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Australia

Green Bans and the BLF: the labour movement and urban ecology

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For John Loh, militant builder's labourer, supporter of the NSW BLF and the Green Bans, and later an organiser in the construction workers' union, the CFMEU. Died at Melbourne, 24 November 2003.

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/35727.jpg>]

Jack Munday

It is one of life's great ironies that the same regime which brought us environmental disasters such as the Aral Sea and Chernobyl should also have continually re-published Friedrich Engels' informed and profoundly ecological writings, *Dialectics of Nature*. [1] Engels warned that unless we learned the laws of nature and recognised that we do not stand outside of nature like some conqueror, nature would wreak terrible revenge on us. [2] Given the ecological atrocities they presided over, one wonders if the USSR's Stalinist bureaucrats ever looked inside the book's covers. Certainly they seemed unaware that the fight to end humanity's alienation from the world is at the core of Marxism.

Clearly, Marx [3] and Engels had developed an ecological consciousness long before the term was coined, but alas, their keen insights were forgotten for many decades by the workers' movement. While this was particularly true in the "degenerated workers' state" of the Soviet Union, it also held true, by and large, for the labour movement in the capitalist world, much of which succumbed to a belief in the desirability of "progress" at all costs. As Jack Munday lamented, working class militants still often "have a high degree of ignorance about the seriousness of the ecological crisis". [4]

It is to the great credit of militant building workers in Australia that over 30 years ago they nailed their green colours to the mast and insisted that ecology was as much the concern of workers as wages and conditions. Munday asked "What is the use of higher wages alone, if we have to live in cities devoid of parks, denuded of trees, in an atmosphere poisoned by pollution and vibrating with the noise of hundreds of thousands of units of private transport?" [5]

The Green Bans movement, [6] as it came to be known, was perhaps the most radical example of working class environmentalism ever seen in the world. At its peak it held up billions of dollars worth of undesirable development and it saved large areas of the city of Sydney - streets, old buildings, parks and whole suburbs - from demolition. There is even evidence that the term "green" itself as a synonym for ecological activism came from those struggles. In 1997, the well-respected Australian Greens Senator, Bob Brown, [7] said:

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/35728.jpg>]

Petra Kelly

"Petra Kelly...saw the Green Bans which the unions...were then imposing on untoward developments in Sydney...She took back to Germany this idea of Green Bans, or the terminology. As best as we can track it down, that is where the word "green" as applied to the emerging Greens in Europe came from". [8]

Jack Munday and the other leaders of the Green Bans movement were among the most effective and radical of urban ecologists. Although they were eventually beaten by a coalition of corrupt union officials, rapacious developers, thugs and seedy politicians, their message has not been forgotten and in the final analysis their monument is the buildings, parks and bushland areas that they saved for future generations.

The NSW Builders Labourers' Federation

The union at the forefront of the Green Bans movement was the Builders Labourers' Federation (BLF), and in particular its New South Wales (NSW) branch, [9] centred on the city of Sydney. In some ways this is surprising. For many decades before left wing militants captured control of the union in the 1960s, the BLF had been the small and despised poor cousin of the other building trades unions.

The union (which has since been amalgamated into a “super union”, the Construction, Forestry and Mining Employees' Union or CFMEU) covered the unskilled and semi-skilled workers in the industry: labourers of various types; concrete finishers; jackhammer-men; excavation workers; hoist drivers; steel fixers who placed the steel rods and bars for reinforced concrete; scaffolders; powder monkeys or explosives experts; riggers, who erected cranes and structural steelwork; and dogmen, who slung loads from cranes and, in Australia at least, “rode the hook” hundreds of metres above the city streets in a spectacular, but hazardous aerial performance. [10] However, due to technological change in the industry, much of their work became at least as skilled as that of the traditional craftsmen, who were organised in separate unions.

In the years after World War II, millions of immigrants poured into Australia, many of them from southern and eastern Europe. Few made their fortune in the great island continent “down-under”, though many had been lured with stories of streets paved with gold. Most of them became fodder for the factories, mines and mills that sprung up during the post-war boom. Many became construction workers and unless they had specific transferable skills, that meant working as builders' labourers, mixing concrete and carrying bricks or digging deep into the sandstone for the foundations of the new high rise buildings. Immigrants did the dirty, hard, and dangerous jobs that the “native born” were often reluctant to do. By the 1960s, around 70 per cent of the NSW BLF's members were foreign-born. [11]

Struggle against gangsters in union

For many decades the NSW BLF was run by gangsters; corrupt elements including defrocked lawyers and apolitical thugs. One official was notorious for collecting the union dues then spending them on protracted drinking bouts. These characters had no interest in winning better wages and conditions for the members, nor did they want to see strong on-the-job organization, which would undermine their power. [12] Many of the union's members spoke little or no English, but bureaucrats who were in any case uninterested in their opinions did not see that as a problem and there was no translation of reports. As a consequence, BLF members were paid a fraction of the wages of the carpenters, plumbers, electricians and other skilled tradesmen in the industry. The gangsters too, were uninterested in health and safety issues. As Pete Thomas has written, in three years in the 1960s, there was “an appalling total of over 61,000 compensation cases - some fatal, others creating permanent disabilities, others lesser but still cruel - ...in NSW building construction and maintenance.” In one year in the early 1970s, 44 building workers died in NSW. [13] Fourteen dogmen died in another year. Nearly 250 Sydney excavation workers died from silicosis between 1948 and the 1960s, victims of the dust from the hard sandstone that they cut and blasted. [14] There was little change until after the militants began the hard battle to civilize the industry.

The militants gained control of the union only after a bitter struggle lasting over ten years. One of those militants was a young man called Jack Munday. Born into a poor Irish Catholic family in North Queensland, Munday came to Sydney in 1951 to play Rugby League for Parramatta. A little later, after spending time in other jobs, he started work as a builder's labourer and joined the union and then the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). In the 1950s and '60s, the CPA was still an industrial force to be reckoned with, although its star had waned since the heyday of the 1940s when it all but controlled the peak council of the union movement, the ACTU. [15] The CPA was a contradictory force. During the late 1940s and early '50s, when the Cold War was raging, it had identified itself slavishly with the Soviet Union and at the same time it had sunk to rigging ballots in elections to maintain its tight grip on unions under its

control. [\[16\]](#)

Still, many of the best militants in the labour movement continued to look to the CPA for leadership and by the 1960s the party leadership had abandoned much of the old sectarian dogmatism, which had isolated them from the majority of trade union members who supported the ALP. Inside the NSW BLF and other unions, party members adopted the tactic of “unity tickets” with left wing members and supporters of the ALP. The tactic bore fruit and when the militants ousted the gangsters, a real unity had been forged between Communists such as Jack Munday and Labor Party members such as Bob Pringle and Mick McNamara. Munday became secretary [\[17\]](#) of the NSW BLF in 1968.

The growing potential power of the BLF

Although the union had pursued a militant course under Munday's immediate predecessors, this was stepped up once he took up a full-time position. The new leaders of the union saw that the traditional craft unions had been adversely affected by deskilling brought about by changes in the industry from the 1960s on. However, the skills of their own members had been enhanced and the old image of the BL as an unskilled tradesman's helper and general labourer was out of date.

While BLF members still did much of the hardest, dirtiest, most dangerous and least skilled work in the industry, the new construction techniques meant that they had become every bit as important as the tradesmen, particularly on high-rise city sites. This fact gave the union much more industrial clout than previously, but it was not reflected in BLs' pay rates, which lagged far behind those of the traditional craftsmen. Munday, Pringle and another key organiser called Joe Owens were determined that the situation had to change.

In 1970, the union embarked on a campaign of militant strikes, effectively shutting down the industry with mass picketing on a scale not seen before in the industry. The employers, not used to mass participation of the membership in industrial action, caved in after five weeks and granted large across the board pay rises and, most importantly, set BLs' wages at a minimum of 90 per cent of the craftsmen's rates; more for the highest skilled BLs. At the same time, the union experimented with the ideas of workers' control, occupying construction sites, electing their own foremen, staging sit-ins and “working in” in response to lock-outs, poor safety conditions and sackings.

The long-downtrodden BLs had found a new solidarity and dignity. Harry Connell, a long-time militant, recalled that before the left's takeover of the union, builders' labourers would, if questioned about their occupation, reply self-deprecatingly, “Oh, I'm just a labourer”. Afterwards, they would answer proudly, “I'm a bloody BL”. [\[18\]](#)

Involvement in social struggles

Under Munday's leadership, the union also began to involve itself in struggles that went beyond the traditional brief of wages and conditions. This was the period of the Vietnam War, when hundreds of thousands of people marched against Australian military involvement on the side of the US and its Saigon client state. [\[19\]](#) It was the period of the May 1968 upsurge in France, when young people around the world set out to “storm the heavens” in search of a new society. This radical mood was reflected inside the CPA, particularly after the Warsaw Pact powers invaded Czechoslovakia to end the “Prague Spring”, which had sought “socialism with a human face”.

Back in 1956, when the USSR invaded Hungary, the CPA had remained loyal to Moscow, despite the loss of many of its members. This time, the CPA publicly condemned the invasion. A small pro-Moscow group split away, but many

party members welcomed the radical new direction and enthusiastically adopted the new ideas. [20] Munday himself pays tribute to the radical shift in the policies and attitudes in the Communist Party leadership: "I'm sure that none of our innovations would have been possible except for the changes in the Communist Party of Australia, even though we went beyond the CPA mainstream". [21]

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/35729.jpg>]

Norm Gallagher

The BLF leaders threw their union behind the anti-war movement and into other causes such as the fight against apartheid in South Africa. They encouraged women to work in what had hitherto been an all-male preserve, winning an important breakthrough at the Summit site after women "worked in" with the support of their male colleagues. In 1973, Denise Bishop was elected to the union and executive and became possibly the first female organiser of a construction union in the world.

The union also ensured that their largely immigrant workforce was provided with bilingual organisers-before this, the needs of non-English speakers were largely ignored. In another celebrated case, the BLF "blackbanned" work on a Macquarie University hall of residence when the Student Representative Council approached them on behalf of a gay student who had been expelled. This was probably the first instance of such an action in the world (and it was successful). Homophobia has deep roots in Australia and it is a measure of the leadership's calibre that they were able to convince the members to take industrial action on this issue, despite initial misgivings. [22] The union was able to involve itself in these kinds of issues because the leadership had won the deep respect of the majority of members through its commitment to improving their wages and conditions, and also by restoring their dignity as human beings in a dog-eat-dog system that had treated them as expendable slaves. Ominously, one of the most vociferous critics of this kind of action was the union's federal secretary, Norm Gallagher, a member of the Maoist Communist Party of Australia, Marxist- Leninist. [23]

A radically new, democratic style of unionism

It is important to note that the leadership consciously sought not to impose anything on the membership. The NSW BLF had a commitment to radically democratic methods that had nothing in common with the rigid Stalinism of the CPA in the 1940s and early '50s, when they had ruled unions under their control with an iron hand. [24]

The NSW BLF had a horror of entrenched bureaucracy and introduced radical methods to ensure that control of the union stayed in the members' hands; Michels' famous "iron law of oligarchy" was not to apply here! In the NSW BLF, all actions and policies had to be decided on by mass meetings of the members. The union's officials were there to serve the members and not vice versa, as was so often the case with Australian unions. Australian union officials tended to keep the same hours as the employers; Munday insisted on keeping the same hours as the workers on the job. The wearing of suits and eating of meals with the bosses was frowned on.

"The only time I eat the boss's lunch is when I steal it," said one organiser after a sit-in in the site offices of a major builder. Perhaps more importantly, the salaries of officials were cut to the same amount as the members' wages, and the union introduced limited tenure of office; after a maximum of six years in a paid position, officials had to go back and work in the industry. Such measures often outraged the officials of other unions, who were fearful of losing their comfortable sinecures if such ideas were allowed to take root. Munday says that the policy "broke down the barrier between officials and workers". [25]

The first Green Bans

Like its sister parties round the world, the CPA had no record of environmental activism. The same was true, more broadly, of the labour movement as a whole and indeed many sections of the movement, including some self-styled revolutionaries and Communists, depicted the bans as a “diversion from the class struggle” and as a capitulation to alien “middle class ideas”. In one notorious outburst, Norm Gallagher, the Maoist federal secretary of the BLF dismissed widespread support for the NSW BLF as coming only from “residents, sheilas and poofers”. [26] When ecological ideas began to emerge in the 1960s with the publication of such books as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, they collided with deeply ingrained attitudes which viewed nature as a hostile enemy to be subdued, or mastered, and which was expressed in an ideology of limitless economic growth regardless of the consequences. Again it is to the great credit of the NSW BLF's leadership that they were able to gain support for the radical new ecological ideas from the union's membership.

The leadership realized that it would be wrong and self-defeating to try to impose industrial action in support of the environment on the members. By debate and argument at mass stop work or on-the-job meetings, the BLF officials convinced the members to support an all-out assault on the previously sacred right of the builders and developers to re-model the face of Sydney as they saw fit.

During the 1960s, Sydney, like many other cities in the world, underwent drastic change. There were fortunes to be made as old buildings and precincts were torn down and replaced, often with modernistic skyscrapers, for space in the inner city fetched astronomical prices. The NSW BLF's membership soared during this period, rising in one two year period from 4000 to 10,000 and peaking later at 11,000, partly as a result of the building boom, partly because of an intensive recruiting drive. [27]

In the course of this great boom, the developers were not concerned with what was destroyed; Georgian terraces, Victorian spires and domes, parkland, jewels of art deco all fell to the wrecker's ball. Scab labour would be used in nocturnal operations to pull down heritage-listed buildings. This was capitalism in the raw as described by Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*, where “all that is solid melts into air” in the frenzy for profit. [28] The BLF also realized that, as Leonie Sandercock subsequently put it, “Modernist planners [had become] the thieves of memory” - “Faustian in their eagerness to erase all traces of the past in...the name of progress”, they had “killed whole communities, by evicting them, demolishing their houses, and dispersing them to edge suburbs or leaving them homeless...” [29]

The union and its supporters did not oppose all change, recognizing that there was a place for urban renewal to make cities liveable for their inhabitants. What they did oppose was the unwarranted assumption that what was good for the developers was automatically good for the environment, the city, or its people.

The Kelly's Bush bans

The BLF's actions were spectacularly effective. The *Manchester Guardian* considered that Jack Munday was “Australia's most effective conservationist” and claimed “Middle class groups are a little embarrassed at having to turn to a rough-hewn proletarian Communist to protect their homes (and values) from fiats and motorways, and their theatres and pubs from office developers. But approach him they do...” In fact, it was often working class homes and precincts that were saved from the developers, but the union would respond to any genuine request for help.

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/35730.jpg>]

Plaque celebrating the 25th anniversary of the BLF's first Green Ban at Kelly's Bush

Probably the first time the union intervened in an environmental issue was in 1971, when it banned a new private housing development at Hunters Hill. Kelly's Bush, which the AV Jennings group wished to destroy for the project, was reputedly the last remaining piece of natural bushland on Sydney harbour. The local residents had campaigned strongly but unsuccessfully to save it, lobbying members of parliament, cabinet ministers and other persons with power. The NSW state (provincial) government was firmly behind the development and in desperation the residents turned to the BLF for support.

The BLF called a mass meeting of members, which voted overwhelmingly to "black ban" the project. Other bans quickly followed and somewhere along the road, a union member coined the term "green ban" to describe union action to save natural bushland and parks. The term was expanded to describe bans to save historic urban precincts and significant buildings.

The battle of the Rocks

Perhaps the greatest Green Ban of all was imposed on Sydney's Rocks area by the BLF and its allies in the union covering bulldozer drivers, the FEDFA. [30] The Rocks, situated just west of Circular Quay and under the southern abutments of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, is Australia's oldest urban precinct, dating from the 1790s. It is the site of many significant buildings and was also the home of a close-knit working class community who lived in rows of terraced houses, often at controlled rents. In 1972, the state government unveiled a master plan for the redevelopment of the suburb. The people would be evicted and their homes destroyed. In their place would rise a grotesque \$2000 million [31] commercial skyscraper development owned by wealthy corporate interests.

Had the government got its way, a community would have been killed, together with the collective memory of over 160 years, along with one of Australia's most beautiful urban areas. Encouraged by the success of the Kelly's Bush bans, the residents' action group turned to the unions. The union bans held, residents and BLF members picketed against scab labour, occupied buildings slated for demolition, marched, and were arrested in droves. In the end they won an impressive victory and The Rocks was saved.

Buoyed up by their success, the union imposed a string of other bans at the behest of residents and community and conservation groups frustrated by the authorities. These included Green Bans on development at Centennial Park - the "lungs" of the city's eastern suburbs - and at the Sydney Botanical Gardens on the harbour front. The latter ban prevented the construction of an underground car park by the AMP insurance conglomerate, which would have damaged the park's trees, shrubs and plants and involved the immediate destruction of a number of giant Moreton Bay fig trees.

Other bans were imposed on demolition of a variety of public buildings, including the Theatre Royal, the fine old sandstone Pitt Street Congregational Church (which was to have been replaced by a multi-storey concrete car park); on a section of the proposed western distributor and the Eastern Expressway, both of which would have destroyed thousands of houses; and lastly on a monstrous redevelopment of the inner harbour-side suburb of Woollahroo, renowned as "the most Sydney-like place in Sydney".

Battle lines drawn

By this time, in 1973, the battle lines were drawn and the union was faced by an unholy alliance of employers, developers, politicians and right-wing union officials, all outraged by the BLF's flaunting of the prerogatives of capital.

At this stage, a well-informed article published in the Brisbane Courier-Mail claimed that the NSW BLF “has invoked an incredible 36 bans against using labour on projects worth a massive \$3000 million [over \$12,000 million in today's prices - JT] because the projects would mean the tearing down of historic buildings or could violate parklands within metropolitan Sydney”. [32]

The residents and union pickets in Victoria Street, Woolloomooloo, were harassed and intimidated by police. Goons trained in karate and carrying weapons lurked in nearby streets, thirsting for blood. Juanita Nielsen, a prominent supporter of the union, vanished and it is an open secret that goons associated with dishonest developers murdered her. The BLF and its supporters had also run up against the corrupt state government, led by Premier Robin Askin, who has since been exposed as a swindler and a crook with interests in illegal casinos and other sleaze. In a period of 12 days in August 1972, the Sydney Morning Herald, the voice of the local ruling class, carried no less than five editorials attacking the NSW BLF. One of these screamed about “a handful of unionists led by the nose by a member of a party dedicated to social disruption and the overthrow of democratic government...” and another claimed that “the mass of the unionists concerned are, of course, only dupes of their leadership...” Shortly afterwards, the Askin government charged Jack Munday with contempt of court. Earlier, Askin and members of his cabinet had called the BLF leaders “traitors to this country” and made hysterical forecasts of the union causing “rioting and bloodshed in the streets of Sydney”. [33] The vultures were circling.

Federal intervention

Left to themselves, the ruling class would have had a hard time to break the union. The Maoist leadership of the federal union did the job for them. In 1974, federal secretary Norm Gallagher decided to crush the NSW branch and replace all of its officials with his own stooges. The Master Builders Association (MBA) and the Askin government were keen to offer him every assistance, barring NSW branch organisers from sites and sacking BLs who refused to join the new branch. When crane drivers, members of the FEDFA, went on strike, Gallagher flew in scabs to replace them and there was a steady trickle of interstate “conscript” workers” who came to “do the work of pro-Munday builders labourers.” Gallagher declined to put his case to a mass meeting of BLs, declaring that it would be “full of residents and poofers”.

It was later revealed that much of the cost for Gallagher's intervention was paid for by the bosses, and perhaps this included the wages of murderous gun thugs brought in to intimidate NSW branch loyalists. Some of these industrial mercenaries were lodged in the city's most luxurious motels at nightly rates far in excess of a BL's weekly wage. Unemployment was also rising in the industry during this period and it was clear that the NSW branch would not be able to resist for much longer. The coup de gr ce came in March 1975 when the NSW branch office in the Sydney Trades Hall was burgled and its records stolen, on good information by a career contract criminal. Shortly afterwards, the NSW leadership advised its members to take out membership of the Gallagher branch and continue the fight from within. With heavy hearts, they agreed. Sadly, most of the NSW leadership was blacklisted and never worked in the industry again. Later, regretting what he had done, federal president Les Robinson admitted, “I think we destroyed a virile organization and it didn't do the federation any good either”. [34]

The BLF's legacy

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/35731.jpg>]

Bob Hawke

The NSW BLF perished, but its exploits have become the stuff of legend and an inspiration to all who wish to rebuild the workers' movement as a thoroughly democratic, class-conscious movement, committed to social and

environmental action as an integral part of the aim of building a better world. Since those rare old times, other unions have from time to time taken up ecological issues, although perhaps none with the sheer panache and militancy of the NSW BLF. During the late 1970s and early '80s the ACTU banned the mining and export of uranium "yellowcake", until officials linked to the right-wing Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke [35] undermined the policy from within. On occasions, wharfies have banned ships carrying cargoes of scarce rainforest timbers from Southeast Asia and construction workers have stopped the routing of oil pipelines through ecologically sensitive areas. More recently, in my own neighbourhood, unions imposed bans on the redevelopment of an old industrial site heavily polluted with arsenic, until it was declared clean by independent experts. Such actions are not uncommon today. Munday is convinced that union environmentalism would have spread even further but for the destruction of the NSW BLF.

Looking back after some thirty years, the NSW BLF story still amazes and inspires those who hear it. Capitalist ideology holds that working people are brutes with no interests beyond satisfaction of their most immediate needs. The Green Bans prove them wrong; here is a clear example of a union composed of blue collar workers - many of them immigrants, most of them lacking formal education, all "battlers" up against the odds - who stood up and counted themselves citizens in the fullest sense of the word. Bertolt Brecht once had a worker wondering whom it was who had hauled up the lumps of rock to build Thebes and other massive cities of antiquity, given that the books only gave the names of kings. [36] Throughout history, building workers have been viewed as beasts of burden who had no right to concern themselves with what they built or demolished. The Green Bans movement challenged that, and for a few years we had a glimpse of what workers, unalienated from the products of their labour, might be like; of a truly human future. "We are not just animals who put things up or tear them down," insisted Joe Owens. [37] Today, when we declare that "A better world is possible" in the struggle against dehumanising and environmentally rapacious neoliberalism, we should not forget the struggles of the NSW builders' labourers. Jack Munday should have the final word:

"Ecologists with a socialist perspective and socialists with an ecological perspective must form a coalition to tackle the wide-ranging problems relating to human survival... My dream, and that... of millions... of others might then come true: a socialist world with a human face, an ecological heart and an egalitarian body". [38]

This article is a contribution to the discussion inside the Fourth International on the importance of the ecological question in the labour movement.

[1] Frederick Engels, 1934, *Dialectics of Nature*, Progress Publishers, Moscow. Revised 1954 and reprinted a further five times to 1976.

[2] Ibid. "The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man", p180.

[3] See, for instance, John Bellamy Foster, 2000, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*, Monthly Review Press, New York.

[4] Jack Munday, 1981, *Green Bans and Beyond*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, p148.

[5] Ibid. p143.

[6] Books on the Green Bans and the BLF include Munday's semi-biographical book cited above; Pete Thomas, 1973, *Taming the Concrete Jungle. The Builders Labourers' Story*, NSW Branch of the BLF, Sydney; and Meredith Burgmann and Verity Burgmann, *Green Bans, Red Union. Environmental Activism and the New South Wales Builders Labourers' Federation*, University of NSW Press, Sydney, 1998. The former book is long out of print. There is also a film about the BLF and the Green Bans; Pat Fiske, 1985, "Rocking the Foundations : History of the New South Wales Builders Labourer's Federation, 1940-1974", Bower Bird Films, Sydney.

[7] Bob Brown, a Green Senator from Tasmania, was a leader of the struggle to save the Franklin River from being flooded in the early 1980s. He has spoken out strongly against imperialist war and he is a passionate supporter of the human rights of refugees, Aborigines and other oppressed groups.

[8] Cited in Burgmann and Burgmann, op cit pp9- 10. One can argue this point. The term might have been used in the 1960s, however, there can be little doubt that Brown's claims contain a lot of truth.

[9] The BLF, or to give it its full name, the Australian Building Construction Employees and Builders Labourers' Federation, was a "federal" union, with branches in each of the states (or provinces) of Australia. The union also had a federal council, which by the time about which we are writing, had fallen into the hands of Maoists led by Norm Gallagher, the Secretary of the Victorian branch, based in Melbourne.

[10] Dogmen are known as banksmen in Britain and Ireland, but I am not sure that the practice of riding the load ever existed in those countries.

[11] Munday, op cit p56.

[12] For information on this period, see Paul True, 1995, *Tales of the BLF : Rolling the Right*, Militant International Publications, Parramatta, NSW.

[13] Thomas, op cit p12.

[14] Ibid. p14.

[15] Australian Council of Trade Unions, to which the great majority of Australian unions are affiliated, regardless of political affiliation.

[16] Most notably the Federated Ironworkers' Association (FIA), where it lost control to the Right by the early 1950s.

[17] In Australian unions, the secretary's position has often been the most powerful.

[18] Cited in True, op cit.

[19] Australian unions have a long history of political and social involvement. During World War I, for example, they waged a dogged fight against conscription. In 1938 dockers - known as wharfies in Australia - refused to load scrap steel aboard the SS "Dalfram", bound for Japan, arguing that it would end up as bombs and bullets for use against the Chinese people. In the 1940s, wharfies and seamen were in the forefront of the movement of solidarity with the Indonesian Revolution against Dutch colonialism, successfully black-banning Dutch shipping in Australian ports. After the Australian government committed troops to support the US in Vietnam in 1964, the maritime unions refused to load or sail any vessels to Indochina.

[20] Even earlier, in 1966, the CPA leadership had roundly condemned the trial of the Soviet dissidents Daniel and Sinyavsky. (Munday, op. cit. p. 48). Significantly, Pat Clancy, the leader of the main building craftsmen's union, the BWIU, was a member of the pro-Moscow breakaway. Clancy refused to support the NSW BLF when the Maoists moved to destroy it. See below.

[21] Ibid. p79. Looking back, the present author is convinced that young anti-Stalinist militants who came into politics at this time and shunned the CPA missed an important opportunity to link up with radicals inside the CPA and build a qualitatively stronger and united organization.

[22] Munday, op cit p106.

[23] The CPA-ML was a small and secretive group that had split away from the CPA during the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s.

[24] Ernie Thornton and Jack McPhillips, the principal leaders of the CPA-controlled FIA between the late 1930s and early 1950s, actually imposed a "democratic centralist" (i.e. bureaucratic centralist) constitution on what had been a loose, relatively democratic federalist union. McPhillips remained a hard-line Stalinist to the end of his days, with nothing good to say about radical experiments such as the NSW BLF. Thornton was a much more sympathetic character.

[25] Munday, op cit p56.

[26] Burgmann and Burgmann, op cit p54. "Sheilas" is a derogatory Australian term for women; "poofers" is a homophobic slang term for homosexuals.

[27] Munday, op cit p44.

[28] This, of course, is the theme of Marshall Berman's book inspired by a famous passage in the "Communist Manifesto"; All That is Solid Melts into Air: the Experience of Modernity, Viking, New York, 1988.

[29] Leonie Sandercock, "Towards cosmopolis: utopia as construction site" in S. Campbell and S. Fainstein (eds), 2003, "Readings in Planning Theory" (Second Edition), Blackwell, Oxford, p402.

[30] The Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association.

[31] \$500 million in the prices of the time. As a rule of thumb, I have multiplied prices by a factor of four to give approximately current values.

[32] Thomas, op cit p54.

[33] Ibid. p119.

[34] Burgmann and Burgmann, op cit p274. Ironically, the Gallagherites were themselves some years later driven out of office by rivals in collusion with governments and employers. Gallagher served a prison term for accepting secret commissions from employers and rival unions absorbed the BLF.

[35] Hawke is also a former president of the ACTU. We called him the "fire brigade" in those times because of his habit of dousing industrial "fires" to save the boss.

[36] Bertolt Brecht, "Questions from a Worker Who Reads", in John Willett and Ralph Manheim (eds), 1976, Bertolt Brecht Poems 1913-1956, Methuen, London.

[37] In Pat Fiske's film, "Rocking the Foundations", op cit.

[38] Munday, op cit p148.