you weren't affiliated with the A.C.T.U.?

Well, that was the way .... Western Australia was looked upon as the "Cinderella State", and it wasn't until after the War that I began to realise that the major cases taken before the Industrial Commission in the Eastern States by the A.C.T.U., that the ground work of all their cases had simply been copied by Western Australia. We certainly were not a federated organisation but we used the same arguments in achieving the same things that they were achieving, and I thought this was distinctly unfair. So that at a later stage Oscar Neilson, the Secretary of the Federated Transport Workers' Union, and I was the Secretary of the Metropolitan Council of Perth Trades Hall Incorporated, we combined forces and we indulged in a campaign with the unions and the State Executive, to bring about the affiliation of Western Australia in the A.C.T.U. This was successful but it was opposed. It was opposed not only in Western Australia because of the money they had to pay in - the extra lot they had to pay in - but also from the Eastern States, because they realised that with the set-up in Western Australia, the ALP being the dominating factor in the Trade Unions activities, that we would have two more members on the A.C.T.U. Executive. That was the reason that they opposed it.

Colombo Plan

But we were successful and also to their credit, I must say that later on fellows like Jim Healey of the Federated Waterside Workers, Jackie MacPhilips of the Federated Ironworkers, and one or two others, they accepted my argument after the following Congress. Because of that, in 1950, there was a plebiscite taken and I was appointed as the Australian representative to go to the Asian Regional Conference of the I.L.O. which was to be held in Ceylon, in Colombo. I accepted it with great pleasure. It's always been a point I'm rather proud of, because even on that occasion, I moved successfully that some of the Asian nations be allowed to send their workers, or their students, to Perth, to Western Australia - or to Australia generally - to see how we ran our Trade Union movement; and for them to copy the principles and take them back into the countries, and to teach their own men how to run these shows. That was the main aim of my effort.

Unfortunately, I was successful in getting the resolution through the Congress, but the people that these countries sent here to learn our ways wanted to stay here, and they didn't always go back. But my real effort was for them to go back and and teach those involved to copy our efforts.

Did you have Asian unionists coming our here and working with Australian unionists as a result?

No, we didn't. Actually the move was opposed by our own unions, not generally, but particularly in Western Australia it was. But the universities and the teaching groups of Australia accepted it in toto, and they accepted the people that were sent here to learn our ways and to become students. This was the wrong group that came to Australia to learn our ways. That's why they wanted to stay here. They didn't send the people here that were really workers, with the result that well....they didn't go back to teach their own people.

Why were the unions here opposed?

Oh I think it was just that the unions' general attitude to keep control of their own affairs and not to be used as an example by other people, because at that time the Trade Union movement was pretty strong. It still is today, but it was having such a wider influence then just after the conclusion of the War. It was having an influence in the Asian region that was far beyond the influence that Australia as such a small nation should have had. But however, that was the case and that was history.

So what kind of influence were Australian unions having in the Asian region?

Well, they refused to allow the Asian workers to work with them unless they received the award conditions.

One thing you haven't mentioned is that your appointment to go to Ceylon was opposed.

Oh, it wasn't opposed by any member of the A.C.T.U. of any significance. The only people who opposed it were two people in Western Australia. They rang up Albert Monk who was the Secretary of the A.C.T.U. at the time, and they told him that the wrong man - in their opinion - the wrong man had been appointed.

Who was that?

Chamberlain and Herb Graham. With the result that I couldn't trust them ever after. They did it behind my back. I still went there representing the A.C.T.U. I was very successful in it because while I was over there, I was on every committee almost; because I found that the Asian people trusted us more than they trusted either America or Great Britain or Germany or anybody else. They seemed to place their trust entirely in the Australian attitude, with the result that they wanted me to be on every committee. I recommended that the Asian Governments should send people who were worthy of it to study in our universities back onto their people, so that it could be of some benefit. But it didn't work that way. When the people came here they wanted to stay here, and a good number of them did. But I couldn't stop that. I made an error there.

Metropolitan Council

What was the role of Trades Hall at the time you took it on?

Well there were about 80 unions affiliated with the Metropolitan Council and the Perth Trades Hall. They used to meet fortnightly and the delegates, many of them were secretaries of the unions that they came from, and they really were the cream of the Labor movement at that time, they were very fine speakers, but very rough and very forthright. They took a lot of controlling. Herbert Graham was the President of the Council and Perth Trades Hall Incorporated, but he was a very good Chairman. He could control the meetings perfectly. If any delegates got out of line he'd pull them up immediately; there was no foul language allowed and he would order the delegates either to sit down or leave the room. The delegates naturally obeyed because he was such a good speaker and he spoke with such authority that he had to be obeyed - or that's the way they felt. He certainly was easily outstanding as a Chairman - the best Chairman. Later on he became the Member for East Perth, at which I assisted him.

But when I originally took over, the place was in a real shambles. There was only one girl employed. She came up from Fremantle every day. There was a small office and there was only this girl and myself. The filing system was really unworkable as far as I was concerned, because it went back for years and it was based on all the letters that came from the Trade Unions. If I was asked to look up a certain fact, we'll say for argument's sake: who was on the Karrakatta Cemetery Board in 1940. Well I'd have to search through about 20 years of these letters to find out, and that became impossible. So I had to devise some kind of a system which I could refer to immediately, and not take up much room.

On several occasions I came home and I thought the matter over, and finally I came up with a proposition which looked quite good to me. Any letters that came in, the first thing I would decide was what is the subject matter in the letter. Now then I would then place it in alphabetical order and in the order of the noun: for argument's sake, if it was hotel licences I would say "Licences", and then I would give that a number and we'd start a file on it. This went on with so many files that I had a book there...... I finally found out that what I'd done, I had devised a system which was already in use, and I didn't know about it. It was an American system called the "Kalamazoo" filing system, and I started this filing system and it was wonderful. I've still got the index.

All I had to do was to start the index - and the index cost eleven pounds - and get three or four filing cabinets, and then start files. So that if anybody asked a question on the Karrakatta Cemetery : who were the members of the Karrakatta Cemetery Board in 1936, I could go straight to that letter and find out. There was no difficulty about it; and previous to that, I'd had to rely on the girl in the office, asked her if she knew anything about it.

There were two huge bookcases which had been made specially. They were made up into little squares - about twelve inches square and about fifteen inches long - long enough to hold up a letter. These were packed up one after the other. There were thousands of them! It almost drove me frantic because delegates, everybody, were asking questions and I didn't know. So I had to devise this system. It turned out a real winner. I kept it going all the period of the time that I was the Secretary to the Trades Hall.

But however, that was one of the big difficulties that I had when I first came over. I wasn't very well liked I don't think, because I was rather inclined to be critical of the system itself, because they, the people who were running the ALP at the time, they were not trained to put all the information in a proper category where it could be found readily.

In addition to that I was expected to control the staff, the cleaning staff of the Trades Hall Incorporated. I was expected to run the State and Federal elections in my own area, the Metropolitan Council. I was also expected to speak in Forrest Place or on the Esplanade whenever a Federal Member came over. Then we were expected also to make one visit at least, to every other district council during the course of the year. How on earth I kept it going I don't know. If it hadn't have been for my wife, and also for the good sense of the committee who assisted me, I could never have got through it. It would have killed me. It would have been too much because it was a constant pressure and anybody who told me, "The pressure will kill you," well I'm now 90 years of age and I really put that pressure - or the work that I had to do - I loved it, I loved the work I was doing and I put the pressure down to be one the

things that kept me alive and kept me in good health. In addition to my wife and all my family and the help of all the other delegates.

I had to work in with the opposition and with our own government and almost every phase I got on very well with everybody, because I adopted the attitude that, first of all I had to be honest, and if I felt a subject or a problem was worth supporting, I had to support it and be honest about it. They I used to give the delegates all the information I possibly could on the

subject that we were talking about. They respected me for that because before they hadn't been advised on the details of these problems that were cropping up.

Why was that? Did the leaders of the Party deliberately keep things from people or what?

They had been in the past and it was to some extend even whilst I was there. Each week after a meeting, and very often in between meetings, the press would come along ..... There was what they called a "Trades Hall roundsman", just the same as there was a "Police roundsman". They'd come along and they would ask me for some information on any activity that the Metropolitan Council was engaged in. If I thought it was of disadvantage to the movement, I would tell them about it; I would give them all the information, but before I did so, I would tell them it was off the record: that if they didn't respect my attitude then as far as I was concerned, I would see them no more. I got on very well with all these people and they all worked in with me. Even the editors of the *West Australian* and the *Daily News*, they still worked in with me. Hartley Joynt, he was with the *Daily News*, and I can't remember now the editor of the West Australia, but he was a good .....As a matter of fact they were so good that I got them to act as adjudicators on some of our debating nights that we had.

Well then I also became associated with the Employers' Federation to such an extent that they asked me to address them at lunch-hour meetings on industrial affairs. This I did and again I told them the truth and straight to the point, and they all appreciated it, and I think that was the reason that for my long period of office, people got so to trust me because I'd tell them the truth and it had worked out all the way through over the twenty years I was there. But they respected that attitude of mine and they respected me for it.

Do you have any recollections about the State Labor Government around '43/45, the Willcock Government?

Yes. I had a way with me. I've always liked to address people by their Christian name. I've always looked upon it as being unfriendly to talk to people with a surname, with the result that the Premiers and the various important people I met, like well Premiers of Western Australia,

Jack Willcock and those people.....At a meeting of the State Executive I would get up and I would say to them, "Well Jack, this is the way it goes and this is so and so."Everybody seemed to build up an image for me for breeding such familiarity with all these important people, that they thought that I was something unusual [laughs]. Herbert Graham, after he got into Parliament, he said to me one day, he said, "Oh Bob," he said, "I wish you were up there with me." He said, "Your attitude would help me such a lot."

A.L.P. Fundraising

Well then there was another angle to it. The State Executive was supposed to collect money from the various firms round Perth - or anyone who could collect money for electioneering purposes. But my name became so well known that one morning Herbert Graham and I were walking along Wellington Street and we were talking about the same thing, and I was criticising Tom Davies who was then the General Secretary of the ALP. My thoughts were that he didn't do enough of this, going round to people and getting money from them when I knew it was there to be had, if somebody would just ask for it. So I said to Graham, I said, "Well look, I'll just show you, Herb, how it works. I'll go in now and I won't.....Now Frankie Boan doesn't know that I'm coming and I'll go in and see him and I'll ask him for a donation to the Labor movement," I said, "and you can be there and you can see it." So we both went in and we asked to see Frankie Boan and he was there and we saw him, and I told him what I was there for. I said, "I want a donation from you for the ALP." I said, "Our people, look they're ordinary working people but they spend such an enormous amount of money with Boans, that we're entitled to get something from you in return as a recognition of the way they patronise Boans etc. " [laughs] He laughed at me and he said "What do you want?" "Well," I said, "That's up to you, it's not up to me. You know how much you can give and you know what it's for, and I'm leaving it to you." With the result that he gave us a cheque.

That backfired on me because Graham told them about it in the caucus meetings. But people began to think that I could go in and ask for money anywhere and a lot of it wasn't going into the books of the ALP. Now that was all right and I thought, right, well that's the end of that. I can't do that any more. Now Graham didn't do it to hurt me but it was just that somebody else had thoughts on the matter, and I didn't blame them for it, because that would happen quite easily with anybody else. But I had to stop it, so that was that.

Censures

Then there were other things. On the Metropolitan Council itself, the delegates there, I had a very, very good relationship with them over the whole twenty years I was there. There were only about three or four occasions when resolutions were moved censuring my decisions. One

of them was from the Secretary of the Barmaids and Barmen's Union; he told the delegates that I had received money from the licensee of a hotel in Bayswater in his daughter's name, towards the Labour Day bathing beauty competition, and that I hadn't put it in. Well on the spur of the moment, I had no proof to say otherwise, but I knew in my own mind that there was a receipt for it somewhere. So I spend some weeks looking through the back record of the Labour Day Committee and finally I fond it. It was well over .... about 250 or 300 pounds, I'm not sure now. I was waiting for the delegate to come back so I could ask him to explain to delegates clearly how he'd misrepresented the position.

But some of my members of the Trades Hall and Metropolitan Council Committee passed the word on to this chap and he never appeared on the Metropolitan Council meeting for many months afterwards. So I lost the opportunity. But I've never lost a receipt. I still have that receipt now in my house 40 or 50 years later; because I would never have anyone impugn my honesty, because I've tried to be honest in every respect. Then there was another one. There was a woman that objected to the way I spoke to her, she was a Member of Parliament. Mrs. Hutchison. I think she was an Upper House Member. She came in one day complaining while the elections were on, and she wanted some things done. It wasn't within her province and I told her so. But I also told her that when a candidate was endorsed by the Labor Party, the Labor Party expected them to do something rather than sit on their bum. She told the delegates about it and all the delegates did was laugh! They roared laughing at the situation, so my name was quite cleared [laughs] and she had moved a motion of censuring me. Even the seconder, Bill Finch, he didn't vote for her.

D.L.P.

But that's the kind of thing I had to put up with. I had the same problems with the DLP. Because I was a Catholic a lot of people expected my attitude to be on the Catholic side. It made no matter because I've always had the opinion that religion and politics do not mix! They've both got to be kept separate and you've got to look at each subject factually. You've got to decide which is the best for the people you're working for, and I was working for the Labour movement. So I had to decide what was the best thing for the Labour movement. I remember on one occasion when I'd been to a service at the cathedral one Sunday morning, and Archbishop Prendiville met me outside the church. It was when the banking issue was on, and he said to me, he said, "Bob, don't you think your fellows are going too far?" He said, You know we always bank with a certain bank and if the Commonwealth Bank takes control of all this money, they mightn't grant us the loans that we need." "Oh," I said, "that's all bosh." With the result that I wasn't very happy, or at least I wasn't in their good books for very many years.

Even when the DLP came into existence, I still took the same attitude. But if there was a problem there, I looked at it factually and decided what was the best thing to do. I told these people that had pulled away and started the Democratic Labor Party - they started a branch of it in Western Australia - and I told them if they disagreed with the attitude of the ALP it was no use going outside the ALP and starting a branch and expecting to damn the ALP, because the ALP was far too big and too well known for them. They wouldn't achieve any objective whatsoever. Finally that attitude of mine provided to be correct because the DLP went out of existence altogether, and it was then taken over...... or rather during the period it was on, it was run by a fellow named Santamaria in the eastern States. He was rather a wealthy man. But it was favouring the payment of Catholic School teachers by the government. The same as they'd done in Scotland. But it made no difference to me because I followed the common sense rule that if there was money to spare for that purpose available to the government, then I expected the government to do it. If the economics of the country were such that they couldn't afford it, well then all right, I would abide by the government's decision. The Federal Government this was.

And so it went on. Because my attitude was like that all the way through I built up a reputation for fairness and it seemed to carry on right through. Finally when the unions became dissatisfied with the ALP and they wanted to follow the same principle that governed the Trade Union movement in the other States, they started their own Council here. Well now then, the ALP owned the Perth Trades Hall and the Perth Trades Hall was a very valuable property, and I knew that among the unions there were the people who were not favourable to the ALP, such as the pseudo-Communists. They could easily work things up at a meeting towards people who didn't have the full knowledge of the situation. So I adopted the attitude there and then that when the ALP was started, it was the Trade Union movement that started it. It was the Trade Union money, the Trade Union movement money that paid for the Perth Trades Hall Incorporated, and a lot of them were our tenants. So I recommended that the only attitude to adopt was for the ALP to still retain the ownership of the Perth Trades Hall Incorporated, and that applies today.

I'd like to take us back to the discussion we were having about the DLP. How did you get on with colleagues of yours in the Labour movement who were looking at the DLP and saying, "well that might be the way to go".

Well, I didn't get on too well. A lot of them were suspicious and I think, even now 40 years later, some of them still think, because I'm a Catholic, my attitude would have been favourably disposed towards the Democratic Labor Party. But it certainly was not! Every problem that came up, I looked at it quite dispassionately and without any consideration of any religious influence. If it were for the benefit of the ALP, I supported it. If it was in opposition to the

ALP, I opposed it. People respected me but the great factor was, that all the time I knew where I stood because I never changed my ground.

Did you ever go to any DLP meetings?

Yes. I did go. The first DLP meeting I was invited to go there. It was held in Warwick House in St. Georges Terrace. I forget who the Chairman was. The invitation was extended to quite a number of Metropolitan Council delegates, and also to other people outside, and I was one of them, because I was the Secretary of the Trades Hall. I didn't know what the meeting was really about though I listened carefully for the first twenty minutes or so. I could see quite well, quite clearly in my own mind, that an organisation was being set up to manoeuvre the ALP along certain lines when it suited the outside organisation. So I immediately stood up and I said, "Mr. Chairman and friends, I'm very sorry but I can't .....I'm the Secretary of the Perth Trades Hall Incorporated; they're paying me for my services, for my honesty, and they're the people I've got to serve. Therefore, I must leave your meeting immediately and don't expect me to be favourably disposed to anything that you might put forward, that is against the ALP, because it won't work." That was it.

This is the attitude that I've followed all the time. Even then there was a Senator who was in the DLP, I won't mention names, but one of them threatened that he would get Wetherby into the position of Secretary of Trades Hall. I told him to try because I knew very well that I was firmly in charge because of my attitude of honesty. I think he tried indirectly but it didn't work.

Tom Burke

Even now, when we talk about the Democratic Labor Party, I still tell them that I did not support them in any of their causes, even Tom Burke, when he was expelled. Tom Burke was looked upon as being a member of the Democratic Labor Party. I don't think he was and he came to me for advice. I told him, "Tom, you're the Member for Perth." And I said, "It's the citizens of Perth you're serving, not the Catholic Church, and nobody else but the citizens of Perth. Now you've got to do the right thing," I said, "if you want to hold your job. You've got to think of the citizens of Perth first and vote accordingly." He didn't accept my advice and he was defeated. And I could see him being defeated because Tom really hated Dr. Evatt, and he allowed his hate of Dr. Evatt to colour his views and his decisions. It was no good to anybody. You can't do that sort of thing, you've got to look at a thing dispassionately, and if the proposal requires support and if you think it's a fair thing, you vote for it. If it's not, you oppose it.

You mentioned Tom Burke being expelled. Had he been a close friend of yours prior to that?

Yes, he had and I thought Tom was a very fine man. I thought Tom Burke was one of the most honest men I ever met, and so did Ben Chifley. Tom was looked upon by the Cabinet as being a future Treasurer in the Federal Government. But he defeated himself opposing Dr. Evatt in some of his moves. So I wasn't responsible for that. He came to me and I advised him against it on many occasions at my own home.

You mentioned him being expelled, can you remember the circumstances ?

No, he wasn't expelled. No, that question has often been talked about. Joe Chamberlain was the Secretary at the time and naturally he was opposed to the DLP, and he was opposed to what Tom was trying to do. Because he opposed the principles of the Labor movement at the time, Joe Chamberlain put the case and he said that Tom Burke had expelled himself. He wasn't expelled by any motion - as far as I can remember - of the ALP. But Chamberlain said that he had expelled himself and that seemed to go down and was suitably accepted generally. I couldn't argue against it because he certainly had stood against the ALP.

Joe Chamberlain

With Chamberlain, what was his role in this?

Joe was a very good speaker. Incidentally his name wasn't Joe Chamberlain. His name was Francis, F.E. Chamberlain. He adopted the name "Joe" Chamberlain copying the English Prime Minister. He thought it would do down well because Chamberlain was an ambitious man, and he was a very shrewd man and a good speaker. Also he had the knack of introducing into any argument that cropped up, religion. As anybody knows, Catholics are only one fifth of the population - or were at that time - any motion that he adopted that attitude to was always defeated because the big majority was opposed to it.

Well I never trusted Joe. I can tell you that quite frankly. I didn't go to his funeral because I couldn't trust him. I found out that he'd been deceitful to me as an individual. That's fair and square and now Battye Library's got it.

In what case was that? What did he do that wasn't fair to you?

Well......oh there were many occasions. There was one case where I think I was a member of the ACTU Executive at a conference that was held at either Sydney or Melbourne, I'm not sure which. Joe Pereira who was then Secretary of the Police Union, he went there, too. He was very friendly with Paddy Troy. Chamberlain when making a report to the State Executive on Pereira's attitude, mentioned this friendliness at the conference, inferring that Troy had some

influence over Pereira. Chamberlain had asked me in confidence to tell him what was happening at the conference. I told him what had happened but I didn't expect him to use it. But at this particular meeting he used it and he put it in such a way that he reported to the delegates that I'd reported to him that Pereira had done so and so and so and so. Pereira jumped up and said he opposed it and said it wasn't true. I could see this conflict of the State Executive meeting; it had arisen but again religion had come into it, because Pereira was a Catholic and Chamberlain was not. I immediately got up and I said, "Delegates," I said, "I'm not having Chamberlain or Pereira put words into my mouth." I said, "I've reported to you exactly what happened and I told Chamberlain what had happened faithfully and now he's using it as a report. It wasn't intended for that purpose. I gave it to him for his own knowledge and for the benefit of the ALP."

So was your explanation accepted by them?

My explanation, well yes. Yes and my explanation was accepted by the State Executive itself, by all the delegates who were present. But I lost the friendship of Pereira, not that it was of any value to me, because I didn't like his attitude on very many things.

What about your relationship with Joe Chamberlain, was it a difficult relationship?

No, no, no, my relationship with Chamberlain was not always so difficult. If Chamberlain was putting forward a proposition with which I agreed, I supported it wholeheartedly, and if he was putting forward a proposition which I disagreed with, I opposed it wholeheartedly. The delegates admired me for it. Certainly in the finish, I became unfriendly with Chamberlain, because I came to the conclusion that his words, or his opinions, were not to be accepted as a basic truth. So I thought the best thing to do was not to confide in him anymore, so I ceased any confidential talks with Joe. They ceased from that moment onwards.

Did Joe have any effect on members of the Party, Catholic members of the Party? I was thinking perhaps in driving them away from the Party because of his attitude?

Yes, I think he did. I think they left because of Joe. Because first of all they .... he was opposed to their attitude - and rightly so - because if they were in the DLP, well they certainly wouldn't move in favour of the ALP. But by the same token, it broke down any possible chance of real friendship or of any healing of the conflict that had taken place.

Did that happen just in Western Australia, or did he have that sort of influence nationally?

Well Chamberlain was often described as being a big strong man, but Chamberlain very often came to me for advice on matters, and I gave him the advice which made him....I told him when he was the Secretary of the ALP, he then became an officer of the ALP Executive interstate, and there were occasions when Dr. Evatt had to come before them because he'd done certain things that were being questioned by the Executive and I told Chamberlain, I told him "Well, if you're going to be any good, if you're going to have any influence on the Executive, you've got to come out in a forthright manner and let Dr. Evatt get the same treatment as anybody else. In other words once he enters into this conflict he's not eligible to be at a meeting that ...or a meeting of enquiry with the Federal Executive conducting." And Joe stuck to that and with the result that he got the name of being a strong man. I think he was to some extent. But through it all I could never trust Joe implicitly. Now there it is. That's the whole point. I shouldn't be saying it but that's my truthful attitude. And I didn't go to his funeral.

Who were the people in the Party at that time that you did have the most respect for?

Well, I always respected the decisions of the State Congress right through until the time I retired, on all the matters that they made a decision on, because I've always felt that when the majority makes the decision, as a member of that body I've got to accept it. That's the way it went until the time I retired. With the result that I never did one single act in the whole of my period with the ALP - or even in my life - which could be construed as being hurtful to the ALP. I wouldn't do it so there it is. And I'm still the same today.

Amongst the Labor Premiers that you've had to deal with here in the State?

Bert Hawke was the most forthright. I suppose that answers your questions.

Well that starts to answer it I guess.

There certainly have been a number of Premiers. Frank Wise was another reasonably good Premier. Frank Wise was a thoughtful Premier, but Bert Hawke was a man who could speak with decisiveness and act with decisiveness, and lead the Parliamentary Labor Party to a sensible conclusion on nearly any subject.

Industrial Disputes

Well let's talk about some of the dealings that the union movement had with the Premiers. Were there times when there were conflicts between what the unions wanted to do..?

Yes there was. I remember one quite clearly. It was a dispute in which the Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Union was actively engaged, and they'd refused to run the engines through the tunnel on the Albany line. I think through Mount Helena somewhere. Alec Davies was the President, and Alec was a forthright man and he was a very good speaker but he was...well, anyhow they had this decision. Now Harry Webb was the Secretary at the time and he was also on the State Industrial Committee. I told Harry, I said, "It's foolish of you, Harry, to be on the State Industrial Committee whilst your union's in conflict with the State Executive of the ALP, because you'll have to do something which is not acceptable to your union. Because the State Executive do not agree to what your union wants." So I said, "You'll have to do something." So finally Harry and I, conceived the plan together and the idea was to bring in an outsider as a mediator. We recommended that Mr. Wallwork who was then a magistrate, that he be invited to be a mediator to settle the dispute. He came in and he put the case very fairly.

I opposed one of the clauses the union was sticking out on and the clause was that the union should have the right to decide when a Garrett engine was in a state of repair, that it could be used safely. I opposed it. When I had to address the union in the Perth Trades Hall Incorporated on this very matter, I pointed out to them how foolish they were, because if an accident occurred and they had agreed that the engine was safe to run, they would then have lost all possibility of making any claims against the government. They could see the error when I explained the situation to them. So it was accepted and after a conference the unions went back to work.

To be continued in the next issue.

The Response to Coal-Cutting Machines at Collie

Brian Pope *

Coal-cutting machines were bitterly resisted by miners on American and New South Wales coalfields whereas the response at Collie was one of bargained acceptance. It is argued here that distinctive work and market patterns developed in Collie which enhanced the miner's bargaining power and enabled them to establish priorities in relation to the introduction of coal-cutting machines. The general pattern of work on the field is described from evidence given in Arbitration Court hearings. A description of the new coal-cutting technology is followed by a discussion of the miners' responses to it as articulated through the Collie River District Miners' Union of Workers.

The Collie field was distinctive in the context of Australian coal mining. It developed quite rapidly yet remained compact both in physical area and in size of individual mines. Coal was found on the banks of the Collie River in 1883 and although leases were established by the early 1890's little effort was made to produce coal.[1] In 1894 the government tried to stimulate development of the field by raising 1000 tons of coal for trial purposes. The tests were considered successful and in 1897 the government commenced construction of a railway to the field.[2] The first mine on the field that could be deemed productive was established at Allanson late in 1897. The seam worked was 130 feet down and, by subsequent Collie standards, very low, being only about three feet thick. Unfortunately it deteriorated in quality & was abandoned in August 1898 after producing only 2900 tons. [3] With the state provided railway line already opened on 1 July 1898, the failure at Allanson prompted the government to call for tenders to work the more promising seam at its original trial site. This became the successful Wallsend Mine and it was soon joined by the Proprietary Mine. Production increased under the impetus of contracts with the State Government. (See Appendix for tonnages). Coal-cutting machines were introduced as early as 1903 and by 1913 some 75% of the output of the six mines on the field was being holed by machine.[4] Such levels of production and applied technology were attained much earlier in relative terms than elsewhere in Australia. How were they achieved?

Winning coal is influenced by a number of factors such as geology, the scale and mode of operation, the market and the structure of capital investment. These factors allowed a brisk rate of development at Collie but were also advantageously manipulated by the miners. For example, the local geology allowed tunnel rather than shaft entries to be used. These lessened the capital investment required to open a mine but attenuated managerial control. Tunnel entries gave the Collie miner the option of leaving the pit at his choosing rather than

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being forced to wait on a fixed schedule of shaft winding controlled from the surface by management. The Collie men exercised this option both during disputes and in periods of industrial quiet. [5]

Another geological factor was the sub-bituminous nature and relatively high moisture content of the local coal which meant that more coal was needed to provide a given energy output. The high moisture content also made Collie coal prone to crumble quite quickly after being mined. This property made it difficult to keep coal at the surface for any length of time. Although a successful technique of storing under water was developed subsequently, management in the early days was unable to stockpile coal and so output had to be correlated closely with demand. This restriction on stockpiling was exploited by the miners as Loftus Connor of the Cardiff Mine affirmed in 1905.

> The Manager agreed --- well he was forced into the position because it meant that if he did not pay this 3d per ton extra demanded by the men in this particular bord the work would be stopped, and we were short of coal at the time, and sooner than be placed at a disadvantage through shortage of coal the Manager paid... because we were at the mercy of the men. [6]

The pattern of demand for Collie coal was distinctive in that there was rarely any export component and only a modest market for bunkers. The domestic private market was minimal and the state became the principal user on its railways. The practical outcome was that the demand for, and use of, Collie coal became a question of policy for the Government rather than a commercial proposition. By 1905 the Government was taking 80% of production under politically expedient pricing structures negotiated directly with the Collie River District Miners' Union. [7]

The Union was formed as early as 1900 when miners from the three working mines were brought together under a single organisation. Its history has been one of independence and although it has maintained a close relationship with the inter-state union movement it did not formally join the Miners' Federation until 1942. It left in 1945, rejoined in 1946 and left again in 1949 and it is only in recent times that moves are being made to rejoin. The fragmented nature of capital at Collie allowed the new union to assume a leading role and whilst success did not always come its way, the fact that the Government was prepared to negotiated pricing directly with it gave it enhanced status.

The early miners in Collie were primarily British who arrived either directly or by way of the eastern States or New Zealand.

Miner's Backgrounds 1903-1910

Year	Name	Years of Mining Experience in,
1903	Alexander McCaughan	20
"	Robert Archer	20
"	John McDermott	14 NSW, Vic, Qld
"	Alexander Grant	29 NSW
1904	Robert L. Williams	10
"	George Gregory	40 NSW, Vic
1905	Andrew Galloway	24 Scotland, NSW, Qld, Vic
"	William Reid	13 Scotland, NSW, NZ
"	Andrew Lillicot	15 England, South Africa
"	Philip Whitworth	15 England, Vic
"	John Reeves	14 NSW, Vic, Tas
"	Thomas Dixon	30 Vic (Gold in W.A.)
"	James Joseph White	14 NSW, Qld
"	Michael Gavan	30 England, NSW, Vic, NZ
"	Joseph Fairless	11 Gold only, no coal.
"	Dennis Davy	12 England, South Wales.
1907	Edmund Mahoney	30 NSW
1910	Harry Rice	16 South Wales, NSW.
"	James Horrocks	40 Yorkshire, Eastern States.

Source : Arbitration Court Files 1095/10-4, 169, 170, 172, 261, 368.

This background reinforced the British training of the early mine managers and ensured that British customs and traditions were introduced in Collie as, for example, in the naming of the Wallsend and the Cardiff mines. More significantly, British work practices such as the cavil and the taking of the Saturday following pay day as a holiday were also observed in Collie.[8] Such observance was a persistent and symbolic reminder to management that its control over labour was not absolute and it played an important role in the maintenance of the miners' independence by providing a matrix of familiarity in which to work.

The following account of the process by which coal was won is specific to Collie and is based on evidence given by miners in the early hearings of the Western Australian Arbitration Court. [9] It is, to that extent, a general account drawn from the experience of several mines rather than a description of work in any one mine.

Holing was the miner's word for undercutting and involved cutting a groove across the face, close to the floor, to enable the coal to fall freely when shot. [10] To hole by hand it was necessary for the miner to lie on the floor of the bord on his side, usually supporting his shoulder on his shovel or rolled up jacket. As the depth of the cut increased, he had to manipulate his pick by feel. It was up to him to decide whether to start at the left or right,

how deep to go and how wide to make the opening. The decisions were based on the nature of the coal, the state of the seam and the amount of coal to be won in any particular stint. He managed his pick with dexterity sufficient to ensure that the undercut was as small as was consistent with speed of working and a good shoot of coal. A finished undercut was three to six feet deep and tapered from about twelve inches at the front to almost nothing at the back. [11]To hold a face successfully required skill for, as de Rousiers remarked, "the miner's pick must continually be wielded with discernment. "[12]

A standard bord in Collie was eight yards wide and usually the full width was holed. Once holing was completed the shot holes were bored in the face and charged. The fuses were lit, a shouted warning of "firing" was given and the miners withdrew to a safe place. The men returned to the bord as soon as it was safe to commence filling the coal. Any dangerous coal still clinging to the roof or ribs was brought down and, provided the wheeler had brought in a skip, filling commenced. This was by shovel. If there was dirt or stone in the seam it was picked out at this stage because excessive quantities of dirt in a skip were penalised.

Skips ran on rough tracks and there was an art in filling a skip so as to ensure all the coal was still when it reached the weighers on the surface. The practice in Collie was to pack the outer edge of the load with big coals called "toppers" to hold the smaller coals in place. It took two men about ten minutes to fill a skip. If the skips were running nicely the full skip was taken away by the wheeler and the next empty one could be filled without delay. It was obviously desirable for the filling sequence to proceed without serious interruption which necessitated a balanced and controlled distribution of skips to the ten to twenty bords being worked. Any uneven distribution of skips to the bords was an inevitable source of grievance. Once filling was completed the necessary timbering was undertaken and the place left ready for the next shift to start the sequence again.

The wheeler operated between the bords and a section called a flat which was a passing loop analogous to those on a single line tramway system. Sets of empty skips came down to the flat from the surface and sets of full ones were dispatched from the flat. The wheelers had to link this distribution point with the working bords. Where hand wheeling was the rule it was usual to open out the bords in such a way as to ensure an incline falling away from the face to assist the movement of full skips. As single sets of rails were normal it was necessary to provide a means of getting the full skip past the incoming empty one and this was done at a spot close to the face called a cope or copeover. One of the props was knocked out to make sufficient space for the incoming empty skip to be tipped off the rails on to its side to allow the full skip to be wheeled past. The empty skip was then righted by the wheeler with the assistance of the face miners and pushed up to the face to be filled. The full skip was taken by the wheeler to the flat, made up into a set and dispatched to the surface either by horse or by rope winding gear.

The work cycle was a complex process that required the integration of wheeling into the activities of the bord. A delay in the bord did not affect the wheeler very much as he just

went on to the next bord if the men were not ready for a new skip. A delay in wheeling, however, seriously affect the face men. The intrusion of coal-cutting machines into the delicate pattern of activity affected everyone and posed a serious threat to the control of the labour process exercised by the miners and thus to their independence.

Coal-cutting machines were developed to a usable stage by the Jeffrey Company in Ohio in 1877. The first machines in Australia were tested at Greta in New South Wales in 1890 and the first Jeffrey machine was in use by 1894. These early machines were the mechanical pick type powered by compressed air. [13]

The rationale of mechanised coal cutting was clearly stated by the Sullivan Machinery Company in 1902.

> Managers of pick or hand mines should bear in mind that coal-cutting machines offer several more points of advantage than merely a reduction in the cost of the coal on the mine car. In pick mines nearly every employee is a skilled workman requiring several years of experience before being able to perform good work. The use of machines reduces the proportion of this skilled labour and at the same time increases the productive capacity per capita. This means that, for a given tonnage, fewer miners are necessary. [14]

There is little reason to doubt that other material of this nature was circulating in managerial circles during the formative stages of Collie thus encouraging the early introduction of mechanised coal-cutting.

The capital required was not excessive and Collie consequently experienced the impact of coal-cutting machines relatively soon after mining commenced. Trials were carried out at two collieries as early as 1903. Two electric Jeffrey machines were at the Proprietary in 1904 and by 1905 similar machines were working at the Cardiff, whilst the Collie Burn had two Ingersoll compressed air type machines.[15] Early in 1908 a Sullivan electric machine was installed at the Co-operative and by the end of 1908, the State Mining Engineer was able to report that

> the increased tonnage per man is in no doubt due to the fact that coal cutting machines are not installed at all the mines and also to the fact that fewer men being employed has resulted in more shifts per man being worked. [16]

By 1913 almost 75% of the field output including the total output of the Co-operative, the Cardiff and the Proprietary mines was being holed by electric coal-cutting machines. [17] By 1925 the equivalent percentages in Britain and New South Wales were still only 20% and 20.5% respectively. [18] Thus within the span of only a decade, coal-cutting machines were used on the Collie field to an extraordinary degree.

The initial impetus for this rapid introduction of machine cutting came from the Ewing Select Committee in 1902. Ewing, the Member for South West Mining Districts in the Legislative Assembly, was quite forthright about his motivation in moving for a Select

Committee. "My chief desire is to impress on the Government ...... the necessity of using nothing but Collie coal within the boundaries of the state". [19]

The Select Committee in its Report, amongst other recommendations, directed that-

> the attention of the mine owners be drawn to the necessity of equipping their collieries with up to date machinery, thereby reducing the cost of production, so as to enable them to defy competition from without the State, and thereby bring coal into general use. [20]

The competition from "without the State" was coming from New South Wales where modern coal-cutting machines were just being adopted in some numbers. Enhanced production was not the only attraction of the new machines. In 1904 the owners of the Hebburn mine in New South Wales lamented that "...we scarcely expect the Cutters to cure all troubles underground, but something must be done to protect us from the Miner and the vagaries of the Arbitration Court....." [21] The Collie owners were not much troubled by vagaries of the Arbitration Court in the early 1900s and, although there were some troubles underground, they saw the machines primarily as a means of lowering production costs.

Several types of machine were used in Collie. The puncher type made by Ingersoll and powered by compressed air was "not considered half so suitable" for Collie seams as the electric Jeffrey although the former was adopted in the Pelaw Main colliery in New South Wales. [22] Notwithstanding the two Ingersoll punchers in use at the Collie Burn in 1905 and the separate category of "puncher machine man" included in the Agreements and Awards from 1906 on, there was little reference to puncher machines in the Court transcripts.

The second general type of machine was the chain cutter which was akin to the modern chain saw. There were two makes used in Collie, the more popular Jeffrey and the Sullivan. Both could be powered by electricity or compressed air with the former source employed in Collie despite the bad experiences some miners had with it. For example, in 1905, Joseph Fairless told the Court how

> you get shocks off the cable where it is worn. Where it rubs along the ground and the insulation is worn right off, and the wire is bare. Of course you cannot see these places always, and you pick it up and get a shock right off the main wire. I have gone out the pit sick with shock, especially when it is very warm. [23]

The mine manager, John Evans, was questioned about this evidence of worn insulation and his reply was a prime example of managerial prerogative being exercised with no reference to the men at all. The problem of faulty insulation, Evans said,

> cannot be helped. We considered that before we introduced the machines, and after hearing the evidence of electricians we decided that the wire we would use would not be strong enough to do them harm at that distance. 500 volts is considered low tension. [24]

Low tension notwithstanding, the men were continually reminded of the power of electricity underground. In 1910 Jeff Lawrie, for instance, had five days off work after being burned by a cable. [25]

In Collie, the first type of Jeffrey was operated by three men although the company catalogues invariably showed only one or two. The mode of operation was discontinuous with a straight-in cutting action followed by a non-cutting withdrawal. In Collie, one man was at the front of the machine working the stabilising jack and shovelling the buck dust clear as it came out of the cut. [26] The second man worked the stabilising jack at the rear and took care of the timbering. [27] The third man operated the machine. It made a cut three feet wide by five feet deep straight into the coal at floor level. The cutter bar was then withdrawn and the whole machine levered sideways three feet and the operation repeated. This took place seven times across an eight yard bord. It was, as one miner remarked, "laborious work". [28] The Sullivan machine was a distinct improvement on this inasmuch as it did not have to stop between one rib and the other. It was designed to cut across the face continuously under its own power guided by a tensioned chain. Later Jeffrey machines also worked in this fashion.

The new type of machine by being both quicker and continuous imposed greater stress on the operators. It also increased the likelihood of accidents. Hiram Whiteaker told the Court in 1925 that he had seen the machine jump out many times. "I know one man that has only one eye left and another one with half his head off. The machine did that".[29] In 1910, H. Digwood had his hand caught when the machine slipped off the jack and Thomas Hume was injured when the "lifting jack on [the] Sullivan machine slipped whilst placing pipe under machine".[30] Working these machines in poorly illuminated confined spaces was no routine matter!

The self propelling function of the new machines allowed them to be worked by a two man crew thus eliminating one job per machine compared with the older type. Increased speed of operation and the reduced crew gave rise to a long-running problem involving the clearance of buck dust from the undercut. The early machines, being slower, brought most of the buck dust out of the cut and it was readily cleared away. The new machines did not clear the cut so thoroughly and the reduction to a two man crew meant that there was no one available to remove the buck dust. This was a problem because an undercut choked with buck dust did not allow the coal to fall properly when shot. The companies employed special buckdusters at various times to clear the undercut but this job was never permanent. The buck dust problem brought forth Taylorist ideas in 1924 when Thomas Burgess, Underground Manager at the Proprietary

> got the buckdusters, unknown to themselves to scrape out various places and I timed them. The oldest hand in the mine cleaned out a 6 yard place in 30 minutes. I averaged up the wages paid at that time and the average wages for the men amounted to 28/- a day. They worked 7 hours per day and that made 4/- per hour. I therefore put a flat rate of 2/- on. [31]

The resulting rate was unsuccessfully disputed by the Union and there were continual skirmishes over whose duty it was to clear the buck dust and how much they would be paid for it. [32]

The introduction of coal-cutting machines influenced the numbers of men employed and rates of production. The extent of the changes wrought is evident from official figures.

Employment and Production Figures 1903-13

	Men u/gd	Men sfce	Men total	Tons per u/gd man	Tons total
1903	308	94	402	433	133,427
1904	283	75	358	489	138,550
1905	261	90	351	487	127,364
1906	236	71	307	634	149,755
1907	179	74	253	795	142,373
1908	204	76	280	859	175,248
1909	301	93	394	711	214,301
1910	397	124	521	660	262,166
1911	340	123	463	734	249,899
1912	416	126	542	709	295,079
1913	418	141	559	750	313,818

Source: Report of the Department of Mines, 1903-1913.

Between 1903 and 1907 the underground workforce decreased by more than 40% whilst tons raised per undergroundman increased by more than 80%. Although these are official figures and no allowance is made for new mines, richer seams and developmental work of low productivity it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the advent of coal-cutting machines allowed a significant reduction in the underground workforce whilst raising output per man even more significantly. How then did the men respond to such major changes?

Response was articulated through the Collie River 'District Miners' Union formed in September 1900. The early office-bearers were experienced miners with union experience and the Secretary at the time of the introduction of coal-cutting machines was J. Allen followed in 1904 by A.A. Wilson who had previously been at the Outtrim mine in Victoria. The Union had historically pursued an independent approach to industrial relations. The bargained acceptance of coal-cutting machines was a clear example of that policy in action.

The introduction of coal-cutting machines into North American mines provoked strikes and violent opposition from the miners and the early machines had to be sent into the pits under armed escort. In New South Wales, at the Pelaw Main Colliery, there was similar

resistance to the new machines. [38]   Collie did not follow this pattern. Strike activity in Collie from 1900 to 1916 shows strikes of one to three weeks' duration every year up to 1906, a short but bitter conflict in 1909 and a longer and equally bitter one in 1911 but none of these was primarily about coal-cutting machines. The emphasis was on pay scales and establishing policies such as the "last-on, first-off" principle as exemplified by a strike at the Proprietary in 1904.

In August of that year, John Evans, Manager of the Proprietary, agreed that the dismissal of eighteen men was directly attributable to the "introduction of coal-cutting machinery". [34] Furthermore he had not abided by the principle of "last-on, first-off" in deciding who was to be dismissed. The whole workforce at the Proprietary stopped work not as might have been expected, in protest at the introduction of coal-cutting machines but in support of the "last-on, first-off" principle. Evans took the precaution of obtaining police reinforcements from Bunbury although they were not in fact needed. [35]   He made his own position quite clear. There was one machine in the mine with an output "equivalent to about twenty men" and he reserved the absolute right of the Company to "engage whosoever they liked and the number they liked". [36]   The new machine effectively abolished the holing function of the face miner and down-graded him to filling at a lower rate of pay. As Evans said,

> it was clearly laid down to the fillers before they accepted engagement that this
> principle of mechanical coal getting and filling coal was a new department of
> labour introduced since the award of the Arbitration Court and inasmuch as it
> entailed less skill it naturally followed that a lower rate of pay obtained.[37]

The Union, whilst accepting the machine, tried to have the men working behind it employed as shiftmen at 11/6d a shift whereas Evans insisted they were now only fillers and would be paid 10/- a shift. [38] The week long strike ended when it was agreed there would be no prosecution for laying the mine idle and that the matter would be referred to the Arbitration Court. [39]

Seemingly the Union was prepared to accept dismissals provided they were carried out in accordance with the "last-on, first-on" principle. It was not opposed to coal-cutting machines as such; rather it saw them as liberating devices. The attitude of the Union was clearly conveyed by General Secretary Allen in 1904 when he stated

> that the question of the introduction of coal cutting machinery had been
> discussed several times between the manager and himself and he had
> repeatedly told the manager that the men would hail the day when coal cutting
> by machinery would be recognised 'throughout the world'. He believed in
> machinery at all times as it saved the arduous work now necessary. He
> anticipated that when the era of machinery generally arrived, the time would
> have come when they would have to shorten the day's work.[40]

Why then was the response in Collie one of acceptance rather than resistance? The Union's attitude as enunciated by Secretary Allen was consistent with a broad policy of defending and enhancing the independence of the miner. The miners themselves were quite clear about this and their independent attitude pervaded the Arbitration Court transcripts. In

1903 John Millard, an Overman at the Proprietary, related to the Court how he had spoken to some men about leaving the mine early. They told him that they would not fill any more as "they had done their limit".[41] Alexander McCaughan in the same case told the Court that "by custom we never work on payday or on Sundays".[42] Counsel for the Cardiff company in another case in 1903 informed the Court that "if there is a difference of opinion ... the men go out and cease to work"[43] In 1905, John Evans thought that

> the whole of these clauses, it must be apparent to anybody, are brought in with a view of the men controlling the mine to their way of thinking so that when a man is once employed he will be always employed.[44]

In 1907, Tom O'Carroll, a timberman at the Cardiff, was asked whether he thought coping the empty skip and taking it by hand to the face was part of a pony wheeler's duties. His reply revealed a sense of scorn for someone who could ask such a silly question. "No", he answered, "I think a man must have a pony to be a pony wheeler".[45] In 1925, Isaac Whiteaker, a miner at the Westralia, was being cross-examined by McVee, the Manager of the Westralia, on the question of the employment of a buckduster:

McVee: Was it ever done during my period?

Whiteaker: No, you were too tight. You are a Scotsman.

McVee: I have been at the Westralia mine for over 3 1/2 years.

Whiteaker: Yes, worse luck.

McVee: In handholing you use more shots than on machine mining?

Whiteaker: Yes, on the average.

McVee: Would you ever use less?

Whiteaker: You want to know all the secrets.....we have certain tricks of the trade.[46]

Whiteaker's answers reveal both an awareness of the value of specialised skills and the traditional independent attitude towards management.

The institutionalised defence and enhancement of this independence at Collie may be illustrated by three matters that were in dispute for a number of years. The first was the consolidation of the "last-on, first-off" principle which removed a powerful prerogative from management's control as it severely restricted its powers of dismissal. The second was the preservation of the custom of not working on Pay Saturday which conflicted with management work schedules oriented to fulfilling immediate market demands. The third was the number of holidays provided for in the Union Rules and taken by the men without reference to management.

The Union tried to have the "last-on, first-off" principle incorporated in the first Award handed down in 1903 but Justice Parker rejected the application on the grounds that it interfered with managerial prerogatives. The Union responded by getting the principle accepted by the individual owners at the Collie Burn in 1903 and the Cardiff in 1904.[47] The Cardiff miners extracted a letter of intent from Manager Straw dealing with numbers to be employed, shifts to be worked and conceding the principle of "last-on, first-off", all of them matters at the very heart of managerial prerogative. As Connor, the Managing

Director of the Cardiff, later explained to the Court,

> The reason that this letter was sent was that I was desirous of working the mine two shifts. At this time we were only working one shift. We had increased orders, and we decided to work two shifts. The men were reluctant about working the second shift and they expressed themselves as willing to do so providing that we put this in writing and handed it to them. We were simply forced into the position because there was no arbitration award at the time, and we were simply at the mercy of the men. If they said they would not work we were placed in an awkward position, because we had contracts to supply. That is the reason this letter was written. They said they would work the second shift, but on the condition that in the event of the work falling below eight shifts per man per fortnight the Company should agree to a reduction of hands which would insure the men that we kept on, having at least four shifts per week work. They also insisted upon us putting this in, that the last comer should be the first to go. We were forced in to the position. We did it reluctantly. [48]

Such attempts by the men and the Union to gain ground when the owners over-ruled their managers in the interests of trade were not always successful; nonetheless, by 1905, Manager Evans was lamenting the innovations that had crept in "through the weakness of the people who first established this industry here".[49]

Notwithstanding this adoption of the "last-on, first-off" principle by two of the employers on the field, Justice Burnside in 1904 rejected another application by the Union to have it formally recognised in the Award. Next year the Union tried again and won a partial victory by having preference for married men established in the Award of 1905. This Award, however, provoked a lot of dissatisfaction because of its low rates and the Union extended its tactic of dealing with individual owners by negotiating another Industrial Agreement outside the jurisdiction of the Court in 1906. The reality of this Agreement which included the "last-on, first-off" principle induced Justice Burnside to formalise the principle in his 1907 Award.[50]

Pay Saturday was traditionally taken as a holiday irrespective of whether work was available or not. For example, Justice Parker reminded the Court in 1905 how

> we were told by one of the employers that upon one occasion an order came through which would necessitate working upon Pay Saturday if it was to be complied with, but as the men could not be induced to work upon Pay Saturday he lost the order. [51]

Furthermore there was a Union rule under which members could be fined for non-observance of the Pay Saturday holiday.[52] Permission to work on that day could be given by the Union but only in special circumstances. It was a clear manifestation of independence and the men sought to defend it. In 1905 the owners tried to have a clause inserted in the Award compelling the men to work twelve days a fortnight when required. [53] The Court handed down a compromise clause which decreed every day except Sunday to be a work day although the men were not required to work on Pay Saturday if the preceding eleven shifts in the fortnight had been worked.[53] As eleven shifts in a fortnight were rarely worked, this clause effectively provided that Pay Saturday would be worked. The Union nullified this provision in 1906 by

having Pay Saturday incorporated as a holiday in the Agreement negotiated outside the jurisdiction of the Court.[55] R. C. Young, Manager of the Proprietary, revised this Agreement for his mine in 1907 and introduced the qualification that the men would work Pay Saturday if required and that six hours at the face would constitute a full shift.[56] The 1907 Award recognised the custom of not working Pay Saturday whilst adopting Young's compromise but with the significant concession of counting the six hours bank to bank rather than at the face. The final sentence in the Award clause acknowledged the miners' independence in conceding that, "should he cease work on his own account he shall be paid at the ordinary rate for such time as he had actually worked."[57]

Perhaps the clearest example of independence being established and defended in the context of the Awards was the issue of holidays. No public holidays were provided for in the 1903 Award yet Union Rules included the traditional provision that no member could work on New Year's Day, Foundation Day, Easter Day, Christmas Day or Boxing Day, Eight Hours' Day or Parliamentary Election Day under penalty of a 12/6d fine. Bedlington, Manager of the Proprietary, giving evidence in 1905, complained to the Court that the Union Rules provided for holidays and that these were rigidly adhered to irrespective of trade. The managers were not consulted and "we have to agree with them, there would be a row if we did not".[58] Justice Parker pointed out from the Bench that this rule was invalid because such matters were at the sole discretion of the Arbitration Court and refused to insert any public holiday clause in the 1905 Award.[59] However, in the 1906 Industrial Agreement negotiated outside the jurisdiction of the Court the owners conceded New Year's Day, Foundation Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Eight Hours' Day, Christmas Day, Boxing Day and Parliamentary Election Day.[60] Justice Burnside could not ignore the realities and incorporated the holidays in the 1907 Award. Furthermore, Parliamentary Election Day was defined to include both Federal and State elections and by-elections.

Such preservation and enhancement of independence by the miners of Collie was facilitated by the relations of production that pertained there. The Union's tactic of negotiating outside the jurisdiction of the Court and then getting the results formalised in an Award proved successful. The response to coal-cutting machines was consistent with this broad policy. The impact of the new technology was absorbed because the miners gave higher priority to other matters. The response of bargained acceptance rather than outright resistance enhanced their overall control of the labour process sufficiently to counteract the immediate de-skilling and job losses involved. Such an approach contrasted markedly with that of American and New South Wales miners. The early machines certainly brought job losses and a greater risk of injury to the workplace yet, as Secretary Allen had hoped, they did indeed save some of the "arduous work" and they provided a foundation for the prosperity of Collie in the 1920s.

APPENDIX
Western Australia and New South Wales compared
1898-1925

Average number of men employed   Production ('000 tons)

Year	WA	NSW	WA	NSW
1898	70	10,258	3	4,706
1899	192	10,339	54	4,597
1900	400	11,333	118	5,507
1901	383	12,191	117	5,968
1902	368	12,815	140	5,942
1903	402	13,917	133	6,354
1904	358	14,034	138	6,020
1905	351	14,019	127	6,632
1906	307	14,929	149	7,626
1908	280	17,734	175	9,147
1909	394	18,168	214	7,020
1910	521	17,618	262	8,174
1911	463	17,375	249	8,692
1912	542	17,795	295	9,886
1913	559	18,843	313	10,414
1914	525	18,755	319	10,391
1915	498	17,959	286	9,449
1916	458	16,764	301	8,127
1917	571	17,197	326	8,293
1918	618	16,744	337	9,063
1919	726	18,041	401	8,632
1920	830	19,800	462	10,716
1921	870	20,784	468	10,793
1922	744	21,551	438	10,183
1923	713	23,037	420	10,479
1924	673	23,200	421	11,618
1925	677	24,038	437	11,396

Source:
Report of the Department of Mines, New South Wales & Western Australia.

NOTES

1. C. Stedman, (ed) 100 Years of Collie Coal, p 3. For a detailed description of the early mines see Brian Pope, 'Skill, Autonomy and Change in the Workplace: The Coal Mines of Collie, Western Australia, 1898-1925.', (BA Honours Thesis), Murdoch University, 1982, pp 85-92.
2. Report of the Working of the Government Railways and Tramways. Year ending 30 June 1987. Railways under construction.
3. Western Mail, 1 August 1946, p 12a. L. W. Johnson, 'A History of the Collie Coal Mining Industry'. University Studies in History, III, 1 (Sept. 1957), pp 15, 16. J. H. Lord, Collie Mineral Field, p 148.
4. Report of the Department of Mines, (henceforth RDM), 1913, p 48.
5. Western Australia, Arbitration Court File (henceforth ACF) 1095/104, pp 4, 15, 17. 1095/368, p 44. 1106/2687, p 78.
6. ACF 1095/169, p 14.
7. Johnson, 'A History', p 25.
8. The cavil pronounced 'kayvil' is the drawing of lots to decide on working places
9. Extensive transcripts of the evidence presented and the judgments given in the Arbitration Court of Western Australia have survived from the earlier years. They are housed in the State Archives, Perth. Little previous use of this material has been made.
10. ACF 1095/183, u.p., contains a sketch and description of the process for Collie.
11. Keith Dix, 'Work Relations in the Coal Industry', in A. Zimbalist (ed) Case Studies on the Labor Process, p 160, describes the operation for American mines. The same skills and discretion requirements are evident for Collie.
12. R. Samuel, 'Mineral Workers', in R. Samuel (ed), Miners, Quarrymen and Saltworkers, p 39.
13. M. H. Ellis, A Saga of Coal: The Newcastle Wallsend Coal Company's Centenary Volume, p 144. For a circa 1900 survey of coal cutting machinery see E. W. Parker, 'Recent Developments in the Undercutting of Coal by Machinery', in Mones E. Hawley (ed), Coal: Social, Economic, and Environmental Aspects, Part 1, pp 128-135.
14. Modern Methods of Producing Coal, p 15. A similar rationale was expounded in 1947 in H. S. Elford and M. R. McKeown, Coal Mining in Australia, p 81.
15. RDM 1903, p 49. 1904, p 51. 1905, p 53.
16. RDM 1980, p 48.
17. RDM 1913, p 48.
18. K. F. Walker, Australian Industrial Relations Systems, p 318.
19. Western Australian Parliamentary Debates, XX New Series, p 2279.
20. J. Ewing, Stimulating Coal Mining, Recommendation 10 (c), p vi.
21. Robin Gollan, The Coalminers of New South Wales, p 115.
22. Collier Miner, 18 March 1905, p 3a. J. W. Turner, 'The Mechanisation of Coal Cutting in Pelaw Main Colliery: 1902-05', Labour History, 18 (1970), p 62.
23. ACF 1095/172, p 60.
24. ACF 1095/172, p 80.
25. 'Engineer's Report Book'. u.p.
26. Buck dust was the fine coal dust produced by the coal-cutting machines. The American equivalent was 'bug dust'. Possibly a corruption of back dust.
27. ACF 1095/172, p 79.
28. ACF 1095/2687, p 27. George Snell's evidence.
29. ACF 1095/2687, p 31.
30. 'Engineer's Report Book'. u.p.
31. ACF 1095/2643, p 22.
32. For example, Western Australia Industrial Gazette 8 March 1926, pp 306-311. The Court was asked to decide whether the undercutting of the coal by the coal cutting machine had to leave the cut clear of buck dust or whether the company had discharged its obligation under the agreement by merely undercutting with the machine regardless of whether the cut was clear of buck dust. The Court equivocated and suggested another application be made for an interpretation.

33.	Ellis, <u>A Saga of Coal,</u> p 144. J. W. Turner, 'The Mechanisation of Coal Cutting in Pelaw Main Colliery: 1902-05', <u>Labour History,</u> 18, (1970), p 62.
34.	<u>Collier Miner,</u> 13 August 1904, p 3b.
35.	'Collie Police Occurrence Book', 8 August 1904. Telegram from Corporal Pilmer to Inspector Holmes. 'Proprietary miners and wheelers out strike today send two constables fear trouble report following'. PC Horus came from Bunbury.
36.	<u>Collie Miner,</u> 13 August 1904, p 3b.
37.	<u>Collie Miner,</u> 13 August 1904, p 3b.
38.	<u>Australian Mining Standard,</u> 25 August 1904, p 285.
39.	<u>Collie Miner,</u> 20 August 1904, p 3g.
40.	<u>Collie Miner,</u> 13 August 1904, p 3a.
41.	ACF 1095/104, p 16.
42.	ACF 1095/104, p 22.
43.	ACF 1095/142, p 10.
44.	ACF 1095/172, p 84.
45.	ACF 1095.263, p 6.
46.	ACF 1095/2687, pp 54, 56.
47.	ACF 1095/172, p 9.
48.	ACF 1095/142, p 10.
49.	ACF 1095/172, p 84.
50.	Clause 24, <u>Western Australia Arbitration Reports (henceforth WAAR),</u> 1907, pp 40, 47.
51.	<u>WAAR,</u> 1905, p 42.
52.	<u>WAAR,</u> 1905, p 41.
53.	<u>WAAR,</u> 1905, p 28.
54.	<u>WAAR,</u> 1905, p 36.
55.	<u>WAAR,</u> 1907, p 40.
56.	ACF 1095,248, u.p. The 1907 Proprietary Agreement, Clause 33.
57.	<u>WAAR,</u> 1907, p 48.
58.	ACF 1095/104, p 22.
59.	<u>WAAR,</u> 1905, p 42.
60.	<u>WAAR,</u> 1907, p 40.
61.	<u>WAAR,</u> 1907, p 48.

From Indispensability to Redundancy
The Afghans in Western Australia
1887-1911

Brian Willis *

The 1890s was a watershed in the economic development of the Colony of Western Australia. Economic and demographic growth in the colony was, until the late 1880s, slow and at times faltering. Modest gold discoveries in the Kimberley in 1885 were followed by those in the Yilgarn in 1887 and the Pilbara in 1888. Gold production rose from 270 fine ounces in 1886 to 13,860 in 1889.[1] Then followed the rich strike by Bayley and Ford at Coolgardie in 1892, a precursor to the fabulous find by Flanagan and Hannan in the following year on what was to become the celebrated Kalgoorlie "Golden Mile".

Prior to 1890, Western Australia's rail network was limited to 55 miles of the Northern Railway linking Geraldton with Northampton and Greenough, the 20 mile section from Fremantle to Guildford extending a further 96 miles to the Eastern Railway towns of Northam, Toodyay, York and Beverley.[2] Roads at the same time were both limited in extent and basic in form. Horse and bullock teams were the means of heavy haulage beyond the meagre rail and road system. The discovery of large amounts of alluvial, and later reef gold, in the 1890s enabled Western Australia to enjoy an era of unprecedented prosperity, development and population growth. Very substantial investment finance was attracted to the colony for mining and related ventures. New centres sprang up on the major fields while smaller communities and mining camps continually extended the bounds of white settlement further inland.

In the first five years of the nineties, the value of gold production increased by more than 900%: from 86,664 pounds in 1890 to 787,099 in 1894.[3] In the same period, the population of the colony rose from 48,502 to 81,579, due mainly to the influx of diggers to the goldfields.[4] With the arid and remote interior of the colony now the focus of wealth and population growth, there was an immediate need for a means of transportation able to service these areas.

Among the newcomers attracted to the Colony at this time was a small group known as the 'Afghans' whose presence was a response to the transport opportunities in the rapidly expanding Western Australian economy. According to the common usage of the day, the term 'Afghan' described all people whose origins were the north-western part of the Indian sub-

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continent and South and Central Asia. Substance was given to this all encompassing 'Afghan' grouping because the homeland of the vast majority had, until the late 19th century, been part of the old Afghan Empire. But the term 'Afghan' implied an homogeniety to the members of the group which is not really so except that, with the exception of a few Sikhs, all of the so-called 'Afghans' did share a common religious faith, that of Islam.

In the absence of effective road and rail transport, the role of the Afghans was to be the transport of equipment, material, foodstuffs and water to build new communities and to sustain an increasing goldfields population. With their hardy camels, the Afghans were indispensable in the rapid expansion of Western Australia in the nineties. As major civil works undertaken by the Government were completed, the role of the Afghans and their camels became less vital. Water flowed to the Eastern Goldfields through the newly constructed pipeline, railways began to carry freight and passengers to and from burgeoning inland centres, ill-defined tracks were re-routed and improved to meet the needs of coach and wagon transport and the web of the telegraph network linked the outlying centres with Perth and the world.

Plainly, the Afghans were very significant contributors to the economic development of Western Australia in the late 19th and early 20th century. Yet scarcely more than twenty years after their first arrival in numbers, the Afghans had become economically redundant and numerically insignificant. Progressively, camel transport had been relegated to the economic and geographic margin. Numbering 664 and constituting 4.85% of the total population in 1896, Afghan numbers had declined to 153, representing just 0.05% of the State's population by1911.[5]

While it could be argued that the Afghans were contributors to their own redundancy, there were other factors which helped prescribe their fate. Restrictive legislation, neo-Darwinist racism, social, legislative and economic discrimination, together with the very high concentration of Afghans in camel-related occupations, made it almost impossible for them to find a permanent niche in the Western Australian community. Groups and individuals directly associated with the Labor movement were often prime movers in organised opposition, to the Afghans. This article examines the circumstances which saw this immigrant group pass from indispensability to redundancy in little more than two decades.

The history of Afghanistan, particularly during the 19th century, can be seen as a significant factor in the formation of the attitudes of Anglo-Australians to the Afghan migrants. Twice, in 1839 and in 1878, Britain invaded Afghanistan. The 1839-42 war was variously described as a terrible mistake and grave injustice, "in principle and in act, an unrighteous usurpation" and for the British *Raj*, "the greatest disaster its arms had suffered in Asia".[6] Britain's peremptory attack on Afghanistan in 1878 was motivated by Anglo-Russian rivalry for which Afghanistan became the unfortunate pawn.

During each of these two Anglo-Afghan wars, the British suffered horrific losses and exacted fearful retribution against the Afghan people; Afghanistan was left physically and psychologically scarred.[7] One definitive outcome of the Second Anglo-Afghan War was the delineation of the mutual boundary along the rugged North West Frontier between British India and Afghanistan . The agreed boundary cut through a cultural and ethnic area, a vagary which led to the significant discrepancies in colonial immigration and census records due to varying interpretations of 'Afghan' nationality.[8]

Many of the British *emigrés* who arrived in Australia in the latter part of the 19th century had fought in the Afghan Wars or during the Indian Mutiny. Personal experiences and popular legends of the 'Black Hole of Calcutta' and the 'Relief of Lucknow' reinforced pre-existing notions of racial superiority and the unversal villainy of 'Asiatics'. There is good reason to believe that the Afghans too, carried to Australia their memories of British excesses and the perceived injustices of this era. Mutual distrust was perhaps the least that may have been expected in relations between the Anglo-Australian population and West Australian Afghans.

The first large-scale importation of camels and their Afghan handlers reached Fremantle from Karachi on SS *Abergeldie* on September 28, 1887.[9] It was the intention of the venturers, Meer Dost Khan and Company to establish camel transport and carrying operations in the Colony. This shipment, comprising 155 camels and 23 camel handlers, was landed at Rockingham and was followed on October 24, by a further 100 camels and about 20 handlers from SS *Yeoman,* also from Karachi.[10]

A series of advertisements in the *West Australian* advertising camels for sale and the availability of Afghan drivers for "re-engagement" attracted little or no response.[11] An auction sale of camels at Beaconsfield, reported in the *West Australian* of November 14, was said to have attracted a large number of spectators but few buyers. Meer Dost Khan and Company were soon considerably in debt to their principal agents, J.W. Bateman of Fremantle. The subsequent unsuccessful mortgagee auction on December 1, did nothing to ameliorate the problems of the Company or its Afghan employees.

With little or no work forthcoming for either men or camels and Meer Dost Khan and Company in dire straits financially, the Afghans began to suffer ever-increasing hardship. The *West Australian* of December 8, 1887 carried a report of the appearance in the Fremantle Magistrate's Court of two of the distressed Afghans seeking relief. Reports in the Fremantle *Evening News,* on January 17, 1888 reported the plight of Afghans living in primitive conditions at a Mr. Albert's piggery in Rockingham Road, unable to obtain either work or food and on the verge of starvation. On the same day at least fifteen of the Afghans applied for Government rations.[12]

Within three or four weeks the hapless Afghans left Fremantle for a less uncertain future in South Australia where an Afghan community had been established since 1866.[13] Some sixty Afghans, together with a considerable number of camels departed by ship for Port Augusta. Shortly after, the remaining thirteen Afghans, with more than 100 camels made the overland journey to Port Augusta, little more than twelve years after Ernest Giles had made his epic trans-continental crossing.[14] The capability of the Afghans and their camels was well demonstrated by their traverse of virtually unexplored country with few waterholes and in the fierce heat of summer . This was an affirmation that they did indeed have the capacity to play a role in Australian 'outback' transport. What was missing at this juncture however, was the economic imperative for transport in the hinterland; this was to be provided by the gold discoveries of the next few years.

No reliable figures are available to indicate exactly how many Afghans arrived in Western Australia prior to 1901 due to the failure of census and immigration records to distinguish between people from South Asia and the Indian sub-contintent. Estimates of the numbers of Afghans in Western Australia before 1901 vary widely, more attention having been given to the recording of camel numbers than to their handlers.[15] It seems that the number of Afghans in Western Australia in the years 1891-1900 may well have ranged from around 60 in 1891 to a maximum of around 500-600 in 1896, fluctuating in a general decline from that point. By 1901, 261 Afghans were recorded as residents of the State.[16]

Many of the new arrivals came from South Australia while others came from their various homelands in South Asia, with Karachi the usual port of embarkation. Under a heading of "Newcastle News" in the *West Australian* of May 28, 1892, it was announced that Mr. W.J. Stewart of the firm Throssell Son and Stewart had departed Newcastle (Toodyay) for Southern Cross to make "full arrangements regarding a camel train to Southern Cross". This innovation, it was said, "will enable customers to get their produce at much lower rates than before".[17] As the gold diggers thronged to the Yilgarn and on to Coolgardie so did the demand for supplies. This demand was answered by the continuing arrival in Western Australia of both Afghans and camels.

Brothers Faiz and Tagh Mahomet, who arrived in the Colony from Port Augusta in 1892, were pre-eminent among the Afghans on the Western Australian goldfields. Faiz had been manager and later, owner of Elder's camel station at Marree in South Australia. Trading as Faiz and Tagh Mahomet, the brothers first established their base on the Murchison, shortly after transferring part of their operations to Southern Cross. It was not long before the firm moved its headquarters to Coolgardie, rapidly developing as the hub of the Eastern Goldfields.[18]

Within a short time Faiz and Tagh Mahomet established camel stations and shops at Geraldton, Mullewa, Cue, Day Dawn as well as at Coolgardie.With the extension of the railhead to Southern Cross in July, 1894, their camel trains carried passengers, supplies and water on to Coolgardie until the rail link reached that centre in March, 1896. Along the network of camel tracks on and between the Murchison and the Eastern Goldfields, Faiz and Tagh Mahomet set about providing their own water supplies as cameleers were allowed to use only watering places prescribed by the Wardens. They sank numerous wells and constructed water condensers to convert the more readily available salt-water into fresh.

Just before the line was completed, a newcomer to the town described how he was greeted by the sight of at least a hundred camels at the railhead waiting to carry all the goods and material onwards. On arrival in Coolgardie, "there was the same spectactle, camels and Afghans with their coloured costumes".[19] A serialised account of *Life on a Westralian Gold-Field* , describes "the Afghan's love for bright and gorgeous colors" (sic), their being frequently seen wearing ordinary European coats "decorated with strips of vivid red or green velvet ... [and] ... to see a gaily caparisoned riding camel, with its gorgeously dressed rider, ambling along the streets [is] a sight which once seen lingers in one's memory." The Afghans and their camels were said to give to Coolgardie "the glow and glamour of color - of orientalism - which casts a spell" over the beholder.[20] Plainly camel transport and the Afghans had an established place on the goldfields landscape.

Following Bayley and Ford's rich finds, Coolgardie became the boom town of Western Australia and the logistics of supplying the town were considerable. The Afghans, as part of a transport sector comprising more than 600 horse teams as well as camel trains of 40 to 50 camels, carted a miscellany of stores, heavy mining machinery, boilers and condensers from the railhead at Southern Cross. Coolgardie, declared a municpality in 1894, was by 1898, the third largest town in the Colony with a population of 15,000 in the town area and some 10,000 in nearby centres. Included in the staff of the police station were two Afghan cameleers, while her own Afghan camel attendant and camel enabled Dr. Margaret Corlis to attend outpatients in areas remote from the main centre.[21] The cemetery, opened in late 1894, contained 1100 graves by 1899; of these sixteen were those of Afghans.[22]

During the 1890s the Afghans and their camels were seen in the remote regions of the Colony, from Wyndham to Albany. In the north, the Afghans provided the transport services so essential to the sustenance of the miners and pastoralists in the remote Kimberley, Pilbara, Ashburton, Gascoyne and Murchison. Food and stores were carried by the Afghans from the port of Wyndham to otherwise inaccessible stations and to the miners of the East Kimberley. Jack Edwards, a long-time Kimberley resident, in a recorded interview recalled that it was the camel men - "Punjabi men, Afghans, Sikhs, Malays ... [who] opened this country up ... they [the pioneering whites] owe the camel men everything".[23]

Port Hedland, the principal port for the Pilbara, was the operating base for many of the North-West Afghan cameleers. March 20, 1907 saw the last large-scale arrival of camels and Afghan drivers into Western Australia when the SS *Century* landed 500 camels and 45 Afghan camel-drivers at the port.[24] Afghans were also present in Onslow, in the Ashburton region, around the turn of the century where Afghans plied the camel routes to and from the distant pastoral properties until just after World War I. Outbound they carried the necessities of life to the scattered and remote stations, on the return journey the weighty and bulky bales of wool bound for southern markets. Remote, tenuous pastoral enterprises were thus able to become economically viable and less isolated. The Ashburton was arguably, the last bastion of the camel teamster in Western Australia.

Further south on the Gascoyne, the turn of the century saw an influx of Afghans. At Carnarvon, the chief port for the region, they and their "strange beasts of burden" disturbed both the townsfolk and the horse teams. Where the paths of camel and horse teams were likely to coincide, strict regulations were often necessary to avoid confusion and inevitable conflict between the respective teamsters. As was the case in Onslow, the Carnarvon "townspeople were vociferous in expressing their feelings towards these Afghans ... with their camels tramping through town and grazing on the common." Their complaints, which were "hotly debated" in the council chambers, drew a response from Seanko, a spokesman for the Afghans, pointing out the economic benefits to the town and district of the Afghans' presence. It was said that the Afghans spent about 10,000 pounds a year in Carnarvon on rations alone and "by transporting goods to and from the stations they were creating work for numerous shearers, boundary riders and others".[25]

The Afghans were also well represented on the Murchison, their camel teams operating throughout the region. "As early as 1892 there was a regular weekly camel-train service between Cue and the nearest port of Geraldton, 250 miles away".[26] The cutting and carting of firewood for use in the boilers of the large gold mines was another sphere of supply and transport activity in which the Afghans engaged.[27] Carting bush timber for the shoring of mine shafts was one more role of the Afghans on the Coolgardie and Murchison fields. At Coolgardie the Afghans transported vast quantities of firewood to fuel the water condensers.[28]

With the opening to traffic of the rail link from Southern Cross to Coolgardie in 1896, there was a distinct change in the scope and volume of cartage available. This marked the beginning of the dispersal and progressive numeric and economic decline of the Afghans which was accelerated with the rail extensions to Cue and Menzies in 1898. Short-haul and reduced loading were the characteristics of the cartage to the small communities and mining camps off the expanded rail network.

Perhaps the last grand enterprise for the large camel strings was in 1897 with the cartage of construction material from Coolgardie to Kookynie, a distance of some 200 kilometres.

Central to the extension of the railway line north from Kalgoorlie was the provision of water for the steam trains. To meet this need the Government contracted out the construction of a dam at Niagara, then a small mining community just southwest of Kookynie. Completed, the concrete walled dam was to be 750 feet (228 metres) in length, 23 feet (7 metres) thick and 61 feet (18.5 metres) above foundation level; the amount of cement required was thus very considerable. Abdul Waid, the owner of some 400 camels, carried out the cartage of the cement from the Coolgardie railhead to the dam site. The cement was railed in casks too large to be manageable for camel transport, so Abdul Waid arranged for the wooden casks to be sawn in half on arrival at Coolgardie and then the camels were pack-loaded with half a cask on either side.[29]

At the turn of the century the Afghan population was approximately 450, scattered throughout the colony. In the Perth and Fremantle areas there were Afghans engaged in camel-related occupations - importing and transport - while there were a number of others involved in a whole range of small business activities: storekeepers, drapers and the like. This small urban group was complemented by a number of scattered Afghan communities, big and small, in the outlying areas of Western Australia and it was these Afghans who ranged to the limits of inland settlement.

In Coolgardie some 100 Afghans were employed by Faiz and Tagh Mahomet by 1893, while Abdul Waid, another large camel operator, employed more than 60 Afghans.[30] On the north eastern goldfields, the Afghan presence persisted beyond 1910 at Leonora, Mount Sir Samuel, Malcolm, Bummers Creek, Lawlers and Menzies. Cue became the railhead from the port of Geraldton in December 1897 and as such was a centre of Afghan camel transport operations to the many smaller mining settlements on the Murchison, with Meekatharra, the eventual rail terminus, another lingering Afghan outpost. Port Hedland, distribution point for the Pilbara region had a significant Afghan population prior to 1911 and several continued carting out of Marble Bar after the opening of the railway.[31]

The circumstances of their entry onto the transport scene in the early 1890s prescribed a role for the Afghans which was inextricably tied to the development of a comprehensive rail network. Railways were not only the key factor in the entry of the Afghans to the carrying trade in Western Australia, but also a key determinant in fixing the scope, geographical location and time-frame of their participation. From a modest beginning in 1891, the Afghans with their camels acted as a substitute and support for an embryonic railway system. This continued to be so until the Eastern Railway extension from Northam to Southern Cross was opened for public traffic on July 1, 1894.

At this point the relativity began to shift. From being key figures in the carrying trade to the far flung goldfields, the Afghans and their camels became increasingly complementary to a widening railway network. Railway construction slowed from 1904 and in the seven year period to 1911, only an additional 734 miles of track was opened, of which 406 miles was in

predominatly mining areas. By 1911, the Eastern Railway extended eastward to Coolgardie-Kalgoorlie-Kanowna, northwards through Menzies, Malcolm thence to Leonora-Gwalia and eastward to Laverton. From Coolgardie the railway extended southward to Widgiemooltha and Norseman On the Murchison, the rail link with the port of Geraldton reached Cue by 1898, Nannine five years later, and by 1910, Meekatharra, the eventual terminus. In 1910 a spur line connected Mount Magnet to Sandstone, while in the Pilbara, the Port Hedland Marble Bar railway was completed in July, 1911. A comprehensive railway network now served Western Australia's major regions of gold production. This marked the final stage of the progressive relegation of the Afghans to a role of supplementary carriers: providing cartage to and from points along the railway to isolated mining camps and pastoral properties. The pre-eminence of the Afghans and their camels in the transport sector of Western Australia had passed.

During the period from 1904 to 1913, gold exports fell in value from a near peak of 8,617,959 pounds to 4,319,362 pounds. Concurrent with this decline in the gold industry the value of other major export commodities - Other Minerals (lead, copper & tin), Timber and Wool - rose from 51,132, 654,120 and 419,395 pounds to 273,507, 1,089,486 and 976,818 pounds respectively.[32] The downturn in the value of export gold production was paralleled by a steady decline in the numbers of Afghans in the State: from an estimate of 377 in 1904 to the 1911 census figure of 153.[33]

Another factor which diminished the role of the Afghans on the Eastern Goldfields was the completion of the Coolgardie Water Scheme. Begun in 1895, water from the Mundaring Weir flowed into the 1,000,000 gallon Toorak Reservoir at Coolgardie on December 22, 1902.[34] Then on January 24, 1903, with the temperature at 41 deg. C., Sir John Forrest turned on the tap and water began to pour into the Mount Charlotte Reservoir overlooking Kalgoorlie. In his address at the opening ceremony, Forrest, the former Premier, praised the Afghans for their invaluable contribution to the ultimate success of the scheme.[35]

Public recognition of their services no doubt gave satisfaction to the large number of Afghans who attended the ceremony, but the reality of the pipeline's completion was yet another threat to their economic survival. Water, always a critical commodity on the parched goldfields, had provided employment for the Afghans in a variety of ways. For more than ten years they had carried water from bores, wells, condensers and the shifting railheads, to communities and outlying camps. They had also carried equipment and materials for the construction of the pipeline, as well as carting wood to fuel the boilers of the condensers, several of which were owned by Afghans.

As had been the case with the advancing railways, the completion of the pipeline to Kalgoorlie not only reduced the volume of cartage required, but also the stage lengths over which water had to be carried. Changing circumstances saw the Afghans supplanted from the position of primary carriers of water to large communities to that of supplementary - 'off main-line' -

carriers to more remote smaller communities and camps so in less than two decades the Afghans with their large strings of camels had been displaced from the long-haul carrying trade to the goldfields.

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The position of the Afghans within the wider community was always ambiguous. This was well illustrated during the great celebrations in Coolgardie when, on March 23, 1896, Lieut. Col. Sir Gerard Smith, Governor of Western Australia, declared the rail link from Southern Cross open. The Governor was accorded a guard of honour of Afghan cameleers and on the following day:

> His Excellency the Governor was the recipient of two very handsome illuminated addresses, one worded in the Afghan and the other in the English language. These were beautiful specimens of art in water-colour, the design being taken from native flowers and grasses. The presentation party left for the Hampton Bungalow with 30 camels and gaily dressed drivers, and, forming in front of the Bungalow in the shape of a semi-circle, delivered the presentation ... [to which] was appended some thirty signatures.[36]

However, all was not amity in the lead-up to the celebrations as the Railway Reception Committee was beset by conflicting community attitudes: a prevailing racial intolerance was evidenced by "another rumpus between the Afghans and Whites [in determing relative positions in the grand parade]. The Afghans refused to march behind the Christian dogs. The Whites refused to give precedence to picturesque Orientals." When the order of precedence was finally settled, it placed "the Afghans (sic) camels four abreast, and the niggers" at the rear of the grand parade.[37]

The participation of the Afghans as a distinctive group in the parade can be seen as an acknowledgement, however grudging, by the Railway Reception Committee of their importance to the Coolgardie community. Their assertion to a position nearer the head of the parade indicates their perceived position in Coolgardie society. Nevertheless, different in appearance, practising an 'alien' religion and with a distinctive culture and value system, the Afghans were immediately set apart from the wider, Anglo-Saxon community. Unaccompanied by their womenfolk or families, the all male Afghan community was viewed by many with a mixture of fear and suspicion.[38]

Perhaps the most crucial factor in the exclusion of the Afghans from mainstream society was the widespread belief in the superiority of the 'white' races. Notions like Social Darwinism, "The Great Chain of Being", scientific racism combined with virulent ethnocentrism and an attendant xenophobia had been nurtured during the latter half of the 19th century by, among others, William Lane.[39] In his novels *White and Yellow* and *The Workingman's Paradise* and the newspapers *The Boomerang* and *The Worker*, Lane lauded the "Aryan tradition ... an ideology for the racism of the early socialists".[40] C.H. Pearson, the radical liberal, through his *National Life and Character,* depicted non-European immigration in terms of race

struggle, with Australia as the last bastion "in which the higher races can live and increase freely for the higher civilisation". [41]

There was legislation to restrict the activities and growth of Asian communities in Western Australia from as early as 1874. Historians suggest that the fundamental reason for the restrictive and exclusionist legislation was "the preservation of a British-Australian nationality"[42] Racism is an age old prejudice and one not peculiar to Australia or to any social group.[43] While its presence in Australian society is universally acknowledged there is a wide variety of opinion as to its origins.[44] It has been argued that racism is "inherent in Australia's economic and geographic position": an outpost of Europe, fearful of "an unarmed conquest ... by cheap Asian labourers".[45] Although William Lane, articulated the racism of the late 19th century Australian working class, he was at the same time spokesman for a national 'white' collectivity.[46] "Racist ideas can act to direct behaviour which does not find its prime cause in racist belief".[47] Evidence from the Western Australian experience indicates that racist ideas exercised a rationalising role in the reactions of trade unions and business to economic competition from non-Europeans.

In the years from 1890 to 1895, Western Australia's population increased by 54,853 of which 39,785 were males and of these a great proportion were diggers from the goldfields of the eastern colonies.[48] These miners brought with them a spirit of democratic tradition, albeit a selective one, which was accompanied by an actively hostile sense of race. Not surprisingly, their attitudes had been shaped by anti-Chinese riots on the Victorian and New South Wales diggings and the presence of large numbers of Chinese on the North Queensland fields.[49] Often a compounding factor was the presence of Chinese in strikes by seamen in 1878 and shearers in 1890. This antagonism was reflected in varying measure by the response of the community, officialdom and the guardians of the law to the Afghans.

Among the newcomers to the Western Australian goldfields was Frederick Vosper who became an influential figure as editor of the *Coolgardie Miner,* the dominant figure in the Anti-Asiatic League, a compelling advocate on a whole range of social issues and an MLA from 1897 until his death in 1901. Vosper served his journalistic apprenticeship on the *Northern Miner* at Charters Towers on the north Queensland goldfield. Strongly sympathetic to trade union ideals, Vosper emerged from his sojourn in north Queensland as a fiery, flamboyant republican, a patron of white Australia and the rights of goldfields workers.[50]

This was the backdrop against which a broadly-based agitation against non-European labour commenced on the goldfields in late 1894. It is no coincidence that Vosper, passionate anti-Asiatic crusader, arrived in Cue in 1893. While on the Murchison, Vosper made an immediate impression with his kerbside "thundering against the dangers of Asian immigration" as well as with his journalistic talents.[51] When, in 1894, he became editor of the *Coolgardie Miner,* he lost no time in using the newspaper as a vehicle for his opinions on a whole range of social

issues. Through his editorials and his persuasive oratory at public meetings and street gatherings, Vosper both stimulated and reacted to the existing anti-Asiatic sentiment.

In his crusade to have the Afghans expelled from the fields he claimed that, not only were they employed as camel drivers, but they were employed by the municipal council and police, and they owned freehold land as well as stores. In one editorial on June 16, 1894, he spoke of "a great evil at our doors in the presence of large numbers of Afghans upon this field" and continued :

> We calmy arise to protest in language simple and unadorned against the opening of our doors to aliens of Asiatic extraction ... we see the shadow of a great evil at our doors in the presence of large numbers of Afghans upon this field.

Continuing in language far less than 'calm, simple and unadorned', the editorial invoked "the spirit of the Act passed by Parliament prohibiting Asiatics flocking to our fields to compete with men of our own race and blood."[52] It said that the camels were wanted but not the "Asiatic driver" and continued that there were "plenty of white men able and willing to steer the 'desert ships'." He warned of a "rapid influx of this people ... from the burning home of the Hindoo race" and forecast that "by-and-by we shall be overrun by Mongolian hordes if we do not now protest against our Afghan visitors." The editorial concluded :

> Those Afghans who have pitched their tents amongst us seem a most exemplary lot of men, and this article is no wise levelled at them, but we fear that a low, degenerate, mongrel race of human beings will follow where they lead, and for the protection of our Anglo-Saxon race we say, and say emphatically "ooshtah", which, being interpreted, means "lay down, we have no use for you at present."

The Afghans were not without their advocates though, as was shown by the response of one digger, "C.L.B.", in a 'Letter to the Editor'of the *Coolgardie Miner* on July 28, 1894. He suggested that two earlier anti-Afghan correspondents may have been "carriers or water condensers who fear competition from the swarthy men." C.L.B. went on to say that "many a digger on 'way back' fields has been enabled to pull through till he got a few ounces of gold by reason of the Afghan selling him tucker at a fairly reasonable price". The writer declared that the miners' interests should be considered and not those of the carriers and storekeepers. "CASH", another correspondent, wrote in the same day's issue: "There seems to be an ill feeling towards our coloured brethren, the Afghans and Chinese; the laborers (sic) and storekeepers may complain, but they are not the only sections of the community to be considered."

Nevertheless Afghan camel drivers, carriers and storekeepers were frequently in direct economic competition with Europeans - businessmen and workers alike. Pay differentials were significant and the economic consequences of that difference impacted on both, albeit in different ways. One European camel owner claimed that the difference between him employing Europeans as against Afghan camel drivers would be four thousand pounds per year. Therefore, to compete against Afghan owners employing all Afghan drivers, he was

compelled to employ Afghans.[53] Relative rates of pay for European and Afghan cameleers in Coolgardie in 1899 were four to five pounds per week and two to three pounds per week respectively.[54]

Religion also served to separate the Islamic Afghans from the nominally Christian community. A mosque was built on Mount Eva, at the eastern end of the town in 1894 and a high priest, Hadji Mullah Mehrban arrived in Coolgardie shortly after. The daily calls to prayer by the mullah became a feature of Coolgardie life. Along with thirty of his fellow Afghans, Hadji Mehrban is buried in a remote corner of the Coolgardie Cemetery. Their religion was to ensure their isolation from the community at large, both in life and in death.

Although confined to the margin of the town's community life, the Afghans nonetheless shared in many of the dramas and tragedies of the Coolgardie goldfield. In the summer of 1893, two prospectors returned to Coolgardie with 40 ounces of gold from a new find at Siberia, 75 miles to the north northwest. Despite the extreme heat and almost total lack of water, there was a rush of diggers to the new find.[55] When, as inevitably happened, the lives of great numbers of the diggers were imperilled. Faiz Mahomet's Afghan cameleers rendered assistance, mitigating the extent of the disaster in which many lives were lost. Faiz Mahomet gained the esteem of many on the goldfields for this and other acts of charity. Faiz courteously declined payment by the government for these 'mercy missions' saying : "These men are the Sons of God and therefore I have saved them".[56]

During the Great Fire at Coolgardie on October 9, 1895, all the buildings in an acre block were destroyed and the damage was estimated at a quarter of a million pounds. Under the direction of Tagh Mahomet, the Afghans formed a bucket brigade and salvage team, playing a major part in saving some buildings. When he became aware that a man was trapped in a shanty across the street Tagh, "with his customary cool gallantry, disappeared into the inferno and risked his life to save the man". Plans for a public presentation to Tagh in acknowledgement of his actions were pre-empted by his untimely death shortly after.[57]

While kneeling in prayer in the Coolgardie Mosque in the early morning of January 10, 1896, Tagh was shot in the back at close range by a fellow countryman Goulah Mahomet. The probable reason was the centuries old enmity between the Durrani and Ghilzai tribes of their native Afghanistan. Following a trial held in the Supreme Court Perth was convicted of the murder, sentenced and hanged at Fremantle Prison on May 2, 1896.[58]

Coolgardie's newspapers praised Tagh in death. Described as "a member of the firm ... whose name is familiar as a household word over the West Australian goldfields"; whose death had created "a deep sensation" throughout the town; a fine specimen of the Afghan race, who, with his brother Faiz, virtually opened up the camel-carrying trade in the Colony; and a man whose success was attributable to determination and good business qualitites.[59]

On the Goldfields, the pollution of drinking water was regarded as a cardinal sin; questionable water supplies having been established as one of the principal causes of typhoid which ravaged the Coolgardie field in its early years. In 1893, W.J. Raeside, a government engineer responsible for the inspection and maintenance of existing wells and waterholes, reported in vitriolic terms:

> The Afghans and their camels are the filthiest lot that ever went near water. They camp right against the wells and in the watersheds, and for all that I can do, I cannot keep them at a proper distance from the water. The Afghans wash their dirty linen on the edge of a well, while the splashes and dirty suds fall into the water. I may also state that most of the camels are bad with mange and should not be allowed to go near any public drinking place as they create hydatids.[60]

Savage criticism indeed! Deserved or not, there was a popular perception of the misuse of watering places by the Afghans. This perception nurtured the rising anti-Asiatic feeling on the Coolgardie field and was to trigger an incident the following year in which two Afghans were killed.

On December 27, 1894, the *Coolgardie Miner* reported a "huge public meeting" in the town objecting to the Afghan presence on the field and of the formation of an Anti-Asiatic League. With G. Taylor, formerly prominent in Queensland union circles as its first president, the League soon found a focus for its activities when a white teamster, Thomas Knowles was charged with the manslaughter of two Afghans at a waterhole at Point Malcolm. Vosper wrote that "[f]orce of circumstances has made Knowles ... the representative of the whole white race in Western Australia" and that securing the acquittal of Knowles was necessary to put the "uppity" Afghans back in their place.[61]

Knowles with two mates, John Hatfield and Ernest Langheim, and their sixteen-horse wagon team, was enroute to Esperance from South Australia to begin carrying between Esperance and the new fields at Dundas and Kurnalpi. They had stopped at the waterhole for the night, as had eight Afghans with their train of 200 laden camels. The elements for friction were present in full: the incompatibility of horses and camels, the economic rivalry of the carrying trade, racial antagnosm and the ultimate trigger - the totally different behaviour of Europeans and Afghans at watering places.

A climax was reached when Knowles saw Noor Mahomet washing his feet in the rockhole. Noor Mahomet was conforming to the dictates of Islam in doing so, but at the same time he was committing the cardinal sin in the bushman's code: polluting precious drinking water. Knowles ordered Mahomet to leave the waterhole but he refused. Threatened by Knowles, Mahomet called for assistance from his fellow Afghans whereupon a fracas ensued in which sticks, stones and, finally, firearms were used. Knowles shot and killed Jehan Mahomet and seriously wounded Noor Mahomet who subsequently died of his wounds in the Albany Hospital.

Thomas Knowles was charged separately with the manslaughter of Jehan Mahomet and Noor Mahomet and the trial on the first charge was heard in the Albany Court in the first week of January, 1895. On January 5, after one hour's deliberation, the jury brought in a verdict of 'Not Guilty'. "[T]he announcement was received with loud applause and a rousing cheer from the enormous crowd both outside and inside the Court".[62] When the second charge, the manslaughter of Jehan Mahomet, came on for hearing on January 7, the Crown, entered a *nolle prosequi,* to which Magistrate Loftie said "that after the extraordinary verdict [not guilty of the manslaughter of Noor Mahomet] of Saturday he could only accede to the request". Turning to Knowles, he said: "You have had a very narrow escape ... had you been convicted no Court could have done less than have passed a sentence of imprisonment ... I advise you not to be so free with firearms in the future ... You are discharged."[63]

The cheers which greeted the acquittal of Knowles in Albany were even louder from the ranks of the Anti-Asiatic League in Coolgardie which received the news with great rejoicing. "An impromptu roll up" of three or four hundred men had assembled in Bayley Street on the preceding Saturday night to "keep the ball moving in connection with the anti-Afghan agitation". The hat was sent round for subscriptions for the legal defence of Knowles, the collection amounted to twenty pounds thirteen shillings and threepence halfpenny ! [64]

The *West Australian* in reviewing the Knowles case addressed itself critically to the subject of racial prejudice.Noting Magistrate Loftie's apparent surprise at the the jury's verdict and the disadvantage to the Crown case due to the unreliable evidence of white witnesses, the *West's* editor believed the outcome was strongly influenced by racial hatred. Despite conflicting testimony given on behalf of the prosecution and defence which gave the prisoner the benefit of the doubt, the editorial suggested that "strictly they [the jury] might, perhaps, have found him guilty technically of manslaughter". Following this theme, it went on to say that "[i]f the evidence of the Afghans is accepted as a true statement of the facts, there can be little doubt that Knowles ought to have been convicted ... An assault, it must be remembered, was first committed by Knowles". The editorial implies a clear disagreement with the jury's decision while recognising its dilemma in reconciling the conflicting evidence of racially antagonistic witnesses.

When Dost Mohamed was killed at Port Hedland in April 1909, the Afghan community again had reason to question British justice. Dost, a successful businessman and camel transport operator in the Pilbara region had been a wrestler of considerable renown in the early days of the Coolgardie field.[65] There he courted Annie Charlotte Grigo, a 16 year old girl, whose family opposed the liaison. The couple fled Coolgardie and were married in Broome in 1896. Annie's two brothers, Harry and William, followed the couple to Port Hedland where they were subsequently employed by Dost. On April 7, 1909, Dost died from severe head injuries inflicted by Harry and William following a domestic dispute at Dost's home.

The Grigo brothers were charged with murder and were sent to trial in the Supreme Court at Broome.[66] Compelling prosecution evidence was available from the District Medical Officer, the Coxswain of Police and other Crown witnesses. But before the last witness, Mrs. Annie Dost, was called, "the jury informed the Court that they were prepared to return the verdict, which was one of 'Not Guilty', without leaving the box."[67] This decision left the Afghan community with feelings of disbelief and resentment.

Applications for naturalisation as British subjects was another administrative sphere in which Afghans received scant favour. Faiz Mahomet, arguably the most eminent Afghan in the Colony, made application for naturalisation as a British subject on August 20, 1896, but the application was disallowed, notwithstanding Faiz's high standing in the civic and commercial affairs of the Colony.[68] In personal representations to the Colonial Secretary and the Hon. E.H. Wittenoom MLC, Faiz pointed out that for 44 years he had lived and worked under British rule, of which seventeen years had been spent in South Australia and five in Western Australia. A formal response by the Colonial Under Secretary on September 14, 1896 stated:

> I am directed to inform you that it is fully admitted that you have proved yourself a good citizen of the Colony and the decision arrived at in refusing you a Certificate of Naturalisation has no personal reference, but is part of the Policy of the Government.[69]

It is interesting to note that in the years 1871 to 1898, twenty two Certificates of Naturalisation were issued to Western Australian residents born in China but none to any Afghanistan born resident. There were no further Certificates of Naturalisation issued to any Chinese or other Asian born residents for more than a decade.[70]

Social contact between the Afghans and women, European or Aboriginal, was rare. Many of the Afghans had wives and families in their homeland whom they visited from time to time; some sons later joined their fathers to work with camels in Western Australia. A small number of Afghans married European women, perhaps no more than five or six and a few married Aboriginal women, but such marriages were uncommon. The Coolgardie Cemetery Register records the burial of "Mahomet Zibanesa, (10 days old), Female, Debility" on October 18, 1897 and "Essaken, (Afghan's child), 10 months, Male," on February 12, 1899, children of such marriages or liaisons.[71]

Newspaper reports of two 'mixed' marriages provide some indication of varying racial and sexual attitudes towards these relationships. The *Kalgoorlie Miner* of March 20, 1907, under the classification of 'Marriages' read :

> Mahomet-Lesire   On 18th March, 1907, Violette Adrienne Lesire (French) to Gool Mahomet (Afghan) in the Mahometan Church (under Mahometan religion) Coolgardie.

Under a banner heading BLACK AND BLONDE , another of Kalgoorlie's newspapers, *The Sun,* carried a derisory account of the past activities of the "notoriously known French woman ... of the rorty Rue de Brookman". Stretched across two columns, it reported in great detail Violette's many years as a "blonde belle" of the town's brothel area The sarcasm of the paper's report of the marriage reached its ultimate in the final paragraph:

> Mr. and Mrs. Gool Mahomet have taken up their residence in the Afghan quarter of Coolgardie, on the east side of the town. Hocking's daily may later on announce Mrs Gool's "At Home" days.[72]

Just one week later ,*The Sun* continued its derisory reporting of a second 'mixed' marriage:

> Last week the goldfields press recorded a Franco-Afghan matrimonial alliance. This week the Northam paper chronicles the nuptials of Fatta K. Pan, a Hindoo, and Scholastica Boulton, an aboriginal woman, winding up with the thrilling information that "the happy couple left for Meenaar, where they intend to spend their honeymoon." The choir, it appears, didn't sing "What will the Harvest Be?"[73]

It concluded with the judgement and prophesy that "the net results of the New Aborigines Act are a pronounced increase in mixed marriages and a gradual population of the country with wretched mongrels".[74]

The vicious sarcasm and racial intolerance of the *Sun* might well have reflected the majority goldfields view but it contrasted with the more tolerant attitude of other sections of the population. A report of the same wedding in the *Northam Advertiser* of March 23, 1907, under a heading - An Interesting Wedding - read:

> An interesting and really unique wedding was celebrated in St. Joseph's Church Northam on Wednesday last, the contracting parties being Fatta K. Pan, an Indian ... and Scholastica Boulton, a young Aboriginal woman. ... The presence of an unusually large number of Afghans in and around the Church on the day named drew a very large concourse of sightseers who filled the sacred edifice to its utmost capacity. After receiving numerous congratulations, the happy couple left for Meenaar, where they intend to spend their honeymoon.[75]

In the Editorial of the *West Australian* of January 9, 1895, John (later Sir Winthrop) Hackett noted "the instinctive dislike of the average Australian to the man of a different colour ... and that the case against the Afghan seems so far to rest chiefly upon sentiment and prejudice". But the fear of Asiatic immigration was a persisting and powerful influence in all of the Australian Colonies in the late 19th century. "Three times (1880, 1888, 1896) their representatives had discussed [exclusionist immigration policies] at Intercolonial Conferences, with a view to the adoption of uniform measures".[76]

With concessions to Britain regarding the non-exclusion on grounds of colour or race of her own subjects as well as those of foreign countries with whom she was anxious to maintain friendly relations, in 1897 Western Australia introduced legislation "restrict[ing] the immigration of undesired peoples by a language test" rather than by race itself. Commenting

on the legislation enacted during the previous week, the Editorial of the *West Australian* of December 24, 1897 said:

> Possibly the foremost subjects in importance are the Immigration Restriction Bill and the Import Labour Registry Bill, which place immigration to these shores, and specially of the coloured races, on quite a fresh footing, and one which it cannot but be believed is more in consonance with the desires of the population of this colony.

Of course, prior to the 1890s, the Colonial Government had enacted a series of legislation to restrict Asian immigration. The Goldfields Act, 1886, for instance precluded Asiatics or African aliens from obtaining a Miners' Right, or any lease, licence or permit on any goldfield before the expiration of five years from the date of first proclamation of such a goldfield.

When, in December 1894, the Anti-Asiatic League was formed, Vosper became its official delegate and as such, travelled throughout the goldfields setting up branches. In Southern Cross he recruited 200 members for the local branch of the League and then went on to establish branches in Perth and Fremantle. While in Perth, he secured the backing of the Trades and Labor Council (TLC), under whose auspices three public meetings were held in Perth and Fremantle, two of which attracted an attendance of 2000. In company with G.F. Pearce (later Federal Senator, 1901-1937), Vosper joined a deputation to the Premier seeking legislative action to restrict further non-European immigration. Forrest's refusal to meet the deputation rankled Vosper who then "threatened to organise a movement to bring down the government and made clear that he would not be satisfied with anything less than the removal of non-Europeans from the colony."[77]

In the vanguard of the push for exclusionist policies were the TLC, the Australian Workers' Association (AWA) and the voice of "organised labour", *The Westralian Worker*. The anti-Asiatic sentiment was not confined to working class individuals or organisations however. A "largely attended meeting", chaired by Mr. F. Connor, MLA, was held in the Fremantle Town Hall in September of 1897 to discuss the "Asiatic Question". This meeting, organised by the TLC and Fremantle shopkeepers passed a resolution pressing for "immediate steps to be taken to prevent the present and increasing influx of Asiatics." [78]

The 1897 legislation to restrict non-European immigration by means of a language test,was the first by a colonial government.[79] The racial consciouness of the Anglo-Australian community had seemingly been mollified, but it was not long before the agitation re-surfaced. When it did, it was in the mining town of Kookynie. With the advance of the railhead to Menzies in December of 1898, the north eastern goldfields became an important new region for the Afghans' cartage operations. A public meeting was held in Kookynie on June 29, 1901 "for the purpose of protesting against the local business people extending their patronage to Afghan carriers." After appointing the president of the local sub-branch of the AWA as chairman, a resolution was proposed by Thomas Beattie, former secretary of the Norseman

sub-branch of the AWA, "[t]hat this meeting deplore the action of the local trades people who patronise Afghan carriers." In speaking in support of the motion Beattie said that :

> "while not blaming the local tradespeople for their action in supporting the Afghans in the past ... after this meeting they would see that it was to their advantage to fall in with the views of the residents of this place, and refrain from giving the Afghan carriers any support whatever".

The resolution was carried unanimously as was a second, that a committee of seven present be appointed "to interview the business people of this town, asking them to cease patronising Afghan carriers, and to use their utmost endeavour to induce others to adopt this step." One speaker said that the matter was "assuming so serious an aspect, that it is a matter for legislation, and ... a good chance for our Labor members to show their hands."[80]

Unlike the earlier Fremantle meeting which saw businessmen and workers combine in their opposition to non-Europeans, the Kookynie agitation appears to have been worker dominated. The March 8, 1901, edition of *The Westralian Worker* contained an article berating miners who patronised the Afghans, concluding with the comment : "In the East Murchison, the Afghan carriers are ousting their white competitors simply through their ability to live on 'the smell of an oil rag'"

The Western Australian Trade Union and Labour Congress in September, 1901 resolved to establish a White Australia League to press the Federal Government to legislate for prohibition on non-European immigration and the regulation of those non-Europeans already resident in the country. *The Westralian Worker* persisted with its campaign and on October 25, 1901, ran a two column article headed **The Asian Curse in Kalgoorlie** in which it urged its readers to "first, resolutely refuse to patronise the alien and second, you must agitate for his speedy exclusion from this continent.". [81]

An open-air meeting to discuss the "Afghan Curse" was held in Leonora in October, 1901. Arranged by the AWA and chaired by the Mayor, those present were urged to "refrain from patronising Afghan carriers and any local business people who utilised their services after 31 October, 1901." It was resolved that an agreement to this effect be drawn up for presentation to the local trades people.[82] The north eastern goldfields continued to be the locus of agitation when, on December 14, 1901, "a large crowd assembled in front of the Kookynie Hotel ... where a meeting took place regarding the Asiatic question." As was the case at the June public meeting in Kookynie, the AWA appeared to be the front runners, although the hotel proprietor, Thomas Campbell, was one of the three persons appointed to a committee to carry the resolutions of the meeting into effect one of which was, that steps should be taken "to stay the influx of Asiatic aliens to this State" [83]

The achievement of a 'White Australia' was given prominence in the programme of each of the three parties - Protectionsts, Free Traders and Labor - contesting the first federal elections in March 1901.Queensland, with its divisions over the Kanaka question, was the only State in

which the principle was a live election issue. When later that year debate began in the Federal Parliament on the Immigration Restriction Bill, there was no controversy over the principle of excluding non-Europeans; rather, the argument centred on the question of method.

Sensitivity in regard to the "Empire's constituent races", as well as the preservation of Britain's relationship with China, and more particularly Japan, persuaded legislators to make the Act non-discriminatory, in form at least.[84] As had been the case with the Western Australian Immigration Restriction Act of 1897, the 'Natal' dictation test was to be the instrument of exclusion: a means which had the potential for severity and flexibility to satisfy domestic and imperial concerns.[85] Formal proclamation of the Immigration Restriction Act on December 23, 1901, was the culmination of what had been a popular, broad-based movement for the exclusion of Asiatics.

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Afghan numbers in Western Australia peaked in 1896 and then began to decline It is no coincidence that 1897 was the year in which the dispersal of the Afghans began, due not only to the passage of the Immigration Restriction Act and the Imported Labour Registry Acts of that year, but also due to the increasing government infrastructure and changes in the economic development pattern of the colony. The increase in population slowed from 133% for the period 1892-1896 to 21% for the succeeding five year period.[86] Export gold production continued to rise, reaching a peak in 1903, but by 1897, alluvial mining had given way to reef mining at the major fields: Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie and Cue.[87] An indication that expansion on the goldfields was nearing an end is shown by the hiatus in railway construction in those regions once the lines reached Cue and Menzies in 1898.

For some of the Afghans dispersal meant return to their homeland, with or without accumulated wealth. For those who stayed on, conditions became more and more stringent. Decreasing numbers and the necessity to seek work away from the centres where small Afghan communities had existed increased the social isolation of those who remained. Of those displaced from camel transport, some became storekeepers in country towns or hawkers, driving "covered wagons laden with household utensils, bolts of cloth, jewellery and tinned stuff of all kinds."[88] Others took up farms in the northern and eastern wheatbelt while several moved on to banana plantations on the Gascoyne. A number of Afghans simply retired and went to live in Perth to be near the Mosque in William Street.

Government records show a great diversity of occupations for the remainder: farm contractor, land clearer, poulterer, horse dealer, Islamic scholar and wood contractor.[89] Those Afghans who remained did so, under an exemption from the provisions of the Immigration Restriction Act, 1901, by obtaining a Certificate of Exemption (from the dictation test) or a Certificate of Domicile. Exemptions were given subject to the applicant meeting certain criteria, among which were prior residence and property ownership.[90]

The nature, role and scope of the Afghans in Western Australia is well summed up in a tribute published in the *Williamstown Advertiser* of February 8, 1908:

> Truly these followers of Mahommed are a sober, industrious race and a necessity in the arid interior of Westralia, until such time as other means shall be devised for carrying provisions and materials to the brave hearts who, under a burning sun and with scanty supply of water, under conditions the very hardest and most monotonous, delve and toil, and blaze the tracks for the weaker ones who shall follow on behind.

As with most other Asiatic ethnic groups, the contribution of the Afghans to the development of colonial and early 20th century Western Australia has been under-estimated, distorted, or ignored to accommodate Anglo-Australian perceptions. Acknowledgment of the Afghans' rightful place in historical interpretation is overdue.

END NOTES

1 *Statistical Register of Western Australia*, 1911 and previous years, Pt,. VII.

2 Western Australian Government Railways Annual Report, 1889.

3 *Statistical Register of Western Australia,* 1911 and previous years, Pt. VII.

4 ibid., Pt. I.

5 The 1896 figure of 664 derived from a "best estimate" related to camel numbers in the Colony. The 1911 figure drawn from the Commonwealth Census of that year.

6 L. Dupree, *Afghanistan,* Princeton, N.J., 1978, p.400 & P. Sykes, *A History of Afghanistan,* Vol II, London, 1940. pp.59-60.

7 In the British retreat from Kabul in 1839, of a force of 16,500, only one European, several.Sepoys and about twenty 'loyal' Afghans reached Jalalabad. Dupree, pp.388-89. Prior to their withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1842, the British armies almost totally destroyed Kabul, and "every kind of disgraceful outrage was suffered to go on in the town". From *Diary of a March through Sinde and Afghanistan,* quoted in Fletcher, *Afghanistan : Highway of Conquest,* Ithaca, N.Y., 1965, p.115.

8 For example, the 45 camel handlers landed in Port Hedland ex SS *Century* in March 1907 are listed as Indian nationals; however, 43 were, by racial sub-division Afghans: Pathans, Brahui, Makrani & Baluchi, while the remaining two were also most probably ethnic Afghans. Australian Archives, Acc. PP 281/S3 B1.

9 The colonial government recognised the potential of camel transport in the Swan River Colony as early as 1846 when a premium was offered for the importation of camels. A similar offer was made again in 1851:*Inquirer,* 11.11.1846 & 8.1.1851. Two Afghan cameleers, Saleh & Haleem, members of Peter Egerton-Warburton's 1873 expedition from Alice Springs to Roebourne were almost certainly the first Afghans to set foot in W.A. Saleh was also a member of Ernest Giles' party which made a triumphant entry into Perth in November 1875, having crossed the Nullarbor from Beltana, S.A.

10 *West Australian,* 28.9.1887, 29.9.1887, 3.10.1887 & 25.10.1887.

11 *West Australian,* 21.10, 25.10, 31.10, 1.11 & 7.11.1887.

12 A. Atkinson, *The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australia,* Nedlands, 1987, pp.405-20.

13 The first large scale shipment of camels into S.A. landed at Port August on December 31, 1865 from the SS *Blackwell.* Among the accompanying camel

handlers were the brothers Faiz & Tagh Mahomet, later to gain great prominence in W.A.

14 C. Stevens, *Tin Mosques and Ghantowns*, Melbourne, 1989, p.114.

15 See also Stevens, *Tin Mosques*, pp.25-26, *Australian Historical Statistics*, IEO42-54, M. Brunato, *Mahomet Allum*, Leabrook, S.A., 1972, p.16 & the *Report of the Royal Commission on the Immigration of Non-British Labour (1904)*.

16 Seventh Census of Western Australia, taken for night of March 31, 1901, Vol.II.

17 *West Australian*, 28.5.1892.

18 A. Koutsoukis, "Faiz Mahomet", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10, Melbourne, 1986, p.378.

19 N. King. *Daughters of Midas*, Victoria Park, 1988, p.54.

20 Louis C. Ware, "Life on a Westralian Gold-Field", in the *Williamstown Advertiser*, February 8, 1908.

21 G. Casey & T. Mayman, *The Mile that Midas Touched*, Seal Books, undated, pp. 48-9 & from notes compiled by C.R. Corlis quoted in N. King, *Daughters of Midas*, Victoria Park, 1988, p. 107.

22 Coolgardie Cemetery Register.

23 Oral History transcript, Battye Library OH4.

24 Australian Archives, Acc. PP 281/S3 B1.

25 J. Valli, *Gascoyne Days*, Perth, 1983, pp.54-5.

26 T.L. McKnight, *The Camel Men in Australia*, Melbourne, 1969, p.51.

27 Battye Library M/S 558A.

28 Approximately one ton of wood was required to produce 1,000 gallons of fresh water. One mammoth condenser in Coolgardie consumed 100 tons (101.6 tonnes) of wood fuel per day to produce 100,000 gallons (454,600 litres) of fresh water from 120,000 gallons (535,520 litres) of salt water. N. Jarvis, *Western Australia 1829-1979*, Perth, 1979, p.73.

29 N. King, *Ghost Towns of the North Country*, Kalgoorlie, 1974, pp.12-13.

30 Waid used 400 camels to transport material from Coolgardie to the Niagara damsite in 1897.

31 V. Loois, "Afghans and Indians in Western Australia" in A. Atkinson, *The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australia*, Nedlands, 1987, pp.421-2; Coolgardie Cemetery Register, Australian Archives, Acc. No. PP63/1 S1, B1, Page 1.

32 *Statistical Register of Western Australia, 1913*.

33 *Statistical Register of Western Australia, 1904-1911*.

34 *West Australian*, December 24, 1902.

35 Brunato, *op cit.*, p. 23; *Advertiser*, Oct. 8, 1957; & "The Medicine Man" in *People*, July 4, 1952, p. 32.

36 *Coolgardie Pioneer*, March 25, 1896.

37 A. Reid, *Those Were the Days*, Victoria Park, 1986 p.22.

38 Stevens, *op cit.* pp.212-217 quotes a range of encounters, drawn from diverse sources, between European and Aboriginal women.

39 The Great Chain of Being was the idea originating in the philosophy of Plato & Aristotle in which all living things are arranged in a hierarchy beginning with simple forms and ascending through primates to mankind and the spirit world. The human range placed the Hottentots and Australian Aborigines on the lowest rung, "with a Bacon or Newton (both Englishmen) [at] the summit." See A.T. Yarwood & M.J. Knowling, *Race Relations in Australia*, North Ryde, NSW, p.19.

40 M. Wilding, "Introduction" to W. Lane's *The Workingman's Paradise* , Sydney, 1980, p.32.

41 H. McQueen, *A New Britannia*, Ringwood, Vic., 1975, p.21.

42 See M. Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy to 1920*, Melbourne, 1967, Ch.5, esp. pp. 188-200.

43   "Eighteenth-Century Europe was the cradle of modern racism." G. Mosse, *Towards the Final Solution : A History of European Racism,* London, 1978, p.1.

44   R. Ward, *The Australian Legend,* Melbourne, 1974, pp.129-32.

45   H. McQueen, *op cit.,* pp. 42-3.

46   V. Burgmann, "Racism, Socialism, and the Labour Movement, 1887-1917", in *Labour History,* No. 47, 1984. p. 39.

47   A. Markus, "Explaining the treatment of non-European immigrants in nineteenth century Australia", in *Labour History,* No. 48, 1985, pp. 90-91.

48   *Statistical Register of Western Australia, 1901,* Pt. I, p.6.

49   Clashes between white and Chinese diggers were followed by serious riots at Buckland Hill, Lambing Flat amongst others. On the Palmer River field in Far Nth Qld in 1877 there were 17,000 Chinese to 1,400 Europeans. See Yarwood & Knowling, *op cit.,* pp.165-180.

50   E. Jaggard, "F.C.B. Vosper: The Agitator", in Lyall Hunt (ed.), *Westralian Portraits,* Nedlands, 1979, pp. 104-110.

51   *ibid.,* p.105.

52   The "Imported Labour Registry Act (1884)" or the Goldfields Act (1886).

53   Brunato, *op. cit.,* pp.17-18.

54   Colonial Secretary's Office File 1511/1899, Battye Library AN527.

55   King, *Ghost Towns, op cit.,* p.6.

56   Gerady Papers, unpublished, held by Mrs Frances Tree, Coolgardie & Uren *op. cit.,* p.17.

57   A. Reid, *op. cit.,* p.202 and Gerady Papers, held by Mrs. Frances Tree, Coolgardie.

58   *Coolgardie Miner,* January, 10, 1896, January 15, 1896 & May 4, 1896. *Coolgardie Pioneer,* January 15, 1896.

59   *Coolgardie Miner,* January 11, &13, 1896 & *The Coolgardie Pioneer,* January 15, 1896.

60   Reid, *op, cit.,* p.174. Hydatids : larvae of tapeworm.

61   A. Markus, *Fear & Hatred,* Sydney, 1979, p.196.

62   *West Australian,* January 7, 1895.

63   *West Australian,* January 8, 1895.

64   *Coolgardie Courier,* January 5, 1895 & *West Australian,* January 10, 1895.

65   In a wrestling match for a prize of one thousand sovereigns, held on the Coolgardie racecourse, Dost defeated an American Stan Pearce, who was "sen[t] back to America on a stretcher". Battye Library OH405.

66   Battye Library, Acc. No 3624, File No. 8, 1909, Case No. 57, Crown Law Department 2942/09. This file contains all witness statements from the Coronial Inquisition held at Port Hedland on April 8, 1909, the Committal Hearing at Port Hedland on 26-28 April, 1909, but little in regard to the Broome trial.

67   *Pilbara Goldfields News,* July 2, 1909.

68   See *Australian Dictionary of Biography,* Vol. 10, Melbourne, 1986, pp.378-379.

69   Brunato, *op cit.,* 1972, pp.24-26.

70   *Statistical Register of Western Australia,* 1908, p.72 & 80.

71   Dost Mahomed, Ayub Kyam, Qadir Bux, Taqir Shah and Gool Mahomet.

72   The *Kalgoorlie Miner* is the paper referred to as Hocking's daily.*The Sun ,* March 24, 1907. Violette remained married to Gool until her death in 1939 and is buried in a deserted Ghan cemetery near Farina (S.A.) along with two of her children.

73   It is highly probably that this name should be Fatta Khan and is a typographical error made originally in the *Northam Advertiser* and perpetuated in *The Sun.* The marriage register of St. Joseph's Church, Northam is non extant, so positive confirmation is not readily available.

74 *The Sun,* March 31, 1907. The Act referred to is the Aborigines Act of 1905 which sets out in Section 3 those persons deemed to be Aborigines for the purpose of the Act and as such subject to the control of the Protector. Section 13 sets down those Aborigines excluded from Act. Relevant to this case is 13 (c) : every Aboriginal who is female, lawfully married to and residing with a husband who is not himself an Aboriginal."

75 Meenaar, the honeymoon venue mentioned, was the location of a property owned by Anwar Kakad, a leading member of the Afghan community who farmed in the district for some years.

76 M. Willard, *op. cit.,* p. 119.

77 E. Jaggard, "Bread and Democracy : F.C.B. Vosper in the Roaring Nineties", in *Westerly* No. 4, December, 1977 and Markus, *op cit.,* p. 196.

78 *Morning Herald,* Sept. 24, 1897.

79 The Immigration Restriction Act, 1897, was based on the "Natal" model: "which used literacy in any European language as the test of a migrant's acceptability". Yarwood & Knowling, *op cit.,* p. 232.

80 *The Westralian Worker,* July 12, 1901.

81 A list of laundries, Dyeworks, etc. employing 'WHITE LABOR ONLY".

82 Loois, op cit., p. 399.

83 *The Westralian Worker,* Dec 27, 1901

84 The British Government was acutely conscious of its responsibilities to and the rights of the citizens of British India, many of whom, prior to the rearrangement of the Afghanistan-British India border in 1893 (Durand Line), were Afghan nationals. A petition to the Viceroy of India was made in 1903 on behalf of some 500 natives of India & Afghanistan against perceived discriminatory administrative practice. See A.T. Yarwood, *Asian Migration to Australia,* Melbourne, 1967, Ch. 7.

85 See Yarwood, *Attitudes to Non-European Immigration,* Sydney, 1968, Ch. 5, *Asian Migration to Australia,* Ch. 2 and Yarwood and Knowling, *op. cit.,* pp. 233-37.

86 *Statistical Register of Western Australia, 1901.*

87 *Statistical Register of Western Australia, 1910.*

88 J. Stokes, *Cunderdin-Meckering : A Wheatlands History,* Melbourne, 1986, p.84.

89 Commonwealth Archives Acc. No. PP63/1 S1 B1: Dispensations against the Immigration Restriction Act and War Precautions Regulations, 1916. Also Atkinson, *op. cit., pp. 403-20.*

90 The Certificate of Domicile was issued to Asians in Australia able to prove ownership of property or similar material possessions, demonstrated good character and five years residential status.

Red Baiting and Purging Radicals : Western Australia and the British Seamen's Strike of 1925.

Peter Gifford *

In 1926, as part of its "..... Review of Public Events At Home and Abroad", the British Annual Register reported that during September the previous year :

> ... the British shipping industry, depressed as it already was, suffered further severe loss through a strike of seamen on British vessels. In England the only large port seriously affected was Southampton, and that only for a few days at the beginning of the month. But in Australia and South Africa the strike assumed large proportions, and interfered seriously with the trade between those countries and England. [1]

This was all correct as far as it went, although it failed to mention that the 15,000 seamen involved in this 1925 strike action in Britain and the Empire's "white" Antipodean dominions had withdrawn their labour because their wages had been cut. The industrial action was described elsewhere in conservative circles as "unofficial", because it resulted from rank-and-file resentment over an agreement between the major employer group, the British Shipping Federation, and the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union. In particular, what caused the strike to extend to ships in South African and Australasian ports was the failure of the union's autocratic president, Joseph Havelock Wilson, to consult his members before agreeing on a cut effective from 1 August, of one pound a month. In most cases that meant a reduction in wages from ten pounds a month to nine pounds, at a time when sterling and the Australian pound were of equal value and the equivalent Australian monthly seamen's rate was sixteen pounds five shillings. The reduction, furthermore, was almost certainly suggested by Havelock Wilson.[2] He was aware that the British shipping industry was in decline with no relief in sight, and seems to have been motivated by a desire to forestall an anticipated demand for wage economy from the shipowners. Wage and salary cuts would, after all, become commonplace in Britain and elsewhere once economic depression became worldwide at the end of the decade.

At all events, the seamen's strike lasted far longer in Australia -- where the Federated Seamen's Union had acquired a reputation in the preceding decade for militancy -- than in Britain. Wilson's union officials actually took on a strike-breaking role there, collaborating with the shipowners in supplying more than 20,000 "loyalist" seamen to ships in British ports affected by the industrial action. [3]

By contrast in major Australian ports from Fremantle to Cairns the Seamen's Union encouraged several thousand of the British men to leave their ships, providing accommodation on shore for them and leading efforts to provide them with strike pay and other comforts. [4] All told, at least 70 British ships were held up in Australian ports for a total of more than 4,000 days as a result of the strike [5] Some vessels were held up for longer periods than others, but in Fremantle alone, one strike veteran later estimated that up to 1,100 men were involved at any one time, while the West Australian Premier, Philip Collier, stated in mid-October that 2,603 men had been prosecuted in his State for breaching their articles of employment. [6] These were framed under the terms of the British Merchant Shipping Act of 1894., which not only set down imprisonment for any such seafarer taking industrial action while in port but was still enforceable throughout the supposedly self-governing dominions of the Empire. Fourteen days hard labour became the standard penalty for virtually all those seamen who took part in the British strike overseas, while some served up to eight weeks. That the strike was restricted outside Britain to far-flung Empire ports in Australasia and South Africa seems to have been at least partly by design, as far as the strikers were concerned. [7] Despite the likelihood of a prison stint, they knew if they signed articles in Britain, then joined the strike after sailing overseas, they could count on white working class support in Australasia particularly, and in South Africa to a lesser extent. "Blackleg" labour was also less likely to be available in those places than, for example, in North American ports where organised unionism was relatively weak.

Thus the strike had foundered by 12 October in Britain (and South Africa), but continued until late November in Sydney and Melbourne, where it finally ended. On 2 November, meanwhile, a violent confrontation involving hundreds of strikers and police effectively concluded the industrial action in Australia's most isolated major port, Fremantle. As will be seen, this confrontation was not a deliberate act of provocation on the part of the West Australian authorities but came about through frustration on the part of the strikers. This in turn was caused partly by the very fact of their isolation - from their fellows elsewhere, but also because Fremantle seems to have been singled out for special attention by the acknowledged leader of the British shipowners, the P & O group's Lord Inchcape.

The Communist activists among the striking seamen in the Port of London might have felt affronted that their efforts received no mention in the Annual Register report for 1926. Their British union organisation went, however, under the name of the National Minority Movement, which was an accurate reflection of their status and influence among British seamen at least, at that time.[8] But the strike's supposedly Communist leadership both in Britain and in Antipodean ports did become a focal point in the federal election campaign in Australia late in 1925. The Nationalist-Country Party coalition led by S.M. Bruce and Earle Page, with the unanimous backing of the conservative press, campaigned vigorously on a platform of law and order and industrial "peace". This was seen on the opposition Labor side as "Red-baiting" - a perception which can be shown to be justified even when the very real fears of Bolshevism held by

conservative and moderate sections of Australian society in the 1920s are taken into account. Feeling intensified on both sides towards the end of the election campaign when the government attempted to deport the "Red" leaders of the Federated Seamen's Union of Australia, Tom Walsh and Jacob Johnson. The government had earlier amended the Immigration Act to provide for the deportation of persons not born in Australia who were concerned in what it called, industrial "acts of hindrance or obstruction". [9] Since Walsh had been in Australia for more than 30 years and Johnson since before the First World War, the High Court later held that they were not immigrants. It is now commonly accepted as well that Johnson rather than Walsh was the real militant in the seamen's Union during the second half of 1925. Walsh seems even to have preferred a conciliatory approach to settlement of the British seamen's strike - the dispute over which the government finally decided to deport him and Johnson - but ended up literally as a prisoner of his apparently uncompromising, radical past. [10] Far from wanting further upheaval on the waterfront, Walsh may merely have been seeking justice for a closely associated group of workers who happened to be, like himself, from the British Isles. What is certain, however, is that the British seamen's strike became entwined with domestic Australian industrial and political issues in which Walsh had been involved, both in the eastern States and in the West.

The Australian seamen and maritime unions in general had established a post-war reputation as militants; much more so than the British seamen, whose major union had been established and led for 40 years by the right-wing industrial "pacifist" Havelock Wilson. [11] Walsh's election as Federal secretary, as Richard Morris has noted, ".... represented a rejection of the cautious and conciliatory former leadership and signalled the seamen's growing disillusionment with the arbitration system which was now under increasing attack from both labour and employers". [12] In keeping with his militant reputation, Walsh went to jail in 1919 for making inflammatory statements when the union resorted to strike action after the breakdown of its attempt to re-negotiate its award. Having established his sincerity and, to some, revolutionary spirit by virtue of his stint in jail, Walsh then pursued a strategy of strike mixed with arbitration to improve the lot of his members. As the Seamen's Union official historian Brian Fitzpatrick put it :

> While in the two years after March 1921 wages of members of Havelock Wilson's National Union of Sailors & Firemen of Great Britain fell by five pound ten shillings a month, or nearly half, Australian wages continued to rise as a result of increases gained by direct action and through the court. For though the Union leadership untiringly expressed itself as being opposed to the industrial arbitration system, it showed no diffidence about serving logs of claims on the shipowners for hearing in the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, and had its successes there. [13]

There was nothing particularly revolutionary about all this. Walsh's industrial tactics consisted largely of trying to obtain a better share of the shipping company profits and improved conditions for his members by whatever means seemed most appropriate at the time. They

realised this, and even the moderates among them were prepared to back him while he was successful. It is quite consistent with this as well that he should have tried by whatever means seemed appropriate to protect hard-won pay rates and conditions. A cut in pay for British sailors, then, could have been seen as a precursor of reductions in the largely British-owned Australian merchant fleet. [14] And determination to back the British men would have hardened as the British owners, led by the P & O 's Lord Inchcape, attempted to break the strike in South African ports by the introduction of "blackleg" labour - Indian "lascars". This was rejected by virtually all sections of white South African society, for economic as well as racist reasons. [15] As in South Africa, so in "White Australia" - the possible introduction of cheap "coloured" labour was the major economic reason for white working class support of the Australian colour bar. In fact such an influx of "coloured" labour never happened, but Australian seamen in particular would have felt they had reason to worry, given both the measure of British ownership in the Australian shipping industry and allegations of a "special" relationship between Lord Inchcape and the Australian Prime Minister, Bruce.[16]

The perception was totally different, however, in the case of the conservative, propertied sections of Australian society as represented by the 1920s Nationalist governments. To such people, industrial action - whatever the circumstances - went against the public interest. It was true that strikes on the waterfront caused loss and inconvenience, but as Fitzpatrick and later, the historian Heather Radi recognised.

> The issues were industrial, and political only to the extent the workers' right to choose their methods for redress of grievances was involved, but the latter was made the overriding issue, the grievances themselves relegated to second place, by those who asserted public interest. [17]

To conservatives, production and the interests of the producers were thus identified with public interest, and action against strikers was therefore perfectly legitimate on the basis that they interfered with production. The fact that there was an arbitration system at all was sufficient reason for unions to abide by it and for strikes to be proscribed. But the seamen, like the waterside workers and miners whose harsh working conditions had not been improved markedly by that same system, were not prepared to give up the strike weapon totally in favour of arbitration. That held for Western Australian as well as the eastern States as far as the seamen were concerned. Tom Walsh may have come to Perth in 1924 to set his W.A. members an example in industrial tactics, but they followed him willingly enough to the point where they were cast out of the established labour movement. In the West Australian case as elsewhere, the British seamen's strike became enmeshed in local political conflicts both within and without the labour movement, and a purge of radicals was the result. The purge was completed after the Federal election of 1925 which Labor lost and for which loss the seamen - both British and Australian - were blamed.

Walsh's propensity to criticise bourgeois Australian institutions and laws, then use them when it suited his union's purposes, was part cause of the enmity which arose between him and the moderates of the ALP in Western Australia before the British seamen's strike began. In late 1924 the seamen made common cause with waterside workers throughout Australia, who had banned all overtime in an effort to rid the nation of an organisation known as the Overseas Shipping Bureau. Set up in 1917 as a strike-breaking agency, it had continued after the war to give preference in maritime work to non-union labour in Sydney. As part of the campaign, and to have the Navigation Act more rigidly enforced, Walsh came to Western Australia and almost immediately came into conflict with the local ALP machine. The government as employer had already clashed with Walsh, who was now Federal president of the Seamen's Union, over the State Shipping Service; [18]there was another confrontation in late November over the refusal by the Minister for Works, Alex McCallum, to agree to pay increases and improved conditions demanded by dredge, tug and pilot-boat crews. McCallum, a former union leader himself, took the line that the government could not grant special concessions to one section of its employees. The unions's response was, as the West Australian put it with some accuracy, "...a course of direct action ...to embarrass the Labour Government". [19]

That Walsh should have entered into public disputes with McCallum and the ALP's state secretary, E.H. Barker, was perhaps understandable given their relative positions. [20] But to attack the editor of the ALP-owned *Westralian Worker,* John Curtin, over a relatively petty issue when the *Worker* was backing the seamen and lumpers in their disputes with the Commonwealth, was hardly tactically sound. Curtin was no longer as militant in the cause of socialism as in his youth in Victoria, but for Walsh to berate him on this basis was pure humbug given that Walsh himself was already (as it subsequently transpired) in the process of abandoning his Marxist ideology. [21] Curtin may have become more pragmatic and conservative as a result of his day-to-day involvement with the ALP power-brokers who owned the *Westralian Worker,* but he was allowed considerable latitude in his editorial role and was far from being a mere party journalistic hack at any stage of his period with the newspaper.[22]

He was subsequently declared "black" by the Seamen's Union for refusing to publish a letter from a militant member of its West Australian executive, George Ryce. In so doing, Curtin had aligned himself firmly with McCallum, Barker and the ALP machine; an examination of Ryce's letter, however, supports Curtin's contention that it contained material on which some ALP figures would have had grounds to sue for libel. Not even the most optimistic of radical unionists should have expected the editor of a Labor newspaper to approve material possibly defaming those who were, after all, his employers. [23] Curtin nonetheless dealt fairly and humanely with the British seamen as individuals throughout their strike, even though he must have been aware that their cause was hopeless against the combined power of Inchcape, the other British shipping interests and the Bruce-Page government. [24] By attacking Curtin

personally, however, Walsh succeeded only in alienating his group from the mainstream labour movement in Western Australia. [25] Consequently there were few expressions of either surprise or sympathy in Western Australia when the union was de-registered nationally on the owners' application by the Arbitration Court in June 1925. The reason, according to Fitzpatrick, was "...continuous disobedience to arbitration law and repeated interruption to shipping services" [26] Its award was cancelled and for the next ten years the union federally had no power to enforce its rules or collect membership dues. Yet another strike followed, nationally, as the union sought to safeguard award conditions by having them incorporated in ships' articles. The union succeeded in this object, under which protection would be afforded by the Navigation Act's sanctions rather than those previously available from the Arbitration Court. But for the Prime Minister this industrial action was sufficient provocation to justify drastic counter-action. Accordingly, he pushed special legislation through Parliament to amend the Immigration Act so that "immigrants" such as Walsh and Johnson (who had been prosecuted earlier in the year for inciting strike action) could be deported. Walsh and Johnson were effectively warned : a month later, however, they and their union were supporting the British seamen's strike. [27]

The situation had thus been reached where an Anglo-Australian Prime Minister, educated at Cambridge and who had served with distinction in the British Army, [28] was attempting to deport one union official born in the U.K. and another originally from continental Europe.[29] They in turn were trying to protect the rights of British (and ultimately Australian) seamen against a perceived incursion of cheap foreign labour. It is no less ironic, however, that a strike of British seamen, brought about by events 12, 000 miles away, should have become the major (and possibly even the deciding) issue of an Australian Federal election campaign, at least as far as conservative newspapers were concerned. [30] The strike in Britain may have ended in mid-October 1925, but the decisions by the various faction leaders there to call it off had no immediate effect on the strikers in Australia, and this was not merely because of the support provided by Australian seamen and other sections of the labour movement. As the *Westralian Worker* noted, the British men were not criminals, and the spectacle of their parading daily outside courthouses - Fremantle, in the case cited by the *Worker,* but in most other major Australian, New Zealand and South African ports as well - " .... had the effect of quickening Labor spirit and solidarity"., in the strike's early stages at least. [31] At a mass meeting of the British seamen in Sydney on 21 August, it was pointed out that even before the wage cut comparative monthly rates were : - First seamen, Australia, sixteen pound five shillings, British, ten pounds; firemen and greasers, eighteen pound five shillings, ten guineas; trimmers, sixteen pound five shillings, ten pounds; stewards thirteen pounds, nine pounds five shillings; cooks seventeen pounds eleven shillings, ten guineas. It was hardly surprising then that when the Australian Prime Minister appealed to them to compare "..... the results which have flowed to them under their own trusted leaders...... with what has happened to the Australian seamen under the extremist leadership", they did just that and walked off their ships.[32]

As far as Fremantle was concerned, the strike period was most notable for extremes of behaviour on the part firstly of the ship owners in deciding to boycott the port, and then by an element of the British seamen in staging a riot on 2 November. This "affray", which followed an attempt to move the strike-bound liner <u>Borda</u> from Victoria Quay, involved more than 100 policemen and several hundred strikers armed with "..... iron bars, pieces of wood some of which had pieces of iron attached to the business end and others with nails protruding, hammers, improvised batons, bolts, stones and coal". [33] The police, however, were not issued with firearms until the trouble had ended, and although scores of men were injured on either side, there was no loss of life. [34] This was due largely to the policy of sensible restraint followed throughout the strike by the police officer in charge at Fremantle, Inspector W.C. Sellenger. He had been present at the so-called Battle of the Barricades in Fremantle six years earlier in which a lumper - Tom Edwards- had suffered fatal injuries at the hands of the police. Consequently Sellenger by his own account had had no desire to inflame class hatred during the British strike, and had managed to prevent a number of earlier incidents from developing into full-scale confrontations. [35] But despite the distribution in London of evidence to this effect by the West Australian Agent General, H. C. Colebatch (another with first-hand experience of the 1919 Fremantle "incident"), the shipowners persisted with their decision to boycott Fremantle on the grounds of alleged "lawlessness" there. [36] The long-standing antipathy of the P & O's Lord Inchcape for working class Australians, and West Australians in particular, seems to have been at least partly behind this decision. [37] The refusal of the West Australian Premier, Collier, to support Bruce's proposed strike-breaking measures would only have hardened Inchcape's prejudices - as would the unflattering references to him in the *Westralian Worker*. [38] At all events the ban remained in force until 9 November, by which time the strike was well and truly over in Western Australia. The conservative former premier Colebatch had done his best to set the record straight as far as his State's business interests and reputation were concerned. The same could not be said for its most influential newspaper, the *West Australian*, which exaggerated the "lawlessness" in the first place and then blamed the shipping boycott entirely on the strikers and their "Red" Australian supporters. [39] By lapsing into violence, however, the strikers had alienated virtually all of their remaining supporters in Western Australia, as one such - the *Westralian Worker* - was quick to point out. [40] The men themselves also realised this immediately : as soon as they had been dealt with by the Fremantle court, most returned to their ships and departed, having gained nothing. [41]

Bertha Walker argues that the strike "dispelled many of the nasty schisms between workers" [42] in Australia but in fact the exact opposite was the case in Western Australia, and probably throughout the Commonwealth. The deportation struggle was one in which the labour movement in general became involved reluctantly and usually for civil libertarian reasons. But as soon as the deportation case and the strike were over, a wave of anti-radical feeling swept through the A.L.P. and trade union movement, blaming the radicals and by extension the

British seamen for the fact that Red-baiting had just helped win an election for the conservatives. [43] The moderates and right-wingers in the labour movement, however, were not acting entirely irrationally or simply hunting scapegoats in seeking to purge the radicals.

In Western Australia, the militants within the Seamen's Union in particular had acted with a single-mindedness both during the British strike and for some time beforehand which had been interpreted by others as both selfishness and lack of working-class solidarity. The lumpers, for example, were asked by Walsh to show solidarity with the British men in their struggle, but were not consulted about the tactics to be adopted; this despite the admission by Walsh that: "The response made to the call by the (Australian) seamen on the wharf labourers of Fremantle and Port Adelaide early this year was such as to merit the unqualified esteem of all unionists. Those men refused to scab on the members of the Federated Seamen's Union of Australia ...".[44] The consequence, in Fremantle at least, was unemployment of more than 50 per cent by late October, and average weekly wages of less than two pounds ten shillings for those able to gain lumping work during the British strike. Tally clerks, carters and railwaymen associated with wharf work were in the same situation, according to the Lumpers' Union secretary, Frank Rowe.[45] Yet the seamen insisted on ignoring the A.L.P.'s disputes settling mechanism, just as they had during the pre-British strike troubles in which Walsh had taken a leading part, effectively "taking on" both the State Government and the ALP administrative apparatus. Admittedly there was little to be gained from the British seamen's point of view in employing an Australian arbitrator for what was a dispute with its roots elsewhere. In terms of public relations, however, the seamen could at least have attempted in this way to placate other sections of the West Australian maritime industrial workforce which were jobless through no fault of their own.

The end result in political terms was that John Curtin, who had recognised the justice of the British seamen's case, was well beaten in the electorate of Fremantle which Labor had expected to pick up. In his first attempt to enter Federal Parliament, Curtin polled 14,812 votes to 20,568 by the sitting independent, William Watson, who increased his majority substantially. Several other factors were involved in the result, most notably the fact that this 1925 election was the first in Australia at which voting had been compulsory, and that there had been only a 54 per cent voting turnout at the last Fremantle poll in 1922.[46] Compulsory voting had been expected to favour Labor, however, and probably would have but for the strike. The ALP machine itself had functioned efficiently - the organisation at the Port, in terms of numbers, morale and enthusiasm, had been the best for a decade. There were long memories at Fremantle - the defeat was attributed in part to "conscription press propaganda", and to an amply-funded and well-organised anti-Labor campaign. The British seamen's strike had disrupted industry and employment, causing "... large numbers of women and girls especially to be stampeded into the camp of the enemy", although how that assertion could be proved was not revealed, since voting patterns, then as now, could not be characterised by gender simply

through examining ballot papers. The most savage vituperation, however, was reserved for "... the so-called Laborites within our gates who by their stupid and traitorous behaviour on countless occasions worked, it would seem, in cooperation with the employers to the utter undoing of the labor movement."[47] These were bitter words indeed, but that they had some foundation is shown by the case of another Labor candidate, Richard Lane, also heavily defeated in the seat of Perth by the maverick Nationalist incumbent, E.A. Mann. Lane, a solicitor, had been retained by the Australian Seamen's Union some time previously, and had appeared for the union and its members during their industrial troubles leading up to the British strike. He then received even more adverse publicity as counsel in Fremantle for the British men during their protracted court appearances. Lane gained only 12,768 votes to 21,517 by E.A. Mann in a 92 per cent poll, compared with 47 per cent in 1922 when Mann's tally was 9,509 to Labor's 4,951.[48]

The result overall was a loss to the ALP of five seats, and in Western Australia *status quo ante*, with Labor's A.E. "Texas" Green retaining the seat of Kalgoorlie and George Pearce and two other Nationalists winning the three Senate places from Labor candidates who included the party's State secretary, E.H. Barker. Had the atmosphere of moderation which prevailed at the previous year's State election continued, then Barker at least should have gone to the Senate. Barker, who was a English-born, had been in Australia for 28 years and had come up through the ranks of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. By Paul Hasluck's account among others, Barker epitomised the respectable, largely self-educated upper working-class tradesman whose socialist roots, such as they were, had little or nothing to do with Marxism and who had no time for labour "extremists" such as the Communists or I.W.W. "Wobblies".[49]

The use of "Red" smear tactics against such men may well have been distasteful to locally-resident conservatives in what was, after all, a small and isolated community where genuine radicals were known to be few. Likewise exaggerating the so-called Communist threat to shipping at Fremantle was not going to help Western Australia's international trading reputation. This is presumably why the Opposition in the State Parliament took so little interest in the law-and-order debate brought on by the British seamen's strike, which was stirred up in the conservative Press largely by Bruce, his senior West Australian minister Pearce and the shipowners. As has been mentioned, H.P. Colebatch went to some pains to set the record straight in London. In Perth, State Parliament sat virtually daily throughout the strike, but only three questions - relating to police protection for non-striking crews, the arming of police and port charges for shipowners - were put to the government.[50] There was no particular reason why conservative State MP should have done the dirty work for their Federal counterparts, but nonetheless Collier was justified in asking the rhetorical question in the campaign's final stages: "Are our local Opposition, the leader of which is an esteemed ex-Premier, less mindful of our country's interests than our accusers?"[51]

Ultimately, the resentment against the Labor radicals was not based on the use of unsavoury tactics by the Federal conservatives - the West Australian Labor renegade Pearce in particular[52] - but on the perception that the radicals and hot-heads among the seamen of both Australia and Britain had foolishly and selfishly given those conservatives ammunition. In Western Australia, the purge was directed principally at the Seamen's Union, which was ordered to vacate its premises in the Fremantle Trades Hall after a meeting of more than 90 representatives of unions affiliated with the ALP resolved overwhelmingly on 24 November that Seamen's Union officials were guilty of:

. gross misrepresentation and subterfuge in correspondence with the Fremantle executive of the ALP when withdrawing affiliation from the Labor movement,

. precipitating grave industrial crises without authority, involving large numbers of men who had no say in the conduct of disputes,

. libelous and traitorous attacks in the anti-Labor press and elsewhere on the Federal Labor candidates and Labor representatives, and

. participating in an attempt to form a bogus Industrial Council in opposition to the present District Council of the ALP. [53]

Much of this had to do with events before the British seamen's strike began. The withdrawal of affiliation from the ALP, for example, was in connection with the dispute between the Seamen's Union and the government which had resulted in the placing of a "black" embargo on Curtin by the union and the retaliatory expulsion from the ALP of union executive member George Ryce. As a Marxist and foundation member of the Communist Party in Western Australia,[54] it is likely that Ryce's ALP membership would have been terminated in any case, but in fact both he and his fellow radical official of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union, Cecilia Shelley, had been expelled before the British strike ended. Ryce, Shelley and the Seamen's Union secretary, Tom Houghton, were among those who had met three weeks previously in the Fremantle Trades Hall to consider setting up a rival Industrial Council "similar to those of other States", as the *West Australian* put it.[55] What such a council would have done, essentially, would have been to challenge the hegemony of the right-wing Australian Workers Union, which effectively controlled both the political and industrial wings of the labour movement in Western Australia (and its newspaper, the *Westralian Worker*) through the combined ALP apparatus. The A.W.U. had long since, through alliance with other moderate unions, disposed of left-wing plans for the One Big Union in Western Australia; the continuing problems with the militants in the Seamen's Union, culminating in the British strike, now provided the excuse to remove the few remaining radicals from the mainstream labour movement. Their reconstituted Communist Party[56] would never be more than a small rump on the Left, while - as David Black has put it - a "mutually beneficial relationship with politicians" had been established by the A.W.U. "which formed the basis of Labor's successes in State politics between 1924 and 1947."[57]

In the case of Tom Houghton, there was no real need to purge him from ALP membership. He was re-elected as State secretary of the Seamen's Union soon after the British strike, but posed no threat while the union remained disaffiliated from the ALP locally and de-registered nationally from Arbitration Court coverage. Houghton, never a Communist anyway according to his son, would quit the union movement entirely before the end of the decade and spend the rest of his working life as a self-employed businessman in Perth.[58] That is quite ironic considering he was under surveillance - almost certainly without his own knowledge[59] - by Commonwealth authorities during 1925, and could well have been in line for deportation (along with George Ryce) had the Commonwealth's test case against Tom Walsh and Jacob Johnson succeeded.[60] The Prime Minister was determined to rid Australia of what he considered the taint of foreign doctrines, and the fact that he sacked his Attorney General, Sir Littleton Groom, in the wake of the High Court decision is one measure of how annoyed Bruce was that the deportation tactic had failed.[61] But as Heather Radi has noted, in establishing its deportation powers the government "had forged a sledgehammer to crack a nut", since there was no widespread support for Walsh and Johnson nor even agreement between them.[62] In Western Australia likewise, had Houghton and Ryce been threatened with deportation, then probably only John Curtin in the mainstream labour movement would have spoken up for them, his black ban notwithstanding, for the same civil libertarian reasons as he did in Walsh's case. The Premier, Collier, who had declined to assist J.T. Lang's government in testing the legal validity of the deportation regulations [63] would not have been sorry to see the last of either Houghton or Ryce. As Radi says: "Even allowing for the exigencies of electioneering, the image Bruce created of a Labor movement about to succumb to revolutionary violence was the reverse of what was actually happening."[64]

NOTES

1   The Annual Register, Vol. 167, A Review of Public Events At Home and Abroad, For The Year 1925, (London, 1926), P. 99.

2   According to allegations in the National Minority Movement organ, the International Seafarer, reprinted in the Westralian Worker, Perth, 22.1.26.

3   B. Mogridge, 'Militancy and Inter-Union Rivalries In British Shipping, 1911-1929', International Review Of Social History, Vol. VI, 1961, P. 403.

4   See, for example, B. Walker, Solidarity Forever, (Melbourne, 1972), Pp. 244-249; also the West Australian, 26.8.25.

5   See K. Burley, British Shipping And Australia 1920-1939, (London, 1968), P. 338.

6   Joe Cooper, quoted in J. Williams, The First Furrow, (Perth, 1976), Pp. 95-96; also H.P. Colebatch to P. Collier, 15.10.25, WA Agent General Correspondence No 325, Vol. XVIV, Premier's Dept. No. 292 of 1925; Battye Library, Perth, AN 2/1, Acc. 1496.

7   Mogridge, 'Militancy and Inter-Union Rivalries ....', P. 403.

8   The National Minority Movement was the official British trade union link to the Communist Third International. See R. Martin, Communism And The British Trade Unions, 1924-1933, A Study Of The National Minority Movement. (Oxford, 1969), Pp. 1-36.

9   West Australian, 25.8.25.
10 See, for example, R. Morris, 'Mr. Justice Higgins scuppered: The 1919 Seamen's strike', Labour History, No. 37, Nov., 1979, Pp. 61-62; F. Cain, The Origins of Political Surveillance In Australia, (London, 1983), P. 203; F. Farrell, International Socialism & Australian Labour, The Left In Australia 1919-1939, (Sydney, 1981), Pp. 53, 63-4; and M. Roe, 'Strike-Bound In Cape Town, 1925; Responses Aboard An Australian Migrant Ship', Labour History, No. 53, Nov. 1987, Pp. 76, 84.
11 Wilson's so-called pacifism did not extend to his rivals in the British union movement. See E. Shinwell, Conflict Without Malice, An Autobiography, (London, 1955), Pp. 46, 57; also F. Lindop, 'The Strange Case of George Reed'. Bulletin Of The Society For The Study Of Labour History, No. 42, spring 1981, Pp. 19-20.
12 B. Fitzpatrick and R.J. Cahill, The Seamen's Union of Australia 1872-1972, A History (Sydney, 1981), P. 53.
13 Ibid., Pp. 51-52.
14 The extent of British ownership in the Australian shipping monopoly was examined by Frank Anstey, MHR, in a supplementary memorandum to the 1925 Navigation Royal Commission reports, and published in the Westralian Worker, 28.8.25, 1.9.25 and 11.9.25. See also F.C. Green, Servant Of The House, (Melbourne, 1969), Pp. 42-44.
15 See the West Australian, 3.9.25., 5.9.25., 7.9.25.: the Times Of India, 3.9.25; B. Hirson and L. Vivian, 'The Homeboat Strike Of 1925: British Seamen and South African Community Relations', unpubl. paper, University of London, 1986, Pp. 3-7; and Roe, 'Strike-Bound In Cape Town ....' Pp. 76-78.
16 See C. Edwards, Bruce Of Melbourne, Man of Two Worlds, (London, 1965), Pp. 141-142. In a less complimentary view of the relationship, the Westralian Worker, 28.8.25, described Bruce as having entered the British dispute as "... a rampart for the sweat lords."
17 H. Radi, '1920-29', in F.K. Crowley (ed.), A New History Of Australia, (Melbourne, 1974), P. 397.
18 The union protested over an attempt to exempt some State Shipping Service vessels from Navigation Act clauses regarding Australian wages and conditions. See B. Oliver, 'War And Peace In Western Australia: The Impact Of The Great War On Western Ideology, Politics And Society 1914 To 1926', PhD thesis, UWA, 1991, P. 343; also Fitzpatrick and Cahill, The Seamen's Union ..., P. 57.
19 See the West Australian, 28/11/24, 2.12.24 (McCallum on Walsh); also Oliver, 'War And Peace ...;, Pp. 347-348; and D. Black, 'The Era Of Labor Ascendancy 1924-1947', in C.T. Stannage (ed.), A New History Of Western Australia, (Nedlands, 1981), P. 411.
20 West Australian 2.12.24 (McCallum on Walsh), 3.12.24, 8.12.24, 9.12.24; Daily News, Perth, 5.12.24, 9.12.24; see also Oliver, 'War And Peace ...', Pp. 348-351.
21 The dispute was over Curtin's visit to Geneva in 1924 as a delegate to the I.L.O., described by Walsh as "a bribe offered by the master class", In response to Curtin's claim that Walsh, too, had been nominated to go to Geneva in 1919, Walsh replied that he had 'preferred the company of the comparatively humble "criminals" in Melbourne Gaol' to that of the arch criminals at Geneva. Curtin's response was that others had "found gaol was the price of the opinions they held" - a reference to his own imprisonment during the anti-conscription campaign of 1916-17 - but did not "make a song about it." Westralian Worker, 12.12.24.; see also the West Australian, 11.12.24.
22 These themes are explored further by Dianne Sholl in 'John Curtin at the Westralian Worker 1917-1928: An Examination of Curtin's Political Philosophy as Reflected in his Editorials', BA Honours dissertation, UWA, 1975.
23 Ryce's letter is contained in a pamphlet published in Perth by the Seamen's Union in late 1924 or early 1925 under the heading 'W.A. Seamen's Dispute, Astounding Facts, To The Unionists of Australasia', copy held by the Battye Library, Perth, ALP Metro. Council No. 20, 1924-25, MN 300, Acc. 1319A. The assessment of Ryce's letter, in

which the attacks on State Disputes Committee members appear particularly actionable, is based on more than 20 years of practical journalistic experience. See also Curtin's statements, West Australian, 1.1.25, Westralian Worker, 2.1.25.

24   The page one editorial in ibid., 4.9.25, stating that 'Australians believe in humane and just treatment of those who "go down to the sea in ships" ', is typical. Curtin's friend and eastern states counterpart, Henry Ernest Boote of the Australian Worker, behaved in similar fashion throughout the dispute.

25   The Westralian Worker staff and at least 13 unions and ALP branches throughout Western Australia issued statements expressing confidence in Curtin and deploring the Seamen's Union action, to the Westralian Worker, West Australian and Daily News between 5.1.25 and 16.1.25.

26   Fitzpatrick and Cahill, The Seamen's Union ..., P. 58.

27   Ibid., Pp. 58-59; see also Edwards, Bruce of Melbourne ..., Pp. 111-112.

28   See, for example, ibid., ch. 1.

29   Walsh is variously said to have come originally from Ireland (then still part of the U.K.) or Liverpool, and Johnson (whom sections of the Australian Press consistently called "Johannsen" or "Johannson" throughout the strike, to emphasise his foreign extraction) was born either in Holland or in Sweden. Johnson himself told the Sydney Central Court, 24.4.25, that he thought he was born in Holland, but was not sure. See the West Australian, 25.4.25.

30   The West Australian, for example, provided saturation coverage of the strike, usually juxtaposed with election stories from late August until early December, 1925. Since most of its interstate strike and election coverage was drawn from other conservative newspapers such as the Sydney Morning Herald, the Brisbane Courier, the Melbourne Argus and the Adelaide Register (judging by the addresses provided at the foot of election stories), it can be assumed that these newspapers did likewise.

31   Westralian Worker, 'Fremantle News and Views', 25.9.25 and 13.11.25.

32   West Australian, 22.8.25 , 24.8.25.

33   Quoted from report by Sgt. K.A. Donaldson, East Fremantle station, 20.11.25, in WA Police C.O. No. 6751 of 1925, Battye Library, Perth, AN 5/3, Acc. 430.

34   West Australian, 3.11.25; see also Insp. W.C. Sellenger, o/c Fremantle, to R. Connell, Police Commissioner, 14.11.25, WA Police 6751/25.

35   See for example, reports by Sellenger to Connell, 3.10.25, 10.10.25 (re Demodocus), and 18.12.25; WA Police 6751/25.

36   See Colebatch to Collier, 15.10.25, Premier's Dept, 292/1925.

37   According to his official biographer, Stephanie Jones, Trade and Shipping, Lord Inchcape 1852-1932, (Manchester, 1989), p. 57.

38   Curtin referred to him, for example, as a "sweat lord" and as "Lord of Lascars". Westralian Worker 28.8.25, 11.9.25

39   West Australian, 12.10.25, 14.10.25.

40   Westralian Worker, 6.11.25.

41   Most were fined five pounds, but were allowed to leave with the fines unpaid. See the West Australian, 33.11.25, 6.11.25, 7.11.25.

42   See Walker, Solidarity Forever! ..... p. 262.

43   The one remaining former Labor man in Bruce's cabinet, George Pearce, admitted as much at the declaration of the Senate poll in Western Australia, saying there ought to have been a swing to Labor, but that the people "were afraid of the influences, brought upon Labor parliamentarians from outside". West Australian, 11.12.25.

44   F.S.U. committee of management statement,Sydney, signed by Walsh, 4.9.25; W.A. ALP Metro. Council corresp., No. 20, 1924-25, Battye Library, Perth, MN 300, Acc. 1319A.

45   West Australian, 27.10.25.

46   Ibid. 12.11.25, 5.12.25.

47   Westralian Worker, 20.11.25, `Fremantle News and Views'.

48   West Australian, 13.11.25, 10.12.25.

49   Ibid, see also P. Hasluck, Mucking About, An Autobiography, (Melbourne, 1977), P. 96.97.

50   Western Australian Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 72, (Assembly) 21.10.25, p. 1460; Vol. 73, (Assembly), 18.11.25, p. 1987; Vol. 73, (Council), 3.12.25, p. 2380.

51   West Australian, 13.11.25.

52   Collier and Pearce in particular had engaged in a heated exchange of views over the handling of the strike in W.A. ; Pearce, as the senior Nationalist MP from W.A. and the only one in Cabinet, led the electioneering campaign in his home State. Neither Bruce nor the Labor leader, Matthew Charlton, visited W.A. during the campaign. The low point of Pearce's campaign was probably at its opening,when he referred (West Australian, 9.10.25) to the strike as a "submarine campaign" against Britain, notwithstanding the fact that 15,000 British seamen had lost their lives in keeping the shipping lanes to Britain open during the U-boat campaign of 1917 (a point raised in the Westralian Worker, 11.9.25).

53   Ibid., 27.11.25; see also the West Australian, 26.11.25.

54   See Williams, the First Furrow, pp. 86, 88-91; also J. Wells, 'The Political Commitment of Katharine Susannah Prichard : Political Activity 1930-1940 And The Writing of the Goldfields Trilogy', BA Honours thesis, Murdoch University, 1984, P. 40-41.

55   West Australian, 26.11.25; Cecilia Shelley discusses the reasons behind Ryce's and her expulsion in an Interview recorded by C. Puls, 13.9.76, for the Battye Library Oral History Programme. Battye OH 171, transcript Pp. 26-29.

56   See A. Davidson, The Communist Party of Australia, A Short History, (Stanford, Calif., 1969), Pp. 11-12; also Williams, the First Furrow, p. 96-97.

57   D. Black, 'Party politics in turmoil 1911-1924', in Stannage, A New History of Western Australia,Pp. 397-398.

58   Westralian Worker, 22.1.26 (Houghton's re-election); Cecil Houghton, of Joondanna, conversation with P. Gifford, Perth, 24.6.91.

59   Cecil Houghton (ibid) knew nothing of surveillance in his father's case, and had never heard him speak of it.

60   See Cain, The Origins of Political Surveillance......, P. 32; also numerous examples of surveillance activities by Major R.H. Weddell, contained in WA Police, 6751/25, Houghton had been born in Liverpool and Ryce in Scotland.

61   See D. Carment, 'Sir Littleton Groom and the Deportation Crisis of 19.25; A Study of Non-Labor Response to Trade Union Militancy', Labour History, No. 32, May 1977, Pp. 53-54; Edwards, Bruce of Melbourne......, Pp. 118-119; and the West Australian, 'From the Federal Capital', 19.12.25.

62   Radi, '1920-29', P. 399.

63   West Australian, 5.9.25.

64   Radi, '1920-29', P. 399.

Circle-men, Untouchables and Seagulls. The development of a work culture at North Fremantle.

Geoff Harcourt   *

Existing studies of Co-operative Bulk Handling in Western Australia have centered around the overall development of the company or located its growth as a necessary part of the growth of the wheat industry in general. No attention has been paid to the work done by the grain handlers who have been employed in the industry; their working environment. Material produced by Co-operative Bulk Handling (CBH) itself makes brief references to its staff absorbing the co-operative spirit and working in harmony with the growers' needs. While this spirit has been a significant factor in the company's development another body of evidence suggests that not all sections of the workforce accumulated the same cultural baggage.

A North Fremantle work culture evolved separately from the dominant Co-operative Bulk Handling (CBH) culture which was built around patronage and reward. While CBH's country workers might have absorbed the CBH spirit claimed to be so important to company development, North Fremantle grain terminal workers shared elements of waterfront working life. Studies by Wendy Lowenstein and Tom Hills, of Melbourne Waterside Workers, and Bryn Griffiths' recent account of 100 years of unionism on the Fremantle waterfront, detail cultures much the same as that identified among grain handlers at Fremantle. [1] The importance of solidarity and the almost arrogant sense of pride in the work made the men who worked in and around the post-war waterfront feel they were in charge of their own destiny.

When the bulk handling of wheat replaced bagged wheat in Western Australia in the early 1930s it created a new work environment for those who worked in the wheat exporting industry. The back-breaking, but relatively clean lifting of thousands of bags was replaced by the less laborious but extremely dusty operation of mechanical devices to shift bulk grain. Emerging from the changeover from bags to bulk handling in the early 1930s was a set of work practices that were responses to the new working environment created by bulk wheat handling. Many aspects of these practices were similar to those which evolved on the Fremantle waterfront. In both areas - the waterfront and the grain terminal - work was

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casual but with an element of security for those in a position to be picked-up regularly. For many men at the wheat terminal this system suited them during Australia's only sustained period of full employment, the post-war period from 1945 to the end of the 1960s.

The years between the commencement of World War II and the early 1960s were a period of consolidation for CBH at North Fremantle. After coping with storage problems during the war the terminal's operations grew steadily over the next ten years. By the late 1950s the increasing volume of grain being harvested meant North Fremantle had to expand. The work culture that started to emerge in the initial years of bulk handling had, by the late 1950s, also established itself strongly. For those fortunate enough to obtain regular work in the industry, despite being casual, there was a sense of security and self determination attached to the job. These men developed a free and easy attitude towards work during a period of post-war full employment. Plans for development at North Fremantle hence took into account not only the needs of the plant itself but also the manner in which it was operated.

Even in postwar years not all grain was handled in bulk. Although the size of grain vessels had increased to up to twelve thousand tons' capacity, with the average load being eight or nine thousand tons, some smaller ships taking loads of bags, and bulk grain, or wheat and coarse grain in the same load, still called at Fremantle. The most common of these were ships of the Bakke Line which serviced many small Asian ports.[2] These ships took general cargoes as well as bagged and bulk grain. They were in port for a considerable time as they had to have their holds partitioned to accommodate each separate cargo. [3]

Being labour intensive these ships were good 'money spinners' for grain handlers. John Duggan recalled :

> The Hanne Bakke and the Martin Bakke were two of them. They came from Singapore. Much of their cargo was for small flour mills. They would come in on weekends and load all weekend including Friday and Saturday midnights. Sometimes they took bags to separate parcels of bulk grain or they would put hessian in the hold as a partition, after a couple of hours loading. They also took mixed commodity cargoes or live sheep. When they were fully loaded they were so low in the water you would wonder how they would get to their destination. [4]

Derek Miller described the work involved in preparing for bagged grain shipments :

The three bagging points were only capable of about 30 tons per hour, so when a lot of bags were required we would start several days before the ship arrived - usually on overtime. We filled bags that were then taken by hand trolley to the first floor of the silo which held about 2,000 bags. When the ship was ready the bagging point output was supplemented by the bags from the first floor.[5]

John Fuller added :

We necked bags around the clock for Bakke boats, when they took bags to shore up bulk loads. The bag garner had three outlets going all the time. The bags were put in a truck and carted to the wharf. [6]

The bulk handling of grain in some cases was also laborious; for example, the transference of grain held in the horizontal storage to the vertical cells was done by underground conveyors partly fed by valves backed up by a series of floating screw (auger) conveyors and a series of clarke shovels. [7] Working on the screws in the annexe at North Fremantle was hard. When the wheat over the underground valves had stopped running via gravity feed, the screws were positioned so as to direct the rest of the stack into the valves. The screws had to be manhandled through the grain into place. John Fuller described the process :

...on the screws it was hard work. They were 20 feet long and almost 2 feet wide. We had to pick them up full of grain and throw them into the wheat stack in the annexe. To shift them to a new part of the stack it took six men. Once it was in place two men would feed the screw with clarke shovels, usually on a twelve hour day. [8]

John Duggan explained that :

You had to lift the screws...Later they got tractor perhaps because of a few back injuries. [9]

But the job had its appeal as a means of regular work for a casual workforce and as a symbol of a grain handler's ability to work hard. John Duggan recalled that :

When you were on the screws you had to work the screw and the clarke shovel. I used to work there as a "untouchable" casual; we go seven days a week. You would rather be on the screw than on the grid. It was better work, not cleaner but better all round work and the guarantee of a start. You were seen as OK if you could work on the screws....The first time you went to the screws you tried to get with someone who knew what they were doing. But some times they would not teach a new bloke. If you were not in the local clique they would stand back and watch you make a fool of yourself. [10]

The inability of the silo to hold enough grain for a single cargo for the larger ships that called at Fremantle by the late 1950s was compounded by a lack of continuity in the loading rates for the ship and the horizontal storage. The ship could be loaded at 1,600 tph whereas

grain transferred from the annexe came in to the silo at 600 tph. The bottleneck meant that extra labour had to be utilised to get sufficient grain into the silo while the ship was not loading.[11] John Duggan explained :

> When a ship was due, we would bring grain into the silo two or three days before..then during loading you had to build up the stockpile. That's what the breakfast hour on midnight shift was for. After your rail shift you go into the annexe and transfer grain to the silo until the day shift crew took over. That way they got an hour's stockpile before the ship started at eight o'clock. This could go on all week. So you could work a nine hour day on midnights.[12]

The bottleneck created by this imbalance in loading rates helped give the workforce a degree of power. The workers exercised this power in bargaining with the company for better conditions and the development of many work practices that became cherished conventions over time. For example, the practice of 'job and finish' became institutionalised in the award, being sanctioned by guaranteed minimum payments on overtime. [13] Barney Johnson described an early experience of the manner in which 'job and finish' established itself :

> One night soon after Joe Kutzer was made up as a foreman, he told us if we got another three bays [sections of the annexe defined by the upright poles that held the roof up] done we could knock off. We were supposed to move the machinery under this supervision, but we had two old hands Cookie Mitchell and Billy Pickett in the gang. They could set-up better than any boss, so we kept going. When we had reached the target he had set up we phoned the office to get the OK to go home. Kutzer came down to see what we had done. When he saw how fast we had worked, he wanted to renege on the deal, saying it was too early. We told him we had done the job and we would see him in the morning.[14]

Rail discharge also relied heavily on physical labour. Trucks were laboriously clarke shovelled and hoed empty. This was a labour intensive job as initially the trucks had to be stripped of their canvas covers and the canes that gave support for extra freeboard. Once the trucks were emptied the bag liners that prevented spillage during transportation had to be rolled up ready to be sent back in the train along with the canvas and canes. [15] Because of a lack of shunting space at either end of the North Fremantle terminal wagons were pushed in to the track shed by a tractor and then pulled over the grid in smaller numbers by a capstan rope. [16] The introduction in the mid 1950s of a wagon that could be up-ended by a hydraulic 'tippler' built into the grid both speeded up the unloading process and cut the need for labour. [17] Emptying these wagons at times caused some new and unusual problems. Barney Johnson described one of them :

On midnights when blokes were tired or a few may have had a bit to drink, occasionally there would be a mix up with a rake of tippers. As the next truck was placed over the tippler it pushed the empty off. If you hit the empty too hard the "chopper" [the coupling arm on these trucks] would link it to the full truck on the tippler. When you lifted the tippler, the empties would hang off it like a string of sausages. To get them back on the line we had to lower the tippler slowly and crow bar the wheels onto the tracks.[18]

The terms of employment for grain handlers at North Fremantle before World War II and throughout the 1940s through to the early 1960s were casual A daily pick-up operated from what was commonly known as "the corner". Pick up times until 1961 were 7.30am to 9.00am for day shift and 1.00pm and 2.00pm for afternoon and midnight shifts. After 1961 one pick-up time of 7.45am to 9.45am was used. [19] Despite the casual nature of the employment, preference was given to an inner core of 37 regulars known as the circle These men were, as an award provision, expected to; 'unless lawfully absent from the industry attend the pick up regularly from day to day and accept employment provided by the employer'. [20] John Duggan explained that:

> The circle consisted of a certain group of people who got picked up every day; they were permanent casual. They got a job before anybody else...they never got a dirty job. They ran the silo and the capstan, the cockpit and the tipper on the grid. "Cookie" Mitchell and Billy Pickett were two and Les Lampert, no he was just outside when I started, he belonged to a group called the untouchables. [21]

The company gave further unofficial status to selected circle men. A group of selected and trained men were known as silo operators. Six circle men operated control functions in the silo, while work for another group included the more skilled jobs connected with the rail, road transport and the horizontal storage. [22] While circle men were given status under the award those outside were at the mercy of fluctuations in the industry. A group of semi-regulars or 'untouchables' picked up any surplus jobs left by the circle, while a third group of hopefuls - the 'seagulls' so called because they hung around for the scraps - were picked up mainly when conditions were busy. [23] It was possible to move gradually through into the circle but, for many, that wait was not necessary. Much of the hiring was done on approval of influential people among the bosses and workers. Dave Barnes, a casual during the 1950s, recalled how two operators gained quick entry into the circle;

> Nugget Kitson and Geoff Currie virtually went straight into the circle because they had relations on staff. Nugget's father-in-law was Bert French a boss in Perth and Geoff had a uncle, Don Currie as a clerk at North Fremantle. [24]

Both John Duggan and John Fuller became regulars at North Fremantle because of a word-of-mouth network. John Duggan explained :

> I was told there might be work at North Fremantle...so I went over and positioned myself on the corner [the pick-up] and saw one of my old school mates. He said he would put in a word for me. [25]

And John recalled :

> I was only 16; I had two uncles working there. They told me it was the busy season and casuals were being picked up each day. So I went over there and got picked up for a midnight shift....I was one of the last picked up that day, but once I was there a few times they knew me as McCarthy's nephew.[26]

But he was not always successful :

> Not being circle you only got picked up about half the time. It would depend on if there was a ship in, or the time of the year. It was fairly spasmodic for a couple of years. When you didn't get a start at the silo you would go down to Paddy Troy's corner - the Painters and Dockers - but once you got used to CBH work you had a better chance of being picked up. [27]

John Duggan's early experiences highlight another important factor in the system 'discipline' :

> After two days I upset an Agricultural Inspector. I was looking after the weevil screens or bombs as we called them...He said I wasn't keeping them clean properly, so next time he came to check I had waited for him and when he stuck his head under to check it I hit it and covered him with dust. He took off out the door and I didn't see him for the rest of the night. For a couple of days I didn't get picked up so I approached the foreman. He told me the Agricultural Inspector had put me in, said I hadn't kept the screens clean and had been sitting down on the job. He [the foreman] had been told not to pick me up.[28]

Fortunately for John his side of the story was listened to and he was given another chance, but not as grain handler again until he proved to be reliable. He was given a maintenance job in one of the annexes retrussing the roof with wire. This appears to have been a test for him as, when he was finished, he was put back on the corner (the pickup). [29] John Fuller also recalls being 'left' on the corner for a few days once :

> We wanted to go to the Kalgoorlie round but this year it was busy in August so we didn't ask to be excused, we just went. When we got back a week or so later we didn't get picked up. I had to go to the boss and square off. [30]

On another occasion CBH suspended a casual hand from the pick-up for fighting on the job. Barney Johnson remembered when Bert Morgan was left on the corner for a week :

Bert Morgan got left out in the cold for a week once for fighting with Leo Matthews - he only got two days. Bertie was annoyed and argued the point with Paul Baird [the boss] that a week was a bit stiff. He said "a bloody week! Come off it! I could smack a copper in the mouth and only get two days in the slammer and they'd have to feed me." [31]

The rules were not quite so tight for circle men unless it was extremely busy. John Duggan explained that :

Some of the circle blokes would work all weekend and wouldn't want to work Monday. When the foreman called out the names from his book someone would say "washing day, Bill" that would mean that bloke wasn't coming in. [32]

Replacements for those circle men who opted not to report to the corner after weekend work came from the untouchables, the group just outside the circle. Usually there were enough men to cover all the required positions but occasionally the company could be left short of labour. From the men's point of view these arrangements broke down the number of hours worked. John Duggan claimed that this practice was popular because it allowed men to take time off in lieu of wages that would otherwise be taxed heavily, while giving the battler a chance at a day's wages. [33] The power of the circle was reinforced with activities like this as members indirectly dictated who worked in the industry. In addition, non-attendance after weekend work institutionalised a later award condition - the day in lieu of weekend overtime.[34]

The casual and seasonal mode of CBH was attractive to some shearers who lived in the Fremantle area. Barney Johnson, for example, was able to come home when the shearing sheds were cut out, have a short holiday and then pick up regular work at CBH once the harvest got under way. [35]

The foreman Bill Stansfield was an old shearer himself, so after the circle had been looked after he favoured blokes like me. This upset some of the circle who had mates just outside of it. They wanted them picked up first. Once I was given a circle man's position because he hadn't turned up but when he arrived he "rolled" me. Old Bill said to me "sorry Barney" and that name stuck to me. [36]

Shearers who had shorn union were able to move freely between wool and wheat as both areas of work were covered by the Australian Workers Union. Barney Johnson recalled how this helped in the pick-up at North Fremantle :

I had always shorn union. I bought my ticket at the first shed I went to each year. That meant I was a walk-up start at CBH because my ticket was still valid when the work there picked up. [37]

During the season North Fremantle worked more or less round the clock. The silo ran a day shift plus overtime and a midnight shift. The extended day shift went from 8.00am till 5.00pm and after tea from 6.00pm till 10.00pm. The midnight shift was from 11.00pm till 7.00am the next morning. Weekend work followed a similar pattern, except for Saturday day shift which was for the morning only unless the ship had to sail and then the shift had to finish before half past two. [38] When it was busy it was possible to work seven days a week on rotating shifts. John Duggan described the process :

> You would get picked up on Friday for days ...during the afternoon old Bill would come around and say "back Saturday morning and back Saturday midnights" and usually you stayed on midnights all week through to Friday which was overtime. They would tell you Friday to come in Sunday on days where you would be expected to do the long one for the rest of the week.[39]

The long hours worked meant that men earned big wages. John Fuller at the age of sixteen, normally a junior, claimed that one midnight shift, which was paid at double time, was equal to a whole week's wages in his previous job. [40] While most men made themselves and their families financially secure there were elements of a 'work and bust' lifestyle. Gambling was popular. A two-up school was run every lunch time on pay day. John Duggan :

> Cookie Mitchell and Billy Pickett ran the two-up. Poor old Tommy Castledine, you had to feel sorry for him. He used to do his pay; he should have been protected. Once, after the new office was built, Ted Sherridin was cockatoo in case of a raid. There was a strange ute parked by the office. Ted lifted the tarpaulin and there were two bodies [hiding] under it, he slammed it down and raised the alarm. By the time the coppers got there the school had hidden. They got no-one. They went to the office and told the boss that his men were playing two-up and if he didn't stop it, they would arrest him.[41]

Barney Johnson confirmed this event but added that :

> The confusion over the ute and the reason Teddy looked under the tarp was that Jim Toohey, one of the circle guys, had just bought one exactly the same. I think Sherro thought he was sticky-beaking in Toohey's ute. I thought there was six coppers and they all had overalls on and if Ted had not found them they would have probably wandered down to the school unnoticed.[42]

John Fuller added :

> The school as it was then (run out in the open) was stopped by the boss. So he must have taken notice of the cops. After that, though, we used to play dice and cards inside on pay day, or other days if the blokes were flush.[43]

The consumption of alcohol was also embedded in the culture that developed at the terminal throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. Not all the men indulged in the drinking but it was strong enough to become an accepted custom at North Fremantle. Some men would come to work on shift work under the influence of alcohol while a smaller number also brought beer or wine with them and drank during the meal breaks. One particular piece of folklore recalled that on occasions the company tractor was used to go to the nearest hotel, the Railway, to get extra supplies, or the publican at the hotel would sometimes send supplies up to the terminal. [44] The most popular time of indulgence in a drink amongst the terminal's workforce, though, appears to have been at the end of a shift. John Duggan recalled :

> Those in the clique would always go to the pub after work. If you could get in before ten o'clock you could stay there until midnight. It didn't do much for your family life. How the wives put up with it, I don't know; I suppose it was the good wages we earned.[45]

These men who gambled and drank together formed a close-knit group which, despite their habits, worked hard and was able to keep the operation running. It became apparent very early that under these circumstances as long as the job kept going without any trouble the "bad habits" of some men were overlooked. [46]

Saturday, because it was a short shift, was almost like a day-off. This enabled the punters amongst the men at North Fremantle to go to the races. John Duggan remembered that Jack Norton was one ;

> Jack used to come in on his push bike on Saturday ready to go to the races. After work he would have a shower and get dressed. He was an immaculate dresser. But this day they swapped his good hat for his old work hat with a bag needle stuck in it. He went in to the races, good suit on, and a dirty old hat. [47]

Many of the men lived close to the terminal in the casual days because it was convenient. Some could walk or ride a bike to work. Alfie Hayes and Geoff Currie lived in one of the streets that ran down to the silo, Jack Norton and Jock Woods lived across the highway.[48] However Jimmy Down, an untouchable, came from Nollamara via a bus and a train. John Duggan recalled one of the most intriguing stories of all:

> Billy Bristow was of no fixed address. He was a casual. They used to give him enough work to live on. He would go up to the railway station and catch the train, the last train to Midland, sleep on it and come back with it the next morning. No one ever knew this for a long while. [49]

John Fuller added :

> In the summertime Billy used to sleep on the beach. He was a bit simple, I
> thought, but he loved a punt. One of the blokes, Leo Matthews, used to
> have a lend of him. They would go up to the betting shop and Billy would
> ask "what are we on?"; Leo would say "I'll tell you later", that was usually
> after the race.[50]

International grain markets began to change by the 1960s. The shift from a seller's market to a buyer's market brought with it greater demands for quality and specific grain types. [51] This fact together with the need to expand North Fremantle's storage capacity began to impress itself upon CBH by the early 1960s. To overcome the difficulties of adequate storage and guarantee of product CBH explored its options for expansion. The company was keen on shifting operations to Cockburn Sound where a sizeable parcel of land could be obtained. [52] But, after pressure from the Fremantle Port Authority and the Western Australian government to keep Fremantle the major grain port, CBH undertook further development at North Fremantle. In 1961 earthworks for a new vertical cell block began. The No. 1 and southern most annexes were demolished along with the 'front rail grid' to make way for the new cell block. [53]

Development at North Fremantle did not suit everyone. Even though most of the circle men received first option for the new permanent positions CBH intended to create under a new award, a number of long serving men ignored the opportunity. [54] Many men who had worked for CBH as casuals since the end of the Second World War were not interested in permanent jobs. Some of them had spent all their working lives as casual labourers and had come to accept the occasional uncertainty of the pick-up because they also enjoyed the freedom a casual status provided. Amongst those men who did not want a permanent position were some who thought that the ability to earn good wages would disappear with rigid shift work patterns that they claimed permanency would bring. John Duggan recalled :

> A lot left because they thought they weren't going to get the big money they
> had got in the past, or the new hours didn't suit them. The ones that stopped
> were the ones who were interested in a permanent job.[55]

Dave Barnes remembered some circle men refused the offer of permanency, or wanted to revert to a casual status after signing on as permanent hands.

> Cookie Mitchell and Billy Pickett got on as permanent but didn't like it, so
> they resigned and went back on the corner with us as casuals. A lot of us
> who got left out would have been glad to have got in as permanent. Johnny
> Fuller and I were left as casuals for about two years before we got put
> on.[56]

When the new terminal was opened in 1964 it was heralded as the dawn of a new era for CBH and rightly so, but it was also the closing of a chapter in its history. The plant was modern and much more of the working environment, it was suggested, would be cleaner. An example can be seen in the work practices associated with rail discharge. Modifications to the rail discharge system introduced in the early 1960s as past of the modernisation programme consolidated the former 'front' and 'back' rail grids. Two tracks were laid through the new rail shed enabling two trains to discharge simultaneously. The track laid was dual guage in anticipation of the national standard guage line coming into service. [57] The capacity of the conveyor belts and elevators which took the grain away from the rail pits was increased to 400 tph, standardising in loading (except for road transport in loading) with shipping. However, each rail grid had only one belt under it giving the rail intake only half the capacity of the shipping gallery. The provision of new facilities had to be designed to handle existing rolling stock by means of clarke shovel on the grid until more modern wagons were constructed in the mid 1960s. [58] Derek Miller described how the rail grid operated :

> The grid was built for narrow guage..... in the days of clarke shovels you would only do 200 ton an hour each side even with four gangs. Everyone believed the pits were coping, but when the tankers came with 70 ton in each truck and three on the grid at a time the pits were choc-a-bloc all the time. [59]

The end tippler system which was introduced in the 1950s was upgraded to take a longer narrow guage tipper wagon, known as an RCB. Holding 40 tons these wagons helped convey the growing harvest at an acceptable rate. Although these wagons were tipped to allow grain to empty, manpower was still necessary. Hessian liners to prevent leakage during transport had to be removed on emptying. A practice known as 'riding the wheat down' was employed. A operator would climb into the wagon before it was tipped to stop the bag liner from sliding the door with the wheat. [60] Despite being accepted by both workers and management as proper, this practice did produce some questionable incidents. One, while potentially dangerous, was still amusing. John Duggan recalled:

> ...Before you got in there was a piece of rope they tied to the coupling of the truck at the end that went up. This was thrown into the truck for the bloke in it to hang on to, to stop himself from also getting sucked into the grid. This day Alfie Hayes must have lost the rope...when he got to the door he was hanging on to the side yelling, "Put it down, I don't want to die. I've got too much money in the bank". Somebody else was heard to call out, "quick grab his wallet"...so it must have been true about the money..[61]

The new award, the North Fremantle Grain Handling Award (No. 6 of 1964) as well as making provision for permanent employment alongside the hiring of casual labour also

reflected an increase in technical and operational requirements which divided the workforce on skills. [62] A number of new operators were engaged from outside the old casual workers in an attempt to make the workforce more appropriate to the terminal's requirements. However, enough of the older workers remained to perpetuate a strong element of the work culture that existed in the casual days. An inner core of operators who became known as the 'purple circle', saw themselves as the custodians of the 'rules' under which work was carried out; that is, they were the protectors of the old work practices and conditions which had grown out of casual employment. Moreover, they were the instigators of any new practices. In that sense, although the circle had ceased to exist by definition, it remained in spirit, and in many ways its influence grew stronger and more reactionary as the nature of the terminal's operations changed.

For the first six years of operation (1964-1970) the new North Fremantle terminal conducted a dual hiring system. CBH called for applications to fill the new permanent positions it offered at the new terminal. But there was no guarantee of a place for all the previous casuals other than those circle men who may have sought permanency.[63] It appears that a selection process was undertaken by the company to 'weed out' those it considered to be below standard, for whatever reason. Personnel were taken on over a period of more than twelve months and the number of permanent hands grew to around 70. Barney Johnson, a casual, who was a successful applicant in the first intake of permanent, recalled comments made by CBH personnel officer 'Weevil' Jones that none of the casuals would be able to do the work involved in the new silo.[64] Ironically Derek Miller, one of the new permanents, recalled that a number of the casuals who persisted eventually outstayed many of the newcomers.[65]

John Duggan remembered:

> When they went from the old silo to the new one at North Fremantle they told us that some of us would have to go, but we could all apply for jobs. They paid out some of the older ones like Hector Gabrielson. He didn't want to be permanent; he just wanted to stay a casual even though he had been a circle man all his life. Myself, I was the 100/1 shot that got up - a bolter. When applications came out I thought having some clerical experience with Burns Philp I should apply for the weigher job and I got picked.[66]

However, Dave Barnes remembered being overlooked:

> I had to apply two or three times before I got put on as a permanent. One of the foremen reckoned I was responsible for a blue that I didn't have anything to do with. John Fuller was left off too because they said he was unreliable.[67]

The wages and penalties clauses in the 1964 AWU North Fremantle award were divided into two parts, a permanent section and a casual section. The permanent workers had access to improved wages through advancements. Many extras, though, like margins and shift penalties, were lower than those contained in the old casual award (No 14 of 1961). The casuals received the lowest or 'on commencement' rate paid to permanent, but received better margins and shift penalties because they were still tied to those of the waterside workers[68]. If a shift was filled by both permanent and casuals it could cause friction. John Fuller recalled:

> When casuals were picked up to work with permanent it was a very funny situation especially on midnights. The casuals got double time but the permanent only got time and a half. There was a lot of trouble over it.[69]

Derek Miller, who started as a permanent hand saw the problem from a difference viewpoint:

> There was always strife.....I think the old casuals had a casual attitude to work. They tried to carry on the old system. They wanted to work weekends but not during the week. They always made sure they were there Friday to get the double time.[70]

This problem disappeared by 1970 when the casual clause was deleted from the award by the Arbitration Commission, despite indication from both CBH and the AWU that they would prefer to retain it - albeit in different forms.[71] However, it became possible for CBH to hire new permanents and treat them as casuals. A six month probationary period in the new award allowed CBH to put the new hands off inside that period without reason. If they were picked up over the harvest period temporary hands usually fell into this category.[72]

Those who preferred to follow the casual mode of employment after the introduction of permanency found their freedom of choice more limited than had it been before 1964. CBH were now in a position to discipline errant casuals more strongly than it had been able to do in the past. An incident that may have once been resolved by an influential circle of men leaning on the boss to overlook an indiscretion (by one of its mates) was likely now to end up in arbitration.[73]

A case of this nature involved two brothers Joey and Kenny McCarthy, who were long term casuals.[74]   They opted not to take up an engagement on a midnight shift allocated to them just prior to Christmas Eve in 1965. Furthermore, they did not present themselves on the corner for day shift the next day preferring to return after Christmas. Because this period was the busiest time of the year their presence was needed and the company went to

some length to locate them and urge them to report to work.[75] When the brothers did report to the casual corner they were advised that they would not be re-employed as casuals. Stopwork meetings were held to pressure CBH into adhering to the old rules. However, the company resisted direct action. Only through arbitration did it agree that the men be re-instated with no loss of entitlements. If appears that the object of the exercise for CBH was to impress on the workforce that the rules had changed.[76] The Commissioner in summation alluded to this when he said:

> .....It was impossible for the company to function on a proper basis if the workers felt that they had a right not to report for duty at any time and still be picked up in the normal manner when it suited them.....where workers voluntarily desired to follow this type of employment they had an obligation when picked up....any breach of that contract would entitle the employer to refuse to pick up such men in the future.[77]

The number of old non circle casuals in the intake of permanent was low. In July 1965, for example, in a group of nine new recruits there were only two of the old casuals, despite there being other applicants among the casuals. The men felt so strongly over the number of outsiders in the intake that they downed tools in support of those they considered locals.[78] Suspicion and resentment of new people caused them to be ostracized. Derek Miller experienced this: 'when you started no one would show you anything. They would just stand back and laugh if you made a blue. The old hands were not in favour of new chums'.[79] Derek himself became part of the folklore:

> Derek Miller became known as "the mute in the suit" because he wore a suit coat to work and kept to himself. He spoke to nobody for a long time. This used to amuse us. We used to joke that he was a mute.[80]

The tradition of ignoring newcomers that developed at North Fremantle continued well after the first intake of new permanent hands. It was not uncommon even in the 1970s for new hands, unless they knew people, to be ignored for weeks on end. At this later date, John Fuller recalled a new hand who had been ignored for sometime at North Fremantle comment that the others might begin to acknowledge him when he had been there for three months. [81]

The gradual influx of new workers appears to have been attempted by CBH to change the outlook of its workers. However, much of the old culture remained. It was difficult for many of the new hands to fit in with the old culture. What became noticeable to some new workers was that there was a distinct division in the plant.[82] There was a clique which clung to the old work culture. This group wielded a great influence, even if many of them did not do all the skilled work. Established members of the clique were usually able to extract privileges such as so-called better jobs. These jobs were so named because they

were easier, had less responsibility or were made easier by an occasional 'blind eye' from the foreman, who was usually an old circle man or had been a regular casual with these men in the past.[83]

New hands could gain the gradual approval of the clique if they were seen as drinkers. Management, though, always kept a close check on newcomers who adopted the behaviour of the refractory old hands and often put them off during their six months' probation period. Usually the termination of work coincided with the end of the seasonal rush, the time when most of those workers surplus to regular requirements were put off.[84]

The rest of the workers at the terminal - those outside of the clique - were often the ones to advance to the more responsible and interesting jobs because they were seen to be reliable and to be trusted. In that sense another elite group, that of the control room operators, established itself. This group also wielded considerable influence, often as a form of self-preservation. These men could at times determine the future of others by what they told the bosses about a man's ability to do his job. Alan Olsen remembered:

> There was no opportunity to get into the control room at North Fremantle.
> Three operators had it sewn up. They were seen as the top operators.
> Some people did not advance at all if the guys in the control room didn't
> think they were any good because they had influence with the bosses.[85]

However, the 'purple circle', as the clique became known, saw any promotion for those other than its own as achieved through crawling to the bosses and therefore to be condemned. Despite this, it did not see its own activities in the same light. Those in the clique were 'using' certain bosses to extract favours. Alan Olsen recalled:

> There were two totally different groups. You didn't associate, except a
> polite hello, with those who did not go to the pub regularly. They were
> regarded as wimps by the leaders of the clique. For some people no one
> would talk to them for a long time. I didn't feel it much....I adopted the
> culture without knowing it because I knew a few people and went to the pub
> at lunch time.....I was seen as O.K.[86]

An 'unwritten' rule that originated in the casual days allowed those within the clique to get away with abuses of the system. Openly described as 'the rules' this meant that if the job got done then the behaviour or activities of certain workers ought to be overlooked. Misdemeanors of varying degrees were committed by those who could get away with them. Alan Olsen explained:

> The old "purple" circle still existed in that sense. I remember one of them could have been sacked one night...but it would have put a strain on the relationship. They [the clique] never had any fear except for direct conflict with a foreman. Clarrie Tapper treated most casuals badly but was easy on the older hands. He sacked a casual one night for giving a bit of lip....nothing was said.[87]

There were cases when a worker could be missing and not be accountable as long as his mates stood in for him. On occasions on midnight shifts when supervision was light, groups of men would coerce other operators into covering up.[88] Others, if a favour was due, could be relieved of their job to do something for themselves. Alan Olsen recalled:

> The old bosses like Darcy Duggan or Clarrie Tapper had their mates....Some blokes might say"I want to fix my car today".....They could be in the [company] workshop for three days. The foreman would give someone else the job while the bloke got a free rein.[89]

Not all the foremen would bend as easily. The celebrated case of Merv Stoddard, sacked in 1974 by a senior foreman for threatened assault and alleged abusive language towards him, had to be settled by an Arbitration Commission ruling. On afternoon shifts Merv Stoddard managed to prepare his evening meal during company time. It was a practice which had gone on for many years but Merv had been taking too big an advantage of the 'privilege' in the opinion of some of his workmates. Moreover, CBH were determined to stamp out this type of activity.[90]

The evidence in the Commission hearing suggested that the foreman involved in the confrontation sought Merv out and may have even tried to goad him. The Commissioner recommended that Merv be re-instated because none of the accusations of cooking his meal on that particular day could be proved. The threats and abuse, the Commissioner suggested, were in the heat of the moment. He did suggest, though, that Merv had been very lucky and that 'any further on-the-job incidents might well cost him his employment.[91] Despite the dismissal being overturned the clear message from the outcome was that past practices were being scrutinised.

Shift work and overtime played a large role in the lives of grain handlers. The introduction of a straight eight hour shift for waterside workers in 1968 brought the need to alter the hours of work for the terminal. Starting times for shifts were re-aligned to coincide with those on the wharf.[92] At 7.30 am to 3.30 pm day shift with a paid meal break replaced the old nine hour day with an unpaid hour for lunch. Afternoon shift commenced fifteen minutes before the end of day shift to gain continuity of operations and ran until 11.15 pm.[93] The company which had always expected operators to work a double shift now

saw this as meaning from 7.30 am to 11.15 pm. Because of these arrangements grain handlers worked more overtime than ever before.[94] Alan Olsen recalled:

> You used to work from 7.30 till 11.15 at night; it was equal to three weeks' pay. You could work seven days a week and the only time you had off was Saturday afternoon. It got to the stage where despite the big money blokes did not want to work five week nights, because you got home at midnight and you had to be back there at 7.30 the next morning. Among us new blokes if you scratched you were threatened with the sack. The younger guys could put up with it; we did the double headers and still went out Friday night....but guys that were older and still expected to do every night started to complain.[95]

The long hours worked by grain handlers were in excessively dusty conditions in most parts of the terminal. The problem of excessive dust, identified by some opponents of bulk handling in the 1930s, had not diminished even with the construction of the new terminal. Advances in technology had done little to lessen the amount of dust encountered in areas of direct contact with grain.[96] The only protection offered to grain handlers until the 1970s remained a piece of cheese cloth. Waterside workers were issued with 'air flow' masks before this time but there is no evidence to show that these were supplied to CBH workers. [97] The accepted practice in relation to excessive dust was to claim monetary compensation. CBH opposed these claims each time, either as a matter of principle or to limit the cost of such payment. [98] For example once a claim for dust money became legitimate through arbitration it was limited to areas of extreme concentration. Payment of an allowance whilst working in prescribed areas was administrative expensive as each worker's movements had to be monitored and his pay adjusted accordingly. [99]

Two developments in the struggle for recognition of dust as a hazard highlight attitudes at that time. Firstly, in 1968 after the introduction of the self-discharging tanker rail wagons the company sought to have dust money on the grid discontinued, on the basis that this type of wagon substantially reduced the amount of dust. The claim could not be proved but resulting from it was the acknowledgement that abnormal conditions could occur.[100] Secondly, a system that became known as a dust claim was introduced under this system. If conditions were thought by workers to be too dusty a claim could be made on the employer for compensation.[101] John Fuller remembered:

> You had to tell the foreman it was too dusty and he would tell the boss. If he decided it wasn't then you couldn't claim again that shift or at least not until after lunch on day shift. Sometimes the blokes would yell "dust claim" to have an unofficial smoko. You couldn't blame them. It was a stupid system.[102]

In 1970 dust claims were replaced by the granting of dust money of varying value to more areas of the silo. [103] This system further highlighted how a definition of dusty could be

more expensive than a uniform payment, which was introduced after a revamping of the North Fremantle award in 1975. [104]

Protective face masks were used in the industry as early as 1961. While investigating a claim over dusty wheat at the Geraldton terminal the then Arbitration Court Board of Reference noted that 'workers are issued with cheese cloths....and it was further notice that at least one worker had purchased his own mask.' [105] In 1971 some operators at North Fremantle were still providing their own masks as CBH did not see them as necessary. However once there was a collective effort to have the masks provided the company did resist their universal introduction. [106] Alan Olsen recalled:

> Dust was quite bad but because of the wages it wasn't a prime concern. When I started Archie McDonald bought his own mask, so I bought one too. The alternative was a piece of cheese cloth around your mouth like a robber's hanky. It was hopeless. Soon after the company agreed to supply them to all without any real protestation.[107]

However, the attitude of the old hands to the dust gives insight as to why it took so long for proper protection to be available. Alan Olsen explained:

> You were seen as a stirrer if you bucked the dust....The older hands sneered. They said, "I've been working here twenty years and it hasn't hurt me". I don't think they understood much about dust and pesticides. Also, in many cases, if you complained while you were temporary you probably wouldn't get picked up again.[108]

Fluctuations in the world product market for wheat affected grain handlers substantially. A glut of wheat on the world market in the late 1960s meant that Australia had difficulty selling its crop. As a stop-gap measure the Australian Wheat Board allotted growers a quota or a limit on what they could produce. [109] Derek Miller recalled the problems this caused at North Fremantle:

> We had two or three seasons wheat in storage. We had it in every nook and cranny. Every cell had been topped up, even in the annexe we let grain run into the tunnel. CBH had built the workforce up to around 70 - enough to work around the clock. They put us to work doing things like painting and helping tradesmen.[110]

As a consequence the number of permanent hands at North Fremantle which had grown consistently during the latter half of the 1960s began to fall. There was no mass redundancy though; people just left to find other, better paid jobs because the big money of the previous few years had disappeared.[111] Many of those who elected to stay took up second jobs to compensate for the huge drop in income they were experiencing without the

regular overtime and shift work. Derek Miller remembered how North Fremantle grain handlers coped:

> There was no overtime and that's what cleaned the place out. People who had left good jobs to come to CBH fell flat on their face because all the big money dried up. In a very short time the workforce had dwindled to 35 that were prepared to hang on. Most blokes found part time second jobs; I used to do window and office cleaning.[112]

Once world demand for wheat improved in 1971 and Australia gained access to new markets, work at North Fremantle picked up immediately. The busy pre-quota days returned as Derek Miller described: 'the place went mad. They went from 35 men to 100 overnight. They took anybody off the streets.'[113] John Duggan recalled an event which highlighted the rapid increase in the numbers of workers and the diversity among them:

> Once on a midnight shift there was a lot of new names on the allocation board as spares [surplus labour for emergency]. When I was giving them a job I was looking at faces, some I hadn't seen before but you could put a name to them. I said to one "You're so and so aren't you?" Then I said, "Who's White?" and this unusual voice said, "I am". I said, "You could have fooled me" - he was as black as the Ace-of-Spades.[114]

A record tonnage of 554,016 tons was outloaded between December 1970 and March 1971. This was bettered the following season 1971-72, when during the same period (December to March) 772,303 tons went over the weighers at North Fremantle. Sixty one ships were turned around during this period of ninety days, peaking during February when 23 vessels were loaded in 29 days.[115] These figures were achieved by shifts working around the clock seven days a week, except for Saturday afternoons when no work was allowed under the WWF and the AWU awards. Two thirds of the grain exported was wheat and much of it was cleared from the old seasons' stockpiles that had built up due to poor sales.[116]

The amount of grain exported from North Fremantle was quite exceptional given that the plant loaded at a rate of 1,600 tph. Three quarters of a million tons shipped in three months in 1971-72 was equivalent to emptying the silo almost four times over.[117] The capacity of the plant to achieve this total exemplified its efficiency. Its layout was simple but versatile, giving it remarkable flexibility in operations. As well, sensible management practices set out clear distinctions in the running of the plant. Derek Miller described the process:

The control room operators were able to run the plant. The office limited itself to paperwork on the ship's loading requirements and the grain available. The rail was the same; the control room was able to select nominated cells that best suited the operation. The system was able to be kept going if something broke down; you could always find a way around it. [118]

The increased activity in the industry meant that the plant was working long hours again. The men who remained with CBH through the lean time saw this overtime as rightfully theirs. During the first full season after quotas were lifted the permanent hands passed a motion giving long term hands preference in the allocation of overtime. [119] This decision was forced upon the company and was sanctioned by the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) the grain handlers' union, through the union's lack of action in condemning what a discriminatory practice. Newcomers got the overtime left by old hands. A summary of the employment conditions applicable at the terminal produced in it as part of an induction manual for new employees, set out the overtime restrictions put on new hands. It stated that workers were expected to work overtime as an award requirement and an equalisation of each man's hours would ensure a fair distribution of income was practiced. New employees were told they did not qualify for this scheme until after six continuous weeks' work. [120] This period was later extended to six months to prevent university students and itinerant workers who were employed for the season reducing the overtime available to the permanent hands. Despite a formal challenge by some of the new hands in 1973-4 the system carried on indefinitely. The protest was withdrawn as many of those who petitioned for the lifting of overtime restrictions for new hands drew near their six months' qualifying period which signified their acculturation into the system. [121] One new hand who persisted with attempts to change the overtime preference system was dealt some summary justice. Robert Henderson who was one of the new hands at the time remembered:

> After most of us gave up on the overtime question Brian Atkinson wouldn't back off. Down at the TAB one lunch time Rube Sherlock told him to drop the issue. When Brian refused old Rube said, "I'll help you make your mind up" and hit him.[122]

Alan Olsen remembered that when he first started some old hands would do excessive overtime rather than see a new hand get a share:

> Some blokes among the older workers who had been there for years would not scratch [refuse an overtime shift] if they could stop a new bloke from getting some overtime. Many of them by Friday night after a week of long ones looked half dead but they wouldn't go home [after eight hours].[123]

This North Fremantle culture fitted neatly alongside the general waterfront culture which has been identified Australia-wide in works by Winifred Mitchell in Sydney, Lowenstein and Hills in Melbourne, and in Fremantle by Bryn Griffiths. The grain terminal culture identified in this study, like the metropolitan port cultures, developed around a strong sense of solidarity that came from living and working close to one another and a tradition of pride in the job. Further, the technological infrastructure that spawned elements of port cultures were also in place at the North Fremantle terminal.

The North Fremantle work culture grew and firmly established itself during the 1940s- late 1960s during post war full employment in Australia. Much of the nature of the culture at the terminal, like that of the waterfront in general, evolved around a casual and seasonal mode of employment. Despite the uncertainty of an irregular pick-up grain handlers experienced good wages while in work giving them a degree of self determination that enabled them to lead a free and easy life. These factors contributed to the terminal workforce's having an ability to influence the manner in which the work was conducted.

Bulk handling produced a new environment in which grain handling work was carried out. Although the new methods initially reduced the number of men needed to move grain, early technology required the manual operation of machinery and the unloading of rail wagons was done by hand. This necessity for manual intervention added to the sense of importance felt by grain handlers and therefore strengthened their bargaining power. A lack of storage space at North Fremantle and an incompatibility in loading rates created bottlenecks which further increased the strength of the workforce's position. The introduction of waterfront-style work practices and award conditions in 1947, that were granted to North Fremantle grain handlers as 'applicable to waterside workers at the port of Fremantle', legitimised the identification with the waterfront which the terminal's workforce had embodied in its culture.

END NOTES

[1]   Wendy Lowenstein and Tom Hills, Under the Hook : Melbourne Waterside Workers, Remember, Melbourne 1982. Also see Bryn Griffiths, Wharfies : A celebration of 100 years of Unionism on the Fremantle Waterfront 1889 - 1989, Platypus Press Perth, 1988.

[2]   Interview with John Duggan, 16-7-1991.

[3]   Ibid

[4]   Ibid

[5]   Interview with Derek Miller 4-7-1991.

6   Interview with John Fuller   8-7-1991.

7   A Progressive History of CBH ,CBH Publication N.D. c1951 p 10.

8   Fuller op cit

9   Duggan op cit

10   ibid

11   ibid

12   ibid

13   Interview with Barney Johnson, 28-8-91.

14   ibid

15   G.H.F. Jones Statement 7-2-1958. A sworn affidavit by G.H.F. Jones CBH Industrial Officer (1958) sets out to the Arbitration Court the number and type of jobs required on the rail grid at North Fremantle. This was part of CBH's defence against a WWF attempt to gain control of the union coverage at the North Fremantle terminal.

16   ibid

17   A Cooperative Enterprise, CBH. Publication N.D. c1965 p 30.

18   Johnson op cit

19   John Fuller recalled that the 'corner' as it was called was actually an area outside the North Fremantle grain handlers' amenities room.

20   WAIG No. 27, Wheat Handling (Bulk) Award No. 13 of 1947, pp 133-134 WAIG No. 41 Award No. 14 of 1961

21   Duggan op cit

22   Jones op cit

23   Interview with Dave Barnes, 28-8-1991.

24   ibid

25   Duggan op cit

26   Fuller op cit

27   ibid

28   Duggan op cit

29   ibid

30   Fuller op cit

31   Johnson op cit

32   Duggan op cit

33   ibid

34   Fuller op cit. A day in lieu for overtime was granted in the North Fremantle Grain Terminal Award [No. 27 of] 1975. It was only for Midnight shift on Saturday but, as John recalled, because there was so much overtime worked in the early 1970s days   in lieu of all weekend work were granted to grain handlers work by arbitration in 1976. See WAIG No. 56 1976.

35   The AWU was formed largely to cover shearers and has been known as the 'shearers   union'.

36   Johnson op cit.

37   ibid

38   WAIG No. 41 op cit Award No. 14 of 1961 clause 6

39   Duggan op cit.

40   Fuller op cit. also see WAIG No. 41 op cit No. 14 of 1961.

41   Duggan op cit.

42   Johnson op cit.

43 Fuller op cit.

44 ibid

45 Duggan op cit.

46 ibid

47 ibid

48 ibid

49 ibid

50 Fuller op cit.

51 A Cooperative Enterprise op cit. p36

52 1961 Annual Report to Shareholders ad Staff, p6 CBH Perth 1962.

53 ibid

54 WAIG No. 44 1964, Award No. 6 of 1961

55 Duggan op cit.

56 Barnes op cit.

57 Cooperation and Progress CBH Publication N.D. c 1968, p. 7

58 'Commemorating the Official Opening of Fremantle Grain Terminal' CBH Publication N.D. c. 1964.

59 Derek Miller Interview 4-7-1991.

60 John Duggan interview 16-7-1991.

61 ibid

62 WAIG No. 44 Award No. 6 of 1964.

63 Johnson op cit

64 ibid

65 Miller op cit

66 Duggan op cit

67 Dave Barnes interview, 28-8-1991

68 WAIG No. 44 1964 award No. 6 of 1964, Part II covered permanent hands' wages and Part III covered casual hands' wages.

69 Fuller op cit

70 Miller op cit

71 WAIG Vol. 50, 18-2-1970, p35 No. 469 of 1969.

72 WAIG Vol. 44 1964 op cit Part II clause 20 (wages) sub clause (a).

73 Fuller op cit

74 ibid

75 WAIG Vol. 46 26-1-1966, p 1202-1203.

76 ibid

77 ibid

78 Miller op cit

79 ibid

80 Fuller op cit

81 ibid

82 Alan Olsen op cit

83 ibid

84 ibid

85 ibid

86 ibid

87   ibid

88   Bruce Lambert Interview, 4-7-1991.

89   Olsen op cit

90   Duggan op cit

91   WAIG, Vol. 55, 1975 pp 1840-1842, Award No. 27 of 1975.

92   Western Australian Industrial Gazette_ No. 48 1968, p 129.

93   ibid

94   Miller op cit

95   Olsen op cit

96   Each time grain is moved the rubbing together of grains creates new dust.
      Therefore no matter how much dust has been extracted from the flow of grain,
      dust will always occur.

97   WAIG_No. 45 1965, p 721.

98   ibid p 965.

99   Because of the complex nature of CBH's daily operations a grain handler might
      move   in and out of various operations during any day or over a weekly shift.
      Under a graduated dust allowance system his entitlement could alter by the hour.

100   WAIG_No. 48 1968, p 1161

101   ibid

102   Fuller op cit

103   WAIG No. 50 1970 Award No. 469 of 1969,

104   WAIG No. 55 1975 Award No. 27 of 1975.

105   WAIG No. 41 1961, p196.

106   Olsen op cit

107   ibid

108   ibid

109   57th Annual Report op cit.

110   Miller op cit

111   ibid

112   ibid

113   ibid

114   Duggan op cit

115   CBH Staff Magazine April 1972.

116   ibid

117   The North Fremantle terminal held 195,5000 tons of grain, for statistical
      details see, 'Commemorating the Official Opening of Fremantle Grain Terminal'
      CBH Publication N.D. c 1964.

118   Miller op cit

119   ibid

120   North Fremantle Terminal Induction Manual for New Operators, N.D.c 1972 CBH
           Publication

121   Robert Henderson Interview 25-10-1991.

122   ibid

123   Olsen

BOOK REVIEW

A Bibliography of Australian Engineering History and Heritage. Compiled by D.A. Cumming, A. Moulds and L.J. Wrigley for the National Committee on Engineering Heritage of the Institution of Engineers, Australia.

Review by: Richard Hartley *

This Bibliography which was compiled from a data base containing all the varied papers and articles published by the Institution of Engineers Australia since 1980 may be of more significance to labour historians than many might initially suspect. It has been published to make the contents of the 300 or so abstracts more accessible to 'Historians, particularly to historians of technology and to those concerned with...... the "World at Work" as a source to improve understanding of the role of technologists, including engineers in the development of Australia'. Although it covers only a short timespan, the booklet also provides an interesting barometer of the growth in awareness amongst engineers of heritage values and changes in their interpretation of them. From 'Rescuing our engineering heritage' and 'Heritage - the engineer's nightmare', the emphasis has moved to a more thoughtful approach in 'Interpreting engineering heritage' and to the development of specialist conservation techniques.

A browse through the booklet, assisted by the comprehensive index, provides an interesting indication of the priorities which engineers have given to various categories of heritage and history. Two of the most popular topics for papers are those examples of the engineer's work which are most dramatically evident to the general public; bridges and railways. However the overall range of topics is surprisingly wide, extending from mining stamp batteries to electronic controls, cane harvesting, radio astronomy and even waste disposal. There is also a useful range of regional surveys of engineering heritage. On the more esoteric side there are an intriguing number of papers by enthusiasts who have rediscovered Australian 'firsts' such as; 'The first tunnel under Sydney Harbour' (1913), 'The first government railway in the British Empire' (1953) and 'Australia's first all steel monoplane' (1930).

What value is a bibliography such as this to the labour historian? There are several reasons why I think it deserves attention or at least a place on the shelves of reference libraries. In the first place, it contributes towards an understanding of how it felt to work as an engineer and of his attitudes to those working with him or under his supervision. These are very tentative steps but, after all, there has been scarcely any work done on the historical role of the engineer at work in Australia. What has been done, such as Edelstein's paper 'Professional Engineers and the Australian Economy (1866-1980)', has involved little more than counting engineer

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numbers and identifying their geographical and educational origins and their fields of work. 1 There have, of course, been institutional histories and the Bibliography includes several interesting additions, such as one on nineteenth century engineering associations and another on the education of prominent engineers of that period. The formation of the professional engineers' industrial association, the APEA, in 1947 and the landmark Arbitration cases in the federal and state courts in the 1950s and 1960s have been well documented by Brian Lloyd. He has also, in his recent book, *Engineers in Australia - A Profession in Transition*, (1991), helped to set the agenda for the current debates on the place of the Australian engineer in the 1990s and beyond 2000. [2] The theme of the changing role of the engineer in society is also represented in the Bibliography by items dealing with changes in fields such as public health engineering and local authority works construction and several on changing educational needs.

The biographies of Australian 'famous men' of engineering, such as John Monash, C.Y. O'Connor and Essington Lewis have told us surprisingly little about the working lives of the men themselves. Perhaps they were only of peripheral interest to the biographers. The books by Cumming and Moxham containing biographies of South Australian 'engineers, technicians, manufacturers, contractors and their work' and by John Le. Page on the Western Australian Public Works Department and its engineers, have gone some way towards filling the historical gap.[3] Both also provide marvellous resource bases and source guides for more analytical work. However, the titles of the two books, *They built South Australia* and *Building a State*, will certainly raise the eyebrows of labour historians who see construction workers, miners, metal tradesmen and factory workers as having every bit as much a right to the title of 'state builders' as professional engineers. Probably the authors coined their titles in protest against what they regarded as the previous marginalising of engineers from popular histories. Denis Cumming, the co-author of the Book on South Australian engineers, is also one of the compilers of this Bibliography.

There are abstracts of biographical papers on five Australian engineers in the Bibliography. Each made important but hitherto little known contributions to engineering. Of most significance to Western Australians is the paper by John Moynihan on William Hancock who was both the State's first Superintendent of Telephones and also its first radiographer. Why however, the compilers included abstracts of papers on Telford, Brunel, Robert Stephenson and the American Benjamin Wright is a mystery as they add nothing to this compilation on Australian history.

For labour historians the Bibliography represents also, in a small way, a resource for information of working conditions in a variety of disparate industries from the early steel works to colonial road making, nineteenth century ore processing and early telephone exchanges. A further advantage to be found in having it on the shelves is its potential use as an easily available 'outside' change checklist for unanticipated sources. When I was researching

the history of the Chamberlain tractor factory in Perth I might have eliminated several seeks spent puzzling over post-war federal import quotas on tractors and the effects of regional drought on national tractor markets, had I known that Graeme Quick, author of the standard book on Australian tractors, had given a paper to an Institution of Engineers conference on the same topics only two years previously. A brief look through the abstracts on mining attracted my eye to another item which might interest labour historians researching miners. It informs readers that the library of the University College of Central Queensland at Rockhampton now holds archival records for the Mount Morgan Gold Mine which almost cover the complete 108 years of the mine's operation.

As a resource for locating papers on early engineering works the Bibliography has obvious limitations. It covers only papers given since 1980 and includes only one reprint of an original institution technical paper given in the 1930s. Although it is usually not difficult to track the originals of papers published by the Institution, papers on significant engineering works built or manufactured in the last hundred years were not confined to publications of the Institution of Engineers Australia as that body did not become a national organisation until 1919. Many papers on earlier Australian works were published in British or American journals and, even after 1919, papers dealing with certain categories of works such as large dams were still published abroad. Papers on the Kalgoorlie pipeline and Fremantle harbour, for example, were published in the Proceedings of the (British) Institution of Civil Engineers as was a later one one the Canning dam. It is to be hoped that one day someone will prepare a bibliography of all such papers.

There is also only one abstract in the Bibliography referring to an engineer's reminiscences. Engineers as a group have been sadly reluctant to record their 'oral histories'. Perhaps it is true that many felt that their works were their monuments but, ironically, with today's technologies changing so rapidly, for some engineers it may be their personal stories that will endure longer than their works.

The Bibliography could have been improved by the inclusion of an index of authors as it is often useful to be able to check whether the works of certain authors are included in a particular bibliography. However, despite its limitations, the Bibliography is a significant move in a new direction by the Institution and its compilers are to be congratulated on their initiative.

1. M. Edelstein, 'Professional Engineers and the Australian Economy'. in D. Pope and L.J. Alston eds, *Australia's Greatest Asset. Human Resources in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,* Annandale NSW 1989.

2. B. Lloyd, *Engineers in Australia : A Profession in Transition,* Melbourne 1991.

3. D.A. Cumming and G. Moxham, *They Built South Australia,* Adelaide, 1986; J.S.H. Le Page , *Building a State,* Perth, 1986.