# Australia's First Socialists

**Jim McIlroy**

# Contents

# Introduction

The modern Australian socialist movement has its origins in the early radical experiments of the 19th century, from the influence of the transported British Chartists, to the exiled Irish rebels, to the democratic struggles of the miners at Eureka and elsewhere.

From the short-lived Australian affiliate to the First International in 1872, the Australian Socialist League, the Victorian Socialist League, the Socialist Labour Party, the Industrial Workers of the World, to the founding of the Communist Party of Australia, the organisations of the socialist left in this country developed a radical tradition which set the groundwork for the contemporary socialist movement.

This account will outline the history of the early socialists, their achievements and their problems, and attempt to draw some lessons from the experience of the pioneer radicals for the movement today.

The scope of this project is limited to the period up to the founding of the Communist Party, as the history of the CPA is a major task, much too substantial for this story of the initial years of the Australian left.

Moreover, the period from the formation of the CPA in the early 1920s is a distinct, separate stage in the history of the socialist movement in this country.

This account also does not deal in any detail with the founding of the Australian Labor Party, which is a topic for considerable further discussion and elaboration elsewhere.

What can be said about the foundation period of the Australian left and socialist movement is that it illustrates the fact that throughout our history, whatever the difficulties and challenges of the situation, there has always been a "militant minority" of radicals and socialists, fighting — often against the mainstream of the labour movement — for principled political positions in the interests of working people.

Today we need to recapture the hidden history of the pioneer radicals and socialists as part of our understanding of the real origins of the contemporary left and labour movement, and to help inspire us to continue the struggle for socialism. In studying these struggles of the past, we can learn both the positive and negative lessons of the actions of our socialist forebears.■

# Beginnings

## Chartist influence

Early Australian colonial society was strongly influenced by the social forces of Britain from which it had emerged. The development of radical ideas and organisation "at home" had their reflection in Australia in various ways.

The very first "socialist society" was established in Sydney in April 1840, following the liberal reform ideas of the English industrialist Robert Owen. It lasted only a short time, and had little immediate impact.

From the 1850s, debates in the Australian press arose about the development of class and democracy in the new country. Liberalism from the British tradition had its influence.

Significantly, the radical Chartist movement within the British trade unions had an important impact in Australia. Chartist leaders, under repression in Britain, were transported to Australia, where their ideas of struggle for workers' rights had a lasting effect.

Lloyd Churchward writes that:

Chartist ideas were prevalent in NSW and Victoria during the years 1840-60. The Chartist influence reached its peak in the Victorian political agitation of 1852-57 — Ovens, Bendigo, the Ballarat Reform League and Eureka, and the Land Convention of July 1857 — a decade or so after the British Chartist movement had reached its peak. The explanation of the time-lag is not difficult to discover. Many of the leaders of the Victorian political agitation were British Chartists who had left England only after the collapse of the agitation for the Great Charter in 1848. Again, the Australian social soil, especially that of the diggings, proved more fertile for planting the seeds of Chartism. English Chartism, especially after 1840, was essentially a working-class movement. In Australia, Chartist ideas had a much broader support, drawing in middle-class as well as working-class elements of the population. This was because the main political struggle in Australia after 1842 (and especially after 1850) united workers and middle classes against the landowning squattocracy.

With Chartism, as with most other political movements which were to reach Australia in later years, the original divisions within the movement recurred in Australia. The divisions between "physical-force" and "moral-force" men was obvious in the debates at Ballarat in October and November 1854. It was only with the final mass meeting on November 30 and the raising of the Eureka flag that the physical-force men, such as [Thomas] Kennedy, gained a decisive but short-lived leadership in the movement.[1]

Robin Gollan notes that:

[English Chartism] was a movement of the working class in revolt against the way of life that industrial capitalism imposed upon it. Although its most characteristic program was the demand for political reform — the six points of the charter — it was also a movement for social reform.

In Australia, Gollan observes:

The form of the mass protest meetings on the goldfields and in Melbourne was directly influenced by English experience. Manhood suffrage [votes for all males without property qualification] in Australia was in one sense the first victory for the People's Charter.

Chartism in England was, more broadly, a social protest movement against the impact of industrial capitalism. In Australia, it was "a desire to prevent the recreation of the old-world relationships in the new".[2]

Chartism, and the impact it had in Australia, played an important role in the early development of both the trade unions, and the general struggles for democratic rights in this country.

This groundwork laid the basis for further struggles in the latter part of the 19th century.

The relative newness and greater openness of Australian colonial society, together with the chronic shortage of labour, encouraged the development of the union movement, and the winning of world-historic gains — such as the first eight-hour working day.

These events also fostered the widespread view, prevalent in national mythology to this day, of Australia as a "classless, democratic society" — based on "mateship" and "egalitarianism".

By the goldrush period of the 1850s, many veterans of the 1848 democratic revolutions of Europe flocked to Australia.

According to a 19th-century writer on Melbourne in the 1850s:

The years I speak of were years of political excitement and turbulence. Among the newcomers were combative Chartists from Glasgow, Clerkenwell, and Chelsea, brim-

full of schemes for the reformation of mankind in general and of the people of Victoria in particular …

[In addition] many of them had been … in the revolutionary movements which had agitated Europe in 1848. You met men who had fought in the streets of Paris; political refugees from Frankfurt, Berlin, Vienna, and Budapest, and Carbonari from Italy. Mostly young, ardent, enthusiastic, and animated by more or less utopian visions of reconstructing the political and social institutions of civilised mankind so as to bring about an era of universal peace and prosperity, these heterogeneous exiles flung themselves heartily into the popular movements of the day …[3]

## The Eureka Stockade

Following this trend, the democratic and anti-authoritarian mood of the gold miners of the period led to the famous Eureka Stockade rebellion, near Ballarat, Victoria, in 1854.

This was a popular revolt against the unfair taxation and repressive policing actions of the colonial authorities.

Karl Marx wrote in 1855 about the revolt at Ballarat, noting that the two most important "questions at issue" were for the abolition of gold prospecting licences, and for the ending of the property qualification for election to parliament.

Here we see, in essence, motives similar to those which led to the Declaration of Independence of the United States, except that in Australia the conflict is initiated by the workers against the monopolists linked with the colonial bureaucracy.[4]

The goldminers on the Ballarat and Bendigo minefields of the early 1850s were incensed by the imposition of a licence fee, and by the brutal and corrupt methods of the Victorian colonial government and its police and troops in imposing it.

The licence fee and its manner of collection became the monster grievance, but it became so largely because of the diggers' conception of their rights.

The diggers wanted liberty, and what they meant by liberty was conditioned both by the radical political and social ideas of the country from which they came and by their experience in Australia …

To many of the diggers, the government appeared as a projection of the state as they had known it in Europe — hateful, and, in a new country, incongruous.

"I came from the old Europe" [wrote the exiled Italian republican and Garibaldi supporter, Raffaello Carboni, a leader of the Eureka Stockade] "16,000 miles across two oceans, and I thought it a respectable distance from the hated Austrian rule. Why, then, this monster meeting today, at the antipodes? We wrote petitions, signed memorials, made remonstrances by dozens; no go: we are compelled to *demand*, and

must prepare for the consequences … We must meet as in old Europe — old style — improved by far in the south — for the redress of grievances inflicted upon us, not by crowned heads, but by blockheads, aristocratic incapables, who never did a day's work in their life." …

On November 11 [1854; note the date], a meeting of 10,000 miners on Bakery Hill, Ballarat, adopted a radical democratic program and decided on a course of action that would immediately lead either to important concessions by the government or to a state of civil war.[5]

The resolution, proposed by the leadership of the Ballarat Reform League, declared that "taxation without representation is tyranny", and that "the people are the only legitimate source of all political power".

From there, the conflict escalated rapidly. Following a mass meeting of diggers on Bakery Hill on November 29, a public burning of licences was organised.

The authorities read the Riot Act, and shots were fired.

Arms were collected, squads formed and began drilling. Peter Lalor was elected "commander-in-chief of the diggers under arms" …

[The diggers] swore, "by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other and fight to defend our rights and liberties".

Defensive works were begun and a rude stockade thrown up within which elected leaders attempted to establish some kind of military organisation and prepare for what was still quite an indefinite course of action.

The spirit of the diggers was one of tremendous enthusiasm for their act of defiance. Carboni wrote of the meeting on November 29 that "no one who was not present at that monster meeting, or never saw any Chartist meeting in Copenhagen Fields, London, can possibly form an idea of the enthusiasm of the miners of Ballarat". A delegate was sent to the neighbouring field of Creswick and from there came a squad of 300 men, singing the "Marseillaise" and making a forced march through the night over hills and gullies. At their head, as they made their way through a thunderstorm, was [former Chartist leader] Thomas Kennedy, who flourished a sword and declaimed Chartist slogans.

For two days a state of *de facto* civil war prevailed. The diggers sent out scouts and patrols and drilled behind their barricade. But their preparations lacked decision and direction. It is clear that there was no real revolutionary leadership preparing to overthrow the existing state power and establish the power of the diggers under arms. They had come together to defend themselves against the rough hand of authority, but because they were not prepared to take the initiative, the spirit of enthusiasm and defiance of November 30 was rapidly dissipated. When the police and military attacked the stockade

in the early morning of December 3, they found it but thinly defended. After a brief battle, the stockade was taken and the revolt suppressed.[6]

More than 20 miners were killed in the fighting, and many more arrested.

Despite the military defeat of the Eureka Stockade, its impact was profound on public opinion and future political developments in the colony.

A royal commission led to the abolition of the miners' licence and its replacement by a miner's right, including the right to vote. By 1856, manhood suffrage was established in the Victorian parliament — an international breakthrough.

As one contemporary writer explained, "the fight between the gold-diggers and the military at Eureka Stockade in 1854 laid the foundations of a vigorous democracy".

Furthermore, the concessions to democratic government which followed the stockade produced a political framework and an atmosphere which facilitated the development of Australian trade unionism.[7]

Another strong factor in the early radical tradition in Australia was that of Irish nationalism.

As Churchward notes:

The Irish immigrant brought out not so much a political philosophy as a deeply ingrained feeling of national resentment against England for continued suppression of Ireland. As with the Chartists, the Irish nationalists were divided in their tactics and it was probably never more than a minority who were willing to go to the extreme of rebellion. However that may be, there were certainly many Irishmen in the Eureka rising, perhaps as many as half of those participating. From the very outset, an exceptionally high proportion of the Irish in Australia were workers. Irishmen were active, and often leaders, in all of the major struggles of the Australian workers, from Eureka to the strike struggles of the '90s and the great anticonscription struggle of the First World War. They provided at least some of the sympathy and some of the arguments for the anti-imperialism which has sometimes characterised the outlook of Australian workers.[8]

Republicanism had its champions in Australia from the very early days of the 1840s, such as the prominent liberal clergyman, John Dunmore Lang:

As to the charge that the colonists who desire their freedom and independence are somewhat tinctured with republicanism, I fear it must be admitted. The fact is, there is no other form of government either practicable or possible, in a British colony obtaining its freedom and independence, than that of a republic.[9]

In general, Chartism and Irish republican radicalism together had a significant impact on political life in 19th century Australia. "…clear traces of the transplanted Chartist spirit and of the principles underlying the Irish Repeal movement can be found in the

laws and constitutions of all the Australias", noted Michael Davitt, a leading figure in the Irish Land League, who attracted wide attention when he toured Australia speaking on land reform in the 1880s.[10]

## Democratic Association of Victoria

The first prominent socialist organisation in Australia was the Democratic Association of Victoria, founded in 1872. The DAV was largely a moral reform body, with a utopian socialist outlook. Nevertheless, the DAV became accepted, following its founding in February 1872, as the "Australian section" of the International Working Men's Association, or First International.

Following the Paris Commune of 1871, there was a widespread hysterical reaction by the world and Australian capitalist press to the First International (and, to a lesser extent, the DAV). This threat was very much exaggerated in the case of the DAV, whose program was more influenced by the utopian socialist thought of Owen and Fourier, and the liberalism of John Stuart Mill, than Marx and Engels.

The DAV published a newspaper called *The Internationalist* between February and August 1872.

The DAV, despite its limitations, did pave the way for the later development of radical socialism. And it did adopt and publicise sections of the *Communist Manifesto* as part of its program:

This society adopts as the basis of its creed the principles contained in the first manifesto issued by the International Association, viz:

"Considering,

"That the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves; that the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes means, not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies, but for equal rights and duties, and the abolition of all class rule:

"That the economical subjection of the man of labor to the monopoliser of the means of labor — that is, the sources of life, lies at the bottom of servitude in all its forms, of all social misery, mutual degradation, and political dependence:

"That the emancipation of the working classes is, therefore, the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means …"[11]

The DAV had links with some trade unions, and sponsored a cooperative store and a Needlewomen's Coop.

The history of the DAV shows that Marxism, in some form, had an influence in Australia from the 1870s onwards.

International links continued to develop in the next period. For example, in 1873,

as Churchward explains, "Paris Communards, on their way to the penal settlement in New Caledonia, were feted by Sydney workers at a banquet in the Town Hall".[12]

## Australian Socialist League

The next major development in the history of the Australian socialist movement was the foundation of the Australian Socialist League in 1887.

It was the first solidly based left organisation, following on a series of small and transitory groups of anarchists and radicals in the years after the closure of the DAV.

Founded in Newcastle in early 1887, the *Radical* became Australia's first regular socialist newspaper. Linking up with the fledgling ASL, it was distributed nationwide as the *Australian Radical*, containing a wide mixture of socialist ideas and labour movement news.

Despite a variety of interpretations in its pages, the *Australian Radical* did present sustained arguments in favour of "the abolition of the present system of state and society".

At this early stage, ASL propaganda opposed the racist agitation then rife within the labour movement calling for expulsion of Chinese workers and restrictive immigration policies.

The ASL was heavily involved in the Maritime Strike of 1890, and later the Great Shearers' Strikes of 1891 and 1894. Ernest Lane refers to the ASL at this time as "the centre of the revolutionary movement in Australia". At the Zurich Conference of the Socialist International in August 1893, the ASL delegate reported that the organisation had 15 branches and more than 9000 members in NSW.[13]

The ASL was involved in the foundation of the Australian Labor Party in 1891, and pushed it in the direction of a broad, "state socialist" position. It maintained an active affiliation with the ALP until 1898.

According to Frank Farrell, in his book *International Socialism and Australian Labour: The Left in Australia*:

> In February 1898, the shelving by the Labor Conference of the party's socialisation objective caused a majority of the hundred or so remaining ASL members to revitalise their program, cut their links with the Labor Party, and throw themselves into open competition with that party for influence in the unions and in politics. League members charged the Labor Party with abandonment of the working-class cause, and in 1900 they sponsored a Senate team to stand against the official Labor Party as the candidates of a new Socialist Labor Party.[14]

In its early days, the ASL had been, according to a member of the time, "quarter philosophical anarchist, quarter physical-force anarchist, quarter state socialist and

quarter Laborite".[15] (The anarchists had largely left the ASL by 1890, and the defeat of the 1890s shearers' strikes had initially given the pro-Laborites an edge over the militant socialists.)

In its Manifesto to the People of Australia in 1894, the ASL condemned the evils of the capitalist system, which was "based upon class supremacy and class robbery, maintained by class government, through the private ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange".

However, revolutionary and reformist views contended within the ASL, with the majority eventually supporting "only the use of parliamentary means" to achieve socialism. This let to splits in the organisation, with the formation of the Social Democratic Federation and the Active Service Brigade. The SDF opposed the ASL's "mechanical state socialism", based on parliamentarism, while the ASB stressed the importance of working-class struggle as the key agency in achieving socialism.

In her book *In Our Time: Socialism and the Rise of Labor, 1885-1905*, historian Verity Burgmann argues strongly that the socialists of the ASL, together with other militant workers, played a key role in the founding of the Australian Labor Party from the early 1890s, but that the parliamentarians and other right-wing forces in the union leaderships and elsewhere soon took over control of the party and pushed militants and socialists aside.

The ASL continued to campaign inside the Labor Party for socialism and for rank-and-file control during the 1890s, but failed completely. A last-ditch push for a nationalisation of industry pledge in 1897 was defeated.

This proved the final straw for the ASL. At its Easter 1898 conference, it decided to "reshape the movement and place the league on a more scientific foundation". This meant splitting with the ALP, and setting up as an open socialist party in competition with the Labor Party for working-class support.

In practice, during the late 1890s, the league's influence, Turner notes, "was more extensive than its membership of a hundred or so would suggest; it was in open competition with the Labor Party for industrial support, its members were active in the formation and affairs of quite a few unions, and there was a small group of ASL supporters in the Sydney Labour Council."[16]

Campaigning for the upcoming federal elections, the ASL in 1898 adopted a socialist objective calling for "the collective ownership of the land and tools of production", and accused Labor politicians of "betraying the independence of the working-class organisations", and hence "compromising the socialist cause".

The ASL also called for: "A political party on the principles of the international working-class movement as enunciated in the platform of the Australian Socialist

League, to bring into existence at the opening of the 20th century the only party that can truly and intelligently advocate the interests of the Australian workers — the Australian Socialist Labor Party."

Contesting the 1901 Senate election under the Socialist Labor Party name, the ASL scored a modest success in terms of votes. However, the party did much better in the 1903 Senate poll, with its leading candidate gaining around 26,000 votes.

Taking on the ALP for workers' votes, the SLP referred to it as the "bogus Labor Party, the late Labor Party or the Mosquito Party; its official organ was the *Shirker*". The ASL/SLP argued that "disgust, contempt and loathing" must be the response to the ALP of all "decent-minded intelligent men of the working classes".[17]

An Achilles heel for the ASL, however, as it was for a number of the Australian left groups in the early days, was the key issue of racism.

In 1896, the ASL had been represented at the London Congress of the Socialist International by Edward Aveling, Karl Marx's son-in-law. He successfully moved a resolution on behalf of the ASL calling on workers' organisations to refuse to support restrictive legislation against the immigration of aliens.

This caused some controversy back in Australia, where the majority of ASL members disagreed with this view. In 1898, the organisation formally endorsed the call for: "The exclusion of races whose presence under present competitive conditions might lower the standard of living of Australian workers."

This led to a further split in the ASL, with the antiracist internationalists leaving to form the International Socialist Club. The ISC eventually managed to pressure the ASL to delete its anti-immigration clause, using the Socialist International resolution in support of its case.

However, racism and the issue of the White Australia policy remained a bugbear for the socialist movement in the early years of the 20th century — until challenged by the new broom of the Industrial Workers of the World.

## William Lane

Prior to this, in 1889, the Social Democratic Federation was established in Victoria.

According to Joe Harris, writing in *The Bitter Fight: A Pictorial History of the Australian Labor Movement*:

> [The SDF] developed a program of "transitional measures", including electoral reform, election of JPs and jurymen by ballot, free administration of justice, and abolition of all laws relating to the collection of debts. It included an eight-hour day, state ownership of all means of transit, and nationalisation of land.
>
> German socialists, organised in the Verein Vorwärts Socialisten, had been meeting

in Melbourne since September 1887.

The path of the socialist groups was not an easy one. An attempt to publish a newspaper called the *Socialist* in NSW went well for a while but ran into financial difficulties due, to a large extent, to the slump in sales in the Newcastle district when the miners went on strike in 1896.

The first socialist society in Queensland, the Bellamy Society, was formed by William Lane in 1890, during the Maritime Strike. It was based on the teachings of American journalist Edward Bellamy, published in *Looking Backward*. It was a utopian blueprint of a future socialist society. After the Bellamy Society collapsed, a Queensland Social Democratic Federation was established in 1892; it published pamphlets and was very active for a time.[18]

The development of these early socialist organisations occurred within the context of the great radical and labour unrest of the late 1880s and early 1990s. In these years, a plethora of new ideas found acceptance in Australia, from Henry George and his land tax theories, to the gradualist socialism of the English Fabians, such as George Bernard Shaw, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb.

The rise of socialist, including Marxist, ideas received impetus during the maritime strike of 1890, and the great shearers' strikes of 1891 and 1894.

Ernest Lane could write of this period some decades later:

During the early 1890s, during the strikes and their bitter aftermath of suffering and humiliation, a revolutionary situation undoubtedly existed in Australia. All things seemed possible, and it is little wonder that the thoughts of those in the vanguard turned towards revolutionary action.[19]

Whatever the reality of this judgement, the historic class confrontation of the early 1890s gave major impetus to radical and socialist ideas.

Ernest's more famous brother William Lane was a key leader of the movement, both politically and industrially, during the early 1890s strikes. He sought to identify socialism with the mass of the working class.

Convinced that the rapidly expanding and militant trade union movement in Australia was the basis for the ideal future society, he threw himself into labour organising work. In 1889 he took a leading part in the formation of the Australian Labour Federation which hoped to create a united working-class industrial and political organisation. The following year he persuaded the Queensland section of the federation to adopt a political program centring round a socialist objective.[20]

Lane was the first editor of the Brisbane-based union paper, *The Worker*.

With the eventual defeat of the 1891 shearers' strikes, and because of the unclarity of his ideas about implementing socialism, Lane finally abandoned the socialist project

in Australia and sailed off to Paraguay to establish his "New Australia" utopian commune.

He left for Paraguay in 1893, taking many of the militant socialists under his influence with him. "New Australia" — not unexpectedly — did not survive, and Lane ended his days, disillusioned, working for a conservative newspaper in New Zealand.

Lane's later destination on the right of politics had, however, been presaged by the extreme contradiction of his "socialist" views combined with deep racism.

He vigorously opposed Chinese immigration and the continuation of the Melanesian indentured labour trade in 1892. He used the most inflammatory language to attack Chinese in Australia, and condemned "Black labour" as threatening the racial purity of the nation.

Lane's distorted view of the white bushmen and rural labourers as the sole saviours of socialism in Australia was a fatal flaw in his vision of the future society — and one which was to represent an ongoing problem within the labour movement over time.

## 'State socialism'

Notwithstanding Lane's contradictory influence, there is no doubt that large sections of the labour movement of the early 1890s mobilised under the slogan, Socialism in Our Time. They believed in the inevitable and imminent end of capitalism.

However, as Burgmann argues:

The experience of the maritime strike turned most reformist socialists into state socialists. They concluded that the solution to the ills of the working class was the complete nationalisation of all the means of production, distribution and exchange, to be affected by working class representation in parliament, by the formation of labour parties. This indicated a change in strategy on the part of reformist socialists.

Previously, they had mostly envisaged the gradual and peaceful transition to socialism as occurring through the building up of a system of cooperatives, of worker-owned and worker-controlled enterprises in production and distribution of all manner of commodities. This kind of socialism differed from the utopian socialism of William Lane, as it sought, not to create one single community in a remote location that would convince the world that socialist living was possible and desirable, but to build step by step and within the immediate capitalist environment, cooperatives based on different kinds of industry, until the cooperatives had out-competed the capitalist enterprises, and the reign of true socialism begun. Many reformist socialists clung to the cooperativist strategy throughout the 1890s, even evincing a dislike for the new-found statist style of reformist socialism.[21]

Moreover, Burgmann notes:

State socialists worked devotedly to build the Labor Parties in the respective colonies, and in all colonies except Tasmania, they were a significant force in the early development of these parties. Laborism, the working-class but nonsocialist outlook enunciated by the conservative wing of the trade union movement, was comparatively uninspiring as a mobilising agent …

The hopes of socialists within the Labor Parties were dashed, and astonishingly quickly …

The state socialists failed dramatically to realise "Socialism in Our Time" through parliament, and in attempting to do so, did much to disarm the forces of first-wave socialism.[22]

Movement in Victoria

In NSW and Victoria, the small socialist organisations were unable to make substantial headway against the major developments in the union movement and the push for a Labor Party.

In 1897, the Victorian Socialists' League was founded, was active for a time, and then joined the SLP.

The VSL "forged strong links with the Melbourne Trades Hall Council and achieved prominence in labour circles by promoting the visit of British trade unionist Ben Tillett in 1898". A number of League members became involved in the radical newspaper *Tocsin*, which later emerged as the official voice of Victorian Labor under the name of *Labor Call*.

A further development occurred after [British socialist unionist] Tom Mann's arrival in Australia in late 1902. Mann, like Tillett before him, had been schooled in the diverse currents of thought that had constituted the socialist movement in Britain. He brought with him to Australia a strong trade union background, an international outlook, and an unquenchable enthusiasm for creating effective socialist movements. Surveying the Australian situation he decided that what was most needed was a widespread socialist consciousness, and he set about creating a socialist party that could carry out propaganda among the workers, and through them influence the Labor Party. Labor politicians were, Mann decided, capable of being moved by pressure from the rank and file towards a strongly socialist stance. To tread the path of the ASL and create a separate working-class political organisation and fail to recognise Labor as a possible vehicle of socialism would mean that socialists "should soon become doctrinaire, exclusive, pedantic, and narrow and therefore … comparatively useless and perhaps even mischievous".[23]

This view, of course, undoubtedly indicates a critical turning point in the history of the Australian labour and socialist movement.

The mirage of turning the ALP qualitatively toward a "strongly socialist stance"

has continued to this day. The view that attempting to build a revolutionary socialist party, separate from the Labor Party, is necessarily sectarian, has been the bane of the Australian labour movement since that time.

And the struggle to forge such an independent socialist party has continued, via many twists and turns, for the past century, and goes on today.

In 1905, Mann led the formation of the Victorian Socialist Party. According to Churchward:

> Its membership had, within two years, reached 1500, and its influence over a number of years was greater than any socialist organisation prior to the Communist Party. In the first 12 months of its existence, the Victorian Socialist Party organised 500 public meetings, while *The Socialist*, which started in 1906, soon reached a circulation of thousands …
>
> Mann was also the first to promote the unification of socialist organisations in Australia, his efforts in this direction leading to an Interstate Socialist Conference in 1907 (representing seven socialist organisations) which established the Socialist Federation of Australia. This federation included all the important socialist organisations of the time, with the exception of the Socialist Labor Party. In 1910, the SFA reorganised itself as the Australian Socialist Party.[24]

## Rapid growth

From 1907 onward, the socialist movement was growing rapidly in membership, and a number of socialist publications were disseminating its ideas to a wider audience. Churchward summarises the situation:

> The successes of the reformist ALP in the first 20 years of its political history were indeed remarkable, but they left many workers unsatisfied. The action of the Australian Socialist League in detaching itself from the Labor Party in 1898 was essentially a protest of a socialist minority against the dominant reformism of the Labor Party. Its action had little support from ALP members, but in the early years of the 20th century socialist organisations were expanding and developing considerable mass support, as evidenced by the Victorian Socialist Party after 1905 and by the formation of the Socialist Federation of Australia in 1907. The militant — to some extent socialist — tradition of the Australian labor movement, which had been somewhat at a discount since 1894, recovered quickly in 1907 and in the following years. It was evident in the increasing criticism by the industrial wing (especially in Queensland and New South Wales) of the opportunism of many Labor politicians. It was shown by the trenchant criticism that many unionists made of the arbitration system. It was reflected in the sudden growth of the militant direct-actionist Industrial Workers of the World in

Australia. Above all, it was demonstrated by the major strike struggles which studded the industrial history of Australia in the decade after 1907 — the Broken Hill strike of 1908, the Queensland general strike of 1912, and NSW transport strike in 1917. Finally, it was shown in the increased support for socialism, a development strengthened by the October Revolution in Russia in 1917, and recorded in the founding of the Australian Communist Party in 1920 and in the adoption of the Socialist Objective by the ALP in 1921.

The wave of militancy, which lasted from 1907 to about 1921, was not merely the product of disillusionment with Labor reformism. Its economic basis was the intensification of the monopoly trend in Australian industry in these years (as indicated by such developments as the establishment of the BHP steel monopoly), the increasing exploitation of labor and a marked decline in real wages. With such economic developments, the class struggle inevitably intensified, and with the intensification of the class struggle there came a stronger challenge to reformism and a stronger interest in socialism.[25]

Meanwhile, although it adopted a socialisation objective of sorts, partly under the pressure of the socialist organisations, for the ALP, the "Australian variety of Fabianism became the official Labor ideology and served as theoretical justification for a party which embraced land reformers, trade unionists, liberals, and nationalists, as well as ideologue socialists".[26]

In practice, the ALP leadership pursued a racist, nationalist course, vigorously defending the White Australia policy, culminating in then Labor Prime Minister Andrew Fisher's infamous pledge at the outbreak of World War I in August 1914, "to stand beside [Britain] to help and defend her to our very last man and our last shilling".

On the other hand, as Farrell observes:

The trend of developments was very different on labour's left wing. Just as the Labor Party's socialism was increasingly tempered by moderation and popular Australian nationalism, so the far left increasingly took unto itself current overseas brands of Marxism and internationalism. The influences were American, European, and to a lesser extent British. America undoubtedly made the greatest impact, and Marx's basic texts jostled beside such writers as Daniel de Leon, Jack London, Eugene Debs, and E.A. Trautman in a virtual cascade of books from the Kerr & Co. press of Chicago.[27]

Previously, as many commentators have noted, the intellectual influences on the Australian left movement had been more from the utopian socialist or British Fabian direction than from a Marxist viewpoint.

Nevertheless, the works of Karl Marx were widely read by socialist-minded workers. Mary Cameron (later Dame Mary Gilmore) who followed Lane to his utopian

colony in Paraguay, recalled in 1950 of the 1890s period: "I often used to see working men in the trams reading Marx or Engels and carrying a dictionary to help them out."

On the other hand, the prominent ASL and union leader Harry Holland claimed that to study Marx, one required "a hard seat, a bare table, and a head swathed in wet, ice-cold towels".

Thus, the famous study of Australia by the French reformist socialist Albert Metin at the turn of the 20th century, entitled *Socialism without Doctrines*, was probably an exaggeration. His statement that "Australasia has contributed little to social philosophy but she has gone further than any other land whatever along the road of social experimentation", has an element of truth about it, but also overstates the case.

Churchward notes that:

Knowledge of the writings of Lenin in Australia is strictly a post-1917 development. Nevertheless, the progress of the Russian revolutionary movement was followed with interest and sympathy at least by the more radical sections of the Australian labour movement, as is evidenced by the resolution carried at the First Australian Interstate Socialist Conference in July 1907.[28]

## Internationalism

The founding of the Socialist Labor Party in Australia occurred under the influence of the US socialist leader Daniel De Leon — establishing, as Farrell puts it, "a party which could stand uncompromisingly for socialism and revolutionary change and thus give consistent and unwavering direction to the organisation of the working class".[29]

The SLP stood against the ALP in a number of elections on a policy of "uncompromising socialism", with limited success in terms of votes.

In addition, the 1905 founding of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the United States had a major impact in Australia. Debate ensued among the various socialist organisations about the IWW program of One Big Union, and the attitude to take in relation to the Labor Party.

The establishment of the IWW in Australia accelerated a movement towards industrial unionism and opposition to the ALP.

Formation of a "new" IWW in Chicago in 1911 led to a burgeoning of anarchist-style politics in Australia, and the decline of De Leonist syndicalist ideas in this country.

The "Wobblies", as the IWW was called, favoured "direct action" by the working class on the job, namely "sabotage, go-slow tactics, job control, strikes and any and every method of waging the class war in direct confrontation with the wage system".

The Wobblies were also committed to organising One Big Union of the working class, so "forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old".[30]

At the same time, international socialist opposition to militarism and war began to blend in with traditional antimilitarist sentiments of the labour movement.

This antiwar feeling increasingly focused on opposition to conscription for military service. However, despite the growing antiwar movement from the left, the Labor Party under leader Billie Hughes strongly supported the declaration of war in August 1914.

Opposition from the small socialist parties was initially overwhelmed by a tide of patriotism.

However, as Farrell explains:

> Slowly at first, but with increasing momentum after the conscription crisis of 1916, the labour movement moved away from the discredited proconscription outlook, and rejected both the leading Labor politicians of prewar years and the reformist and Fabian methods of political activity they had championed. By the end of World War I left-wing groups were a dominating influence in labour affairs, and the unions particularly had fallen under the hegemony of quasisyndicalist doctrines of militant and international socialism.[31]

As the war progressed, tensions within the labour movement increased. Industrial and political militancy accelerated within the unions and working class generally.

The defeat of Hughes' first referendum on conscription in October 1916 led to a split in the ALP, with Hughes crossing the floor to form a new conservative coalition government with the Liberals.

The victimisation of 12 IWW leaders in the infamous frame-up arson trial in Sydney during August 1917 gave further impetus to a leftward move within the general labour movement.

The idea of One Big Union was popularised very widely as disillusionment with the ALP intensified in the wake of the defeat of the NSW general strike of 1917.

Workers' unrest over economic and industrial issues, and hostility to open profiteering by big business from the war, was growing apace.

The parties of the radical left grew during this time, with the IWW reaching a membership of at least 2000 in 1916.

However, the major impact of these organisations was their "ideological hegemony over the wider labour movement".[32] Opposition to the war and anticapitalist sentiment was widespread in the community by 1917.

The "Red Flag Riots" of 1918-19 in Brisbane were one indicator, not only of the strength of radical — even revolutionary — ideas, but of the growing hysteria of the conservatives over the "threat of communism". During this period, anticommunist rioters attacked a community of pro-Bolshevik Russian *émigrés* living in South Brisbane, following the defiant display of red flags by militant workers at rallies and marches led

by the IWW and the Russians.

The impact of the October 1917 Revolution in Russia was like a thunderclap in the volatile social and political climate of the time. It occurred when "pervading a movement now dominated by unionists and left-wing groups was a spirit of socialism and internationalism quite without equal in labour's history".[33] ∎

# The Industrial Workers of the World[34]

According to V. Gordon Childe, in his classic 1923 work, *How Labour Governs*:

> The most momentous event in the political industrial history of Australian labour, since the historic decision in favour of political action in 1890, was the establishment of locals of the IWW. No body has exercised a more profound influence on the whole outlook of labour in Australia.[35]

The Wobblies were active from 1907, reaching a maximum formal membership of at least 2000 in 1916 with many thousands more supporters, until they were smashed by government repression in 1917.

The Wobblies' internationalism and antibureaucratic militant unionism, their One Big Union plan and their uncompromising antiwar activity during World War I, are unique in Australian socialist history.

## US birthplace

In Cripple Creek, Colorado, copper miners engaged in strenuous and dangerous work sought an eight-hour day. After attempting to use formal channels and getting nowhere, they struck. They were defeated, but the experience of this and other struggles inspired the leader of the Western US miners "Big" Bill Haywood to seek a more effective trade union organisation than that offered by the American Federation of Labor (AFL).

At the same time, leading socialists such as Daniel De Leon of the Socialist Labor Party and Eugene Debs of the Socialist Party of America saw in the new movement an opportunity for socialists to forge better links with working-class militants.

Accordingly, the IWW Founding Convention was held in 1905 in Chicago, with Bill Haywood presiding. He announced: "This is the Continental Congress of the working class. We are here to confederate the workers of this country into a working class movement that shall have for its purpose the emancipation of the working class from the slave bondage of capitalism."

The IWW founding constitution preamble declared: "The working class and the

employing class have nothing in common … Between these two classes a struggle must go on until all the workers come together on the political, as well as on the industrial field, and take and hold" of the industries of the country.

According to US socialist pioneer James P. Cannon: "These were the most uncompromising, the most unambiguous declarations of revolutionary intention ever issued in this country up to that time."[36]

However, in 1908 the IWW split, with a majority of the militant workers resentful at attempts by the De Leonite SLP to dominate the movement. The majority Chicago-based IWW successfully moved a resolution to delete reference to the "political" field from the aims of the organisation.

The SLP section under De Leon withdrew and established a separate headquarters in Detroit. The larger "nonpolitical", "direct-actionist" section remained based in Chicago.

Verity Burgmann's excellent book, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia*, is the major source for the material in this account of the Australian IWW. She observes:

> Although the movement drew some of its ideas and much of its revolutionary vocabulary from the European syndicalist movements, the development of the IWW was rooted in American experience and shaped by American events. Its emergence was an intelligent response from within the labour movement to the increasing centralisation of American capital and industry, a concentration of labour power to meet a concentration of ownership. The AFL was deemed the "American Separation of Labor" by those who presumed to replace this cautious and clumsy confederation of craft unions with industry-based unions that would in time become mere departments of one big union for all workers.[37]

## IWW clubs in Australia

The first favourable response to the US IWW in Australia came from the socialist organisations. In June 1907, a conference of socialist groups held in Melbourne unanimously resolved "that the time has arrived for the reorganisation of the Australian working class on the lines of the Industrial Workers of the World".

However, that's where the agreement ended. The Socialist Labour Party argued that the only "scientific" basis for unity was for the other socialist bodies to accept the revolutionary principles, methods and tactics of the SLP.

When the other organisations refused, the SLP withdrew from the unity process. The Socialist Federation of Australasia (SFA) which emerged from the conference consisted only of the Victorian Socialist Party in Melbourne, the International Socialists

in Sydney and the Barrier Socialist Propaganda Group in Broken Hill, with the SLP in implacable opposition to the SFA.

The initial steps in setting up IWW clubs in Australia were largely taken by the SLP, under De Leonite political control.

> The IWW clubs urged the working class "to vigorously prosecute its emancipatory mission on the political as well as on the industrial field". De Leon had enunciated the "sword and shield" concept of working-class emancipation: industrial action would wrest control of industry from the capitalists, while political action, by neutralising the state apparatus, would defend this action. The clubs therefore maintained the necessity of revolutionary political action, "not to endeavour the absurd and impossible task of gradually ending exploitation by reform legislation; but in order to attack the possessing class in its parliamentary stronghold, and to use the political arena for the purpose of legalising the workers' industrial struggle". To take and hold the means of production as collective property required both the political and industrial arms of the movement. Apart, then, from voting for the SLP, workers should join the IWW clubs, which would continue as a propaganda and educative force until the IWW could become launched as an industrial union with a minimum membership of 5000.[38]

With its sectarian schema, which put forward the idea of a party based on small groups of theoretically pure disciples, isolated in reality from the mass movement, the SLP was determined to dominate the IWW clubs, in practice if not in theory. Because of its doctrinal rigidity and authoritarian organisational methods, the SLP soon alienated other socialists and rebellious workers attracted to the original IWW clubs.

The first IWW club was established in Sydney in October 1907, with clubs in Cobar, NSW and the Hunter Region formed around the same time. The Melbourne IWW club was set up in August 1908.

As Burgmann points out, union membership in Australia trebled between 1901 and 1909 while the number of unions doubled. This led to increasing demarcation disputes. Meanwhile, the employers were becoming more unified by forming industry-wide associations.

The growth of Australia's unique form of federal industrial arbitration system increasingly constricted the unions, with workers' wages falling behind inflation, and penal clauses threatening strikers.

Militants within the union movement opposed resort to arbitration, arguing that workers should rely on their own industrial strength to make gains.

There was an increasing receptivity to the IWW message, that only industrial unionism could provide "the power of the closed fist of class unionism as opposite to the weakness of the limp and open hand of class disunity — craft unionism".[39]

Gollan explains that the IWW operated somewhat differently in the US compared to Australia: in the US the IWW was seen as an alternative to existing unions, the IWW in Australia in practice proposed the linking of separate unions within the same industry and lessening the influence of the numerous small craft unions.

> IWW club recruits were typically unskilled or semiskilled male workers. The clubs gained their greatest popularity on the coalfields to the north and south of Sydney, amongst miners prepared by generations of industrial struggle for IWW ideas …[40]

Conflict between the IWW and both the established trade union and Labor Party leaderships intensified, with the IWW accusing union bureaucrats of occupying "comfortable positions on the backs of the workers", and by backing the electoral ambitions of the ALP, "the unions were converted into feeders for the politicians".

In return, Labor politicians attacked the IWW. Billie Hughes, for example, alleged in 1908 that the IWW favoured methods which promised "violence" and "bloodshed".

VSP secretary Tom Mann became a vocal supporter of industrial unionism, but remained outside the actual IWW clubs because of their link to the SLP.

"I was in keen sympathy with the IWW which at that time was growing vigorously in the USA, and also with syndicalism then growing rapidly in Italy and France", Mann later recalled.

In line with the industrialists generally, he regretted that "undue importance has been attached to political action", and that "reliance on parliamentary action would never bring freedom" — making an identification between "political" and "parliamentary" action, which would later be a hallmark (and contradiction) of the Chicago Wobblies.[41]

In the end, the association of the original IWW clubs with the sectarian SLP became the source of their downfall. The way was being prepared in the course of the class struggle for the emergence of the new, "direct actionist" IWW.

## Chicago IWW 1910-14

Following the split in the IWW in 1908 in the US, it was not long before the "wild men from Yankeeland" arrived in Australia. The political situation here was ready for a massive shake-up, and the Chicago Wobblies certainly provided it.

Various factors assisted the rapid development of the new, "nonpolitical" IWW in Australia.

Firstly, independent socialist parties had fared poorly in state and federal elections around this time. The VSP, for example, received less than 90 votes in two state seats in Melbourne in late 1908 and Harry Holland had scored a low vote running for the SFA against Billie Hughes in the West Sydney federal electorate in 1910. (The absence

of preferential voting at that time no doubt reduced the potential socialist vote.)

Only in Senate and state upper house elections did the socialist parties get a reasonable result.

This lack of electoral success for independent socialist candidates against the ALP strengthened the hand of the "nonpolitical" IWW.

But more importantly, it was the very electoral success of the Labor Party which gave great impetus to the new Chicago IWW in Australia. The workers in this country were the first to experience the treachery of Labor governments — well before Britain and completely out of the political experience of US working people.

Disillusionment between militant workers and the ALP grew markedly, especially after 1910, with strikebreaking moves by both federal and state Labor governments.

The IWW became the rallying point for working-class resistance to the Labor and trade union right wing. As Ernie Lane recalls: "The IWW, comprising the vanguard of working-class revolt, was regarded — and treated — by this latter section of Labor as a deadly enemy."

> The Chicago IWW developed within the shell of the old IWW clubs because working-class socialist activists, many of them associated with the SFA, felt that the Detroit strategy for revolution would repeat the mistake made when militant workers forsook industrial action and founded the Labor Party. Moreover, the IWW clubs were increasingly the domain of the SLP; they had become propagandist bodies more concerned with upholding formally correct positions than engaging in militant activity to promote industrial unionism.[42]

In May 1911, activists in Adelaide formed the first local of the new Chicagoist IWW. Sydney followed in October that year. The Sydney group meetings grew from 25 to 89 people attending within two months.

After Tom Glynn arrived from South Africa in 1912, the Sydney local declared itself opposed to any form of "parliamentary action". By November 1913, there were 199 members in good financial standing in the Sydney group.

In January 1914, the Sydney local began publication of *Direct Action*, official newspaper of the Australian administration of the Chicagoist IWW.

Recent immigrants such as Glynn, Charles Reeve, Donald Grant and J.B. King swelled the IWW ranks — and were many of the organisation's best public speakers. The global movement of migrant workers in the early 20th-century period of capitalist growth was a notable feature of the development of the Wobbly phenomenon internationally.

These speakers drew huge crowds with their passionate street speeches and biting satire, and helped the rapid recruitment experienced by the IWW at that time.

Locals were soon set up around the country. In WA, Fremantle was founded in 1914, with Perth in 1915. Melbourne was also established in 1915.

The Brisbane local was founded in 1915, a Russian-based local in Cairns in 1916 and Mount Morgan in 1917. Queensland's big strength was not so much in the formal membership of locals but in the huge number of Wobbly itinerant workers, who spread the message all over the countryside, taking *Direct Action* and other literature with them.

Meanwhile, the other socialist groups were in the process of differentiating themselves from the Chicago IWW.

In 1912, after the VSP split away, the SFA renamed itself the Australian Socialist Party (ASP). It continued to support the Chicago locals for a while, but during 1913 became hostile to the "direct actionists".

> On the left, two distinct blocs had formed by the time the winds of war were felt. On the one hand, there was the Chicago IWW, loud and energetic, calling on militant workers to abandon all faith in politicians, Labor or socialist; on the other, there was the Detroit IWW and its close allies in the SLP and the ASP, small but smug, denouncing "the Bummery" at every opportunity and imploring the working class to send them, as true socialists, to parliament in the place of Labor MPs.[43]

But the clubs and the socialist parties were stagnating, and the Chicago IWW were about to launch into a massive assault on the control of the Laborites on the trade unions and the political agenda of the labour movement.

## What the IWW stood for

The IWW emerged in the early part of last century as a product of the rising class struggle associated with the rapid development of capitalism in the new, English-speaking imperialist countries — notably the US and Australia.

It was partly a reaction by socialists and militant workers to the revisionists of official social-democracy and Laborism, who were increasingly attempting to accommodate the working class to the needs of capitalism.

According to Burgmann:

> Most commonly the Wobblies are classified as syndicalists or anarcho-syndicalists, because they shared with this movement a belief that socialism was the administration of industry directly by the workers themselves and was not a form of government or state. Moreover, socialism, to Wobblies and syndicalists alike, could only be achieved by workers acting in their capacity as workers and through their unions or syndicats, and not by proxy either through representatives in parliament or a revolutionary seizure of state power.[44]

That said, "the Australian IWW maintained a critical distance from syndicalism and anarcho-syndicalism". Both leading Wobblies and the anarchists themselves agreed that the IWW had too many rules for the anarchists' liking, and that the IWW was counterposed to the anarchists because of its "political practice, which emphasised collectivity, unity, organisation and centralisation".

> In many ways, the IWW was more classically Marxist than syndicalist, anarcho-syndicalist or anarchist; it frequently and fulsomely acknowledged the profound influence of Marxism on its outlook and strategies.[45]

Yet, the Wobblies can not be fully described as Marxists: they were "revolutionary industrial unionists", Burgmann concludes.[46]

James P. Cannon points out that the declaration by the US Wobblies against "political action" does not fit in with their actual practice, which was intensely "political", in the best sense of the term.

Cannon accurately explains the essential character of the IWW in its unreconciled "duality":

> One of the most important contradictions of the IWW, implanted at its first convention, and never resolved, was the dual role it assigned to itself. Not the least of the reasons for the eventual failure of the IWW — as an organisation — was its attempt to be both a union of all workers and a propaganda society of selected revolutionists — in essence a revolutionary party. Two different tasks and functions, which, at a certain stage of development, require separate and distinct organisations, were assumed by the IWW alone; and this duality hampered its effectiveness in both fields. All that, and many other things, are clearer now than they were then to the leading militants of the IWW — or anyone else in this country …
>
> In truth, the IWW in its time of glory was neither a union nor a party in the full meaning of these terms, but something of both, with some parts missing. It was an uncompleted anticipation of a Bolshevik party, lacking its rounded-out theory, and a projection of the revolutionary industrial unions of the future, minus the necessary mass membership. It was the IWW.[47]

Burgmann summarises the Wobblies' own conception of their political project thus:

> The IWW's three-stage strategy for social transformation was: education, organisation, emancipation. It aimed, firstly, to educate the working class into an understanding of its exploited position in capitalist society and to inspire workers with a class-conscious determination to end this wage slavery; secondly, it aspired to organise the working class, now educated, into industrial unions, not craft unions, ultimately joined together in the One Big Union, containing all the country's workers; finally, it planned that this One Big Union, the ultimate attainment of proletarian solidarity, would emancipate

the working class, and bring freedom from wage slavery, by assuming control of the means of production, distribution and exchange. In the content of its education, the form of its organisation and its concept of emancipation, the IWW developed its own unique and coherent approach of revolutionary industrial unionism, while owing its greatest philosophical debt to Marx.[48]

The Wobblies espoused Marx's economic theories, stressing the role of exploitation and creation of surplus value under capitalism. The IWW also emphasised its own role as an organisation in building class-consciousness among the workers to prepare them to take class power from the employers.

The 1906 Convention [of the US IWW] had inserted a new phrase into the Preamble: "By organising industrially, we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old." The IWW was to be both the embryo of the new society and the revolutionary instrument for achieving it …

The Immediate Demands of the [Australian] IWW maintained that the first step in the revolutionary process was to make immediate demands in regard to wages, hours and conditions and to fight for them; and the building of industrial unions to serve as organs of production and distribution in the new society, the ultimate function of the IWW, was the second step.[49]

This transitional view, linking the struggle for reform with revolution, marked an important difference with the Detroit IWW and the SLP, and helps explain the greater success of the Chicago Wobblies. The De Leonites rejected the struggle for immediate demands, instead concentrating on the abstract call for the immediate realisation of socialism — a recipe for sectarian irrelevance.

## Who were the Wobblies?

The origins of the term Wobbly are shrouded in mystery, but a distinctive image of the IWW member has grown up over the years.

IWW leader Tom Barker wrote: "Let us get to work, we of the Industrial Workers of the World, we, the countryless, the pariahs, the hobos, the migratory workers …"

Childe notes that the program of the IWW was drawn up to meet the needs of the semiskilled nomadic worker of the western United States; in Australia there was a precisely similar class, the unskilled worker who roved about the bush to mines or railway-construction works, harvesting cane and grain or picking fruit, or taking casual employment in meatworks or shearing sheds … Churchward, too, stresses that, though there was no section of the workforce equivalent to the disenfranchised immigrant workers of the United States, there were similar economic conditions experienced by many Australians in mining and outback occupations such as timber-

getting and construction works. And it was amongst such workers that the IWW achieved its greatest support in both countries …

> The IWW, *Direct Action* announced [in 1914], "carries on its agitation principally amongst the unskilled workers. By organising the lowest-paid workers and gaining better conditions for them, it has the tendency to force the higher-paid grades and 'aristocrats of labour' to get busy and fight for more concessions if they would keep ahead of the 'common labourer'."[50]

Many Wobblies were migrants, especially union militants from other English-speaking countries, partly thanks to the lack of restrictions on movement around the British Empire at that time. The IWW was proud of its "foreign" membership, and this multinational composition undoubtedly contributed greatly to the internationalist spirit of the organisation.

P.J. O'Farrell writes of the Australian IWW that it recruited "the self-educated workman with his elementary library of books on history and philosophy, his enthusiasm for 'useful learning', his dislike of authority, and his sanguine or emotional belief in the perfectability of man".[51]

> Cannon clearly contrasts the potential with the actual basis of the IWW in the US:
> The IWW plan of organisation was made to order for modern mass production industry in the eastern half of the country, where the main power of the workers was concentrated. But the power of the exploiting class was concentrated there too, and organising the workers against the entrenched corporations was easier said than done …
>
> The organisation never succeeded in establishing stable unions among the workers in modern machine industry in the industrially developed East. On the contrary, its predominant activity expanded along the lines of least resistance on the peripheral western fringes of the country, which at that time were still under construction. The IWW found a readier response to its appeal and recruited its main cadres among the marginal and migratory workers in that region.[52]

A comparable trend can be noted in Australia, all proportions guarded.

The Wobblies in Australia did establish a certain base in the industrialised coastal cities, and also in established mining centres such as Broken Hill, Boulder and Mount Isa. And the IWW's strongest local by far was in the Sydney region.

Moreover, the more advanced stage of the union and labour movement in Australia meant the IWW was able to operate more effectively within the existing union framework than in the US.

## Challenge to racism

The birth of the IWW was the first time a coherent antiracist viewpoint had been

developed in the Australian labour movement. Other socialist groups had either ignored or adapted to the racist ideology and practice deeply embedded in the movement, but the Wobblies took the race question head-on.

The Federal Labor Conference of 1905 had adopted as the first of its two main objectives: "The cultivation of an Australian sentiment based on the maintenance of racial purity." In 1908 it added: "Maintenance of White Australia" as first item on its fighting platform.

> The IWW, on the other hand, inherited the American IWW's hostility to racism as an ideology that divided workers at the point of production. Antiracism was essential to the revolutionary method of the IWW: workers could take and hold the means of production only if the ultimate form of solidarity, the One Big Union, had been reached; this was a strategy dependent upon the breaking down of all divisions between workers. Opposition to racism was crucial to the formation of the One Big Union; and the One Big Union would not be complete without the workers of all nationalities and races.[53]

The IWW had a dramatic effect on the other socialist groups in Australia, convincing them to reverse their previous positions.

For example, the SLP had run in the 1901 new Commonwealth elections under a hard-line racist policy, attempting to outflank even the ALP: "To vote, then, for a White Australia, is to vote for the Socialist Labor Party. This party alone stands for a White Australia, owned and controlled by white workers."

The SLP admitted that racism was a capitalist device used to divide workers, but argued that the "race problem" would simply disappear under socialism: the best way for workers to prevent race antagonism was to abolish the capitalist system and its evils at the ballot box — by voting SLP.

The impact of the IWW caused the SLP to change their line that the electoral process was enough, and that the ballot had to be backed up by "the organised economic might of the working class", as set forth in the 1905 Preamble of the IWW. As a consequence, the SLP at last considered racism a problem: "The IWW is right; it is the true economic organisation. It embraces all workers — skilled and unskilled — black, white, brown or yellow. Its door is open to all honest wageworkers."[54]

The influence of the IWW also changed the attitudes of other socialist organisations on the race issue; for example, the Sydney-based International Socialists, and through them their federal organisation the ASP. From largely ignoring the race issue, the ASP declared itself in 1910 opposed to the ALP's demand for a White Australia Policy as "a claptrap election cry".

*Direct Action* called on workers to support the internationalism inherent in classical

Marxist ideology: "Contrast the narrow parochial outlook evidenced by the 'White Australia' policy with the world-oriented outlook of Karl Marx, when he sent his famous cry ringing down the ages: 'Workers of all countries, unite!'"

> The paper argued, with very modern relevance, against immigration restrictions:
>
> The arrival in the country every year, of thousands of immigrants, is thought by the average wage-slave to be the cause of unemployment, but they forget that this curse is worldwide, and that these workers have themselves been forced to leave the land of their birth by the unemployment existing there … The real cause of unemployment is because the workers have not reduced the hours of their labour in proportion to the productivity of the machine.[55]

The Wobblies also criticised protectionism for Australian-owned industry, arguing it was merely like saying it was all right to be robbed by a white boss, but not a coloured one.

Their positive attitude encouraged many immigrants to join. In September 1916, the Broken Hill local appointed organisers to work among the Italian, Russian and Bulgarian members and translated literature into the relevant languages.

The Sydney local's library contained 600 books in the Russian language, for the benefit of members the many prorevolutionary Russian members who had largely escaped tsarism after the defeat of the 1905 Revolution an all-Russian local was established in Cairns.

The IWW organised Malay, Filipino and Japanese workers in Darwin, and translated the IWW Preamble into Chinese.

## Supporting women workers

"Wanted, recruits, male and female, for the Industrial Workers of the World. Must be determined, unscrupulous, and unafraid of gaol or death", read one Wobbly advertisement.

The IWW "aimed to incorporate women organisationally and encourage their militancy industrially. Just as there were no barriers of race, neither were there any barriers of sex 'to entrance into its fighting ranks', which were 'ever open for red-blooded men and women of the working class'."[56]

The IWW were far ahead of the other socialist groups of the day in demanding equal pay for women, and joining women wage workers up. Women's exploitation at work and in the home was recognised, and had to be responded to by organising the class struggle.

However, in accordance with its rules, the IWW could only join up women who were wage-workers. This hindered the organising of the wives of male workers, but

also disbarred self-employed men from formal membership.

In practice, there was a gap between talk of including women in the organisation and making women feel included. On the other hand, women were much more involved in everyday public activity in the Wobblies than women in the socialist parties of the time, where they mostly did the banner-sewing, catering and fundraising.

Some prominent women IWW leaders included Annie Westbrook in Perth, May Ewart in Sydney, and Lesbia Keogh, also in Sydney.

Ewart was eventually convicted under the Unlawful Associations Act in 1917 for her political work. Keogh was a law graduate who became active in the Clothing and Allied Trades Union and spoke regularly against conscription.

After the suppression of the IWW in 1917, many more women joined the organisation and became active as the men were arrested and jailed. Lena Lynch set about training more women speakers, but was promptly arrested herself.

The ideal male-female relationship envisaged by the Wobblies is depicted in the well-known song, "The Rebel Girl", with the rebel boy and the rebel girl "fighting for freedom" together.

> The IWW thus took issue with feminist movements that asserted the common interests of all women against all men, the rebel girls' common cause was not with women but with men of their own class.[57]

However, the Wobblies supported many feminist struggles in practice, including strong backing for the women's suffrage movement. They also supported the movement for birth control and strongly criticised the "capitalist moralisers" over questions of sex.

While, in accordance with the times, the IWW had a somewhat one-sided focus on struggles in the workplace for equal pay and jobs over other feminist issues, there can be no doubt of their advanced position in comparison to the rest of the organised left and labour movement of the period.

## IWW organisation

Critics have pointed out that the IWW stressed the need for working-class organisation more than it achieved this in practice. While the IWW never organised on a permanent basis, with full-time organisers and a solid financial base like the future Communist Party, for example, it was very serious about organising the labour movement for the coming One Big Union.

The IWW stressed full participation of members in decision-making, with final decisions — binding on all members — taken by majority vote. This is similar in principle to the "democratic centralism" of the Russian Bolshevik Party — and a long way from the organisational ideas of anarchism.

"Unity in resolution and action, but only after a democratic process of arriving at decisions, would achieve IWW ambitions. The Wobblies saw organisation and democracy as complementary not antagonistic", Burgmann comments.[58]

Similar to the plan advocated by Lenin in 1902, the IWW newspaper *Direct Action* became the "scaffolding" within which the revolutionary organisation developed. Tom Barker maintains that the main sources of income for the Wobblies was from sales of *Direct Action* and associated pamphlets.

*Direct Action* cost one penny for four pages of short articles, news and commentary, together with Syd Nicholls' excellent satirical cartoons, and was produced by voluntary labour by members, mostly at night after work. The paper went weekly from October 1915.

Estimates of *Direct Action* circulation vary widely, but Burgmann states a realistic maximum in October 1916 would be around 9000. However, it terms of readership this figure should be double or trebled to account for the very popular paper being passed from hand to hand by militant workers all around the country.

Most *Direct Action*s were sold at meetings, including big street meetings. The Sydney local sometimes sold 1000 papers at one Sunday afternoon meeting in the Domain.

Outdoor meetings were held weekly in the Domain, Melbourne's Yarra Bank, and popular sites in the other major cities. Most locals held regular public speakers' classes to train up new speakers — who were invariably colourful, witty and emotional.

During ongoing struggles for free speech, when the authorities tried to ban the IWW from speaking in public places, the Wobblies created havoc by being prepared to fill up the jails with their speakers.

Estimates of paid-up IWW membership vary wildly, but Burgmann puts the figure at around 2000, with the majority being in the Sydney area. However, the *Sydney Morning Herald* commented on September 30, 1916:

> It is idle to deny the force and rapid spread of the doctrines of the IWW. They are spreading at a rate that is really appalling … its more or less constant followers in Sydney alone number between 20,000 and 30,000, and they are in numbers in all the unions — the more dangerous because the IWW man is everywhere the most energetic as a doctrinaire and the most enthusiastic.[59]

In June 1917, *Direct Action* reported that the Sydney IWW hall filled to its 500-strong capacity, and overflow meetings had to be held outside in Sussex Street. The persecution of the IWW had caused a massive reaction: "The large crowd that marches down George Street on its way to the hall every Sunday night, singing our songs, is a sight to inspire even the most pessimistic."

Roly Farrall claimed in January 1916 that the IWW had done more in the previous 12 months to alter the psychological outlook of the worker towards the present system than all the "class-war theorists" had done in 10 years.[60]

The IWW expressed the demands and aspirations of the militant working class in Australia in a hitherto unprecedented way.

## Politics of 'class war'

According to an anonymous Labor pamphleteer, the "industrial anarchists" of the IWW were a serpent in the new Eden, "a reptile ready to poison the clear spring of progress, to turn social affection to class hatred, newborn hopes to despair, to preach class solidarity against social unity".[61]

On the other hand, *Direct Action* rejected the values of the capitalist class:

I believe in the class war, the materialist conception of history and the theory of surplus value.

I believe in beating the boss.

I believe in sabotage.

I believe in getting wise at the bosses' expense.

I believe in the "right to be lazy" and in direct action.

I believe in doping the Labor fakir with his own dope, and the capitalist with his own weapons.

Hallelujah! I'm a bum![62]

The IWW rejected outright the ethics of the exploiters and counterposed an alternative moral code: the ethics of the producers.

Revolutionary songs were vital to the Wobblies. When American IWW leader and song-writer Joe Hill was executed on trumped-up charges in 1915, the Australian IWW organised a huge demonstration of protest in the Sydney Domain.

The IWW ethics called for working less, a shorter working day and the go-slow. They argued for a six-hour workday to create many more jobs, and for higher wages.

The welcomed automation, but called for shorter working hours to share the work around. "Only fools and horses work hard", was one of their popular slogans.

A key weapon of the Wobblies was sabotage, which they described as "a brake upon the wheels of capitalist exploitation". The stressed a preference for collective sabotage over individual action.

"The concerted withdrawal of efficiency, by slowing down or other means, is sure to bind the workers closer together", the IWW explained. In Wobbly theory this idea appears as a variant of workers' control.

"With industrially organised workers in control of industry, the inventive genius of

the human race can be enabled to blossom forth as never before in the history of mankind."[63]

## Critique of Laborism

The then-ALP leader Billie Hughes admitted in federal parliament early in 1917 that the strength of the IWW represented "the revolt of the people against the chicanery of legislatures". The Wobblies were resented by Labor apologists for their "determination to make workers believe their representatives in parliament were all unmitigated scoundrels".

This marks a difference between the Australian and US IWW. In the US, "political", meaning "electoral", action was not so much rejected as largely irrelevant, because so many of the itinerant workers which formed the US IWW's base were disenfranchised, unable to register to vote because of racial, linguistic or residency restrictions.

> In Australia, with a comparatively democratic franchise and reasonably fair access to electoral registration, the IWW was more expressly and truly antipolitical. The Australian IWW's determined rebuttal of political action was informed by the experience, peculiar to Australasia, of the duplicity of Labor, the betrayal of working-class interests by Labor governments.[64]

The ballot, the Australian IWW argued, was "the greatest fraud ever perpetrated upon the long-suffering and over-patient working class." The Wobblies' attitude to Labor parliamentarians is best illustrated by the famous song of the Labor MP, "Bump Me into Parliament".

> The IWW pointed out both the sins of commission and omission on the part of Labor. After carefully enumerating the recent strikebreaking record of the New South Wales McGowen government, it claimed the doings of this Labor government should "serve as a warning to the working class, not alone of this country but of the whole world. The capitalistic state, no matter by whom its institutions are manned, must function as the protector of the economic system which gave it birth." The much-vaunted social laboratory of *fin de siècle* Australasia had produced its own critics, in a peculiarly strong position to make judgements about the experiment of Labor-in-politics. Nor could Labor governments deliver the very limited number of goods promised: "It is pleasing to note that the Labour Parties of Australia, when gaining a majority on the plush cushions in the various parliaments have displayed absolutely their utter impotence to do anything for the workers." The precocity of the political labour movement in Australia, its unprecedented occupancy of Treasury benches in parliaments throughout the country, enabled the IWW to form conclusions and indulge in polemical abuse, based on concrete evidence about the performance of Labor representatives: "Workers

of Australia, you have raised up unto yourselves gods, in the shape of Labor politicians, but behold events have proved that their feet are but of clay."[65]

Unfortunately, unlike the Russian Bolsheviks of the time, under Lenin's direction, the Wobblies were unable to distinguish between "political action" as "parliamentary electoralism", and the revolutionary use of parliamentary action as a vehicle to assist in mobilising the working class and campaigning for socialism.

In rejecting the reformist parliamentarism of the ALP, the IWW threw the electoral baby out with the bathwater. Furthermore, in identifying "electoral action" with "political action" in general, the Wobblies failed to recognise the need for "political action" by a revolutionary party, in all areas of struggle — including, but not primarily, the electoral arena.

> The Labor Party obscured the reality of the class struggle, and preached class-collaboration. Nowhere was this more evident than in the way Labor governments adhered to arbitration, "the very essence of capitalism", enforcing its awards with injunctions, fines and the jailing of strikers. *Direct Action* explained that, despite the support for it since its inception of craft union leaders and Labor MPs, the arbitration court was "the offspring of modern-day capitalism, which fears the dangers of working-class discontent gaining cohesion and intelligence. It … has been purposely established to prevent working-class organisation 'making laws' on its own account to supersede the economic and legal code of the exploiting class."[66]

The IWW criticised the role of the existing trade union officialdom of the craft unions, claiming the current disjointed and divided unions had outlived their usefulness. They now needed to be replaced by the One Big Union as a united and highly organised force, the IWW argued.

While the Wobblies advocated building the OBU essentially outside the existing union structures, in practice it was forced by circumstances to "bore from within" the established unions.

> This departure from American IWW practice was in reaction to Australian circumstances. In the United States the Wobblies had persisted with the practice of dual unionism, for the IWW there was stronger and the official labour movement weaker; but the Australian IWW, relatively underdeveloped, was operating in an environment where the labour movement was well-organised by international standards, with considerable coverage in many areas … The Australian IWW was not, like the American, aiming to organise workers completely neglected by trade unionism; it was hoping, rather, to change the basis on which all workers were organised.[67]

While it is arguable how successful the Wobblies were directly in building the OBU by this method, the IWW's revolutionary propaganda definitely helped ignite the growing

feeling among the Australian working class that the union movement needed to be unified and strengthened through union amalgamations.

In this way, a strong movement toward industrial unionism, and away from craft unionism, was built in this period.

## Direct industrial action

Australian Wobblies did not face the same degree of savage employer and state repression as the US IWW did, as it attempted to form an embryonic dual union structure. Whereas the US Wobblies faced guns, lynchings and murders, the Australian organisation faced sackings, blacklisting, brawls, and arrests by the police.

> Australian employers could not easily isolate and physically intimidate Wobblies because they worked under the cover of an established and comparatively strong trade union movement that had even secured the added respectability of sponsoring one of the main parties of government. Thus, where American Wobblies were defeated ultimately by the employers and their thugs, the Australian Wobblies were restrained and contained industrially by the trade union movement itself, especially by the bureaucracy.
>
> Many union officials shared employers' anxiety about increasing IWW influence within the existing unions, its success in boring from within. In addition to its members and supporters, Wobbly language, attitudes and methods were also permeating sections of the working class who had little or no contact with the IWW. With wartime profiteering, high food prices, long working hours, the refusal of the arbitration court in most cases to increase wages to catch up with price rises, and the increasing use of speed-up methods in production, discontent was widespread; and the IWW was effectively exploiting the failure of Laborism, arbitration and union officialdom to assuage the workers' grievances.[68]

One union official of the time declared in August 1916 that the IWW was going to develop into "a very serious menace."

A sympathetic union activist in the mining industry declared that: "You met Wobblies wherever you went … All militants followed the Wobblies … They had a foot in everywhere."

According to military intelligence, it was "quite the regular thing" for the IWW to "drop down in some community where industrial peace reigns, and in a short while to set that community by the ears and precipitate industrial chaos."[69]

Any number of industrial struggles were blamed on the Wobblies, some more correctly than others. Some examples of union campaigns in which Wobbly influence and leadership were important include:

● The shearers' strike of August 1916 in NSW and Queensland. The Australian

Workers Union leadership had refused to seek an increase in the shearing rates until the existing 1910 agreement had expired. Meanwhile, the pastoralists had seen a 20% increase in profits due to the war, and the shearers wanted a share.

The IWW supported the shearers and gave assistance, including funds to keep the strike going when the AWU leadership wouldn't touch it. Eventually, the pastoralists agreed to pay an increase.

- A coalminers' strike in 1916 for the eight-hour day was linked to IWW propaganda. The rank and file of the Miners' Federation, encouraged by the Wobblies, pressured their union leadership in NSW and then other states to strike. In the end, 11,500 miners struck for two months. Despite the howling of the media and the politicians, eventually a tribunal conceded on both hours and pay.

- In Broken Hill, NSW, the IWW's biggest activity was, in collaboration with Amalgamated Miners' Association members during 1915, to launch a campaign to reduce the miners' hours to a 44-hour workweek. The workers decided to just take the shorter week by finishing work early on Saturday. At first the AMA wasn't supportive, but when the employers locked the miners out, the 6000 workers struck. Through these militant tactics, the miners won their shorter hours.

It is clear that the IWW played a major role, directly or indirectly, in the wave of industrial struggle that intensified as World War I dragged on, as the radicalisation of workers increased and the contrast between employer profiteering and workers' sacrifice intensified.

The Wobblies stressed industrial control in its militant strategy. But the problem was to link up the immediate struggles with its rather abstract goal of forming the One Big Union. Thus, while the IWW achieved major industrial successes on the ground, they were not always reflected in the permanent development of the IWW as a political-industrial organisation.

## Opposing the war

In Europe, the outbreak of the First World War on 4 August 1914 halted abruptly the growth of internationalist socialist consciousness, which had been a marked feature of working-class development in the preceding decades. The wave of syndicalist revolt that had battered liberal England in the immediate prewar years receded as surely as did the storm of suffragettes. In Australia, on the other hand, the war prompted a stark polarisation of attitudes within the labour movement. Though imperial patriots among the workers were undoubtedly many, sceptics and opponents also abounded: apart from the pacifists and antimilitarists, the Irish Catholics within the movement were ever wary of British imperialism and to others the war seemed simply too remote to

concern Australian workers. The opposition mounted as the horror of warfare manifested itself, as the material situation of the workers deteriorated with rising unemployment and the freezing of wages at their prewar level, and as the Labor government placed social reform well below the war effort in its list of priorities. Already divided over the issue of the war and Australia's involvement in it, the labour movement ultimately tore itself apart over the question of conscription. The role of the IWW in encouraging this fragmentation of the labour movement, its regroupment into left/anticonscription and right/proconscription forces, was crucial.

No organisation in Australia at the time opposed the outbreak of the Great War as promptly and determinedly as did the IWW; its internationalist, antimilitarist and anti-imperialist precepts enabled it to respond quickly. The front page of *Direct Action* for August 10, 1914 declared:

WAR! WHAT FOR? FOR THE WORKERS AND THEIR DEPENDENTS: DEATH, STARVATION, POVERTY AND UNTOLD MISERY. FOR THE CAPITALIST CLASS: GOLD, STAINED WITH THE BLOOD OF MILLIONS, RIOTOUS LUXURY, BANQUETS OF JUBILATION OVER THE GRAVES OF THEIR DUPES AND SLAVES. WAR IS HELL! SEND THE CAPITALISTS TO HELL AND WARS ARE IMPOSSIBLE.[70]

The IWW kept pointing to the fact that the working class of Australia had nothing against the workers of Germany, the international ruling class robbed both. They explained that many Germans were opposed to the war also, and that most of the German people had no say over the war.

The Wobblies insisted that "when the empire is in danger, let those who own and control it, fight for it". The pointed out that 20% of Australian Workers Union men were enlisted, as opposed to 2% of parliament and the Sydney Chamber of Commerce.

Tom Barker was charged in September 1915 for publishing a poster likely to prejudice recruiting for printing the following "recruiting poster":

TO ARMS!!

Capitalists, Parsons, Politicians,

Landlords, Newspaper Editors and

Other Stay-at-Home Patriots,

YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU IN

THE TRENCHES!

WORKERS

FOLLOW YOUR MASTERS!!

The IWW held 120 Sunday afternoon antiwar meetings in the Domain, 240 lectures in halls, and over 300 outdoor meetings in Sydney between August 1914 and October

1916.. They sold more than 1000 copies of Kirkpatrick's *War, What For?* and over £2000 worth of revolutionary literature, as well as countless copies of *Direct Action*.

The Wobblies went into the antiwar campaign wholeheartedly. This increased respect for them among militant workers, and led to their greatest period of growth. The Sydney local recruited 8-10 people a week, as the IWW articulated what many people thought.

> This opportunity [to grow] was made all the greater by the collapse and disintegration of the Second International, when most of its affiliated socialist parties supported their respective national war efforts. Parliamentary socialism was discredited by the inability of its major European protagonists to resist the siren entreaties of their governments to encourage working-class support for the war. *Direct Action* was scathing about the performance of the Second International: the potential solidarity of the European working classes and their ability to prevent the war by organising a general strike had been thwarted by the leaders of the major socialist parties …
>
> Although the ASP and the SLP also denounced the war and most members of the VSP were sympathetic to the antiwar agitation, these parties were nonetheless damned by default because of their association with the aims and methods of the Second International: the pursuit of socialism by parliamentary means.[71]

"The working class alone can abolish war. No one else will, no one else can", Tom Barker argued in *Direct Action*.

The Wobblies attacked the idea that the workers needed to sacrifice their standard of living for the profits of the warmongers.

The sheer size of the IWW's organisational effort contributed greatly to the success of the anticonscription campaign. Together with other socialist groups and additional forces, the Wobblies launched the Anti-Conscription League in 1915 in the IWW hall in Sydney.

The IWW were less sectarian than the Labor left, craft unions and other socialist groups. They were willing to work with anyone who opposed conscription, including Catholic Archbishop Daniel Mannix. "We might not have followed him to heaven, but we certainly weren't going to deny him his right as a partner in battle", Barker commented.

The Wobblies used broader anticonscription platforms to broadcast IWW ideas. The mass anticonscription campaign drew crowds of up to 100,000 in Melbourne and Sydney at its height — incredible numbers considering the smaller Australian population in those days.

And accusations by the militarists that the Wobblies were the main organisers of the anticonscription effort only served to increase the IWW's notoriety and popularity.

The ASP shared the IWW's antimilitarist views, but the Wobblies were louder and started earlier. Bertha Walker concedes that the IWW was the only party uncompromisingly against the war itself, not just conscription.

Ernie Lane recalled that: "Unlike the official Labour movement, the IWW with rare courage and reckless of all consequences denounced and exposed imperial capitalist groups." On the 20th anniversary of the first conscription referendum, the Communist Party acknowledged that: "The IWW was in the forefront of the struggle, and not only against compulsory service, but against the war itself."

As early as October 1915, the Wobblies urged workers to answer the threat of conscription with a general strike: "A Conscription Act should be the signal for industrial revolt and insurrection."

> This was the IWW's finest hour. In contrast to so many other sections of the international working-class movement, which capitulated to the war fever, the Wobblies remained resolute. The Second International, which before 1914 had declared its opposition to war, proved utterly ineffective once hostilities were formally declared.[72]

Within the unique history of the Australian anticonscription movement, in relation to the international struggle against the war, the IWW played a crucial role.

As Tom Barker wrote:

> I am sure that the work we did made all the difference to the Australian workers and the Australian people generally when the question of conscription came up in 1916 and 1917. There is no doubt at all in my mind, if it hadn't been for the presence of our organisation and what we did in those days, the history of Australia might have been vastly different as far as the war itself was concerned.[73]

The IWW played a major part in the special Trade Union Congress in September 1916 which called a stop-work meeting on October 4 to protest conscription: the Broken Hill mines were shut down; 70,000 workers took part in Melbourne with 50,000 attending a Yarra Bank meeting addressed by IWW and other anticonscription speakers.

After the defeat of the first conscription referendum in October 1916, Hughes walked out of the Labor caucus with 24 other ALP proconscriptionists. He formed a minority "National Labor" government, which later became a Nationalist conservative government in 1917.

Hughes' second conscription referendum later that year was also defeated, by an even greater margin.

Childe summed up the key part played by the Wobblies in the historic victory of the anticonscription movement at that time:

> Before "No Conscription" became a popular watchword, while the Labor Party was still toying with militarism, the IWW steadily and unflinchingly denounced the curse and

prepared the field where the Labor Party afterwards reaped.
 The IWW, he argued, "can claim the credit for the defeat of conscription".[74]

## Trial of the Sydney 12

State intimidation of the Wobblies started heating up in 1916.

The success of the IWW antiwar propaganda had a significant effect on the Australian population. Broad layers accepted the general "don't enlist" sentiment. But the crackdown on the IWW was more a plan by the Labor right to retain control of the labour movement than a need to preserve society as a whole.

Hughes gave warning of his intentions at a January 1916 meeting of trade union leaders. He stated of the IWW: "There is only one thing they understand, and that is force." The Wobblies must, therefore, he said, be attacked "with the ferocity of a Bengal tiger".

While other socialist groups were subject to state interference in various forms, the main purpose seems to have been more to glean information about the Wobblies than direct repression of the organisations themselves.

Tom Barker was imprisoned for the "dying soldier" cartoon in *Direct Action*. A defence campaign eventually saw his sentence reduced from six to three months.

As 1916 progressed, the government surveillance of the IWW increased. Their correspondence was intercepted and read. They were prosecuted for profane language, printing a newspaper without complying with the Newspaper Act, and vagrancy.

Several members were arrested in August 1916 on charges of producing and distributing counterfeit £5 notes. They included J.B. King, Tom Ferguson and Fred Morgan. King was sentenced to three years jail, Ferguson to 10 years. In Tottenham, a small mining town in western NSW, three Wobblies were arrested and charged with the murder of a policeman. Their association with these arrests helped lay groundwork for future suppression.

In September 1916, Sydney police started prosecuting the IWW under the War Precautions Act for inflammatory seditious language and advocating sabotage. The press helped by equating sabotage with violence against people.

WA Wobblies were charged with "seditious conspiracy". Their IWW membership was taken as proof of guilt.

The Sydney local and national headquarters were raided in September 1916. Police took all IWW money, literature, bankbooks, and membership lists. The cops were instructed to look for fire-making chemicals and, within a fortnight, the famous "Sydney 12" were arrested , and accused of lighting fires that had burned Sydney factories earlier that year. Their original charges of treason-felony were changed to seditious

conspiracy, and conspiracy to commit arson to secure the release of Barker by unlawful means.

The 12 included key leaders Tom Glynn, Charles Reeve, Peter Larkin, Jack Hamilton and others. Donald Grant was arrested in Broken Hill. J.B. King had already been imprisoned for forgery. There was no evidence linking them to the fires, but an intense media campaign was mounted against them.

In the NSW Magistrates' Court, the IWW were accused of lighting fires for political purposes. The police paid informers and fabricated evidence. A jury found them guilty of most of the charges. Their alibis were dismissed. Seven of the Sydney 12 got 15 years' jail, four got 10 years, and one got five. An appeal reduced two of the 15-year sentences to 10 years.

The informers later confessed that everything they had said was fabricated. But by the end of 1917 the IWW had been suppressed, *Direct Action* permanently closed, members who were noncitizens deported and many leaders jailed.

However, repression of the IWW provoked a massive wave of popular anger. There was a big campaign to release the 12. The Melbourne IWW drew crowds of 10,000 to 12,000 to their street meetings to defend the Sydney 12 during the 1917 elections. Release committees were set up, which stressed that the hysteria on the part of the press and politicians had made a fair trial impossible.

The Release the 12 committees were made up of unionists, socialists and Labor leftists. The left of the committees demanded the unconditional release of the 12. In August 1917 Broken Hill miners went on strike for their release.

When a Labor government was elected in NSW in 1920, it came under strong pressure to release the 12. An inquiry was held, and 10 of the IWW prisoners were released in August 1920. However, by this time their organisation had collapsed. Reeve and King were released later.

## Banning the IWW

After the failure of the first conscription referendum in October 1916, Prime Minister Hughes lost the support of the Labor Party majority. While they were enjoying popular support for the war effort the ALP government had tolerated the IWW. As support fell, the IWW was blamed.

Amendments to the War Precautions Act split the Labor Party, and led Labor frontbenchers to rely on the conservative opposition to get them passed. In October 1916, 12 WA IWW members were arrested and tried on seditious conspiracy charges. Nine were found guilty (guilt was established according to words in IWW literature), but were freed on good behaviour bonds.

More raids, arrests and prosecutions followed, but the Wobblies always responded. One pamphlet called on unions to strike in protest at their suppression. Police were ordered to stop its distribution.

On December 14, 1916, Hughes split from Labor to pass the Unlawful Associations Bill. Any IWW member found to hinder the war effort or commit sabotage was to be jailed for six months. Noncitizens were to be deported.

*Direct Action* continued to be published, but its antiwar content was toned down somewhat. IWW locals continued to function, despite the new laws and their leaders languishing in jail. However, in July 1917 Hughes introduced further amendments to jail any member of the IWW or anyone who printed or distributed their literature.

NSW police rounded up dozens of IWW activists. The Broken Hill local staged a free speech fight. Sixty men volunteered to mount the speaker's box. Some 35 were sent to jail. September 1917 saw the prosecution of another 75 members. In all, 103 IWW members were imprisoned for six months with hard labour, and 29 were deported, including Barker. The Melbourne local disbanded.

The Queensland organisation lasted the longest, partly due to the existence there of a less repressive regime under the anticonscription Ryan ALP state government. But the Wobblies weren't as effective without *DA*. The Brisbane IWW changed its name to the One Big Union Propaganda League.

> What was it about the IWW that, by comparison with the other radical contenders in the field, caused it to be singled out for special attention by the authorities? Part of the answer is that the IWW, as Hughes pointed out, held a dagger at the heart of society; it was considerably more threatening to the capitalist order than the socialist parties who busied themselves theorising about the nature of the exploitation the Wobblies were actually contesting.[75]

The relative ease with which the state was able to suppress the IWW is partly explained by the nature of the organisation and its philosophy.

> It was a rank-and-file, bottom-up movement, hostile to bureaucratic and hierarchical organisational forms, and aggressively democratic. Central to its philosophy and practice were open defiance and public forms of agitation …
>
> They had no plans, even of the most rudimentary kind, for survival in the event of suppression. As Tom Barker noted: "We didn't go into hiding. I don't think we ever thought much about what we should do if we were declared illegal. We expected it to come and we just waited until it did come and then carried on despite it."[76]

While the IWW was in decline, with its leaders imprisoned, its periphery intimidated by the state, something tremendous happened — the Russian Revolution. Many Wobblies reacted with great enthusiasm to the October Revolution of 1917.

One of their key leaders, Tom Glynn, commented, "the experience of Russia would indicate the necessity of something more than the industrial weapon … during the transition period towards a communist social order", but insisted that "the view that the industrial union shall ultimately be the unit of administration in the communist state remains unchallenged".

Monty Miller conceded that Bolshevik political action was distinct from the political action denounced by the IWW. Glynn and Larkin were the two highest profile IWW leaders who helped form the new Communist Party of Australia. Other Wobblies joined, but were disillusioned at the limitations increasingly placed on internal democracy as the Stalinisation of the CP developed during the 1920s, and the lack of emphasis the CP put on rank-and-file union struggle and the One Big Union.

So the IWW collapsed. Why? Could they have avoided it? What could they have contributed had they survived? For all their undoubted impact, the IWW had some serious weaknesses in their theory, which underlay their ultimate failure.

They hadn't assimilated some key ideas of Marxism. For instance, Marx and Engels drew some very important conclusions from the lessons of the 1871 Paris Commune. The workers of Paris took control of the industries of the city and began setting up their new society. But they were brutally crushed by the still-intact armed forces of the French capitalist state.

From this Marx and Engels concluded that for a socialist revolution to succeed, it must take decisive power away from the ruling class, destroy the capitalist state machine and replace it with armed working-class organs of power. As long as the ruling class have a military and can fund it, they will always move to put down any threats to their power by force.

The IWW, however, didn't share this idea. They said that state power was just a sham, and that all the working class had to do to create a socialist society was take control of the means of production. The fact that they didn't study the mechanisms of state power, and understand that it is not a sham but very real, meant that they didn't really consider the question: What should the radicalising working class do if it comes under attack from the capitalist state?

The IWW saw their organisation as the vehicle for the radical workers, who needed to take the message of socialism through OBU and spread it throughout the working class. They recognised that the working class needs to be class-conscious, and needs to get educated about how capitalism works, and how to defeat it. And they did this to a significant extent. The arrival and growth of the Wobblies in Australian politics was undoubtedly a major step forward.

The IWW's clear internationalism and antiracism, and their insistence on direct

action and militant trade unionism was a much needed addition to Australian left politics. And it follows from this, too, that their decline was a setback for Australian radical politics. Even though the Communist Party was in formation from 1920, the Wobblies were, on the whole, far sharper on a whole range of issues than were the main groups which formed the CPA at that time.

Nevertheless, any organisation struggling for socialism, and truly determined and convinced that its politics are needed, has to grapple with the issue of its survival. In an atmosphere of impending repression, it has to discuss and prepare for potential state crackdowns, and even prepare to go underground if need be. The Wobblies were determined to always be open about their politics, they shouted them aloud and proud, and were prepared to suffer repression for their ideas. But sacrificing this openness, for as brief a time as possible, may be necessary for the long-term survival of the organisation.

Let's imagine the Wobblies did survive World War I, and re-emerged into the open later. The Communist Party was in formation at that time, and came to play the key role in Australian radical politics for the next 50 years, but inherited a whole number of weaknesses. They weren't as sharp as the IWW on racism, on the Labor Party, even on war. How many more workers would have been educated about what socialism really is and could become if there were some good debates between the IWW and the CP, hopefully leading to unification and the formation of a much stronger revolutionary organisation?

Apart from the question of state power there is the question of the role of the party. The Wobblies were quite right to criticise the idea of a party formed solely to engage in parliamentary processes. And they were also right about the need to better educate the workers politically, and encourage them to unite and fight, and not to rely on parliament or the courts to protect their interests.

But the IWW's political concept of industrial unionism as the main vehicle for workers' revolution proved quite inadequate as a revolutionary strategy. The central role of the Bolshevik Party in the victorious Russian Revolution of 1917 gave a contemporary demonstration of the crucial need for a mass-based, revolutionary-socialist party in leading a revolutionary workers' movement to state power. ■

# Founding the Communist Party

The impact of the news about the Russian Revolution of October 1917 was immediate and powerful within the Australian labour movement.

> Members of the socialist groups functioning in Australia since the 1880s were quick to react to the important news from Petrograd. Public meetings which were being held regularly in all capital cities to conduct socialist propaganda were devoted now to explaining what was happening in Russia … for Australian socialists had understood the significance of Russia's 1905 … they had recognised the Kerensky regime [established following the 1917 February Revolution] as but a passing phase, and now grasped the full meaning of Soviet Power. On the Sunday following its proclamation no less than 20 meetings were held in the parks and on the street corners of Sydney, with a similar quickening of political interest in all Australian major cities.[77]

The red flag was flown atop many trade union halls to mark the victory of the October Revolution, and a number of labor councils and unions passed resolutions of support.

Important among those providing accurate information and leadership for the support movement in Australia were left-wing Russian immigrants, many of them supporters of the Bolsheviks, who had been forced to flee tsarist repression in the previous decade.

Most famous among these was Artem Sergeiev, who had been active in the Australian union movement as well as the Russian *émigré* community from 1911. Inspired by the February Revolution, Artem returned to his homeland and became an active Bolshevik leader of the October revolution and its aftermath.

The legacy of his political work in Australia, together with the ongoing influence of other revolutionary Russians activists such as Pikunov and Simonov, was an important factor in the preparations for the formation of the Communist Party in this country.

## Fierce debate

Throughout 1919-20, a fierce debate and organisational tussle arose among the various socialist and radical parties over the meaning of the Russian Revolution, and the need

for a Communist Party in Australia.

Foremost among these forces was the Australian Socialist Party. The ASP, at its conference in December 1919, declared its allegiance to the Third (Communist) International, and announced "its immediate aim [to be] the dictatorship of the proletariat, with all political power in the hands of the working class". In its manifesto, Australia and the World Revolution, the ASP announced its immediate purpose to be "agitation … to arouse the workers, education to enlighten them, and organisation to marshal them for the conquest of state power".

The Victorian Socialist Party (VSP) debated the need for a communist party at great length in 1919-20, but eventually decided to continue with its established strategy of attempting to influence the ALP toward socialist policies from inside and outside. The minority of members who favoured the formation of a CP resigned or were eventually expelled after an acrimonious debate.

The De Leonite Socialist Labor Party (SLP) refused to become involved in the unity process toward founding a CP, insisting that the SLP program was non-negotiable. The SLP continued with its independent existence, becoming even more isolated from the rest of the labour movement.

And then there were a number of leaders and activists from the IWW (the Wobblies), which had been largely destroyed by state repression by the end of the war. Some Wobblies came to consider the option of a new Communist Party, rethinking the IWW policy against "political action".

The IWW in Australia had published with approval an appeal from the Third International to the organisation in the US to change its "syndicalist" position, stating:

> Every experience of Russia indicates to communists that something more than industrial
> weapons are necessary to combat the internal and external machinations of the capitalist
> class during the transition period towards the communist order … The idea of building
> a new society within the shell of the old is no longer valid.[78]

The Communist International was very keen to convince the former Wobblies to renounce their previous focus on industrial unionism as the vehicle for revolution, and to convince them to join the new CPs.

Leon Trotsky was reportedly delighted when he was informed by the Australian delegation to the 1922 CI congress that some IWW members had joined the CPA: "That is good because the IWW are the real proletariat and real fighters …"[79]

However, Burgmann argues that, unfortunately, only a limited number of IWW members actually joined the CPA in the early days. If more had done so, the CP would have been a much larger force in its formative decade.

Moreover, of those who did join, a number later left, either because of continuing

lack of understanding of the centrality of the party question, concerns about party internal democracy or continued commitment to the One Big Union as the main game.

Last but not at all least of the forces involved in the original formation of the CPA were a group of militant trade union officials led by Jock Garden, centred on the NSW Labour Council, who came to be known as the "Trades Hall Reds".

## 1920 Conference

Finally, in October 1920, a conference of procommunist groupings was held to form a new and united Communist Party, under the banner of the Communist International.

At the conference, to which 60 representatives were invited and 26 came, the main three groups attending were the ASP, the NSW trade unionists and the remnants of the IWW. A provisional executive of 12 was selected, including three representatives of the ASP, leading officials of the NSW Labor Council, including its secretary Garden, and Tom Glynn from the Wobblies.

However, because of the heterogeneity of the organisations making up the new body, within weeks a dispute broke out, with the Australian Socialist Party withdrawing its delegates. This resulted in two competing parties seeking the communist mandate, with two newspapers, the ASP's *International Communist*, formerly *International Socialist*, and the *Australian Communist*, put out by the "United" CPA, grouped around Garden's Trades Hall Reds.

At the Third Congress of the Comintern in 1921, the two contending factions were instructed to amalgamate, or neither party would be recognised as the Australian section of the Communist International.

By this time, the tide of revolution in Europe, following the war and the upsurge which had followed the Russian Revolution, had somewhat receded.

In accordance with the position expressed by Lenin in *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, the CPs were to adopt flexible united front tactics toward mass parties like the ALP, in order to open the road to the bulk of the working class, who were overwhelmingly under Laborite/social-democratic hegemony.

The ASP refused to endorse this position, and in August 1922 the Comintern recognised the United CPA as its Australian section. The ASP then collapsed.

The new CP had around 1500 members, mostly in the Sydney and Newcastle areas at first, and mostly militant unionists.

The CPA led a turbulent existence in the early 1920s, with some ex-IWW sections moving away from the party. The WA, SA and Victorian branches folded, only to be revived later.

The Brisbane branch of the CP maintained a regular existence after 1921, and gradually spread its influence northward in Queensland to Townsville, Cairns and other regional centres.

At big trade union congresses in Melbourne, 1921, and Sydney, 1922, Jock Garden and the "Trades Hall Reds" exercised great influence, with the Sydney union congress calling for communist affiliation to the Labor Party. But this policy was not accepted by all members of the CPA.

And the ALP right soon moved against it, with the October 1924 ALP Federal Conference declaring against affiliation and banning communists from Labor Party membership.

The CPA leadership under Garden then decided to build up its own strength in the unions, and also to enter the political arena independent of the ALP.

The CP fielded a team of six candidates, headed by Garden himself, in the 1925 NSW state elections. Despite great optimism, they gained modest results, losing their deposits.

Perhaps unrealistically confident, the lack of immediate success in the NSW elections led some CP members to lose faith in the project of building an independent party. Garden and his group of NSW Labour Council officials moved away from the CPA during 1926, and he was expelled from the party.

A new leadership under general secretary Jack Kavanagh was elected, scorning the liquidationist Garden and Co, who had bent to the winds of trade union and ALP opportunism.

But it was a hard time for the CPA, which shrank to several hundred members in the late 1920s. It was only with the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, and the big union and unemployed movement struggles which followed, that the CPA began the process of growth and development which led it to become the major left force in the country for 50 years after that.

The cataclysmic international and local events, the gradual Stalinisation of the CPA, and the determined struggles which its members carried out, are beyond the scope of analysis for this account of the origins of the Communist Party – which focuses on summarising the role of the early 20th-century socialist organisations in its foundation. ■

# Conclusion

This account has sought to outline some key features of the history of the early socialist movement in Australia, with a view to providing popular access to a number of lesser-known aspects of our radical heritage.

We have summarised the background influences provided during the pioneering colonial period by British Chartism, Irish republicanism, the democratic upsurge of the Eureka Stockade, and other events.

We have noted the first Australian experiment in socialist organising, the Democratic Association of Victoria of 1872, as part of a growing ferment in the labour movement post the 1850s gold rushes.

This sketch has also outlined the period of industrial and political turmoil of the late 1880s and '90s arising from the collapse of the country's economic boom, and highlighted the great maritime and shearers' strikes and the rise of the movement for "Socialism in Our Time".

We have discussed the founding of the Australian Socialist League, as an important milestone in our early socialist development. Its contradictory political trajectory plays a notable role in the first major turning point in labour history: the formation of the Australian Labor Party in the early 1890s, in the aftermath of the defeat of the great strikes.

Debate continues about whether the direction of the ALP as a reformist, parliamentarist party was inevitable from the start, or whether the ASL and other socialists could have steered it onto a revolutionary path.

It seems probable in hindsight that the lack of political clarity of the early socialists, whether the ASL "state socialists" or other leaders such as the utopian socialist William Lane, together with the general state of the Australian labour movement, made the development of a revolutionary-socialist mass party problematical at that time.

While the influence of Marx's revolutionary ideas in the early socialist movement should not be underestimated, it is clear that the plethora of reformist and utopian theories were predominant in the end.

Moreover, the cancer of racism, including support by many, otherwise on the left, for the White Australia policy, was a major ongoing contradiction for the movement.

Nevertheless, we should stress the tremendous determination and optimism of the early socialists of the period, who genuinely believed in, and fought in their own way for, "Socialism in Our Time". And, within the bitter contest of ideas and forces in the labour movement, there was always a minority who struggled for principled and revolutionary politics at every turn.

Once the ALP had been firmly established as a reformist, parliamentarist party by the turn of the 20th century, a major continuing debate among socialists was whether to focus on attempting to push for socialist policies within the Labor Party, or whether to concentrate on building an independent socialist organisation outside.

This dilemma occupied the socialist organisations of the early 1900s, including the Australian Socialist Party (which replaced the ASL), the Socialist Labor Party, under the influence of US socialist Daniel De Leon, and the Victorian Socialist Party, under the leadership of Tom Mann.

All came to somewhat different conclusions and tactics, but, despite a revival of radicalisation from 1907 during which the socialist movement was able to grow significantly in size and influence, none were able to qualitatively break from sectarianism and establish themselves on a firm revolutionary-socialist path.

It was at this crucial time, from around 1907 onwards, that the "momentous event" of the arrival of the Industrial Workers of the World from the US occurred — the second major turning point in Australian labour history after the formation of the ALP from the turmoil of the 1890s strikes.

The Chicago Wobblies turned the Australian industrial and socialist political scene upside down, and changed the country's history by leading a growing movement against World War I, and were instrumental in the successful fight to defeat Billie Hughes' two conscription referenda in 1916 and 1917.

In addition, the IWW's revolutionary industrial unionism, and One Big Union plan, helped to re-ignite the radicalisation of the union movement as a whole during the war years, helping transform the labour movement from relative quiescence to mass activity within a few years.

Their revolutionary commitment and optimism soon drew down the wrath of the Labor right and the forces of the ruling class, and they were subjected to a ruthless campaign of state victimisation and repression — which was finally successful in crushing their organisation by the end of the war.

Nevertheless, the achievements and indomitable spirit of the Wobblies should be a source of inspiration for socialists and union militants today. We need to closely

study this unique experience to learn its lessons for our current and future struggles.

The third and final turning point in the history of the early socialist movement discussed in this account is the founding of the Communist Party of Australia.

From the worldwide cataclysm of World War I came the electrifying news of the October Revolution in Russia. It provoked wide-scale debate about the future of capitalism, and the revolutionary strategies needed to challenge it.

In Australia as elsewhere, a controversy erupted throughout the socialist and labour movement about the implications of the Bolshevik Revolution.

This account has been limited to discussing the origins of the CPA, and specifically the role of the various existing socialist organisations and forces in its founding in 1920.

It can be seen that the character and limitations of the early Communist Party were to a considerable extent due to the nature and problems of the pre-existing forces which combined to create it.

In particular, the prior collapse of the IWW was a serious blow to the prospects of the new CP inheriting a substantial cadre force of experienced and dedicated revolutionaries, and building politically on that Wobbly inheritance.

Moreover, the other founding socialist forces were somewhat restricted by their relatively sectarian, parliamentarist or trade unionist past, which affected the perspective and dynamism of the early CPA.

Nevertheless, the time for a communist party was definitely right, and the party managed to struggle through the difficult early years, before entering its decisive period of growth in membership and influence in the 1930s and 1940s.

The future development of the Communist Party of Australia is way beyond the scope of this account. However, the key issue of analysis of, and tactics toward, the roadblock to socialism represented by the Australian Labor Party was to be unresolved by the CPA throughout its history until its dissolution in 1990, and remains a central problem for the socialist movement today.

In summary, the history of Australia's early socialist movement deserves close study by socialists and radicals in our time. The often hidden struggles of our pioneer militants are an undoubted source of inspiration and important lessons for the current movement.

The overall conclusion must be that, despite all obstacles and problems, and generally having to swim against the political stream of reformism, there has always been a "militant minority" of revolutionary socialists throughout the history of the Australian labor movement. Our task is to learn from their struggles and apply the key lessons, where appropriate, to the current challenges facing the socialist movement. ■

# Notes

1   Churchward, Introduction to Ebbels, *The Australian Labor Movement 1850-1907* (Australasian Book Society: Sydney, 1960), p. 5.

2   Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics* (Melbourne University Press: Melbourne, 1967), pp. 13, 15.

3   James Smith, quoted in McKinlay, *A Documentary History of the Australian Labor Movemenbt 1850-1975* (Drummond: Richmond, 1979), pp. 505-506.

4   Marx, "The Buying of Commissions. News from Australia", Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 14 (Lawrence & Wishart: London, 1980), p. 65.

5   Gollan, pp. 21, 22-23, 27.

6   *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

7   Churchward, p. 4.

8   *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

9   Quoted in McKinlay, p. 507.

10  Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 507.

11  Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 509.

12  Churchward, p. 26.

13  Burgmann, *In Our Time: Socialism and the Rise of Labor, 1885-1905* (George Allen & Unwin: Sydney, 1985), p. 49.

14  Farrell, *International Socialism and Australian Labour: The Left in Australia* (Hale & Iremonger: Sydney, 1981), p 5.

15  Quoted in Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics* (Hale & Iremonger: Sydney, 1979), p. 28.

16  *Ibid.*, p. 29.

17  Burgmann, *In Our Time*, p. 99.

18  Harris, *The Bitter Fight: A Pictorial History of the Australian Labor Movement* (University of Queensland Press: Brisbane, 1970), p. 107.

19  Quoted in Burgmann, *In Our Time*, p. 13.

20  Farrell, p. 4.

21  Burgmann, *In Our Time*, pp. 14-15.

22  *Ibid.*, pp. 195-196, 197.

23  Farrell, p. 6.

24  Churchward, p. 26.

25  *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

26  Farrell, pp. 8-9.

27  *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

28  Churchward, p. 27.

29  Farrell p. 10.

30  *Ibid.*, p. 12.

31  *Ibid.*, p. 22.

32  *Ibid.*, p. 28.

33  *Ibid.*, p. 32.

34  Acknowledgement in the preparation of this chapter to Erin Killion for contributions from her talk, "The Industrial Workers of the World: The Australian experience", presented to the January 2002 Democratic Socialist Party Education Conference.

35  Childe, *How Labour Governs* (Labour Publishing Company: London, 1923), p. 147.

36  Cannon, *Fighting for Socialism in the 'American Century'* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 2000), p. 49.

37  Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia* (Cambridge University Press: Melbourne, 1995), p. 12.

38  *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

39  *Ibid.*, p. 17.

40  *Ibid.*, p. 18.

41  *Ibid.*, p. 24.

42  *Ibid.*, p. 31.

43  *Ibid.*, p.39.

44  *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

45  *Ibid.*, p. 43.

46  *Ibid.*, p. 44.

47  Cannon, pp. 53, 54.

48  Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism*, p. 44.

49  *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 55.

50  *Ibid.*, pp. 64, 68.

51  *Ibid.*, p. 73.

52  Cannon, pp. 57-58.

53  Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism*, p. 80.

54  *Ibid.*, p. 82.

55  *Ibid.*, p. 87.

56  *Ibid.*, p. 92.

57  *Ibid.*, p. 104.

58  *Ibid.*, p. 113.

59  Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 125.

60  *Ibid.*, p. 128.

61  Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 130.

62  Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

63  Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 141.

64  *Ibid.*, p. 144.

65  *Ibid.*, p. 147.

66  *Ibid.*, p. 148-149.

67  *Ibid.*, pp. 157-158.

68  *Ibid.*, p. 159.

69  Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 162-163.

70  *Ibid.*, pp. 181-182.

71  *Ibid.*, p. 185.

72  *Ibid.*, p. 194.

73  Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 196.

74  Childe, pp. 154, 171.

75  Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism*, p. 225.

76  *Ibid.*, pp. 227-228.

77  Ross, *The Russian Revolution —Its Impact on Australia* (Socialist Party of Australia: Sydney, 1972), p. 7.

78  *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

79  Quoted in Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism*, p. 247.

The modern Australian socialist movement has its origins in the early radical experiments of the 19th century, from the influence of the transported British Chartists, to the exiled Irish rebels, to the democratic struggles of the miners at Eureka and elsewhere.

From the short-lived Australian affiliate to the First International in 1872, the Australian Socialist League, the Victorian Socialist League, the Socialist Labour Party, the Industrial Workers of the World, to the founding of the Communist Party of Australia, the organisations of the socialist left in this country developed a radical tradition which set the groundwork for the contemporary socialist movement.

Jim McIlroy's account sketches the history of the early socialists, their achievements and their problems, and attempts to draw some lessons from the experience of the pioneer radicals for the movement today.

*Resistance books*