

LABOUR HISTORY NEWS – WINTER 2021

Labour History Society (South Australia)

WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT - and everywhere else



Watch *Ms Represented* with Annabel Crabb on ABC TV 8pm Tuesdays from 13 July

Structured around themes rather than chronology, *Ms Represented* ranges across four episodes visiting key events, like the 1894 South Australian parliamentary vote in which a strategic blunder gave SA women not only the right to vote, but the right to stand for parliament too – a world first. **Or** the secret deal cut by male legislators in 1996 that barred women from accessing the abortion drug RU486 for nearly a decade, before it was undone by an unprecedented cross-party grouping of women. **Or** the tense battle behind the passage of the Sex Discrimination Act in 1984.

We hear the stories: the women who were told by party officials to change their names, or stop wearing short skirts. The candidate who faked up a campaign cookbook so as to seem more ‘womanly’. The woman who – desperate for campaign childcare – engaged Germaine Greer as a babysitter. The women who stood up against their own parties. The women who endured drunken gropes and abuse even within the walls of the parliament. The women who were elected to the parliament and found that there weren’t toilets for them to use. But the heart of the series is the women themselves. Proud, angry, determined, sad, hilarious; they speak about their lives in politics with rare candour.

ABC

See also: *Molly Byrne, Labor trailblazer immortalised in Parliament House (p5)*

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the Winter 2021 *Labour History Newsletter*, which celebrates three exciting and well-attended Labour History events:

- The April general meeting with speakers talking about the founding and importance of the 100 years of **the Port Adelaide Workers Memorial**. This event was linked to the Port Adelaide Labor Day Parade and Celebrations.
- **The May Day March and Celebrations** were held for the first time in Port Adelaide. It was extremely well attended and the support from the community watching the march past by was very welcoming and uplifting for all. Our tent at the event was well attended and provided a change to provide a wide section of the Labor Movement with information on LHS activities.
- **The June seminar on the Accord** was again well attended and the panel gave wide and varied opinions on the Accord. The individual panel members papers will be added to our Facebook page as they are received.

Congratulations:

- To **Dale Breasley** on his election as SA Unions Secretary and thanks to Angus Storey for his outstanding service to the union movement during in his time as Secretary.
- To **Bob Gregory** for his AM Award in the Queen's Birthday Honours list.

Good news:

The Australian government has announced it will hand out AU\$67.7 million to the National Archives of Australia to help further preserve the Commonwealth's aging records. Specifically, part of the funding will be used to digitise and preserve what is considered the National Archives' "at-risk collection" as part of an "accelerated" four-year digitisation program. The collection that will be digitised includes military documents in relation to World War II and the Vietnam and Korean wars, as well as immigration records and Census data, all of which are currently kept in various formats, including paper-based, photographers, film-based, magnetic AV tapes, and digital files. (ZNet)

On a sad note, the Labor movement has lost four of its movers and shakers. Tributes can be found on later pages (Colin McKee's tribute will be held over until the Spring Newsletter). Our sympathy and thoughts go out to their families and friends and a big thank you to each of them for their untiring work and commitment to the Labor Movement:

Terry Groom (ex Labor Government Attorney General)

Keith Ridgway (ex MUA Secretary)

Benny Carslake (ex BWIU Secretary)

Most recently: **Colin McKee** (Ex ALP MLA for the seat of Giles, Assistant Secretary ALP SA branch)

Doug Melvin, President Labour History Society (SA Branch)

- **CONTENTS of this issue**
- **Women in Parliament**
- ***The Accord* seminar**
- **Book Reviews**
- **Reflections on politics and football (Terry Groom)**
- **Tributes (Terry Groom, Benny Carslake & Keith Ridgeway)**
- ***Before you go...* (a postscript from Brian Abbey)**

May Day 2021



For the first time the May Day march was held at Port Adelaide to combine with the celebrations for the Centenary of the Workers' Memorial. On a lovely sunny day thousands of marchers gathered at the Maritime Museum in Lipson Street to hear a number of speakers talk about current issues. Many locals boosted the numbers and a large number of unions and community groups were represented.

As has become a tradition, the march was led by the Fire Fighters fire engine and followed by a ute with Jamie Newlyn from MUA (Maritime Union of Australia) leading the chants. We wound our way down to the Workers' Memorial on the corner of Commercial Road and St Vincent Street. The march paused here as a mark of respect to those named on the memorial and in recognition of the families present. Due to Covid 19 restrictions there were only a limited number of guests allowed in this area for the centenary celebrations. The Port Adelaide National Trust group had done a great deal of research and preparation for this event, including interviews with some family members. *For more information: <https://www.mua.org.au/news/100-years-port-adelaide-workers-memorial-2021>*

The 2020 May Day Spanner was awarded to **Allison Murchie** (delayed by Covid19). The 2021 May Day Spanner was awarded to our dear comrade **Ben Carslake** who passed away on the eve of May Day. Fortunately, he was able to receive his award from Matt Blowes, President of the May Day Collective, a few days before his death (see *Tributes*).
Text & photos: Allison Murchie

Photo Captions: 1 Max Adlam (Secretary UFUSA); 2 The 'Firies' truck; 3 Jamie Newlyn (MUA); 4 Janet Giles, Marcia Munn (widow of Rex Munn, MUA), Sally Mitchell; 5 WWF Hall, Port Adelaide; 6 Keith Ridgeway (longtime member of the MUA, died June 2021); 7 *Privatisation of Public Services* protestors; 8 AEU supporters; 9 Allison Murchie, Kas Eaton, Sonya Mezenic; 10 *March4Justice* supporter; 11 Jamie Newlyn, Allison Murchie, Matt Blowes, Lachlan Thorn; 12 Tammy Franks (Greens Legislative Council) & staffer, Lee-Anne Cartledge; 13 St Johns 'on the job'; 14 CEPU banners (Nick Bentley in red); 15 CEPU (Paul Scudds, Dan Ramm, Adrian Valente)



7



8



9



10



11



12



13



14



15

WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT

Labor trailblazer immortalised in Parliament House



 PORTRAITS of AUSTRALIANS

Molly's official parliamentary portrait was unveiled on 1 April 2021—only the third portrait of a woman in the SA Parliament. Molly's portrait was painted by highly acclaimed SA painter Deidre But-Husaim. At 92, Molly remains an inspiration to women who aspire to lead. She was the first female member of the ALP to be elected to the SA Parliament; she campaigned for two years to win the marginal must-win seat of Barossa and helped form the incoming Walsh Labor Government in 1965. Molly held her seat (later known as Tea Tree Gully then Todd) until 1979. Molly was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in 1985 for services to the community and parliamentary service, and in 1987 became the first woman appointed to the board of the State Bank.

Australia was the first independent nation in the world where women could both vote and run for Parliament. But it took us a long time to actually elect any women, and when we did, we expected them to fit into the system that was already there. The struggle of female parliamentarians to be heard, to be respected, and to prosper in our federal Parliament is a thrilling and inspiring one, full of extraordinary stories that our cast tell with grace, humour and the deep authority of experience. This is not ancient history. Many women who are 'firsts' in politics are still actually in parliament. The first Indigenous woman in the House of Representatives was born into a country where her father's people still could not enrol to vote. The story of women in parliament is a living, changing thing. In Ms Represented, we've captured a draft of it. Annabel Crabb, MsRepresented, ABC



THE ACCORD – VISIONARY STRATEGY OR CORPORATIST GIMMICK?

This issue was explored at a very successful seminar meeting of the LHSSA on June 20.

Daren McDonald (onetime union organiser and federal industrial officer; lifelong socialist, peace and anti-apartheid activist) unpacked the philosophy and strategy behind the Left's backing of the 1983 Accord and provided insights to some of the key dynamics, struggles and challenges of its implementation. Daren reminded us of the dire unemployment levels at the time and pointed to the substantial outcomes of the Accord negotiations between unions, industry and government, notably universal health care, needs-based child care and superannuation.

Barbara Pocock (scholar of industrial relations, founder of the Centre for Work+Life at the University of South Australia, advisor to governments and currently a Greens candidate for the Senate in SA) addressed the ACTU's failure to adequately include women in the formulation of the Accord, resulting in the increased casualisation of the labour market especially amongst women, and lower union density overall.

Tony Evans (socialist and political activist with a celebrated career in the AMWSU as a trade union official and delegate) made some observations on the Accord from the perspective of trade unions, arguing that although there was mass involvement in the formulation of the Accord, there was none in its implementation, giving several examples from SA industry.

Ralph Clarke (Secretary of the Federated Clerks' Union at the time of the Accord, and also the South Australian Trades and Labour Council representative on the powerful ACTU industrial legislation committee) argued that the Accord process focussed on factional power in the ALP at the expense of workers and unions, and – after it was eventually 'buried' by Bill Kelty – produced long-term 'wage justice' for bosses (judges, CEOs etc) rather than workers. Ralph said he opposed part-time work in the clerical sector at the time because it would have weakened conditions for fulltime workers.

Victoria Fielding (UniSA & Adelaide Uni academic, labour activist, and commentator on politics, industrial, environmental and social justice issues) explored the Accord in terms of neoliberal economic policy, warning against confusing neoliberalism with capitalism, and arguing that the spirit of the Accord was to give workers some control of the capitalist system.

A lively open discussion produced more insights: the Australian press at the time blamed unions for wage rises, while ignoring price rises, and a 1985-95 wages decline ensued; the Accord was a lost opportunity to improve the working lives of women and casual workers, and we need a new social contract in the 2020s.

All the speakers took a position and contextualised it objectively, and the seminar provided a comprehensive map of the territory for future exploration. The papers presented at the seminar will shortly be made available online and we anticipate they will be published as a booklet later.

**OUT NOW The Accord: how the Australian labour movement
built a world class safety net**

Following our recent successful June forum on “*The Accord: Visionary Strategy or Corporatist Gimmick?*” members will be thrilled to know that our guest speaker Daren McDonald (*the biography of his activist parents is reviewed below*) has released the latest episode in *Deliberately Engaging’s Masterclass for Activists* podcast series: “The Winning Strategy that Built Australia’s Safety Net”: <https://masterclassforactivists.libsyn.com/accord>

In this episode, moderator Emeritus Professor Ed Davis AM is joined by former ACTU Secretary Bill Kelty, Fair Work Commission Deputy President Anna Booth and former National Secretary of the Building Workers Industrial Union and father of the CFMEU, Tom McDonald. They share an amazing story about how the labour movement in the midst of an economic crisis, forged a world class safety net that enriched the quality of life for working people.

Critics on the Right have argued that the Accord handed the power of government to unions while some critics on the left contend that was part of a neoliberal agenda and it left unions less able to confront the power of conservative governments and employers.

The discussants reflect on the vision, experience, lessons and legacy of the Accord and address some criticisms of it. This is a compelling episode for all activists wanting to chart a better future for Australia by learning about on an epic period of change.

I thoroughly recommend the entire series to everyone interested in labour history and making Australia a fairer and more democratic and inclusive society. During the series Professor Davis is joined in conversation with 12 of Australia’s leading current and former trade unionists. You can find out more about the series on <<https://www.deliberatelyengaging.com.au/about-us/>>.

Masterclass for Activists can be accessed from <https://www.deliberatelyengaging.com.au/activist-masterclass/> or any podcast platform.

Dr Adrian Graves



From the Activist Masterclass webpage: *In the face of unprecedented global economic and political crisis in the 1980s, Australia was the only country on earth that radically built its social safety net. At a time when the world was gripped by the hitherto unknown phenomenon of rampant and simultaneously high unemployment, high inflation and high-interest rates, the very idea of the welfare state was under attack globally with the emergence of a new sinister ideology known as ‘neoliberalism’. Against the tide and despite the odds, Australian unions forged once-in-a-lifetime reforms to capitalism. Australia’s social safety net is the envy of the world: the highest minimum wage rates in the world, the most efficient healthcare system in the world that delivers standards of care few countries can match, and the only compulsory employer-funded universal superannuation system in the world. These towering pillars of our safety net were won through an Accord between the ACTU and the ALP; the most comprehensive agreement ever negotiated anywhere in the world between trade unions and a political party.*



BOOK REVIEWS

: to Dream: the memoirs of Tom and Audrey McDonald

Tom and Audrey McDonald are two of the most loved elders of the Australian labour movement with an extraordinary history of activism. Their cause took them from the factory floor to Moscow's Red Square, from ASIO surveillance to Australia's highest honours. *Dare to Dream* is a dual autobiography which provides a truly unique account of epic social and political change. It is a story of struggle and hope about and for the countless numbers of activists whose determination, courage and sacrifice changed Australia.

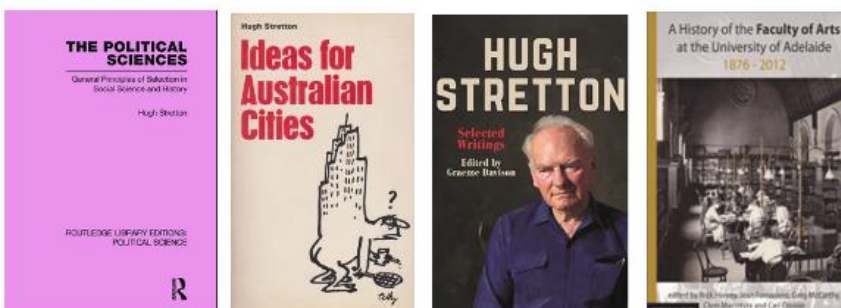
In the foreword former ACTU Secretary, Bill Kelty writes "In telling their story, Tom and Audrey tell a tale of this nation – of country farms, suburban industries, railway tea rooms, building sites, pub life, union offices, party political meeting and homes. This is a love story but, above all, it is a tale of people passionately concerned about peace, equality and respect. It is a diary of warriors for social justice. There is not one person in this country untouched or unaffected by Tom and Audrey's lifelong political pursuits." Current ACTU Secretary Sally McManus who along with Bill Kelty launched the book, remarks that "there is no greater generation of trade unionists than Tom and Audrey's. This is a book every trade unionist should read on what it took to win some of our greatest achievements and what it is to be a trade unionist. This is a book of wisdom to inspire us all."

Tom and Audrey devoted their lives to the trade union, women's, peace, anti-apartheid and socialist movements. Audrey's involvement with the union movement started at the age of 15 year when she was a principal witness for the Hotel Club and Restaurant Union in a major court case against underpayment of wages in the hospitality industry. At 17 she represented the union at the International Food Workers Conference in Europe and was appointed a union organiser on her 19th birthday. From 1969 to 1993 she was National Secretary of the Union of Australia Women and played a principal role in coordinating Australia's participation in the UN Decade for Women (1976-85). In 1982 President Reagan's administration banned her attendance at the UN Conference on Disarmament in New York but in 1994 Nelson Mandela invited her to his inauguration as President of a free South Africa.

Tom has been a full dues-paying member of his union for 75 years; despite having retired 30 years ago. He led his first strike as an apprentice on the Sydney docks and rose to become National Secretary of the Building Workers Industrial Union and was the first communist ACTU Vice-President. He is the father of the CFMEU and played a key role in building Australia's safety net by leading campaigns that won universal superannuation, accident pay, long service leave and helped forge the highest minimum wage in the world. Over the past 25 years he has trained nearly 1000 activists who have passed through the ACTU's Organising Works program including ACTU Secretary Sally McManus.

Beautifully presented, *Dare to Dream* is a 400-page hard copy edition with 24 pages of historic photographs. These memoirs will inspire you in the quest for justice, equality and peace. It is available direct from Tom and Audrey by writing to enquiries@daretodreammemoirs.com.au with a special pricing of \$30 including postage for members of the South Australian Society of Labour History. Alternatively, members can go to Macleans books at <https://www.macleansbooks.com.au/>. More info about *Dare to Dream* can be found at <http://www.daretodreammemoirs.com.au>

Dr Adrian Graves



Hugh Stretton and me: gender, university politics & public policy

Dr Kay Rollison

I first encountered Hugh Stretton as a teacher. The year was 1964, the course called History IIA – perhaps *Europe since the French Revolution*. Professor Stretton (he gave up this title four years later) would walk from side to side of the lecture theatre, explaining – without notes and always in beautifully constructed paragraphs – the rise of liberalism in twentieth century Britain. I was hooked. This exposure to liberal thought left indelible marks on my political consciousness, seeing the liberal experiment, however imperfect, as a precursor to an equally British version of social democracy. Just as important, though, and perhaps inseparable from this political philosophy, was Stretton’s critique of value-free social science. ‘Facts are facts’, he wrote in the preface to *The Political Sciences* (1969), ‘but theories order them, and explanations select them.’ I learnt from him that access to objective reality is a chimera; there is no ‘view from nowhere’. Social scientists, historians, politicians and journalists inevitably see the world from their own perspective, and the best service they can offer is to make clear to their audience what that perspective is, and how it frames their work. His insistence on the importance of values in explanation has remained a touchstone for me ever since.

My next encounter with his work was his privately published book *Ideas for Australian Cities* (1970). This was a revelation, a view of both cities **and** suburbs Australia as culturally valuable. This offered a radical challenge to the dominant myth that country life – claimed as more virtuous than suburban life – had been the central force in shaping Australia’s national identity. It also offered commentary on town planning, and what strategies planners could adopt to make cities fairer places to live. I had been watching a state government tearing old communities apart and replacing them with high rise social housing and freeways; his advocacy of selective urban renewal via conservative ‘dentistry’ was enlightening. His concern for retaining social cohesion, and making life easier for families and children through better planning was also illuminating.

While I continued to read more of what Stretton published, such as *Capitalism, Socialism and the Environment* (1976), his writing had less impact than it should have, partly because it was hard work reading it, and partly because issues like feminism and identity politics were taking centre stage. It was indirectly through this that I again came into contact with him personally. In 1986 I was appointed as the University of Adelaide’s first Equal Opportunity Officer, in line with the requirements of the Affirmative Action Act (1986). This was an administrative position, not an academic one. My first task was to look at patterns of female employment across the university. It was no surprise to find that although the majority of history students were female, the academic staff of the department were predominantly male. My task was to introduce some recruitment procedures which required selection panels to question their own biases – just as Stretton had taught me – to see if their idea of a ‘good’ candidate discriminated against female applicants. Mr Stretton (Administration staff still called him Professor) was immediately hostile to any such interference in academic business, especially by a member of the general staff. It didn’t help that (together with my sister, a senior academic historian in another university) I wrote a letter to the then *Australian Higher Education Supplement* commenting on the paucity of female representation among the academic staff of both the History and the English Departments at Adelaide University. Stretton wrote a highly critical response to me, which is among his papers at the ANU. Stretton was always proud of his ability to select good staff – not by any mandated selection procedures but by his instinct as an academic; his practice has been described as ‘hiring on promise ... hiring people recommended by folk who knew them well ... and [he] had very good connections’. A proud boast, for example, was that he recognised the brilliance of George Rudé and appointed him to the Adelaide History department despite his markedly left-wing leanings. Some of his other personal appointment choices were perhaps less satisfactory.

All this was happening at a time when universities were subject to a creeping managerialism which has now manifested itself as full blown 'tertiary corporatism'. Stretton hated this process, and doubtless saw my efforts as part of an insidious encroaching bureaucracy. In his world view, universities were clearly the preserve of academics; general staff were only there to serve them (he always appeared the perfect gentleman to other academics and students, but there were stories of his rudeness to junior general staff). In Stretton's view, any increase of centralised power that did not have a direct academic relevance was to be deplored. I used to think Stretton's opposition to managerialism came from his loyalty to the system of collegial governance which it was replacing – a system where the Vice Chancellor was first among equals (i.e. not a CEO), where the Academic Committee had a real influence on the direction of the university and where departments were run on quasi democratic lines. But reading Graeme Davison's *Hugh Stretton: Selected Writings* (2018), I see I was mistaken. In a letter to the editor of the Annual Record of his old Oxford College, Balliol, Stretton made clear his dislike of collegial governance; '... nothing in Oxford is quite as crustacean-conservative – as proof against change or innovation – as a provincial university of stable size governed by its senior lecturers'. He thought the transfer of power from professors to rank-and-file academics was regrettable (but nevertheless preferable because 'the former oligarchy was often worse'). But whatever his views on university governance, he hated what one of his colleagues – who at the time refused to speak to me – described as 'intrusive managerialism'. I don't like intrusive managerialism any more than he did, but I still believe it was a good thing to make the process of appointing academic staff fairer and more open. Davison is right when he says Stretton's views were formed before the advent of second wave feminism!

The corporatisation of the universities went hand in hand with the victory of neoliberalism as the dominant mode of thought in Western capitalist democracies. Government, it was argued, should get out of the way and let the private sector rip. Government enterprises should be sold to the highest bidder (who would make the services previously provided by government more efficient). Universities, which couldn't be sold off, were nevertheless also expected to be more efficient by centralising internal decision-making, and competing with each other for fee paying international students while producing 'job ready' graduates – all with less government funding. Stretton always opposed the neoliberal project, preferring a mixed economy, public/private partnerships, and solutions to specific problems based on fairness rather than an all-encompassing dogma like neoliberalism. He wrote about this throughout the 'nineties, culminating in the publication in 2005 of *Australia Fair*, a social democratic manifesto not only outlining the damage done to the social fabric by neoliberalism, but also suggesting what might be done about it.

As far as I can remember, the book attracted remarkably little interest, despite Stretton being recognised as one of Australia's foremost thinkers. In retrospect, it's actually quite easy to see why it was largely ignored; it takes a lonely stand against the neoliberal economic orthodoxy accepted at the time by the Labor Party, the LNP and most economic commentators. Stretton argues 'that we should be doing whatever it takes in our changing historical conditions, by old means and new, to keep Australia fair'. He wrote too early; it's only since the GFC dented confidence in the free market's ability to deliver a fair society that such arguments are again being entertained.

Paul Keating, Stretton says, brought about a U-turn in Labor economic policy: instead of using the state to pursue full employment and balanced development, Keating gave up the power to do this. As well as removing most tariff protection, he 'reduced the regulation of business, privatised some public services and slimmed others to cut their costs, maintained some unemployment to restrain inflation, shifted taxation downward from the highest incomes, and thus increased some inequalities'. Stretton says that Keating knew this would hurt some citizens, and accepted that there would have to be a safety net that provided good health care, welfare and education to those left behind. Stretton argues Keating's motivation was good, because Keating believed such changes would result in optimum

foreign investment, employment, growth, and low inflation – and the wealth thus produced could be used to compensate the losers. I well remember how inexorable this program seemed at the time, particularly as almost all commentators endorsed it. Stretton agrees that for some of the time some good things have happened, but they have been outweighed by the downside. Our current arrangement, he says, ‘trusts production to private enterprise and market forces with minimum public aid or regulation. Government’s role is to rescue the resultant losers and correct the misdistribution of income by tax and welfare means. In practice that has become so expensive for an under-employed and ageing population that we don’t do it very well.’

Stretton outlines a suite of interrelated policy alternatives that would instead reduce inequality. The areas he covers include **work**, where full or fairly shared employment should be the main purpose of economic policy; **housing** policy, where he argues for a public/private effort to build cheap but good quality public housing for sale and rent; a **parenting wage** that enables a parent to stay at home with young children if they wish; a public **superannuation** scheme – he says that ‘the privatisers of superannuation have presided over the creation of a league of parasites on a scale not seen since the close of the eighteenth century’; and a **‘green’ environmental program**. I’m sure he would have added the privatisation of aged care, child-care and technical education to his list of horrors, had the damage done there been quite so evident in 2005 as it is now. I do not know of any other book that not only offers a reasoned critique of the impact of neoliberal economic policies in Australia in the last thirty years, but also offers an alternative set of policies that could just work, at least in principle, if not in specific detail.

Shortly before his death in 2015, I attended a celebration of Stretton’s life and work at which he was present, where I told him how much I admired his work; this was no time for petty reflections on selection committees. In the Introduction to his edition of *Hugh Stretton: Selected Writings* (2018), Davison argues that Hugh Stretton is still worth reading, suggesting that he offers ‘a model of how to think rigorously, ethically and imaginatively about the good society’. What could be more important? Davison’s book is a useful way to begin reading Stretton. It broadly covers his writing from 1969 to 2001. If it is perhaps biased towards his work on cities, this is possibly because Davison is himself an urban historian; and since it ends in 2001, there is nothing in the book from *Australia Fair*. Davison argues that some of the changes Stretton deplored are irreversible – it would be impossible, for example, to renationalise all that has been privatised – and probably some of Stretton’s suggested solutions are outdated or now impossible to achieve. But the recent deaths in private aged care homes from Covid19 show that his criticism of the passing off responsibilities that should be shouldered by the state to private enterprise— instead looking at some of the public/private partnership solutions he suggests in *Australia Fair* – might be fully relevant to today.

References

Hugh Stretton, *The Political Sciences: The General Selection Principles of Selection in Social Science and History*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1969

Hugh Stretton, *Ideas for Australian Cities*, 1st edn, The Author, Adelaide, 1970

Graeme Davison (ed.) *Hugh Stretton: Selected Writings*, La Trobe University Press, Melbourne, 2018

Nick Harvey [et al.] (eds.) *A History of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Adelaide*, 2012, <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/press/system/files/2019-04/uap-faculty-arts-ebook.pdf>

Massacre: The Life and Death of the Paris Commune, John Merriman, (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 327 pages. Review by Don Longo

(Don will talk on this topic at the AGM meeting of the *Labour History Society on Sunday August 15*)

The Commune and Historiography



Among the many hypocrisies of liberal historians and democrats is the claim that repression and terror belong to radicalism and revolutions, to which they adduce the tired evidence of the first French Republic of 1792-94 when 2 to 3 thousand victims were offered to Mme Guillotine. They overlook that in the Paris of 1871 a provisional government in Versailles made up of liberal conservatives, some delusional legitimists and a few provincial grandes headed by Adolphe Thiers – that ‘monstrous gnome’, Marx called him – massacred socialist and anarchist Communards totalling at least *ten*

times that number with ferocious cold-bloodedness over the space of a week! It was a savage butchery unequalled in European history since the Jacqueries of the 14th century. Despite this, the Commune is often seen as an unfortunate appendix to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and, in Anglophone accounts, is frequently characterised condescendingly as a proletarian *dance macabre*. Thus, liberal histories destroy the Commune for a second time. The rivers of blood are replaced by trivialisation or silence.

The Commune and John Merriman

A welcome new book tries to right this wrong. John Merriman’s *Massacre: The Life and Death of the Paris Commune* rescues the event from its obscurity in Anglophone histories. It is a sympathetic and moving account of the Commune’s origins, progress and bloody suppression. He quickly recounts the background of the Second Empire of Napoleon III, its humiliating defeat by Prussia in 1870, the establishment of a provisional government of national defence at Versailles. Then begins his real story: the obdurate restlessness of left-leaning Parisians and especially its National Guard (armed citizenry); the refusal to capitulate to the Prussian and the Versaillais by keeping their rifles and cannons; the proclamation of a left-wing alternative government in Paris led by a coalition of insurrectionary Blanquists, anarchist Proudhonians, and members of the Working Men’s International. It lasted just over two months, from 18 March to 28 May 1871 and passed an impressive array of progressive social legislation such as the separation of church and state, universal education, the abolition of child labour, gender and wage equality and the right of divorce, It also tore down the famous Vendôme column as a symbol of Napoleonic imperialism and ‘barbarism’.



Merriman’s main focus is the repression. He describes the slow but inexorable incursion of the provisional government past the walls of Paris until, in May, Thiers and his troops poured into the city to begin the slaughter known as Bloody Week (*la semaine sanglante*, 21-28 May 1871). He excels in providing shattering depictions of the massacre of revolutionary Parisians drawn from first-person accounts of the mass killings and atrocities. National Guardsmen, women, children, ordinary people looking for food or dragged

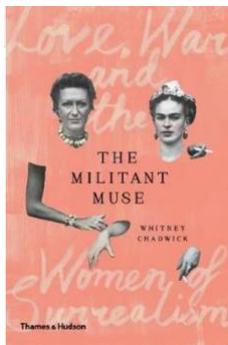
from their beds, thousands and thousands of them, Communards and non-Communards alike, were summarily shot or bayoneted. Many were disfigured beyond recognition and left in the streets to rot. Some were put into mass graves along the boulevards or thrown down Montmartre’s gypsum mine shafts. A mass execution took place at the Communards’ Wall (*Mur des Fédérés*) in the cemetery

where the rebels made their last stand. Especially interesting is his account of the hatred of the revolutionaries by the Parisian well-to-do (and the English and American diplomats and officials in Paris!) who saw them as beasts and wild animals. Paris needed to be purified of a century of revolutionary contagion. That meant carnage.

Merriman's book is more vivid description than weighty analysis. He astutely avoids elaborate historical discussions of whether the Commune was an end or a beginning in the cycle of European revolutions. He could have given more attention to the Commune's international character, i.e., to the Italian Garibaldians, Czech and Polish anarchists, Hungarian radicals, German socialists and Russian militants who rushed to Paris and defended the barricades. I also would have liked more attention on the critical role of women. But for narrative strength, the book is a tour de force.

The Commune and the Future

Legacies are notoriously difficult to determine. Eugène Pottier wrote the *Internationale* while hiding from the repression. Marx saw it as 'the glorious harbinger of a new society'. Lenin regarded the Commune as a model for Russia and the world proletarian revolution and in his mausoleum his embalmed hand clutched a banner from the Commune. It resonated in the May 1968 protests and again in the Yellow Vest (*Gilets Jaunes*) movement of 2018. There has been an annual commemoration by the left at the Communards' Wall throughout the 20th century, and during my years in Paris in the 1980s our family would trudge to the Wall every year to listen to the speeches and join others in laying reverential wreaths to the Communards' memory. More importantly, the Commune is an opportunity to reflect on its lessons for progressive struggles today and to consider the nature of state-sponsored terror in protection of class interests.

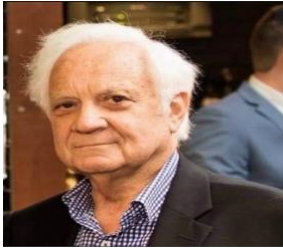


***The Militant Muse: Love, War and the Women of Surrealism,* Whitney Chadwick, Thames & Hudson, 2021 Doug Melvin**

Following one of my great interests in life I recently came across this book which documents the experience of five young female surrealist artists in the 1930s and 40s who worked within an avant-garde art movement defined by men - as well as in the context of the political landscape of the day. These women worked in the shadow of older artist lovers with more extensive experience and educational backgrounds - such as the well-known Frida Kahlo and her husband Diego Rivera as well as lesser-known but also important artists such as the Leonora Carrington and Leonor Fini, both of whom were lovers of the German Dadaist Max Ernst.

Leftist artists such as Ernst, Picasso and Rivera opposed Hitlerism in Germany and Franco's fascism in Spain, and after the defeat of the Spanish republican movement progressive artists were invited by the Mexican government to live in Mexico. This book touches on the fascinating relationship between those artists and Leon Trotsky. Women artists were themselves politically active too: Carrington and Fini worked with those who gained Max Ernst's release from wartime detention. Chadwick also describes the subversive activities of the cross-dressing German couple Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe (under the male aliases of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore) in German-occupied Jersey during WW2, jamming leaflets mocking Hitler's slogans into mailboxes.

The main thrust of this book is how women in the surrealism movement survived being treated as second class by their male counterparts, despite their work being sought after, and how they supported each other to become mature artists in their own right. Overall, the book explores the political context of surrealism, as well as the importance of female friendship to their own artistic and intellectual development. The book includes 85 illustrations by the various artists.



TRIBUTES

Reflections on Party politics and football - following the death of Terence Robert Groom, friend & West Torrens tragic (28 Nov 1944 - 29 March 2021)
Chris Sumner (Attorney General in three ALP Governments)

Terry Groom spent his early years in the then working class suburb of Woodville where his father was a fitter and turner at Holdens. He had a sister and was the eldest of four brothers. They were a bright lot - Wayne is a noted SA documentary film producer and Daryl was the senior wine maker at Penfolds before moving to the USA where he has received numerous wine maker of the year awards. Terry went to Woodville High School which produced many prominent contemporary alumni - among others Phil Hoffman of travel agent fame, Sports commentator Bruce McAvaney, Channel 9 newsreader Rob Kelvin and fellow parliamentarian Greg Crafter. Some of them still caught up for lunch on occasion. Terry himself dabbled with a physical education teaching career before turning to law which he completed while working in the child welfare department. He had a career as a barrister and solicitor which extended over 50 years - still working at the time of his death.

Like many of our generation Terry was inspired to enter politics by the example of Labor Premier Don Dunstan. In the 1960s and 1970s, trade unions - through the 'card' vote - controlled the preselection of candidates but there were no formal factions in the ALP. There was a consensus approach adopted by the Party and Parliamentary leadership (particularly Clyde Cameron, Jim Toohey and Dunstan) sometimes referred to as "The Machine" which saw all Labor's ideological positions represented. The consensus approach, much to the regret of Dunstan, was initially undermined by elements in the Left. After a decade of turmoil in the 1980s the Right and particularly the SDA now dominate the Party. The Left has been left with mendicant status. Under consensus the pool of potential candidates was taken from the whole Party and not from separate factions as is the case now and genuine ballots were conducted at State Convention. In this non factional era, for someone like Terry (and me), the road to Parliament was by trying out in hopeless or marginal seats. If you performed well, recognition on the basis of merit was always possible. First, Terry lost to Liberal Heini Becker in the seat of Hanson in 1975.

The 1977 election was the first in the State's history conducted on boundaries set by the independent Electoral Districts Boundaries Commission, with the removal of any malapportionment between seats in the city and country. Terry ran for the seat of Morphett. Chris Schacht then Assistant Secretary has told me that they did not initially think Morphett was winnable but changed their minds when they realised that Terry was conducting an energetic and well-received campaign. Resources were diverted to the seat and Terry won by 112 votes. A swing of 0.3% would see him lose which was what happened in 1979 when, after Dunstan resigned, newly appointed Premier Des Corcoran made a disastrous and completely inexplicable decision to call an early election (the third in a row). Labor lost government but under the leadership of John Bannon returned in 1982 after only one term, a comparatively rare feat. Terry returned to Parliament in the eastern suburbs seat of Hartley succeeding Des Corcoran.

As in life generally, success in politics depends on chance and a good dose of luck. Had Terry not won in 1977 he may well have found a safer seat for 1979. Had he been in Parliament after the 1979 election he would have certainly been in the shadow ministry in opposition and a minister after 1982. He could well have enjoyed a ministerial career spanning the whole of the terms of the Bannon and Arnold Governments which finished in 1993. Looking back now it is a legitimate question to ask why a person of Terry's intelligence, approachability and capacity for hard work did not make it into the ministry much earlier. He had to wait until 1992 when as an independent he was appointed as Minister for Primary Industries and Minister Assisting the Premier in Multicultural Affairs in the Arnold Government. One of the great paradoxes of Terry's life is that despite his wide and diverse group of

friends across all political factions and his undoubted talents he was unable to secure a ministerial position as an ALP member.

As a back bencher he did some excellent work in Parliament, sometimes in collaboration with independent Martyn Evans. He participated in a Select Committee on juvenile justice which resulted in the introduction of family group conferences involving victims. He pushed for greater privacy protection; I introduced a Bill to create the tort of breach of privacy. Labor under Attorney General Len King QC had tried to do the same in the early 1970s. The media again mounted a sustained campaign of opposition and the Bill became politically untenable and would not have passed the Legislative Council. We had to settle for the introduction of privacy principles initially in the public sector.

Current Liberal Treasurer Rob Lucas in the condolence motion debate in the Legislative Council commended Martyn and Terry for their work done on strengthening the Parliamentary committee system, something I had unsuccessfully tried to do in 1983. In his legal practice Terry developed commercial expertise particularly in the retail tenancies field. In Parliament he was an advocate for better rights for small business tenants.

Blood is thicker than water but nothing is thicker than an attachment to a football team. In Terry's (and my) case this was West Torrens. Max Pontifex, a relative of Terry's, had been one of West Torrens' greatest players in the 1930's and won the Magarey Medal in 1932. Political friendships may wax and wane but football ones never do. When our paths crossed in Parliament we started going to the football together.

In 1990 West Torrens amalgamated with Woodville but the amalgamation should never have been necessary. The new Eagles have been reasonably successful but Terry was never entirely happy. He thought we had been misled by undertakings given about the colours of the amalgamated club's stripe and guernsey colours. Terry was never entirely happy with the amalgamation. He thought we had been misled by undertakings given about the colours of the amalgamated club's stripe and guernsey colours. Despite West Torrens' previous success, and the later success of the new Eagles on the field and in nurturing young talent, the club has a very small supporter base. This is evident at finals time when Eagles spectators are overwhelmed by the number of their opponents. Despite this, we were always there including celebrating last year's premiership of the amalgamated Woodville-West Torrens club.

It is an interesting psychological reflection to contemplate why colours are so important to the human race. On the face of it quite irrational, yet identification with colours seems to fill a human need – from national flags to football guernseys. Port Adelaide's prison bars stirs passionate debate. For Terry and me and many other supporters of the old Eagles, things were never the same after the amalgamation, whether because of the colours or otherwise.

After leaving Parliament, Terry maintained friendships with persons of all factions. He organised the "Groom lunch" for many years for ex MPs whether they had supported him or not. The last one, shortly before his death, was at the well-known Italian restaurant Buona Sera on Glen Osmond Road. He enjoyed it thoroughly which made his death shortly afterwards so devastating. As usual, he regaled us with his customary stories and the latest gossip which, also as usual, were not always accurate. Our lives will not be the same without them - I will be bereft of the inside news conveyed in our regular conversations.

Vale Terry Groom

Tonight I have just received the terribly shocking news of the death of my friend, former legal partner and comrade Terry Groom. To say his death comes as a shock is a vastly inadequate expression of my grief. Terry and his wife were friends of mine and my wife Julie Duncan from the early 1970s when Terry joined my law firm as a partner. That friendship lasted throughout our lives. I served in the House of Assembly with Terry from 1977 until 1979 when he lost his seat, and again after he was re-elected from 1982 until 1984. Terry became a minister in the SA labour government in the 1990s.

Terry had a wicked sense of humour and was always good for a story about the latest political goings on. We shared time together in Italy where he arranged to meet the Pope – not something I had aspired to do. On occasions Terry could be ‘out there’ – he had that side to him – but he could also be quite cautious politically and realistic about the electorate. He certainly knew that in politics both compromise and disappointment were a substantial part of the deal. As a lawyer he was one of the most accomplished practitioners in the commercial field and had continued practising until his death.

He was a loved father and husband of Kay, who must be devastated by his death. Today's news will have shocked all those who knew Terry, but I hope that after we recover from the terrible shock we can celebrate Terry's character and the life – and that will offer some comfort to those who knew him as a dear friend colleague and comrade. My sympathies to his family, to Kay and his children.

Peter Duncan

Vale Benny Carslake



Benny - in hospital shortly before his death - being presented with the 2021 May Day Spanner Award by Matt Blowes for his services to the trade union movement.

**Benny Carslake has died 30 April 2021 in Adelaide aged 74
He was one of the giants of the CFMEU and the Australian trade union movement.**

Benny was a bricklayer who organised other bricklayers in housing as well as the commercial industry. He worked as an organiser and became branch secretary of the SA Building Workers Industrial Union. He was a founding member of the CFMEU, as construction division SA Branch Secretary. A member since April 1975, he was made a life member of the CFMEU at the National Conference in Adelaide in 2019.

Benny believed in the united front and always worked to build unity amongst workers and politically progressive elements. Benny was a member of the Socialist Party of Australia, later the CPA. He was an active participant in the peace movement, anti-bases protests, and the anti-nuclear movement. Benny was a stalwart of Mayday in Adelaide.

Benny was a charismatic and popular person and was much loved by members and comrades in other branches and other unions. He helped turn the Semaphore Club from a bastion of the Adelaide establishment to a hub for unionists, socialists and blues music. He will be sadly missed by his comrades in the CFMMEU and the wider union movement.

Dave Noonan CFMEU National Construction Secretary

Vale Keith Ridgeway

We have farewelled one of our greats this past Saturday (12th June). Former MUA SA Secretary, Keith Ridgeway, was a staunch Unionist throughout his maritime career. A man of great heart and size throughout his long and distinguished tenure as a member and official of the Mighty MUA.

Originally hailing from WA, Keith came to Adelaide in the 1950s where he worked as a bosun, AB and Integrated Rating on many vessels, displaying his quiet but effective trade unionism and seamanship of the highest skill level and professionalism, particularly on board the roll on roll off vessel the Mary Hollyman, trading from Adelaide to Tasmania, and later onboard the (now) Svitzer tugboats in the 90s and many other vessels.

Ever reliable and always a balanced contributor through his commitment, experience and wisdom that came with his sturdy character. His dedication to improving the lives of working people saw him elected to the Honorary Deputy Branch Secretary in 1999 while working for Svitzer (Adsteam), then becoming Branch Secretary in 2002 before retiring on 30 June 2003 after a long and distinguished career.

Embodying the revered slogan of MUA Veterans, Keith was 'Retired from the Workforce not from the Struggle' and after his retirement he remained active in the industry as a staunch Unionist and a life member of the MUA also volunteering on the Maritime Museum vessels and cementing himself as a mentor in craft seamanship.

His efforts in preserving Port Adelaide's maritime history is second to none and saw him become involved in many local groups and organisations including Historic Ketch Falie - HKF, South Australian Maritime Museum, the Port of Adelaide National Trust, The Merchant Navy Association and of course the SA Branch of the Maritime Union of Australia.



From the Maritime Union of Australia SA Branch

“Before you go....” A new postscript blog from LSSA member Brian Abbey

4 Corners on 29 June certainly wasn't one of the great in-depth revelatory episodes, but all the same it served to bring out the neglect of due process, the lack of candour, the rank injustice - and the increasing penetration of the State structures by the Old Boys' network: expensively-suited middle-aged men who have tied themselves into serving the system on boards and committees, vital parts of the machine that has brought them wealth, prominence and comfort.

I'm talking about the re-telling of the Christine Holgate fiasco in which the Morrison Government seized what appeared to its strategists to be an opportunity to garner public support for the removal of a stubborn obstacle in the way of its covert plan to privatise bits of the last remaining profitable parts of the public service.

At the time when the Cartier watches story broke, back in early May 2021, I wrote that it seems Christine Holgate had to be got rid of due to her success in breathing new life into Australia Post and thereby putting paid - for now anyway - to ScoMo's plan to privatise AP's key money-making public service functions. I can't think of another explanation.

But how to get rid of her? Can you imagine the privateers' muffled cheers that would have greeted the discovery of 'Watchgate'? ScoMo and his accomplices would have seen it as a 'game over' moment, given the AusPost Board is chaired by a hand-picked ally and loaded with friendly faces who could be counted on to perform the dirty deed. As Bob Dylan might have said, "You don't have to be a postman see which way the wind was blowing'.

What we saw on that 4 Corners program took nothing away from that account of what happened then and why it happened. It also demonstrated once again the standard deceptions that are employed by the privatisers. Paul Fletcher, the responsible Minister, was careful to give nothing away and feigned sincerity and composure with the skills required by his situation: 'There are no plans to sell ' [That means 'We are going to do it when we can but there is nothing recorded anywhere that could be called 'a plan']; "We have no intention to sell Australia Post. It will remain in public ownership." [That means 'There'll be a husk called Australian Post in public ownership, even though the money-making bits will have been sold off.'] The interviewer, although a very experienced and accomplished journalist, performed poorly. He failed to probe the two ploys listed above and seemed not to have prepared himself to make some international comparisons where the sell-off gambit occurred years ago and produced dreadful results for the staff - all temporary and part-time of course - and for the public, you and me, the non-corporate users of the postal service.

Ten years ago, in April 2011, James Meek published a piece titled '*In the Sorting Office*' in the *London Review of Books* (Vol 33, No. 9) in which he graphically reported the working conditions of the part-time, overworked and underpaid people working in the sold-off European mail services, many of them middle-aged women with few opportunities for more secure or better-paid work. Let me quote him at length:

Somewhere in the Netherlands a postwoman is in trouble. Bad health, snow and ice and a degree of chaos in her personal life have left her months behind on her deliveries. She rents a privatised ex-council flat with her partner and so many crates of mail have built up in the hallway that it's getting hard to move around. Twice a week one of the private mail companies she works for, Selektmail, drops off three or four crates of letters, magazines and catalogues. She sorts and delivers the fresh crates but the winter backlog is tough to clear. She thinks her employers are getting suspicious. I counted 62 full mail crates stacked up in the hall when I visited recently. There was a narrow passageway between the wall of crates and her personal pile of stuff: banana boxes, a disused bead curtain, a mop bucket. One of the crates has crept

into the study, where the postwoman's computer rears up out of her own archival heaps of newspapers and magazines. Should these two streams of paper merge they would not be easily separated. The postwoman hasn't given up. She had a similar problem with the other private mail company she works for, Sandd, a few years back. 'When I began at Sandd in 2006 I delivered about 14 boxes of mail every time,' she said. 'I couldn't cope and at Christmas 2006 I had about 90 of these boxes in the house. By New Year's Day we had 97. There were even boxes in the toilet.' The postwoman is paid a pittance to deliver corporate mail. She hasn't done her job well, yet so few people have complained about missed deliveries that she hasn't been found out. I agreed not to name the Dutch postwoman or to give away any detail that would identify her. Even if she wasn't sitting on months of undelivered mail, Sandd or Selekt could sack her in a heartbeat. She works, she reckons, about 30 hours a week for the two companies, earning about five euros an hour, although the legal minimum wage in the Netherlands is between eight and nine euros an hour. She has no contract. She gets no sick pay, no pension and no health insurance. One of the companies gives her a dribble of holiday pay. Selekt gave her a jacket and a sweatshirt but she gets no other clothing or footwear and has to pay to maintain her own bike. The company is able to offer such miserable conditions because of loopholes in Dutch employment law. The postwoman is paid a few cents for each item of mail she delivers. The private mail firms control their delivery people's daily postbag to make sure they never earn more than €580 a month, the level at which the firms would be obliged to give them a fixed contract.

Meek then continues to trace the same evolutionary tale across the postal services in several other European countries, finding the same conditions being suffered by the gig workers trapped in these privatised jobs, with no way of improving their conditions (because the unions have been smashed or have simply given up the fight). He concludes:

Across the world, postal services are being altered like this: optimised to deliver the maximum amount of unwanted mail at the minimum cost to businesses. In the internet age private citizens are sending less mail than they used to, but that's only part of the story of postal decline. The price of driving down the cost of bulk mailing for a handful of big organisations is being paid for by the replacement of decently paid postmen with casual labour and the erosion of daily deliveries.

The simplistic, shoot-from-the-hip opposition fleetingly mobilised by the ALP at the time is a warning that we need to look elsewhere to find the strength needed to prevent the Australian chapter to becoming as sad, as costly and as cruel as the manner in which the same story has unfolded elsewhere. Say something nice and supportive to your postie when next you bump into her or him.

Brian

Important Dates - forthcoming LSSA events

Sunday 15 August (2-4pm): The Labour History Society (SA) AGM, Box Factory - Regent Street Sth

Guest speaker Don Longo will talk on the 150-year anniversary of the First

Paris Commune and its relevance to society today. (NB Don's review of *The Life and Death of the Paris Commune* in this issue)

Jack Crawford will also give an update on his PhD

All Branch Officer and Executive positions will be declared vacant and elections to take place to fill the vacancies. Note only current financial members can be nominated or vote. Membership subscriptions now due for 2021/22 Cost: \$30 waged; \$15 unwaged

Sunday 17 October General meeting 2 00 pm – 4 00 pm Box Factory

"Unparliamentary Behaviour" – stories from the Party room

Speakers: John Trainer (Labor MLA 1979-93, Speaker in SA Parliament 1986-90)

Ione Brown (press secretary to Hugh Hudson, Labor MLA 1965-79)