

Labour History News is produced quarterly for the LHSSA by:
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Contributions by members are welcome



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 - Labor and the moguls. Australia's last great media upheaval gave Rupert Murdoch the green light to dominate the press, Frank Bongiorno
 - Murdoch's version of (press) freedom, Stewart Sweeny, letter to the editor
 - Young Rupert – avowed socialist, trade unionist and Lenin-lover, Walter Marsh, [LNL]
- Time to celebrate and protect the eight hour day, Dale Beasley, *InDaily*
- YAKKA: AUSTRALIA AT WORK explores the Nation's people in labour ABC TV series
- Pat Dodson retires from Parliament: a dignified diplomat, Pat Dodson is a rare politician. He will leave behind a cavernous hole in Canberra, Indigenous Affairs Editor Bridget Brennan,
- William Cooper, John Batman and a single bend in the Maribyrnong - A brief history of a river, and two men who sought to shape its banks Charlie Lewis

REVIEWS

- *Killing for Country: A family history*, David Marr, Reviewed by Braham Dabscheck
- *AN ODYSSEY, OR TWO*, Rohan Cahill's review of Hall Greenland's book *The Well-dressed revolutionary: the Odyssey of Michel Pablo in the age of uprisings*, Resistance Books 2023
- *Contesting Inequality and Worker Mobilisation in Australia 1851 – 1880*, Michael Quinlan, Routledge 2021 Reviewed by Doug Melvin

INTERNATIONAL

- Hamas, Gaza and the continuing Zionist project, John Menadue
- Workers in Argentina face the biggest blow to their employment rights since the military dictatorship of the 1970s, Luciana Zorzoli

TRIBUTES

- Australian journalist John Pilger
- Gordon Penhall, CEPU (SA)
- Emeritus Professor Geoffrey Stokes

LHSSA Executive Committee:

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The dates that Australia day has been held



No, this is not 'the real reason' Australia Day is celebrated on January 26
AAP FactCheck February 24, 2020

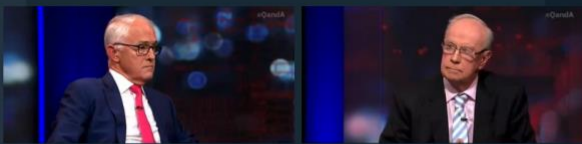
Under the Facade of Journalism: how News Corp used Fear, Manipulation and Division to Campaign Against the Indigenous Voice to Parliament, The Murdoch Referendum Accountability Project report (selected overheads)

Dr Victoria Fielding, Lecturer in Strategic Communication, University of Adelaide
[LHSSA meeting November 2023]

Project Overview

- **Funded by Australians for a Murdoch Royal Commission.**
- **Dr Victoria Fielding leads project team of media experts from The University of Adelaide: Dr Catherine Son, Dr Alexander Beare and Robert Boucaut.**
- **Thirteen weeks of content analysis of articles from The Australian, Daily Telegraph, Herald Sun and videos from Sky News - 17 July to 14 October.**
- **Sample size – total 1613 pieces of content, The Australian 580, Daily Tele 244, Herald Sun 203, Sky News 586 (75% of published content).**
- **Quantitative coding per word:**
 - Voices included.
 - Voice mentioned.
 - 'Yes' or 'No' arguments used.
 - How voices and arguments are framed as heroes, villains or victims.

News Corp Take a Position in Debates



The Australian's editor-at-large Paul Kelly responds to Malcolm Turnbull on ABC Q&A television current affairs panel, November 2020:

"We have many publications that are dedicated to promoting the cause of climate change, and radical action on climate change, so that's OK is it? It's OK to be a propagandist for one side, but if one is a critic or sceptic about some of these issues, that's not OK."

News Corp Blurs News and Commentary

News Corp Editorial Policy

"Comment, conjecture and opinion are acceptable in reports to provide perspective on an issue, or explain the significance of an issue, or to allow readers to recognise what the publication's standpoint is on the matter being reported."



Campaigning for 'No'

"Now I want it [the Voice] to be put up I want it to fail and fail badly so it's put away hopefully forever and a day".

Peta Credlin, Sky News, July 24, 2023

"Australians are being lied to by their prime minister and their government. It's a disgrace. Vote no."

Rowan Dean, Sky News, July 30, 2023

"So please vote no for the sake of the children if not for yourself."

Andrew Bolt, Sky News, August 23, 2023



Media Power: Size and Concentration

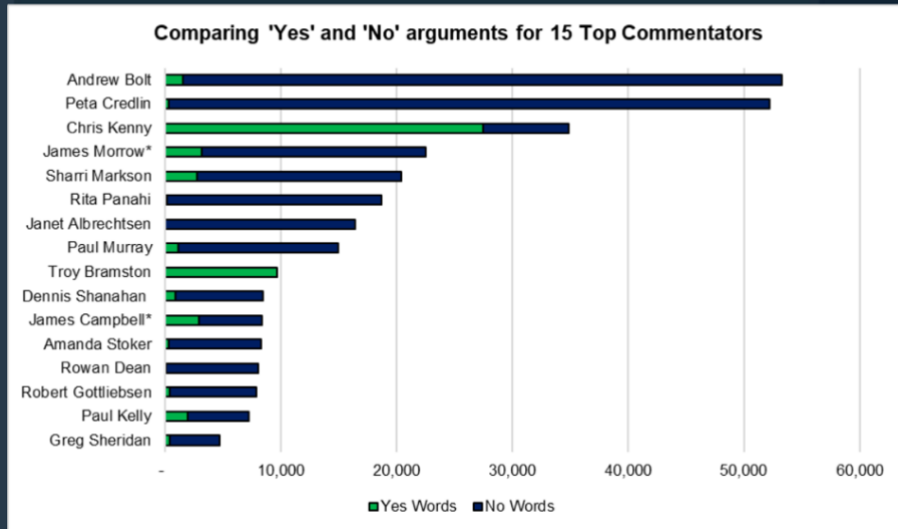


"News Corp is the unchallenged dominant player, owning a 59% share of the metropolitan and national print markets by readership..."

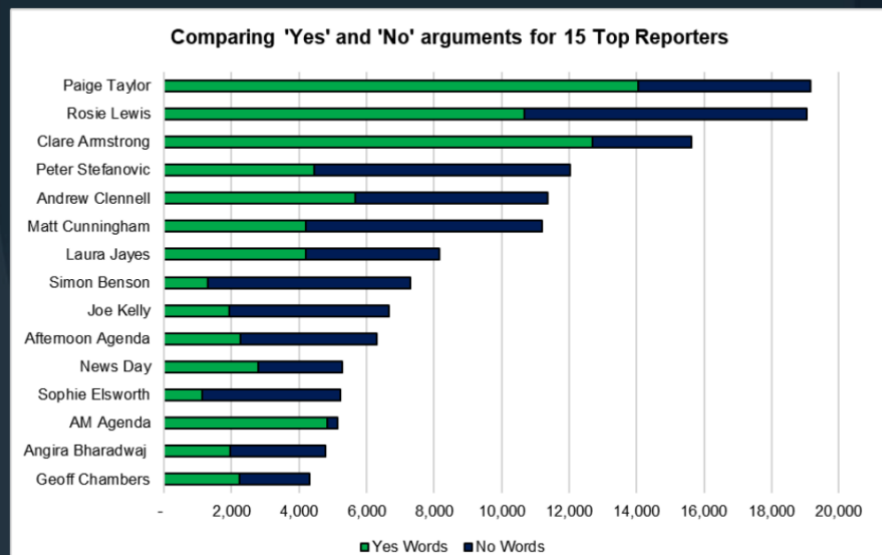
University of Sydney - Benedetta Brevini and Michael Ward
GetUp's Who Controls Our Media Report 2021



Commentary as Campaigning



Standard of Reporting



KEY FINDINGS:

1. News Corp's coverage of the Voice constituted an overt political campaign in favour of a 'No' vote.
2. The most frequently used 'No' arguments from News Corp were consistent with those of the official 'No' campaign.
3. News Corp's coverage played a singular role in the broader anti-Voice misinformation ecosystem, with Sky News being responsible for the most egregious examples.
4. News Corp's Voice coverage was extremely biased in favour of the 'No' campaign and this was especially egregious on Sky News and in the tabloid papers.
5. News Corp's anti-Voice campaign appeared to have dual agendas: defeating the Voice at the referendum and using this defeat to undermine Anthony Albanese's Prime Ministership.

Labor and the moguls. Australia's last great media upheaval gave Rupert Murdoch the green light to dominate the press, Frank Bongiorno, [Inside Story \(originally published 27 July 2018\)](#)



Friends, foes and favours: treasurer Paul Keating and prime minister Bob Hawke in 1988. Patrick Riviere/Getty Images

Towards the top of the *BRW* Rich Lists of 1983 and 1984 was the Fairfax family, the oldest of Australia's media dynasties. The Fairfaxes were enjoying the high profits of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Melbourne Age* and the *Australian Financial Review* — so much so that the company was valued by *BRW*, itself a Fairfax publication, at \$175 million in 1983 and \$300 million in 1984.

Little wonder that Kerry Packer, Rupert Murdoch and many others looked enviously on Fairfax's "rivers of gold," its lucrative classified advertising. But the extensive holdings of the Fairfax family meant that the firm was also seen as impregnable to takeover.

Another widely coveted company was BHP, the nation's largest, with its extensive mining and manufacturing interests. Robert Holmes à Court, a Perth-based lawyer and brilliant corporate raider, mischievously claimed that his ambition was to turn it into a subsidiary of a firm he controlled, Bell Resources. By the time the 1984 Rich List appeared, Holmes à Court was said to have amassed a personal fortune of at least \$165 million. In an era when bankers were falling over one another to offer loans to ambitious entrepreneurs of this kind, public companies — especially cashed-up or undervalued companies — were vulnerable to raiders.

By 1985 the effects of an already impressive bull market were apparent in *BRW*'s list. With a fortune of \$300 million, Holmes à Court was now judged the country's richest man; in the previous year alone, his wealth had increased by \$135 million, or \$2.6 million per week. The Murdochs, however, were still the richest family, with \$400 million. Large personal profits were being made from media and retailing empires but the fortunes of developers such as George Herscu, Frank Lowy, Ted Lustig and the Grollo brothers — all European migrants — were also growing quickly on the back of a buoyant market in commercial property.

A year later, when the 1986 Rich List was published, the era of the entrepreneur had well and truly arrived, as had "the takeover revolution." Among the more significant of the mergers at this time was that of the large and venerable Melbourne-based businesses Coles and Myer, the Myer family thereby relinquishing control of a retailing empire that had its origins in an emporium established in Bendigo on the eve of Federation. But there were large compensations: \$72 million in cash and forty million shares in Coles Myer, as well as two seats on the new company's board. *BRW* estimated the family's wealth at \$330 million.

Another fabulously rich Melbourne clan, the Murdochs, was also flourishing, with an approximate wealth of \$700 million on the back of a massive increase in the price of their News Corporation shares. Rupert himself had disappeared from the Rich List, however, to become a citizen of "the richest, most free and happiest country in the world," as he called the United States. US law prevented foreigners from taking up more than 20 per cent of a broadcasting licence and Murdoch wanted to buy a suite of American television stations. In a ten-minute citizenship ceremony in New York City in September 1985, he "absolutely and entirely" renounced "all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign power, potentate, state or sovereign of whom or which" he had "heretofore been a subject or a citizen." The foreign power in question was Australia, the sovereign Queen Elizabeth II.

But put this way, Murdoch was surrendering very little: he was in all but name already a potentate in his own right, [wrote](#) a *New York Times* columnist, a "Multinational Man... by choice, a man without a country." The judge who administered the oath of allegiance told Murdoch and the other 185 aliens in the ceremony that they now had the

same rights as every other citizen of the United States; if they had something to say, he added — possibly with tongue in cheek — they could write to the newspapers.

While he had given up his right to cast a ballot at Australian elections, Murdoch's wants were rarely permitted to slip from the forefront of political consideration. It was his company, and Kerry Packer's, that Hawke, Keating and their closest allies and advisers in the Labor Party favoured over the two other major media companies, the Herald and Weekly Times, or HWT, and Fairfax. The right wing of NSW Labor, which formed Hawke and Keating's power base, was now especially close to Packer. His father, Sir Frank, had been a dogmatic opponent of the Labor Party, but this matey Labor fraternity and the macho, sports-mad, knockabout businessman were simpatico. Some right-wing Labor politicians were infatuated with those who had enjoyed material success, and they relished the generous hospitality Packer laid on for them. Packer, for his part, enjoyed exposure to successful politicians who understood the media and would be willing to do him a good turn when the need or opportunity arose.

If Hawke and Keating had a less warm personal relationship with Murdoch than with Packer, they nonetheless hoped that any favours would be returned in kind. Everyone remembered the mess Murdoch had made of Whitlam in 1975, and they were aware of his partisanship in favour of Thatcher and Reagan. Hawke and Keating's loathing for HWT, which Murdoch had in his sights, was predictable, since it had never been a friend of the Labor Party.

But their hatred of Fairfax had different roots. It too had once been a formidable opponent of the party, but its journalists' attitude was generally favourable to the key policies of the Hawke government. Hawke and Keating's antagonism to Fairfax had more to do with recent exposés and investigations, which all too frequently seemed to be concerned with Labor luminaries or businesspeople who would increasingly be dubbed Labor "mates."

Fairfax had published articles alleging improprieties or worse on the part of Hawke's close friends Peter Abeles and Kerry Packer, as well as Keating's friend and fellow antique collector Warren Anderson, a property developer who became caught up in the bottom-of-the-harbour tax controversies of the early 1980s. Its papers had also been responsible for the corruption allegations against former Labor attorney-general Lionel Murphy.

In short, the company had allowed its journalists a long leash, and this was offensive to politicians who saw "the deal" as at the heart of political, as of business, life. In the case of Fairfax, they had no one with whom they could clinch the deal that would ensure their problems went away.

All of these likes and dislikes came powerfully into play when the federal government considered media ownership in the mid 1980s. The issue arose in part out of the manifestly inadequate provision of television services to areas outside the major cities. In the early 1980s, 35 per cent of homes with televisions received only one commercial station and the ABC. The Fraser government's decision in 1979 to invest in a satellite opened up the possibility of better services in the regions, but with the danger of centralising power over programming and eroding local production.

But the two-station rule adopted by the Menzies government still prevailed as general policy: no one could own more than two television stations, with a limit of one in any metropolitan market. An owner with stations in Orange and Cairns reached the limit at the same point as Kerry Packer, with his Channel Nine studios in Sydney and Melbourne. This traditional structure couldn't sustain an expansion of services.

But when the federal government considered its options, it was faced with a number of contending interests. The big players in the metropolitan television industry — Packer, Murdoch, Fairfax and HWT — would benefit from being able to establish national networks that could beam programs directly via satellite into the regions. But this would consolidate their dominance. Newer players wanted to be able to expand in ways that the present two-station agreement made impossible. And existing small regional players worried about surrendering their monopoly in a limited market.

Keating would eventually play the decisive role. Late in 1986, after sometimes bitter internal argument arising from a concern that Hawke and Keating were bending over too far to help Packer and Murdoch, the government announced the new arrangements. In future, a single operator could have as many television stations as it wished — although no more than one in any city or region — so long as it didn't exceed a national audience reach of 75 per cent (a figure whittled down to 60 by the time the legislation was eventually passed). Alternatively, a company could own

newspapers — but it could not own both a television station and a newspaper in the same market. Keating memorably warned that you could be “queen of the screen” or “prince of print” but not both.

Yet what the government spun as an even-handed policy aimed at preventing media concentration was really nothing of the kind. Not only would it place control of Australian television in fewer hands, but it was also highly suited to the government’s favourite media moguls. Packer did especially well out of it, for he was primarily in television. His print media interests were concentrated in magazines, which were excluded from the cross-media laws. Murdoch was a little more awkwardly placed, since he retained a 15 per cent share in Network Ten. But he was likely to have to relinquish it in any case, since foreigners were not permitted to own more than 5 per cent of an Australian television station.

The effect of the new laws was not merely to minimise harm to the favoured ones, however. The ability to create a national network greatly increased the likely sale value of Murdoch’s and Packer’s TV assets; it was estimated that the government’s decision had put a billion dollars in their pockets. And it was clear to everyone concerned that Packer and Murdoch had also been informed well in advance about what the government was up to, whereas HWT and Fairfax seemed rather in the dark.

Murdoch, in fact, launched a successful \$1.8 million bid for HWT a week after the new media laws were announced, fighting off Holmes à Court and buying out share raider Ron Brierley. When added to his existing holdings centred on the *Australian*, Murdoch’s new print acquisitions would deliver fully 60 per cent of the audience for daily newspapers in Australia. None of the other great takeovers of the 1980s would have such lasting consequences. [An edited extract from [The Eighties: The Decade That Transformed Australia](#), by Frank Bongiorno, published by Black Inc in 2016]

LHSSA member Stewart Sweeney provides another perspective on Murdoch in that era (AFR 27Sept)

Murdoch's version of freedom

The 70-year career and impact of Rupert Murdoch are better understood if located within the parallel 100-year rise of the myth that freedom, free speech and democracy are inseparable from free enterprise (“Labor MPs wish Murdoch well, Turnbull unleashes again”, September 22).

The news of his “retirement” has him and his acolytes wrapping themselves in the cloak of truth and freedom. It is, however, a very specific version of truth and freedom. It goes back to the so-called tripod of freedom invented by US business leaders from the 1930s to 1950, as a response to the crash of 1929, the threat of the New Deal, and the fear of reformism becoming socialism or even communism.

By 1950, an intellectually coherent, if historically and logically misleading, framework for market fundamentalism had been created. It had started with reframing private enterprise as free enterprise and competitive markets as free markets, and going on to claim that free enterprise and free markets were inseparable from free speech, free press and religion. Indeed, it was argued freedom and democracy required free markets, and that any deviation puts you on the slippery slope of inefficiency, bureaucracy, reformism, socialism and communism. For Friedrich Hayek, you were on the road to serfdom.



PHOTO: ILLUSTRATION: DAVID ROWE

This was the version of freedom and truth that Murdoch sought to consolidate and intensify as he built his media empire starting in the 1960s. Murdoch ran with the freedom myth to teach the world to loathe taxation, regulation and government, and to love the free market. We now have our world of global warming, intensifying inequality and embedded poverty.

We need a different truth, a better version of freedom and above all a different and better economic and social system.

Stewart Sweeney
Adelaide, SA

Succession saga

Rupert Murdoch’s retirement and Lachlan’s ascent have occupied many inches of print and many metres of web

spaces, but only Neil Chenoweth (“The Murdoch succession saga is far from over”, September 23-24) nails it. This is just the opening shot of the Murdoch wars that will tear the family apart when Rupert dies and James and Lachlan duel for their dad’s legacy. Until then the real intrigue is: whose side are Prudence and Elisabeth on?

Gabriel Dabscheck
Elsternwick, Vic

His editors’ loss

With Rupert Murdoch stepping down (how can he go lower?), who will now do all of his editors’ “thinking”?

Chris Roylance
Paddington, Qld

AI will have to do better

If the AI-generated photo of Lachlan Murdoch is the best it can do (AFR Weekend, September 23-24), I will not be using it until there are significant improvements. Those mangled fingers will keep me awake for the next week.



Neale Meagher
New York

Postscript: Young Rupert Murdoch was an avowed socialist, trade unionist and lover of Lenin.
Believe it or not. [Late Night Live, ABC Radio National, 3 Aug 2023](#)

The Murdoch media mogul that we've come to know is almost unrecognisable from Rupert Murdoch, the youth. **Phillip Adams** interviews **Walter Marsh**, author of *Young Rupert - the making of the Murdoch empire*, about the radical who espoused socialism, kept a bust of Lenin in his uni accommodation and then went on to build his empire from 1950s Adelaide. This episode was originally broadcast on August 3, 2023.



Time to celebrate and protect the eight hour day Dale Beasley (SA Unions secretary) [In Daily, Sept 12 2023](#)

150 years ago, South Australia adopted what is now the standard working day. **Dale Beasley** looks back on what went before, how the reform shaped our state's progressive legislation and why it must be protected in the face of modern pressures.



(Left) An 8 hours banner in a rally circa 1895. Photo John Gazard, courtesy State Library of South Australia
(Right) an 1870s banner, courtesy History Trust of South Australia

Photographer Brad Griffin.

In September 2023, we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the first 8 hour day won in South Australia. Back then, working people had to struggle workplace by workplace to win better conditions. The unregulated world of work made a lot of business owners very rich, while thousands of workers struggled. Workers were employed on seasonal or daily basis, lining up every morning down at the wharves and at farm and factory gates in the hope there'd be some work available for them— the low tech, 1800s versions of today's Uber, Mable and Air Tasker.

In the mid-1800s, workers lived in poverty: there was no minimum wage, no minimum employment conditions. Those in steady jobs often worked 14 hour days across six to seven days a week, while away from work there was no Medicare or modern medicine, no social security, little education for working people, and living conditions were cramped with no modern sanitation.

This harsh reality saw mass movements of working people around the country come together to strive for something better. In those years workers learnt that to win better pay and conditions, better safety at work and security for their families, they needed to be organised. In the mid-1800s South Australians organised themselves into the 8-Hour Movement, coming together with a vision – a day of 8 hours work, 8 hours rest and 8 hours to do what we may. It was a movement of people who wanted lives where they and their families thrived, not just survived. They marched in the streets, they met in workplaces, at markets, at church halls, and the movement grew.

In 1873, metal trades workers were the first in this state to win the right to an 8 hour workday. Many more trades and occupations would follow. South Australians had just learnt the power of working people coming together. Workers continued to harness that power, establishing the United Trades and Labor Council (SA Unions) in 1884 and the South Australian Labor Party in 1891 to keep building a state where people thrived, not just survived. The 8 Hour Movement in South Australia became the beating heart of our state's sense of social justice and egalitarianism. And that heartbeat has kept beating strong, driving our state forward to lead the nation on social progress.

In 1876 we were the first part of the British Empire to recognise and legalise trade unions. In 1894 South Australia was the first place in the world to give equal political rights to both men and women, including Aboriginal women. SA led the nation in women's suffrage, with Mary Lee leading the creation of the South Australian Women's Suffrage League in 1888. We drove the campaign towards federation, aboriginal land rights and outlawing discrimination on the basis of race and sexuality. The legacy of the 8 Hour Movement in SA is all around us, in our sense of fairness, the aspiration South Aussies have to enjoy a fulfilling life at work and outside of it, and our important strides forward in working and living standards.

But 150 years after that historic first win, there is unfinished business. South Australian workers are faced with some hard truths in 2023. Corporate profits are extraordinarily high, gouged from workers pockets through profiteering, while too many South Australians cannot afford to live on eight hours work alone. Historically high numbers of us have to hold down two or more jobs to make ends meet, while the creep of digital technology keeps us tethered to work long after we've clocked off.

A secure job is the key to being able to live a fulfilling life now, and plan for the future. Unfortunately, the growth in insecure, casual and gig work is putting that life out of reach of hundreds of thousands of South Aussies. The 2023 Annual Wage Review by the Fair Work Commission heard that low wage growth, high inflation, and unrestrained corporate price gouging mean that people are skipping meals, avoiding medical care and dreading their next bill.

Nationally, in 2022, the average worker saw their wages go backwards by 4.5% – the highest real wage cut on record. The story is worse in Adelaide. In 2022, South Australians saw their wages go backwards by 5.1%. Couple this with the fact that one in three of us are in insecure employment and that ABS figures show that almost a million Australians need to hold down multiple jobs to make ends meet (the highest rate since those records began in 1994), no wonder the cost of living is critical for so many people.

The cost of living crisis is also locking people out of owning (and increasingly being able to rent) their own home. While South Australian households are struggling with increasing cost of living, supermarkets, banks and petrol companies have posted huge profits, which have arisen from corporate price gouging and profiteering. Government policy must prioritise decent wage rises and conditions, as well as workers compensation for all workers, including casual and gig workers, to start to balance the ledger and deliver eight hours of work that we can rely and thrive on for all of us.

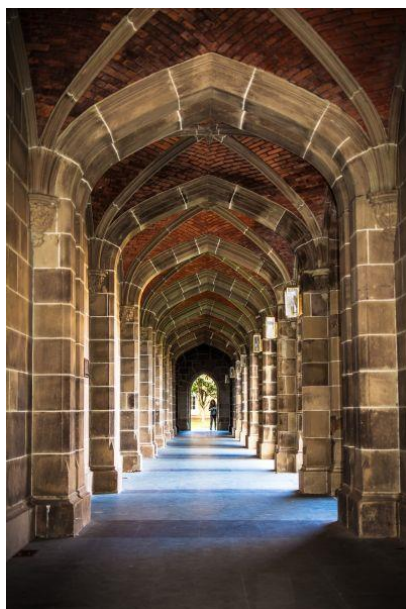
We deserve eight hours work that we come home safely from. Last year, sixteen South Australians were killed at work. In 2021/22, there were nearly 13,000 workers compensation claims lodged by injured workers and that same year courts dished out \$2,561,000 in fines for the 11 worst safety breaches – more than in any year to date. Those figures represent far too many workplaces that fail to uphold health and safety standards, and fail to deal with safety risks before workers are injured or killed. While many unaddressed safety issues pose a risk of physical injury, we are increasingly seeing the damaging psychological impacts of workload intensification, excessive hours and fatigue, bullying and harassment, and social isolation. Every South Australian worker should be able to go to work at the beginning of the day and return home safely, and South Australian workers need greater ability and support to proactively address safety problems at work when their boss fails to do so.

We deserve eight hours of work that we can clock-off from. For too many South Australian workers, their work-life balance is off. Working additional hours, receiving contact after hours, excessive workloads and understaffing are systemic issues for many workers. With constant email and phone notifications, an expectation to always be switched on, and blurring boundaries between work and home life, finding the work-life balance is harder than ever.

Make no mistake; this is always to the benefit of the boss, with workers completing an average of 4.6 hours of unpaid overtime each week. Workers should be empowered to refuse contact outside of working hours, with legislated protection from retaliation. This should include requiring employers to record all instances where employees are contacted outside of regular working hours to allow such contact to be audited and unpaid wages recouped.

We have been taught over recent years, that these issues are merely the price to pay for a working life in the 21st century. But our great great grandparents knew something we need to remember – it doesn't have to be this way. We can imagine and create a world where businesses and workers thrive together. That's why in 2023 SA Unions are renewing our commitment to the principles held dear to the South Australians of the 8 Hour Movement who came before us. 150 years after they won the first 8 hour day, we continue on the path forged by those visionaries.

Activist Helen Todd, another early champion of women's suffrage, advocated for both economic prosperity and an enhanced quality of life, symbolised by the concept of "bread and roses." Contrary to the tropes about lazy bludgers, South Aussie workers work hard, and in return we deserve lives of fulfilment and beauty - lives where we can thrive, not just survive. Not just bread, but roses too.



The Eight-Hour Day movement started in the Quadrangle at Melbourne University!



YAKKA: AUSTRALIA AT WORK explores the Nation's people in labour [ABC TV](#)



▶ 57m

Episode 1 Soil and Toil

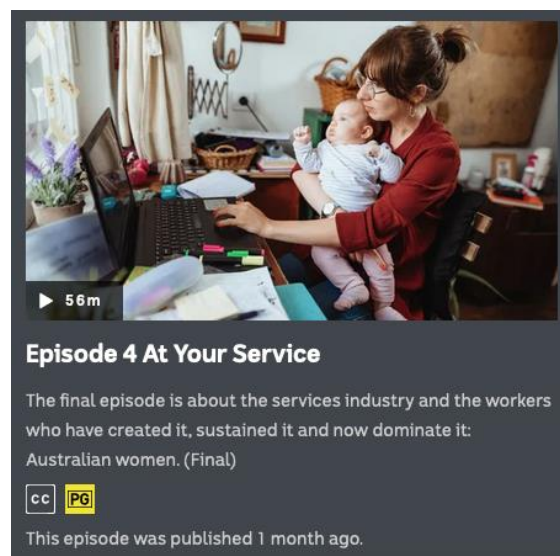
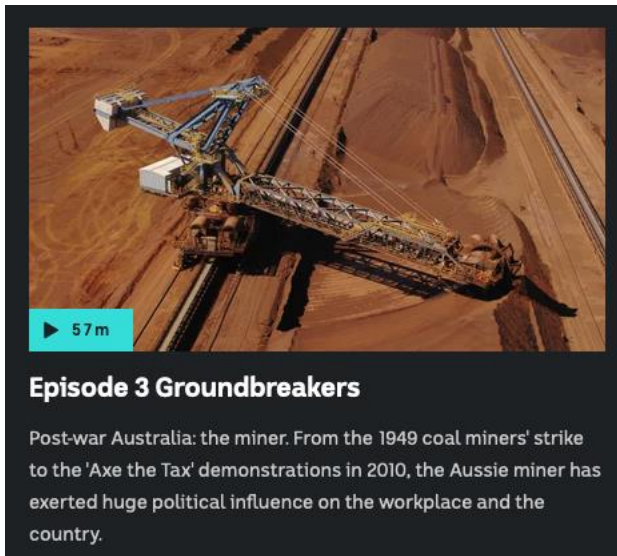
Explore how since the Second World War, Australian agriculture has had to adapt to survive in changing global and domestic economies, a volatile political landscape, and face the challenges of an unpredictable climate.



▶ 59m

Episode 2 Making a Nation

How Australia was transformed from an agricultural economy into a manufacturing one and how this workplace revolution ended 40 years later amidst public acrimony, inflation, an oil crisis and the rise of the Free Market.



From working the land, to digging up minerals, from manufacturing to the services industry, Yakka: Australia At Work explores how work has shaped Australia from the Second World War to the present. Each episode is themed around a particular form of work.

- **Episode 1: SOIL & TOIL**, is about agriculture and how, since the Second World War, Australia has had to adapt to survive in changing global and domestic economies, a volatile political landscape, and face the challenges of an unpredictable climate.
- **Episode 2 MAKING A NATION**, explores the post-war work revolution in which Australia was transformed from an agricultural economy into a manufacturing one. Full employment guaranteed unprecedented prosperity for most Australians and a high standard of living.
- **Episode 3, GROUNDBREAKERS**, is about mining. From the 1949 coal miners' strike which almost undid the economy (and certainly undermined the Labor government) to the 'Axe the Tax' demonstrations sixty-five years later, this episode is about the political power of miners and the mining industry since the Second World War.
- **Episode 4, AT YOUR SERVICE**, is about two things: women and the services industry. Today, women are dominant in the Australian workplace because they are equipped intellectually to take advantage of an economy which is more about brains than brawn.

Pat Dodson, a dignified diplomat, is a rare politician. He will leave behind a cavernous hole in Canberra, Indigenous Affairs Editor Bridget Brennan, [ABC online, Wed 29 Nov 2023](#)



Pat Dodson, who has been an elder statesman in the parliament, with Indigenous senators Malarndirri McCarthy and Jana Stewart (ABC News: Matt Roberts)

In what has often been a dispiriting year for his people, Senator Pat Dodson must have hoped his departure from Canberra aligned with a more hopeful outlook for reconciliation. It wasn't to be.

Announcing his retirement, the "Father of Reconciliation" leaves an immense legacy, but the resounding No vote on the Voice was a reminder of divides that are still entrenched. His departure from the parliament will leave a cavernous hole in Canberra as he takes with him a dignified approach to diplomacy and a lifetime of hard-won battles in the fight for his mob.

Dodson, who has been battling cancer, says he is leaving politics because he can no longer discharge his duties as a Western Australian senator. He has been an elder statesman in the parliament, commanding respect from both sides

of the aisle. As Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said: "There are few more reassuring sights in parliament than seeing Patrick and his hat coming down a corridor towards you."

It was a great shame that Dodson was not able to play a greater part during the referendum campaign. He has a way of cutting through spin and lies with a calm and common-sense pragmatism often missing in our national debate. Typically understated, the Yawuru man says he is grateful for the opportunity to play "a little part" in political life. "I do leave this place with some sense of sorrow, in that as a nation we were not able to respond positively to the referendum. I think that would have helped our country."

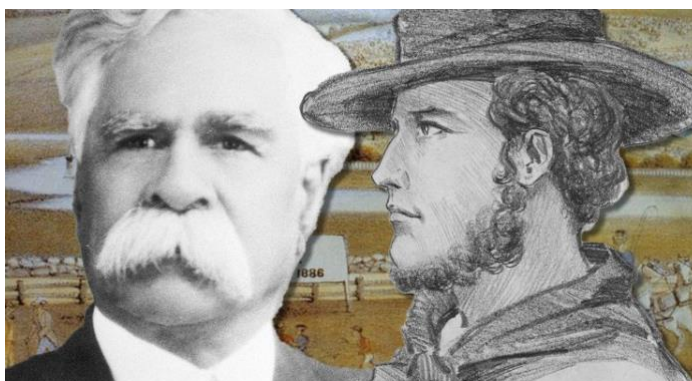
Dodson, thought to be Australia's first Aboriginal Catholic priest, has been a rare politician. Someone who came to politics late in life, but who brought a lifetime of experience and wisdom. The term "Indigenous leader" is overused but Dodson was exactly that — and balancing his ministerial and cultural obligations cannot have been easy.

As a 75-year-old Aboriginal man, he has also lived through the White Australia Policy, a witness to an Australia that few in Canberra would be able to fathom. He was an integral player in the land rights movement and passionately spoke about the pain of the Stolen Generations, having watched on as many of his contemporaries were forcibly taken from their parents.

Interviewing Senator Dodson was always a treat. He didn't trade in stock-standard news grabs, double-speak or dodging. Instead, he was honest, interesting, fiercely intelligent and pragmatic. No matter the debate about Indigenous affairs, he would always remind journalists to study Australia's history to understand the existing structural issues that have led to the subjugation of his people.

His speech marking 30 years since the Aboriginal deaths in custody royal commission was a landmark moment in the parliament. Dodson was a commissioner and he could still recite passages from the inquiry and each careful recommendation, many of which, to this day, have never been properly implemented. He decried the hundreds of deaths of young prisoners as an "awful blight on this nation's history". The parliament would be richer if more elders of Dodson's calibre were to follow him into the chamber. It's fitting that a new generation of Aboriginal politicians will carry his legacy and his lessons.

William Cooper, John Batman and a single bend in the Maribyrnong - A brief history of a river, and two men who sought to shape its banks Charlie Lewis, [Crikey, Oct 2, 2023](#)



This piece owes a huge debt to the work of Bain Attwood, Andrew Markus, Marcia Langton and Jack Horner, and to the help of the Footscray Historical Society

William Cooper and John Batman (Images: Wikimedia Commons)

"No man ever steps in the same river twice" is the condensed aphorism ascribed to the Greek [philosopher Heraclitus](#). That is, the world and those who inhabit it are in a constant state of flux, even that which appears stable and unchanging. This understates things. You can't cross the same river *once* — each step takes you into water that wasn't there a second ago and will be gone before you can raise your foot. At the time Heraclitus put his thoughts to papyrus around 500 BC, people had been populating the volcanic plains sprawling to the west of the Maribyrnong river for at least 15,000 and [possibly upwards of 40,000](#) years. At the point of European incursion into the area, the two main clans based near the river were the Wurundjeri Willum and Marin Balluk. Their tools forged from silcrete, stone working sites and quarries have been found up and down the river's banks. [The name Maribyrnong](#) is said to derive from the Woi wurrung word for "I can hear a ringtail possum".

A good deal of the journey from then to now — what has happened on this continent and the stories we tell ourselves about what has happened — can be sketched via a few kilometres either side of the bend made by what we now call Newell's Paddock, which juts out to the east.

Northwest a little way, you hit the site of the old munitions factory, the largest and most important in Australia during the Second World War, and a major site for the influx of women into the workforce during that time. Next door is [Jack's Magazine](#), the earth reared up all around its long triangular halls, where those explosives were stored. Seven decades earlier, the site served the same purpose for the gold rush, which brought with it one of the great waves of migrants to an area that would come to be defined by them. Now it hosts walking tours and art exhibitions and is surrounded by towers and ice-cube-shaped new builds, and the ammunition factory is long gone.

Back towards Newell's Paddock, across the water from Footscray Park, you can see the Flemington Racecourse. In 1974 the Maribyrnong swelled and surged beyond its banks and the racecourse was submerged. It was the only structure in the area that anyone had done anything to protect by the time the floods came again in 2022. There are sprawls of migrant families filling the area who lost nearly everything in 1974 and whose grandkids [got it worse](#) in 2022, thanks to failures of planning and early warning systems, and the floodwall around the racecourse battling [yet more waves back in their direction](#). Further south, between the railway and the stockbridge is Newell's Paddock, named for a man who made his living dumping the wetlands with what is euphemistically called "night soil" — the literal human waste of the young settlement. The river was filled with animal carcasses and pollution as industry bloomed in the 20th century.

Parallel to that is the story of the great human waves that broke over Footscray and its surroundings after the Second World War. At first Greek and Italian, then, marked by the Heavenly Queen Temple with its luminous statue of Taoist deity Mazu, shifting towards Asia and then the Horn of Africa from the 1980s onward. Continuing past the Joseph Road precinct, [the looming towers](#) on the water's edge are the most visible local remnant of a particularly [nihilistic approach](#) to planning in the early 21st century. Abandoned lots bought in this time dot throughout the area. They are being allowed to decay by developers, an attempt to bully the local council into allowing them favourable development terms.

Just south of the arts centre building — previously used for the slaughter and curing of pigs — is the point where all these strands eventually intersect, the knot where one version of the world splits and splays in directions previously unimagined and unimaginable: Grimes Reserve. Now named for Charles Grimes, the first European to sail through the area in 1803, it marks the spot where it is thought that John Batman first disembarked on the western side of the river during his own exploration in 1835 (it was called Batman Reserve from 1943 to the 1970s).

Batman had already led an eventful life when he set sail from Launceston to Port Phillip and then on to the west. Setting up as a grazier in Van Diemen's Land, now called Tasmania or lutruwita, in the 1820s he led "roving parties" that massacred Indigenous people as part of the "Black War" on the island, where the genocidal portion of the colonial project met with its greatest success. He sailed the Yarra to the site of the modern centre of Melbourne — famously noting "the spot for a village" in his journal — and near Merri Creek, he struck a "treaty" with the Kulin nation for the lands we now call Melbourne.

Batman was largely forgotten in the decades following his miserable and squalid death, disfigured by syphilis and tended to by a pair of Indigenous servants, ostracised by the society he had helped bring about. In the years leading up to Federation, his image was revived and smoothed by biographers serving [the need to assuage colonist guilt](#); he was reborn not as the butcher of Tasmania, but the beneficent pioneer, who had bought the lands beneath Melbourne's buildings fair and square for an annual rent of 40 blankets, 30 axes, 100 knives, 50 scissors, 30 mirrors, 200 handkerchiefs, 100 pounds of flour and six shirts. The treaty, far from being a meaningless con that was roundly rejected by the colonial administrators of the time, became a symbol of the goodwill felt towards the continent's original occupants by the "fine gentlemen" who claimed it for the empire.

Though nothing so momentous happened when he explored further west, the site of Batman's brief visit in June 1835 was picked for the "Pioneers Day" rally [in January 1937](#), which hosted speeches, an Indigenous choir and a reenactment of the Merri Creek meeting. Among those watching was an elderly Yorta Yorta man named William Cooper. Cooper was born at the junction of the Murray and Goulburn rivers in the early 1860s. He was in his 70s, a

long life of fighting for Indigenous rights behind him, when in 1933 he left the declining standards of his home at the Cumeragunja mission to live in a series of cottages in Footscray and the surrounding suburbs, where he would turn out scores of letters to politicians and newspapers by candlelight and host meetings of the Australian Aborigines' League (AAL), the most prominent Indigenous activist group of its time.

As a younger man Cooper, along with many of the other Indigenous people who lived there, had converted to Christianity during his time at the Maloga mission — a move that may have been practically advantageous, but certainly formed a sincere organising principle for the rest of his life. The mission was run by Daniel Matthews, who encouraged Cooper and others to see the parallels between themselves and the dispossessed Jews of the Book of Exodus. Cooper lost a son in the Battle of Ypres, as part of the grand horror of the First World War, a battle for an empire that in return would not recognise the likes of Cooper as citizens until 26 years after his death.

Whatever Cooper's view of Batman, he liked the part about the treaty, insofar as it was one of the few gestures made by colonists that the land had already belonged to someone when they arrived. He had agreed to have the AAL involved with the Grand Pioneer Rally with some misgivings, and watched as it plummeted beneath his lowest expectations. The nadir was the speech by the head of the "Australian Natives Association", which lauded the event as a chance to remember the legacy bequeathed to those present by their forebears: "white Australia". Indigenous people did not rate a single mention in the address.

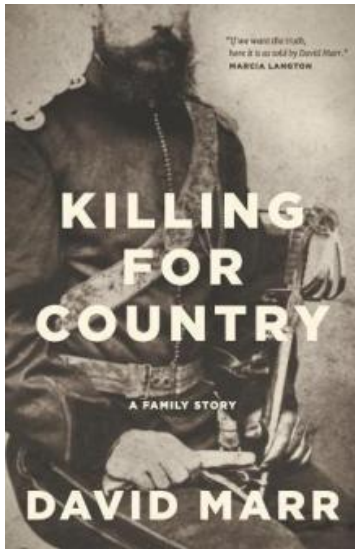
Cooper was furious, writing to the event's organiser that "what is a memorial of the coming of the whites is a memorial of the death of us". In the months that followed, Cooper and the AAL began to advocate the first-ever Indigenous Day of Mourning, which was held in Sydney in 1938, and was the first of what is now commonplace; counter-memorials marking what was lost after January 26, 1788. Cooper issued two simultaneous appeals in December 1937. One regarded the day of mourning, the other revived a long-term goal; [to deliver a petition to King George VI](#) calling for a permanent Indigenous representative in Australian Parliament. Cooper had spent years travelling around the country in the early 1930s, eventually accruing signatures from nearly 2,000 Indigenous people.

As it happened, the first Day of Mourning was [largely taken up and organised](#) by Jack Patten and William Ferguson's Aborigines Progressive Association, and the resolution issued after the meeting on January 26, 1938 did not include Cooper's demand for parliamentary representation. Undeterred, Cooper continued to push his own petition on the subject. It was never passed on to the King, neither by the Lyons nor Menzies' government. The [original was lost](#), along with the signatures it contained.

It was on December 6, 1938, in the midst of this series of indignities, that the AAL attempted to present a letter of protest regarding the events that came to be known as the *Kristallnacht* (which had occurred a month earlier) to the German consulate in Collins Street. This has come to dominate the public memory of Cooper in recent years, with an irresistible image surfacing: the staunch advocate, slowing with age but defiant and unbowed, the nation's sole glint of conscience, marching through the bright December heat to be the only contemporary witness to the early writhing of the cocoon that would eventually split and let loose the full horrors of the Holocaust. A statue capturing in bronze Cooper's dignity and bearing, a plaintive look on his face, the petition in hand, was [unveiled in Shepparton in 2018](#).

But just as a wide enough view of the water's edge will obscure the inlets and waterways that swell into sharp relief on closer inspection, this account blurs details and hides gaps. The AAL's petition was one of many expressions of horror to follow the night of broken glass, and while it's highly likely that Cooper was present when it was delivered, and he was known to walk everywhere, there is no direct contemporary evidence to suggest that an organised march crossing the Maribyrnong on the way from Footscray to the consulate ever occurred. And yet it has become the thing he's most famous for, the possible restated as concrete fact, the imprecise, rendered solid and tangible in [news reports](#) and [educational material](#).

In 2018, Batman, returned by history to his status as a mass murderer, was removed as the namesake of the federal electorate collecting Melbourne's Northern Suburbs. [His replacement was Cooper](#). And so Cooper and Batman are moulded and posed according to the best uses future generations can find for them, and then sunk into the amber of commemoration. And the river is already through our fingers and off around the bend.



David Marr *Killing for Country: A family history*, Black Inc. 2023 432pp \$39.99

Reviewed by Braham Dabscheck, the Newtown Review of Books ([online](#)) 2 Nov 2023

David Marr's account of his ancestors' involvement with the Native Police and the murder of Aboriginal people is distressing and important.

Several years ago, one of David Marr's older relatives informed him that his great-great-grandfather Reginald Charles Uhr (1844–1888) had served as an officer with the Native Police Force, an institution whose task was to hunt down and kill Aboriginal people in nineteenth-century Australia and into the early twentieth.

His younger brother, Wentworth D'Arcy Uhr (1845–1907) had also been an officer with the Native Police. This came as a complete shock to Marr:

It embarrasses me now to have been reporting race and politics in this country for so long without it ever crossing my mind that my family might have played a part in the frontier wars. My blindness was so Australian.

On seeing a photo of Sub-Inspector Uhr 'in his pompous uniform' (which is reproduced on the inside cover of *Killing for Country*), Marr was overcome with feelings of shame. This motivated him and other family members to investigate the 'work' of his forebears with the Native Police. What began as an account of the bloody exploits of the brothers turned into a history of an invasion in which they were foot soldiers.

Marr's account begins with the arrival of Richard Jones (1786–1852) in Sydney in 1809 as a clerk in a merchant house. He became a successful merchant and entrepreneur, grazier – or, in the parlance of the time, a 'squatter' – and a leading figure in the political affairs of the colony. Jones encouraged his wife's relatives – Petersons and Uhrs – to come to Sydney to help him with his burgeoning business ventures. Edmund Blucher Uhr (1815–1874) took up the offer and migrated to Sydney in the later part of the 1830s. Reg and D'Arcy were two of his sons.

In unpacking the affairs of these four men – Richard Jones, Edmund Uhr and Reg and D'Arcy Uhr – Marr provides an in-depth examination of the transformation of Australia during the nineteenth century. The lives of his forebears provide the scaffolding for a broader narrative examining the expansion of white settlement from Sydney to country New South Wales, Queensland, the Northern Territory, South Australia and finally Western Australia. His focus is the transformation of Australia from a land occupied by Aboriginal people, to one colonised by the British throughout the nineteenth century and up to Federation.

What distinguishes Marr's account of this period is how limited a role state institutions played in the affairs of the colonies, especially out in the bush. It is an era of unregulated capitalism, when urgers and scroungers begged for favours from respective governors and colonial officials. These urgers were chasing licences – and ultimately ownership – of land to run sheep (and later cattle) as well as requesting official appointments for themselves and their friends and families, especially out in the bush, to make sure that they could 'manage affairs' if a 'problem' emerged. The sort of problem that might involve an inquiry into their activities. They also sought assistance from the governor to deal with the Aboriginal people living on the lands they now controlled.

When things did not go their way, leading figures in the colonies used business, family, 'aristocratic' and political connections in London to get the outcomes they desired from colonial officials. Marr notes how different governors were happy to scamper back home when their terms of office ended and escape the carping and incessant demands of the squatters. It might be useful to characterise this as a period of 'entitlement capitalism': an attitude of 'we are gentlemen and you should give us what we want and not erect barriers that prevent us from making the fortunes to which we know we are entitled'.

Early in the history of the colony it was realised good money was to be made from sheep. Sheep need land to graze on. Here was land in abundance for the taking. The problem was that the land was populated by Aboriginal people. All the governors who arrived in Australia were given instructions to protect the native people. Squatters were given leases that included clauses to enable Aboriginal people to hunt, fish and maintain their traditional ways on their lands. These clauses weren't worth the paper they were written on. As far as the squatters were concerned, Aboriginal people were in the way. They competed with sheep for land and water.

Regular disputes occurred between Aboriginal people and squatters and those who worked for them. Some were minor, involving stolen sheep, food and implements. Others were major attacks, involving rape, wounding and murder. Actions by Aboriginal people were countered by troops and/or acts of vigilantism by squatters, including patrols that would kill any Aboriginal people they came upon. Poisoning was also used to kill off the First Australians. Marr observes that in the nineteenth century, 'Australia was fought for in an endless war of little, cruel battles'.

Occasionally, settlers who observed an unprovoked attack and murder of Aboriginal people would complain to the press or the governor, demanding an inquiry. With one or two exceptions, those sitting in judgement would find the killings were justified and, in some cases, that the perpetrators should receive an award for bravery in protecting whites from the alleged savagery of the Aboriginal people.

Squatters continually made representations to governors for the establishment of a force to protect them and their sheep from attack by Aboriginal people. Marr observes that 'Pitting native against native is a strategy as old as empire.' In the case of Australia, it involved the use of Aboriginal people from one area to 'police' the affairs of Aboriginal people in other areas. A Native Police Corps was established in 1837 in the Port Phillip District (now Victoria). In 1848 New South Wales established a Native Police Force, and similar bodies were formed in other colonies. Both Reg and D'Arcy Uhr served as officers with the New South Wales Native Police in the 1860s.

The role of the Native Police was to roam the bush, looking for Aboriginal people to kill. Even when they rode up to a settlement where Aboriginal people had long-term employment and cordial relationships with squatters, they would be killed. While there are no reliable figures available, Marr claims that what research there is indicates that Native Police slaughtered at least 40,000 Aboriginal people. In addition, Native Police raped and kept Aboriginal women and girls, and kidnapped young children, boys and girls and Aboriginal women, and sold them into slavery where they were used for labour and sex. Marr also alludes to pedophilia of both sexes. In addition, the Native Police and their officers, especially the two Uhr brothers, often ran amok when they arrived in settlements, going on benders, molesting local women and girls, getting into fights, destroying property and generally disturbing the peace.

When Native Police and their officers were subjected to inquiries or brought before the courts, local magistrates invariably found in their favour. Disruption of the peace and injuries to locals was the price they were prepared to pay in the never-ending quest to kill Aboriginal people. Marr says such official inquiries made things worse. Having survived an investigation, the Native Police were reaffirmed in the knowledge that they had *carte blanche* to do whatever they wanted.

Marr provides accounts of over 70 killings and massacres in *Killing for Country*. Most readers will find that they will need to take a break from reading the chapters reporting these relentless killings. In approximately 85 per cent of the cases he examines, Marr provides information on the number of Aboriginal people killed. Added together, 2141 were murdered.

David Marr's *Killing for Country: A family history* provides a chilling history of nineteenth-century Australia. In examining his family history, he documents how the squatters' wealth was based on the slaughter of Aboriginal people across the length and breadth of Australia. In a period when governments played a minor role in the affairs of the nation, especially in the bush, the squatters enacted a form of entitlement capitalism to enhance their wealth and power.

This is a book that should be read by all Australians. David Marr has provided compelling insights and a superb analysis of the transformation of Australia during the nineteenth century. It documents in frightening detail the barbarity of white settlers towards the First Australians.

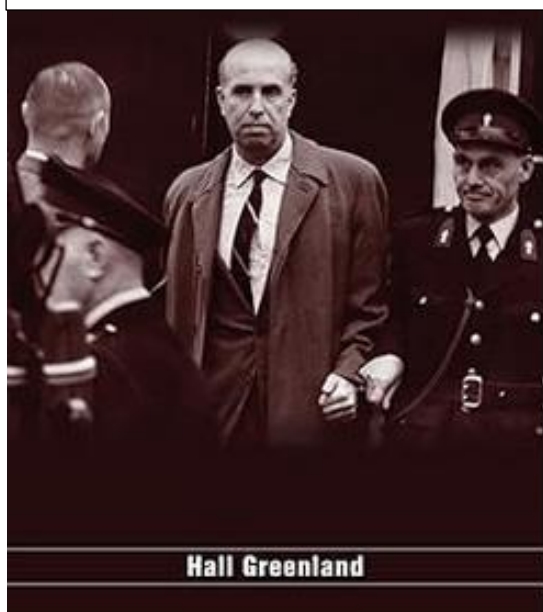
On 29 August 1868, under the headline 'Colonial Humanity and Civilisation', the Dublin newspaper *The Nation* wrote:
When a man because his skin happens to be black can with impunity be shot dead with a rifle for an offence punished with a few weeks' imprisonment when committed by a European, civilization has evidently sunk to a very low degree in the individual guilty of such a deed. But when armed men in the Government employ, surround and shoot down scores of unarmed and defenceless wretches for the pettiest of larcenies, the crime becomes national and affects the character of the entire population.

What does it mean for the character of a nation when people who have not committed even the pettiest of larcenies are killed by government forces?

AN ODYSSEY, OR TWO, a review of Hall Greenland's book *The Well-dressed revolutionary: the Odyssey of Michel Pablo in the age of uprisings* by Rohan Cahill ([his blog](#)) 19 September 2023

***The well-dressed
revolutionary: The Odyssey
of Michel Pablo in the age
of uprisings***

**Hall Greenland
Resistance Books 2023**



An independent-minded and marvellous observer, Hall Greenland provides a candidly judicious picture of a complex and vivid personality embroiled in a tumultuous political career. Peeling back layers of myth to reveal Michel Pablo as a sympathetic, multi-dimensional figure of real depth ... This humanizing biography brings to light a rich tapestry of unusual information that is deeply researched, adroitly formulated, captivating, and at times disarming.

Alan Wald
Professor Emeritus, University of Michigan, author of
*The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the
Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s*

Hall Greenland has written an empathetic and fascinating biography of a great revolutionary of our time. This book is both rigorous historical research and a political essay. It offers a complete picture of Michel Pablo's actions and life. All those interested in the revolutionary movements of the 20th century will learn a lot in reading it.

Yves Sintomer
Professor of Political Science, Paris 8 University
Senior Visiting Fellow, Ash Center for Democratic Governance
and Innovation, Harvard Kennedy School

A man of ideas, of courage and of action, Pablo's role ... was legendary, not only for what he contributed but also for his ability to avoid the pitfalls.

Elaine Mokhtefi
Author of *Algiers, Third World Capital:
Freedom fighters, revolutionaries & Black Panthers*

Born in Alexandria in 1911, Pablo became a leading, and controversial, even heretical, figure in revolutionary Marxist circles from the 1930s onwards. Throughout the 20th century he – and his partner, Elly Dioouniotis – were active in popular revolutions around the globe. His political work ranged from agitation among German troops in World War II, to supporting the Algerians in their fight for freedom, to gun-running for Che Guevara. He also drafted revolutionary legislation in Allende's Chile and Ben Bella's Algeria.

Throughout his long and eventful life, Pablo fought for a society based on 'self-management' or 'direct democracy' – on a local, national and planetary scale. He never stopped believing this utopian dream was possible.



UK £18.00
USA \$25.00
AUS \$35.00



At Sydney University in 1970 Hall Greenland and I were part of a small Master of Arts (History) class tended by colonial historian and conservative liberal Professor John Manning Ward, later Vice Chancellor of the university. Always impeccably dressed in three-piece suit, collar and tie, he bore himself like the lawyer he had trained to be. He wasn't shy in letting me know in a jovial chortling sort of way that yes, Hall and I were researching and writing histories and were developing relevant skills, but the histories we were writing were not really 'history'. I was working on a history of trade union political strikes in Australian history, and Hall on aspects of the history of Australian Trotskyism.

It was the sort of post-graduate class that, if you played your cards right, doors to the professional academy might well open. But for some of us, these were not the times to play games. Hall got kicked out of the University for his leadership role in challenging its power structures and mobilising students as a political force. I disengaged in the wake of criminal prosecution and a significant suspended prison sentence resulting from [a revengeful frame-up](#) engineered by the

notorious NSW (Police) Special Branch. We subsequently charted lives outside the academy, and my tale is for another time. Hall became a print media journalist, picked up a couple of coveted Walkley Awards along the way, and became serially involved in community campaigns of environmental, social justice, and grassroots democratic kinds. In the early 1980s he was a founder of The Greens in NSW, thus seeding the significant politics of the movement in Australia generally.

Born in 1944 into a progressive inner-city leftist milieu, Greenland quickly established himself on the Sydney University campus as a significant presence. He was part of the legendary Freedom Ride in 1965 that dramatically exposed the depth of rural racism and segregation in New South Wales in relation to Aboriginal people, became a leader of the campus Labor Club, radically edited the student newspaper *honi soit*, and was prominent in the anti-war and student power movements. It was during this time via the Trotskyist intellectual and political food chain he fell in with that he encountered the work and thoughts of Michel Raptis (Pablo), who he later sought out and met in Paris in 1968.

The historical project Greenland briefly embarked upon in 1970 remained an undercurrent of his intellectual life. Twenty-eight years after being kicked out of university he delivered with *Red Hot: The Life and Times of Nick Origlass* (Wellington Lane Press, 1998). Trotskyist Origlass (1908-1996) was a Greenland mentor and comrade for some thirty years, a cantankerous self-educated intellectual, trade unionist, local politician, who came to understand that global issues could be fought locally, and that the local could be global. He was also a conduit of the life, work, and political philosophy of Michel Pablo into Greenland's life.

As Terry Irving and I noted in our essay "[A Shelf of Reds](#)" (2016), *Red Hot* is a "a radical spatial study of a small area of Sydney (Balmain), its politics, culture, and radical traditions, and of a minor yet important Sydney intellectual/political tradition, Trotskyism, seldom discussed outside of internecine literature. Empathetic, critical, scholarly, enjoyably readable, *Red Hot* also demonstrates that communities can organise, resist, challenge, and defeat powerful interests and forces, and decisions, often corrupt, made at their expense."

All the while a broader more ambitious project percolated in Greenland's intellectual and historical imagination. It took the COVID lockdowns to provide the monastic conditions and impetus propitious for its realisation. Thus his recent *The Well-Dressed Revolutionary: The Odyssey of Michel Pablo in the age of uprisings* (Resistance Books, London, 2023). Use of 'Odyssey' in the title is biographically obvious in relation to Pablo as I will explain, but in a sense the book was an odyssey for Greenland too, the culmination of an historian's voyage that got off to a rough start in 1970 in the faux-gothic cloisters of Sydney University.

For those who have come in late, Michalis Raptis (1911-1996), best known as Michel Pablo - one of his many aliases and pseudonyms, was a leading intellectual and activist in the international cauldron of Trotskyism. 'Odyssey' in the title refers to his geographical life, growing up in Cairo and Crete, and significantly involved subsequently in revolutionary ways in Greece, France, Algeria, Chile, Palestine, Portugal amongst other sites. 'Odyssey' also refers to the intellectual and political journey of his life, initially with the theological idealism of Tolstoyan Christianity, then to the philosophies of Marx and Trotsky, ending up with an open and creative view of Marxism. With this latter, the revolutionary belief and faith that the way forward to the building of Heaven on Earth is through democratic socialism based on self-management at all levels of human endeavour. 'Well-dressed' enters the equation as Pablo, a lifelong revolutionary and egalitarian, was cosmopolitan in his outlook and bearing. As Greenland notes, he "dressed as a bourgeois professional". His death from a heart attack in Athens made headline news in Greece, and the liberal media in London and Paris ran obituaries.

The dogmatism and internecine irreconcilables that characterise much Trotskyist writing about Trotskyism are absent in Greenland's account and he succeeds in delivering an engrossing chronological biography of his subject across nearly 85 years of the twentieth century. Constructed and elaborated by an historian with significant journalistic skills, we not only get a biography, but also a history of ideas. When internecine splitting and further splitting of the Trotskyist movement come into play, these are not rendered through the lens of factional politics in the present day as often is the case, but as clashes and conflicts in their times, with Greenland's focus always on the ideas and strategies in play or at stake.

There is adventure too. Pablo is often on the move, pursued by vengeful authorities, sometimes by forces with murder/assassination in mind. He moves in a world of pseudonyms and aliases and clandestine presses and across borders; he is variously arrested and imprisoned; he is in action from the underground against the Nazi occupation of

France; he significantly engages in the Algerian struggle for independence; he works for the governments of Ben Bella in Algeria, and Allende in Chile. And there is love. His lifetime partnership and bond with Elly Diovouniotis, a wealthy radical from an aristocratic background who he met in 1935, is significantly present.

Greenland seeks to explain too how it was that Pablo maintained his rage against the destructions and barbarities of capitalism, variously writing, publishing, organising, campaigning, fronting demonstrations and pickets in his well-dressed way, to the very end. Part of the answer is found in Pablo's tool-box view of Marxism, and the politics and possibilities of radical democracy and self-management. But that is not enough, and Greenland argues there is another dimension and is upfront in reckoning that Pablo never really "supressed the ethical or spiritual influence of Tolstoy and the Russian's anarcho-communist pacifism".

Which resonates with me. Back in the mid-1960s when the Australian government conscripted me for the Vietnam War, before I had reached adulthood and gained the right to vote, I wrestled intellectually and emotionally with the problem of who or what had sovereignty over my body and soul: the State? its Army? Its Prisons? Me? Musty and brownly yellowing on the shelves of Sydney University's Fisher Library I found an ancient copy of Tolstoy's Christian anarcho-pacifist The Kingdom of God is Within You (1894), but that too is a story for another time.

While Pablo has obviously influenced Greenland intellectually and politically, *The Well-dressed Revolutionary* is not a hagiography. Greenland writes critically of his subject. Pablo was and is a legend, and the legend is corrected when it is at variance with the realities thrown up by research. Further, Pablo had flaws and contradictions, and Greenland has the emotional distance and wisdom to be able to pick up on these in a way that humanises rather than diminishes his subject.

A great deal of research has gone into the creation of *The Well-dressed Revolutionary*, along with help and contributions from a large number of people, all of whom Greenland acknowledges at the end of the book. Archives in the UK, France, the Netherlands, and Greece have been significantly drawn on, and translators utilised, again acknowledged. Greenland refers to the "kindness of strangers" and to the spirit of cooperation he found during his research. Well yes, but Greenland too has the sort of personality and humanity that facilitates and invites these qualities.

At the end of the book there are twenty-one pages of Endnotes, some of them with content. These are followed by a Name Index, and a detailed listing of the contents of each chapter. More than enough tools here for those who want to use the book for research purposes.

Rowan Cahill, September 2023

CONTESTING INEQUALITY AND WORKER MOBILISATION in AUSTRALIA 1851 – 1880

Michael Quinlan, Routledge 2021

Reviewed by Doug Melvin



**CONTESTING INEQUALITY AND
WORKER MOBILISATION**
AUSTRALIA 1851-1880

Michael Quinlan



This is a follow up to an earlier book by the same author, *The Origins of Worker Mobilisation Australia 1788-1850*, which argued that inequality at work and the 'regulatory subordination of labour' led to worker resistance – informally at first then slowly transitioning to more formal organisations. *Contesting Inequality and Worker Mobilisation Australia 1851-1880* explores the early establishment of worker organisations through to the development of unions and, later, broader-based Trades and Labour Councils.

The first two chapters examine the structure of society, the political economy of the period and the growth of the population – including the influences and ideas that early immigrants from the UK (including those transported as convicts) and Europe were to have on workers and society in general in the early 1850s and the worker forces that set about to change things.

In chapter 1 the author compares 'settler capitalism' between Australia and US, drawing on the earlier work by Robin Archer *Why there is no Labour Party in the US*. ^Archer argues that unionism developed more quickly in Australia and was able to exert both direct and indirect influence on wages, conditions and the labour market because unskilled labour was in a stronger bargaining position; also differences in migration also had an effect since in Australia many came from the UK with ideas of collectiveness and organising workers, whereas in the US migrants more migrants tended to come from more conservative central European countries.

I was particularly struck by the detailed analysis of the 'Half Day Holiday Movement', which started with shop assistants pushing for shops to close on a Saturday afternoon – at a time when there were no restrictions on shop trading hours. The change was of course opposed by shop owners but supported by community groups, and resulted in a win for the shop assistants through their informal organisation. The Saturday Half Day Holiday movement spread to other industries and eventually became the norm – a victory for informal worker organisation.

In later chapters Quinlan dissects the growth of workers organisations, their struggles and victories industry by industry including, transport and maritime, agriculture and rural, mining (including the Eureka stockade rebellion), building and construction, metal/engineering, printing, and transport equipment, apparel footwear, food/beverages, as well as other manufacturing, retail and associated industries – and finally workers in government and community services. Each chapter has easy to read and understand tables which include – in blocks of 10-year periods from 1831 to 1880 – data on worker organisation, strikes, strike outcomes etc. Through reading the tables it is easy to see the growth of worker organisations and their struggles through the decades.

The penultimate chapter 'Wider Alliances and Political Organisation', examines the growth of political and worker organisations. The author argues that the period 1851-1880 witnessed the continuation of informal and alliances and mobilisations, mostly unemployed protests and their effect on influencing 'labourist' policy. This chapter also looks at the proliferation of formal political and peak union organisations, many of which were intertwined with activist bodies. The chapter concludes that as the union movement grew, workers started to be drawn into politics and that there was a strong impetus to form wider alliances – resulting in over 200 peak bodies being form in the period 1851-1880 throughout the colonies.

Reading this book suggests to me that very little has changed in the capitalist system in over a century and a half: earlier chapters deal with unemployment, poverty & community welfare, immigration, labour laws, and the exploitation of workers – the boom/bust cycles of capitalism lead to increased poverty and so the cycle goes on. Other issues well documented in chapter 1 and 2 include: the exploitation of Pacific Islander workers (which continues today, as the ABC recently reported); exploitative non-contracted/casual labour arrangements such as Uber and food delivery workers in today's job market (an issue that could be put to rights with the Federal Government's proposed changes to the IR Act); employers calling for high immigration to undercut wages and conditions (which could well be a reference to exploitation of overseas students studying in Australia in the retail, cleaning and hospitality industries).

In his conclusion Quinlan argues that not much has changed in capitalist society in the last 150 years: "Neoliberalism is delivering escalating inequality and social fracturing globally. Reducing socio-economic inequality and improving community wellbeing requires regulated labour markets, business organisations and welfare regimes, associated with economic policies directed to secure full-employment and redistributed income and wealth in ways benefiting the entire community." (p 313).

In summary, *Contesting Inequality and Worker Mobilisation Australia 1851-1880* is book that is very useful for academic/labour history study and for unions to use in their member education programs, showing how workers' organisations have evolved from the 1800s into today's union movement and that unless we organise to move capitalism into a new dimension nothing will change in modern society.

About the author: Michael Quinlan is Emeritus Professor of Industrial Relations, University of NSW and adjunct professor, School of History and Humanities, University of Tasmania.



Hamas, Gaza and the continuing Zionist project

John Menadue, [*Pearls and Irritations*](#),
[Dec 19, 2023](#)

Hamas is the excuse for the Israeli attack on Gaza. It is not the reason.

The real Israeli objective in Gaza is to drive out the population and destroy infrastructure as part of a long term plan to expel Palestinians in Gaza and elsewhere. This settler colonisation has been ongoing since 1948, starting with the Nakba. In Australia we are very familiar with settler colonisation – driving out the original inhabitants. In 1948 Palestinians owned 94% of all land; now Israelis own 82%. These figures tell the real story. October 7 did not occur in a vacuum. It was the result of decades long Israeli occupation, never ending violence and oppression. The pressure cooker exploded!

The US and Australian parrot on about a two state solution but we do nothing to advance it. We use it as a fig leaf to hide our support for US policies in support of Israel. Recognizing Palestine would be a first step in a political settlement. But the Israeli government rejects it. Netanyahu boasts that he has thwarted a Palestinian State. Instead Israel pursues occupation of more and more land, ethnic cleansing and apartheid.

Even if the military defeat of Hamas was possible it would not end Palestinian resistance. It would continue in another and stronger form. Hamas is certainly not winning in our Washington manipulated media. But it is winning overwhelmingly in the Arab street.

Netanyahu repeatedly tells us about how Hamas is a great threat to Israel. But in recent years he has been channelling financial support to Hamas. In 2016, Netanyahu began allowing the Qataris to send money to Gaza. Netanyahu said that money was humanitarian aid. His motive for this secret funding however has been to build Hamas as the rival to Fatah and President Abbas. Netanyahu is now hoist with his own petard. And Palestinians are paying the price with high-tech Israeli killing.

A recent poll by the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) of persons in Gaza and the West Bank should be essential reading. It reports on Hamas and other key issues:

- **Support for Hamas has more than tripled in the West Bank compared to three months ago.** In the Gaza Strip, support for Hamas increased but not significantly. Despite the increase in its popularity, the majority in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip does not support Hamas. It is worth noting that support for Hamas usually rises temporarily during or immediately after a war and then returns to the previous level several months after the end of the war.
- **Support for President Mahmoud Abbas and his Fatah party drops significantly.** The same is true for the trust in the PA as a whole, as demand for its dissolution rises to nearly 60%, the highest percentage ever recorded in PSR polls. Demand for Abbas's resignation is rising to around 90 percent, and even higher in the West Bank. Despite the decline in support for Fatah and Abbas, the most popular Palestinian figure remains Marwan Barghouti, a Fatah leader (in jail). Barghouti is still able to beat Hamas' candidate Ismail Haniyeh or any other.
 - **Support for armed struggle rises ten percentage points compared to three months ago**, with more than 60% saying it is the best means of ending the Israeli occupation; in the West Bank, the percentage rises further to close to 70%. Moreover, a majority in the West Bank believes that the formation of armed groups in communities subject to settler attacks is the most effective means of combating settler terrorism against towns and villages in the West Bank.

- ***Support for the two-state solution has not dropped in this poll, despite the above-mentioned reference to the lack of confidence in the seriousness of US and European talk about reviving the two-state solution and despite the increase in support for armed struggle. To the contrary, support for this solution has increased slightly in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This increase seems to come especially from those who believe that the US and European talk about the two-state solution is indeed serious. (Asked about their degree of 'satisfaction' of various actors in the Gaza genocide the US was placed last.)***

The Zionist Lobby has become tiresome in accusing its critics of anti semitism. It uses it as a battering ram against all its critics. Think Jeremy Corbyn. The Lobby seeks to define 'anti semitism' to suit its own purposes. It has become a victim of its own propaganda. There has to be a political settlement acceptable to both Palestinians and Israelis. The US has the power to force that settlement but it is in thrall and manipulated by the very powerful Israeli Lobby in the US.

Perhaps Netanyahu will become the scapegoat to save Biden's political skin. But one thing is certain. US 'leadership' is failing everywhere (re Gaza, President Biden urges Israel to be more cautious in its killing!)



Protests in Buenos Aires on December 20 2023.
[EPA-EFE/Isaac Fontana](#)

Workers in Argentina face the biggest blow to their employment rights since the military dictatorship of the 1970s, Luciana Zorzoli, [The Conversation, January 11, 2024](#)

When he was [elected as president](#) of Argentina in November 2023, Javier Milei was seen by many voters as a political outsider. An economist by profession, he promised [a reset for the country](#) which would end inflation and slash public spending. Amid [diatribes against politicians](#) and dismissals of the climate emergency as a "[socialist lie](#)", he was keen on [wielding a chainsaw](#) to symbolise his plans for fixing a stagnant economy burdened with debt. And since he took office, Milei has been busy with his agenda of cutting. Within weeks he had published an 82-page [executive decree](#) as an inaugural phase of his extensive deregulation. The decree is designed to fundamentally change Argentinian society, directly affecting the rights and protections of millions of workers. It has already prompted comparisons with [General Augusto Pinochet's deregulation of the Chilean economy](#) in the 1970s.

One section of Milei's decree aims to limit the right to strike, the right of assembly and the right to collective bargaining. It would alter trade unions' financial standing, workers' healthcare provision and basic rights such as maternity leave. This is all presented as a way of streamlining the labour market, to improve economic dynamism and growth. It is also seen as a way to dismantle the ideology of rights and protections which Milei and his allies rail against. But despite the rhetoric, there is no evidence that reforms of this kind in the region have created jobs or improved the labour market dynamic. Instead, evidence suggests they merely [increase levels](#) of poor quality employment.

Milei's decree was swiftly followed by a 664-article [reform bill](#) covering a vast range of issues, including the privatisation of 41 public companies (including the state-run oil company YPF), changes to the electoral system and the introduction of new taxes. It also contains a declaration of emergency, not just in the economy, but in matters of security, energy and health (and many others). To address this, Milei is seeking to delegate legislative powers to the executive (himself) for at least two years.

This would mean he could sidestep parliament for pretty much everything he wants to do, reasoning that institutional democratic decision making is just too slow. Arguing in favour of these special powers, one of Milei's senior [allies stated](#): "If there is an economic crisis there will not be a valid constitution." Severe ills demand, in their view, unconventional remedies. It would also suit Milei from a political perspective. Despite securing 55.6% of the votes in

the run-off election, his coalition holds a minority of seats in both chambers of Argentina's parliament. Executive power would mean being able to avoid needed negotiations with other parties.

But the president is facing opposition to his plans. More than [40 legal challenges](#) have been filed claiming Milei's decree is unconstitutional, while a court suspended the labour reform chapter of his decree, questioning its necessity and urgency. Outside of the courts, the General Confederation of Labour (CGT), the most important union federation in the country, have [called for a national strike](#) on January 24 and there have been [protests in the streets](#). Elsewhere though, Milei has received backing for some of his plans [from the US](#), [the IMF](#) and other [right wing politicians](#).

As for Argentina's workers, at stake over the coming weeks and months is a fresh setback in rights and the imposition of a working environment similar to that experienced after the [military take-over of 1976](#). For among the killings and disappearances of that era, a top priority for the dictatorship was regressively reforming labour relations. Immediately after taking power, the military extensively trimmed down employment regulations. They took control of unions, froze their funds and prohibited all forms of collective bargaining. Rights connected with joining trade unions, collective action and strikes were suspended. Employers' power was regenerated and discipline revived. Our research reveals that the consequences were a [profound restructuring](#) of capital labour relations, to the [detriment of workers](#).

Milei appears determined to make changes of a similar magnitude, under the claim that there is no alternative. If successful, bypassing democratic institutions, liberalising markets at any social cost and engaging in a war against rights and protections will undoubtedly alter Argentinian society. But it will not make Argentina "great again" as he [has promised](#). What happens next remains uncertain. But the new president's barrage of measures will affect millions of lives. And in doing so, they may well provoke resistance, strengthen social solidarity and potentially reopen a democratic discussion about an alternative path.

TRIBUTES



The world has lost a dissenting voice: Australian journalist John Pilger has died, aged 84

**[Matthew Ricketson](#),
The Conversation, January 1, 2024**

John Pilger, a giant of journalism born in Australia in 1939, has died at the age of 84, according to a statement released online by his family. His numerous books and especially his documentaries opened the world's eyes to the failings, and worse, of governments in many countries – including his birthplace. He inspired many journalists, and journalism students, with his willingness to critique the damaging effects on ordinary people's lives of capitalism and Western countries' foreign policies, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom.

But his campaigning approach to journalism also regularly provoked controversy. That was partly because of his trenchant dissent from official stances, and partly because in aiming to reach the broadest possible audience, he tended to oversimplify issues and overstate his views. The English journalist, Auberon Waugh, who clashed with Pilger on more than one occasion, invented the verb "to pilger" which he [defined](#) as "to treat a subject emotionally with generous disregard for inconvenient detail, always in the left-wing cause and always with great indignation".

Whatever the merits of Waugh's criticism, they are, in my view, outweighed by the breadth and depth of Pilger's disclosures in the public interest. Pilger never hid behind the safety of the "he said, she said" approach to journalism, which New York University professor Jay Rosen has famously [called](#) the "view from nowhere". Pilger, however, rejected the label of crusader, telling Anthony Hayward for his book, [In the Name of Justice: The Television Reporting of John Pilger](#): "I am, by inclination, anti-authoritarian and forever sceptical of anything the agents of power want to tell us. It is my duty, surely, to tell people when they're being conned or told lies."

Pilger was [born in Bondi](#), Sydney. Like many of his generation, he moved to the UK in the early 1960s and worked for The Daily Mirror, Reuters and ITV's investigative program World in Action. He reported on conflicts in Bangladesh, Biafra, Cambodia and Vietnam and was [named](#) newspaper journalist of the year in Britain in 1967 and 1979. He made [more than 50](#) documentaries. His best known is [Year Zero: the Silent Death of Cambodia](#), which in 1979 revealed that as many as two million of the seven million population of the country had died as a result of genocide or starvation under Pol Pot's brutal regime.

His documentaries garnered numerous prizes, including the prestigious Richard Dimbleby award for factual reporting, a [Peabody award](#) for [Cambodia: Year Ten](#) and a Best Documentary Emmy [award](#) for [Cambodia: The Betrayal](#). He also made several documentaries about Australia, including one in 1985, [The Secret Country](#), about historic and continuing mistreatment of First Nations people that thoroughly irritated the then Labor prime minister, Bob Hawke.

When the US government of George W. Bush reacted to al-Qaeda's murderous 9/11 terrorist attacks by invading first Afghanistan, in late 2001, then Iraq in March 2003, Pilger made [Truth and Lies: Breaking the Silence on the War on Terror](#). It sharply criticised not only Bush's actions but those of the most ardent members of the "coalition of the willing": UK Labour prime minister, Tony Blair, and Australian coalition prime minister, John Howard.

No doubt, if Pilger was still alive he would condemn the absence of the National Security Committee's papers from the 2003 cabinet papers [released today](#) by the National Archives of Australia. They [show](#) Howard's cabinet signed off on the controversial – in hindsight disastrous – decision to endorse the Bush administration's plan to invade Iraq based on "oral reports" from the prime minister, rather than full cabinet submissions.

Pilger wrote or edited 11 books, including [Tell Me No Lies](#), an anthology of outstanding investigative journalism, and perhaps his best regarded book, [Heroes](#), which hewed to what one of his favourite journalists, Martha Gellhorn, called "the view from the ground". He did this by telling the stories of ordinary people he had encountered, whether miners in Durham, England, refugees from Vietnam, or American soldiers returning from the Vietnam War – not to parades, but to lives dislocated by the silence and shame surrounding the war's end.

Phillip Knightley, a contemporary of Pilger who was also born in Australia and went to Fleet Street to become a celebrated investigative journalist and author himself, [summed up](#) his compatriot's work in 2000: "He was certainly among the first to draw international attention to the shameful way in which Australia has treated the Aborigines [sic] [...] John has a slightly less optimistic view than I have. In [Welcome to Australia](#) [Pilger's 1999 film], he concentrated on the bad things that were happening but not the good. He would say that's not part of his brief and it's covered elsewhere. He's a polemicist and, if you want to arouse people's passions and anger, the stronger the polemic, the better."

Pilger made fewer films in the 2000s, focusing much of his energy on supporting Julian Assange, founder of WikiLeaks. Assange continues to suffer in Belmarsh prison in England while appeals against his extradition to the US to answer charges under the 1917 Espionage Act grind interminably on.

Whatever flaws there are in Pilger's journalism, it feels dispiriting that on the first day of a new year clouded by wars, inaction on climate change and a presidential election in the US where democracy itself is on the ballot, the world has lost another resolutely dissenting voice in the media.



The CEPU SA Branch is deeply saddened at the recent death of Life Member Gordon Penhall. Gordon joined the ETU South Australian Branch on the ninth of July 1968 as an apprentice working at the Electricity Trust of South Australia (ETSA). Early in his working life Gordon became a leader standing up for himself and fellow union members as a Shop Steward. During his long career he never wavered in serving workers. He was a long-term SA Branch State Councillor, Delegate to Branch conference and founding member of the SA Power Industry Sub Committee, he frequently attended various national union forums as a representative of the SA Branch. Gordon would regularly turn up in the union office just to volunteer to help the organisers and admin team any way he could.

Gordon was long serving member of the Australian Labour Party who was active in his sub-branch and in supporting Labor candidates and MPs over many years. He was involved in the Labor Academy and was a frequent participant in ALP State Conventions and State Council meetings as a CEPU SA Delegate. Gordon had a deep interest in Labour history and the history of the CEPU SA Branch. He would often spend time in the CEPU SA office digging through dusty archive files looking for interesting bits of our past.

Gordon was an irrepressibly enthusiastic supporter of Union and Labour campaigns and causes and did not slowdown in retirement. He was a key figure in revitalising the South Australian Retired Unionist Network and could be relied on to attend rallies and meetings in support of workers' struggles. Gordon Penhall led a life that is a shining example of what unionism is. He will be missed by all at the CEPU SA Branch.

[*Livestreaming link for the memorial service*](#)

Emeritus Professor Geoffrey Stokes: 25 June 1949 – 9 November 2023

Geoffrey Stokes made a 50 year contribution to the labour movement and political life in Australia through his work as an intellectual and union member. As an academic, ministerial adviser, public servant, journal editor and author he contributed to public policy and public life at the state and national level. His life was full of achievement. An enthusiast who did nothing in half measures, his enthusiasm was infectious and he influenced many.

Born on 25 June 1949 at the Queen Victoria Hospital in Adelaide he was the eldest son of Albert and Dulcie Stokes. His father, known as Murph, served in the army in WWII in the Middle East and the Pacific, and then became a public servant at the Postmaster-General's Department and then Telecom. His mother was a shop assistant and then member of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force in WWII, and later full-time homemaker.

Geoff attended Marryatville Primary then Norwood High School where he was active in the Literary and Debating Society, school choir, captain of the athletics team, school prefect, house captain and a member of the 'A' football team; his academic success at school led to tertiary education at Adelaide Teachers College and the University of Adelaide.

His brother, Chris, said while at University Geoff worked as a life guard at the Burnside Swimming Centre to earn some money. "Earning our own money was important as it gave us some degree of independence. We did not come from a wealthy family but our father instilled in us an understanding of the value of money and the importance of working hard." Whatever Geoff took on, he threw himself into it with determination, becoming head chorister at his suburban

church, learning to play guitar and joining various folk groups to perform locally and enter talent competitions. Years later he enjoyed reminding us that he made the final of one TV competition only to be beaten by a new group made up of three brothers all named Gibb, later to become the Bee Gees. His interest in musical theatre led to performing on stage in undergraduate productions of *Guys and Dolls* and *Bye Bye Birdie*. His love of music was matched by a love of sport – baseball, athletics, swimming, sailing and Australian Rules Football.

Amidst this busy life, he was always a serious student, completing a BA with Honours (his thesis was on Revolutionary Social Change in Communist China 1949-69) in 1970 at the University of Adelaide. Geoff maintained a deep interest in the Chinese Communist Party and in Chinese social and political ideas for the rest of his life, visiting China many times. The Politics Department at the University of Adelaide between 1970 and 1975 appointed “a succession of exceptionally able tutors ... and most of these promising young scholars subsequently went on to distinguished academic careers” wrote Peter Mayer in 2012.ⁱ Geoff was one of them,ⁱⁱ though his scholastic career was interrupted by a teaching stint at Naracoorte High School and employment in the Policy Division of the Premier’s Department in 1975-76 while Don Dunstan was Premier. Geoff’s academic appointments took him to every mainland state in Australia, beginning at the University of New England in Armidale, then the University of Adelaide, then Flinders University (where he completed a PhD on *The Critical Thought of Karl Popper*), Murdoch University in Perth, Griffith in Brisbane, then UQ then to a Politics chair at Deakin, and culminating with a senior executive appointment at RMIT. He also held research and visiting positions at the Australian National University, Boston University, Oxford and Harvard University.

Amid a long academic career, Geoff also spent two years working as Senior Advisor for then-Minister for Trade and Overseas Development, Neal Blewett, in the Hawke government (1990–1991). Geoff had joined the ALP in the 1970s and through his local Unley Sub Branch worked actively for state and national reform especially in social, energy and international policy and democratising the structure of the Party. His early academic publications focussed on these interests. In **The Dunstan Decade**,ⁱⁱⁱ he co-wrote with Richard Cox a chapter titled *The Governing Party: The ALP and the Politics of Consensus*. In **Machine Politics in the ALP**,^{iv} he wrote the chapter on the Party in SA. He co-wrote with me a chapter on *Social Democracy*, in **Liberal Democratic Theory and its Critics**,^v a text book used in a number of political theory courses across Australia. We were surprised but delighted when it was subsequently translated into Japanese! For a decade (1979-89), Geoff was Review Editor of the labour movement journal, **Labor Forum**.

A colleague at Deakin University, Associate Professor David Hundt, said:

Geoff had a singular commitment to democracy, the open society, and education, and he channelled these interests into an impactful academic career. He became renowned for his expertise on political theory, especially the work of Karl Popper - the Austrian-British social critic who was one of the 20th century’s most influential philosophers of science. Geoff’s expertise was recognised in many ways: as the recipient of a Fulbright postdoctoral fellowship (1985-86, Boston University), as a judge on the history panel of the Queensland Premier’s Literary Awards (1999–2000), as Senior Editor (politics) for the Australian Journal of Politics and History (1994–99), and as the recipient of several grants from the Australian Research Council (ARC).

He achieved international acclaim in three fields of research: the work of Karl Popper (the subject of his PhD thesis), democratic theory, and Australian political thought. His publications covered an even broader field – philosophy, political theory, the politics of identity, citizenship, economic rationalism (later neo-liberalism), One Nation, drugs, governance, politics of development, indigenous politics, among others. He wrote, co-authored, edited or co-edited 11 books; published 19 refereed articles and 44 book chapters; wrote 40 conference and seminar papers and gave 38 public addresses; he was awarded ARC Discovery and Linkage grants on trade unions, indigenous self-determination and Australian political thought.

One reason for Geoff’s success was his outstanding ability to explain complex ideas clearly, persuasively, and stylishly. This ability was a product of his wonderfully well organised mind. Words mattered to Geoff. As an editor and doctoral supervisor, he demanded exacting standards, but he was generous in sharing his well-

distilled thoughts about the craft of writing. He was an engaging orator, and in his looser moments was known for colourful turns of phrase.

Geoff believed in the value of universities in creating the good society, but he knew they were imperfect and prone to dysfunction. He often described academia as an exercise in ‘herding cats’: he wanted to channel the skills and knowledge of his colleagues into productive ends without suppressing their creativity. He was an optimist, not a cynic: he would say ‘something has shifted’ when he saw discernible and positive change, and even modest but meaningful progress was a reason to celebrate.

While Geoff’s career was headlined by his prolific research output, he had recognised early that undergraduate teaching was also a fundamental focus for universities. At Flinders in the 1970s where we both worked as tutors in political science he wrote a handbook to help young as well as experienced academics improve their tutorials. Academics were not employed for their teaching skills and most of the tutoring was done by higher degree students with no formal teaching experience at all. Geoff was a popular tutor who received praise and gratitude from many students but his contribution was broader because he inspired and helped other tutors to improve their teaching.

Professor Cameron Duff, whose PhD at UQ was supervised by Geoff and who later became a colleague at RMIT, said:

The thing about Geoff is that whenever he asked a question it came as a kind of scholarly covenant, an understanding that questions require considered responses. If politics is always dialogic, a contest between interests, then a question is like the first line of dialogue in a script; there is always more dialogue to follow, an invitation to discourse. This was hard work, but Geoff always worked hard, and he became a mentor to me. I know that Geoff was a trusted mentor to many at RMIT, in every case working to draw qualities out of people, helping us to develop new capabilities, new ways of thinking about problems. Geoff first taught me how to be a scholar, and then he taught me how to be an academic.

Someone who loved words, writing, debate, literature and philosophy, Geoff was renowned for his quick wit, dry sense of humour and loyal friendship to those he cared about. His legacy will continue among students and colleagues in whom he instilled a sense of the urgent and vital importance of academia. He understood the power of collaboration and collective action and proudly maintained his membership of the NTEU including as a Professor at Deakin and in his years at RMIT as Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation). He cared deeply about promoting equality and fairness in our society and faced his illness with grace and dignity. Indeed, just weeks before his death in the nursing home he was able to vote Yes in the Voice referendum.

Geoff died in Melbourne on 9 November 2023 following two years of treatment for brain cancer. He is survived by his son, Peter, his three siblings, and extended family.

Ron Slee

ⁱ Mayer, P (2012) ‘Politics at the University of Adelaide’. *A History of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Adelaide 1876 – 2012*. N Harvey, J Fornasiero, G McCarthy, C Macintyre and C Crossin (Eds). University of Adelaide Press.

ⁱⁱ In addition to Geoff, the other tutors named are Anna Yeatman, John Lonie, Allan Patience, Doug McEachern, Greg O’Leary, Adrienne Moore, George Anthony, Adrian Vickery, Marion Rumball, Brian Trainor, Laurie Rivers, Jack Barbalet, Karen Throssell, Rosemary Pringle and Derek Verrell.

ⁱⁱⁱ Stokes, G and Cox, R (1981) ‘The Governing Party: The ALP and the Politics of Consensus’. *The Dunstan Decade: Social Democracy at the State Level* A Parkin and A Patience (Eds). Longman Cheshire.

^{iv} Stokes, G (1983) ‘South Australia: consensus politics’. *Machine Politics in the Australian Labor Party*. A Parkin and J Warhurst (Eds). George Allen and Unwin, Sydney.

^v Stokes, G and Slee, R (1985) ‘Social Democracy’. *Liberal Democratic Theory and its Critics*. N Wintrop (Ed). Croom Helm, London.