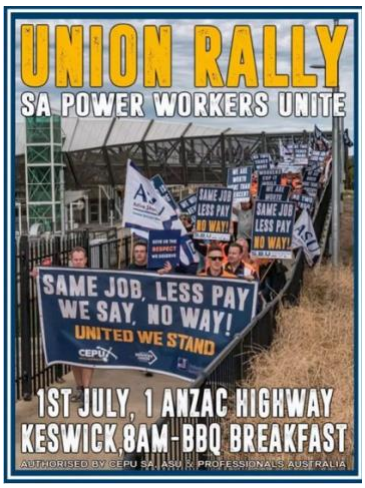
LABOUR HISTORY NEWS Spring 2021

Labour History Society (South Australia)



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President's Report Doug Melvin

I would like to thank LHS(SA) members for re-electing me as South Australian Branch President, along with other Office bearers and executive committee members, at the August AGM. Two of last year's executive committee did not run again, and on behalf of the membership I would like to thank Ken Bridge and Don Jarrett for their work on the committee over the past three years. I would also like to welcome Steve Acton back to the executive committee after a three-year absence.

Elected Branch officers

President: Doug Melvin
Secretary: Sue Marks
Treasurer: Kevin Kaeding
Vice Presidents: David Faber & Victoria Fielding
Executive Committee members: Ralph Clarke, Adrian Graves, Vini Ciccarello, Pat Wright, and Steve Acton (ex PSA senior industrial officer). Grant Banfield has been co-opted to the committee.

One of the major activities for this year's committee is **a review of the Branch's Constitution**. A sub-committee has been formed under the leadership of Pat Wright; other sub-committee members are Grant Banfield, Ralph Clarke and Vinni Ciccarello. LHS(SA) members will be asked for their thoughts on the new Constitution in due course; a general meeting will be held to discuss the sub-committee's recommendations in mid 2022.

As we are all aware, the current Federal Government has put university funding and academia under attack – especially the Humanities sector which of course includes history. **The importance of Labour History** is at risk of being lost to younger generations and it is important for society to understand why it is important. To this effect LHS(SA) next year will be hold a discussion on the importance of history and hopefully publish some articles on the subject in future LHS(SA) Newsletters.

Meanwhile, you can keep in touch with the new South Australia Labour History Society FaceBook page.

Doug M.

Important Dates – forthcoming LHS(SA) events

GENERAL MEETINGS: 2.00 p.m. Sundays @ 2-4pm, The Box Factory, Regent St South, CBD

2021

Sunday 17 October Speakers:
John Trainer (Labor MLA 1979-93, Speaker SA Parliament 1986-90)
Ione Brown (press secretary to Hugh Hudson, Labor MLA 1965-79)

2022

Sunday 20 February	Speakers to be confirmed
Sunday 17 April	Speakers to be confirmed
Sunday 1 May	**Joint event with Maritime Union of Australia (150-year anniversary)**
Sunday 19 June	Speakers to be confirmed
Sunday 21 August	**LHS(SA) AGM and General Meeting**, Speakers to be confirmed
Sunday 18 October	Speakers to be confirmed

EXECUTIVE MEETINGS: Final meeting for **2021** – 5 30 pm Thursday 18 November
First meeting for **2022** - 5 30 pm Thursday 20 January

Tom Sheridan Scholarship 2021, Assessment Panel Report

We are pleased to report on our recommendations for the Labour History Society SA's, 2021 Tom Sheridan Scholarship.

The Process

The Panel proceeded by redeveloping the Scholarship information to better express the purpose of the award and the processes and criteria for its selection. The Scholarship was advertised to relevant departments in the three public universities of South Australia and to members of the Society. Four applications of very high quality were received, two from students at Flinders University and two from the University of Adelaide. Following a consideration of each candidate against the selection criteria, two candidates were shortlisted. The successful candidate was selected following consideration of detailed referee reports.

Panel Recommendations

1. In recognition of the overall strength of this year's submissions, the Executive has already approved the Panel's recommendation, that each of the candidates for this year's scholarships be offered complementary membership of the Society for 2021-22.
2. The Panel recommends that **Yianni Cartledge** be awarded the Tom Sheridan Scholarship for 2021. Mr. Cartledge is a PhD student at Flinders University whose thesis is a comparative history of international labour migration from Icaria, Greece, to South Australia and elsewhere. Mr. Cartledge submitted substantial evidence in support of his application and received unqualified support from two senior professors familiar with his research and his accomplishments. He is an outstanding young historian, achieving first class Honours for his undergraduate degree and the Wakefield History Prize, 2014. He is already published in the distinguished journal, Historical Research, with a further joint publication due imminently to mark the 200th year commemoration of the Greek War of Independence. He is making strong progress towards completion of his innovative thesis, which his referees predict will make a strong contribution to Australian labour history.
3. Exceptionally and based on her outstanding potential to contribute to the history of workers in a little documented aspect of the South Australia's maritime history, the Panel recommends that **Shiralee Farley** be awarded a Special Commendation. It is further recommended that she be awarded $150.00 in consideration of this Commendation. Ms Farley is an outstanding student, currently in the Honours year of the Maritime Archeology program at Flinders University. Her thesis is investigating the working history of a ship salvage site known as the Jervois Basin Ship's Graveyard. Utilising innovative maritime archeological technologies and a variety of social history sources, including oral history, her referees are confident that Ms Farley's thesis will make a distinctive contribution to an important aspect of Port Adelaide's working-class heritage.

The Panel's recommendations to the Executive are unanimous.

Panel: Dr David Faber (Chair)
Dr Adrian Graves (Secretary)
Dr Grant Banfield

The Sheridan scholarship (worth $500) is awarded annually to an applicant who best demonstrates their capacity or potential to make a significant contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the history of the Australian working class.

Applicants must be postgraduate students currently enrolled at any one of the three public universities of South Australia. Disciplines of study may include economic, political, social or cultural history, political economy, gender, minorities or media studies, or any other field of study which contributes to the purpose of the award outlined above. **Labour History Society, South Australia**

The Semaphore Workers Club

In the 1970s, Adelaide's northern beaches were the site of a 'bloodless' socialist revolution that never made the front page. 50 years later, the Semaphore Workers Club remains a kind of paradise

Judges, crooks & poets at the Semaphore Workers Club Royce Kurmelovs *(first published in the Adelaide Review Nov 2019)*

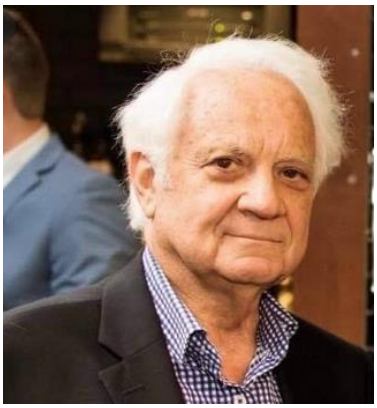
Under the veranda at the Semaphore Workers Club, a poet looks for a table where the wind won't reach her. She doesn't normally smoke, she explains to the magistrate, who introduces himself as she settles into a chair - but when the drinks flow freely as they do on this Saturday night, she still sometimes feels the urge to head out into the night for a cigarette. After she finishes carefully rolling and sealing the paper with her tongue, she looks for her lighter. When she can't find it, the magistrate who had been tending the spit all night offers her a ramekin with a hot coal. The poet touches the end of the cigarette to its surface and the woody smell of burning tobacco fills the air. "Hold it in your hands, like this," he says as the wind from the ocean picks up, demonstrating by cupping both his hands around the ceramic. Both are here tonight because they have somehow entered the orbit of Geoff Goodfellow. The poet who once read on stage with Ken Kesey in California has booked the whole joint out for his 70th birthday.

Inside the crowd is about 100-strong and up on stage, the eight-person band Gumbo Ya Ya plays their New Orleans-inspired rhythms. All eyes are on the man at the centre, as he dances with someone else's wife. If a man is to be judged by the company he keeps, Geoff Goodfellow's life is reflected in the faces of those present. Over in a booth, the former residents of Copley Street in Broadview, all children of military service homes, have gathered to celebrate one of their own. Not far away stands a conference of crooks - among them is a veteran safe cracker, and a man who saved the family farm by diversifying into cannabis. Seated down the front, meanwhile, is a group of Federal and Supreme Court judges, joined by their partners. At their table sits a significant Adelaide property developer who looks uncomfortable in a room where the flag of nearly every union and the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) adorns the walls. Scattered between them are an assortment of poets, writers, publishers, and theatre people, some having flown in for the occasion. Over by the bar, a man dressed like a sea captain leans back on his stool and rests both elbows against the timber. He is Ben Carslake, a founding member of this iteration of the Semaphore Workers Club and unofficial keeper of its history. Ben is quick to claim the man responsible for bringing these people together as a personal friend of "The Commo Club". He claims the club gave Geoff Goodfellow his first gig – he was certainly the first poet to perform at the Semaphore Workers Club.

Before a coalition of the CFMEU, the CPA and the Waterside Workers Federation took it over, the Semaphore Workers Club was a haunt for judges, bankers, sea captains and those with money. Back then the club served as The Adelaide Club by the sea, whose exclusive membership would gather to drink until 4am before liquor licensing regulations started keeping track of time. When the 70s brought a raft of new rules, the old membership fell away until the remaining 15 members let the building fall into decline. Their plan was to eventually sell off the sea-front property, take the money and run. "We saved it," Ben says. "We took it over in a bloodless coup." How it happened was simple enough. What began with a slow trickle of new members eventually reached a critical mass that allowed them to seize control of the organisation. "One day we took the Queen off the wall and put Lenin up, then the rest of them resigned too," he says. "Didn't like our politics. Lenin's still there today but the Queen's long gone.

When word goes around that the speeches are about to begin, the band brings its music to a close and all eyes look towards the front. Outside, the magistrate excuses himself from the table and heads into the warmth, explaining he is expected to give a speech. The poet stays to finish off her cigarette before following. "You know you've lived well when you have friends in both high and low places," she says.

Reflections on Party politics – following the death of Terry Groom (Part II): Chris Sumner



….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. *(from the SA Labour History News Winter 2021)*

One answer may lie in his approach to the establishment of Workcover in the mid 1980's. There was a proposal to abolish the common law rights to sue an employer for damages for negligence arising from an industrial accident in return for improving benefits for all injured workers and facilitating return to work. The Government's proposal had the support of the Trades and Labor Council and unions generally. Law firms who acted for workers were less keen. Terry opposed the Bill in Caucus as he was entitled to do (Terry was right to argue that Workcover would not be the brave new world promised by its proponents - it reduced some workers' rights and the expected benefit to injured workers generally did not endure) but there was a suspicion that he was going outside Caucus to argue his case. The SA journalist Rex Jory (Terry's cousin) wrote an article that could only have been written with knowledge of what went on in Caucus.

The proponents of the Bill were convinced that Terry was the source of the leak and considerable animosity towards him developed. The Deputy Premier Jack Wright and Minister Frank Blevins were particularly critical - supposedly supporting "greedy lawyers" was not popular. The legislation passed, but over time it became apparent that the new scheme was imposing an unacceptable burden on State finances. SA's big companies were given an exemption from Workcover on the basis that they could run their own compatible scheme, and these exemptions helped undermine the scheme's revenue base. Eventually even the Rann Labor Government had to concede that changes had to be made and they legislated for a significant reduction in compensation benefits.

Terry also ran into trouble with the Party Office over his preselection prior to the 1993 election. The electoral boundaries redistribution had turned Hartley from a relatively safe Labor seat into a marginal Liberal seat. This result is always possible with an independent commission but, on this occasion, Terry believed and told me he had some evidence that it was engineered by the ALP Party Secretary Terry Cameron and his Liberal counterpart Nick Minchin. Particularly hurtful was that it was the ALP's own submission to the Electoral District Boundaries Commission that made Hartley harder to win. Terry believed the Party Office should have fought harder to preserve the seat of a sitting member.

Terry then sought preselection for the safe seat of Napier in the northern suburbs but lost. He resigned from the Labor Party and finished the rest of his term as an independent. With another independent Martyn Evans he was part of the Arnold Government for just over a year from September 1992 to December 1993. He was unsuccessful in contesting Napier in 1993, left Parliament but not politics - which remained an abiding interest for him. He was readmitted to the Labor Party and worked hard to support Grace Portolesi when she won his old seat.

Terry was a product of the non-factional Dunstan years. It is inconceivable that Dunstan would have supported a redistribution that so disadvantaged a sitting member. After losing his preselection Terry was scathing about the new factional system and the factional bosses that were entrenching their power

OBITUARIES

Vale Colin McKee

Valedictory speech by Peter Malinauskas, Leader of the Opposition (SA House of Assembly, 24 August 2021):

I rise today to honour the contribution to public life of the late Colin McKee. A parliamentarian, unionist, a Labor man and a friend of many current and former members of the South Australian party, Colin David Thomas McKee passed away last month on 6 July aged 71.

Colin will be remembered as a hardworking and devoted member of parliament who represented the interests of the people of Gilles with diligence and integrity. Colin was elected in the 1989 state election replacing Jack Slater, a former minister in the Bannon government who held the seat of Gilles from 1970 to 1989. At the age of 40, he joined six other new parliamentary colleagues who also entered the parliament in the 1989 election. They included Vic Heron, Colin Hutchinson, John Quirke, Paul Holloway and Michael Atkinson. Colin followed in the footsteps of his father, David, who was also an MP for Port Pirie, between 1959 & 1970, and also the Minister for Labour & Industry in the Dunstan government between 1970 & 1975.

In his maiden speech, Colin spoke passionately about the music industry, the Labor Party and the environment and said that he was never pushed into politics - growing up in a working-class family, being surrounded by unionism and Labor politics, the Vietnam War and conscription were enough to mould his opinion. Colin believed that participation in Labor politics and the labour movement was the only way he could make a substantial contribution to his fellow human beings, even if only in a small way, to improve the community.

Before entering parliament he spent 17 years as a union official and Labor Party organiser. His early career saw him become an organiser of the Musicians' Union of South Australia and, like former premiers Don Dunstan and John Bannon, he later became involved in the union for performers in radio, television, theatre and dance, becoming the founding secretary of Actors Equity.

In 1979, after the loss of the Corcoran government, Colin was elected to the position of state organiser of the Labor Party. His first electoral blooding happened just five weeks after he took on the position, when he was sent out to work on the Norwood by-election.
Some may recall that Greg Crafter was elected in the March 1979 by-election triggered by the abrupt resignation of Premier Don Dunstan but only six months later, was defeated by Liberal Frank Webster at the September 1979 state election. However, when a court overturned Webster's win another by-election was held in February 1980, Colin's work ultimately saw Greg Crafter confirmed as the member for Norwood.

Colin spent nearly ten years at the party office and worked with the then secretary of the party (now former Senator) Chris Schacht. They worked together on four state by-elections,

three federal elections and two state election campaigns, culminating in success in all but three by-elections - an outstanding record. In the lead-up to the 1993 state election, his seat of Gilles was abolished and the new seat of Torrens was created - which Colin did not contest. There was a massive swing against the Labor Party and the seat of Torrens was picked up by the Liberal Party.

Colin was committed to serving the labour movement and was passionate about the issues that were important to South Australians. He was a man who stood firm to his beliefs and his conscience. He pursued whatever he believed was best for our state and his community throughout his entire working life within the labour movement. On behalf of the Opposition and the parliamentary Labor Party, I express my sincere condolences to his family, friends and former colleagues. My thoughts are with them at this difficult time. May he rest in peace.

Senator Alex Gallacher
1 January 1954 – 28 August 2021

The Labour History Society SA notes with regret that Senator Alex Gallacher passed away peacefully on 29 August after a battle with lung cancer.

Alex was elected in 2010 as a Labor Senator for South Australia. He always considered it an absolute honour to represent and serve SA. He was a fierce and uncompromising advocate for workers especially in the Transport industry and a loyal and committed member of the Labor party. Before entering the Senate Alex had a 22-year career with the TWU, serving as an Industrial Officer, later going on to become the Secretary of the SA/NT branch. He later served as Vice-President and President of the Transport Workers' Union.

As a senator, Alex Gallacher worked fiercely and tirelessly; he served as chair of the Economics Committee and the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee. He took great pride in his advocacy for the transport industry and co-founding the Parliamentary Friends of Road Safety group. As Senator Gallacher said of the transport industry in his maiden speech: "There's no smoke and mirrors - just plain talking, hardworking employees and employers alike, in a tough competitive industry that works harder than most people imagine and continues to work while most people are asleep".

Mikis Theodorakis – Zorba the Greek composer and political activist – dies at 96

On September 3, composer and political activist Mikis Theodorakis, who wrote the score for the film *Zorba the Greek*, died at home in Athens at the age of 96 - plunging Greece into three days of mourning. Mikis Theodorakis lived a life intertwined with Greece's 20th century history. Born on the Greek island of Chios on July 29, 1925, Theodorakis was repeatedly jailed for his political beliefs. He was arrested in 1947, accused of being a sympathiser with guerrilla forces in the civil war that broke out soon after World War II between right-wing royalists and left-wing popular forces. Sent to a notorious prison camp on the island of Makronisos in 1948, he was beaten and tortured, had his legs broken and on one occasion was buried alive and left for dead. He was released in August 1949.

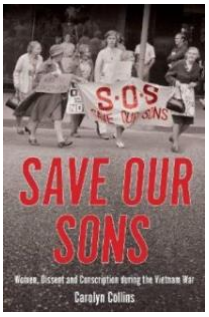
Theodorakis entered politics in 1963 after his friend Grigoris Lambrakis, a left-wing politician, was murdered during a peace demonstration. The Costa Gavras film ***Z***, scored by Mr Theodorakis, was based on the killing. He was elected to Mr Lambrakis's seat in February 1964. When a military junta seized power in April 1967, he went underground, working against the coup until his arrest and imprisonment later that year. He remained in jail - where he was again tortured - until international pressure helped secure his release in April 1970. He sat in parliament as a deputy for the newly legalised Communist Party from 1981 until 1986, but began to have doubts about the left and abandoned politics.

Mr Theodorakis returned to parliament in 1989, but this time for the conservatives, run by Constantine Mitsotakis, father of the current prime minister. In his latter years, he remained a political activist, railing against harsh reforms imposed on Greece for financial bailouts from 2010 to 2015. "I'm not a communist or social democrat or anything else. I'm a free man," he told Reuters in an interview during the 1990s. Greece's communist party KKE called Mr Theodorakis's body of work "a constant confrontation with injustice and defeatism, of new struggles and resistance". It also released a letter Mr Theodorakis penned to the party last year in which he stated: "I want to leave this world as a Communist." (*ABC/Reuters*)

If you want to know more about Theodorakis' music, here's a couple of great videos as a starting point:

- A young Theodorakis energetically conducting Grigoris Bithikotsis singing *Tis dikaiosynis ilie noite* (The Sun of Justice) here.
- A fabulous recent performance at the Parthenon, by Maria Farandouri of Asma Asmaton (Song of songs) with English subtitles: The Ballad of Mauthausen *[Lyrics Iakovos Kambanellis, Music Mikis Theodorakis]*

BOOK REVIEWS



Save Our Sons Women, dissent and conscription during the Vietnam War
Carolyn Collins.
Monash University Publishing 2021 PB 160pp $34.95
Reviewed by Kathy Gollan (ex ABC Radio National)

For a decade on from the mid 60s, the Vietnam War and conscription dominated Australian political life and cast a shadow over the lives of young men. Many of them were radicalised as a consequence – and so were their mothers. The front cover of *Save our Sons: Women, dissent and conscription during the Vietnam War* is a photo of SOS demonstrators walking down a main street with their banner, their sensible shoes and large black handbags, exuding respectability. And yet, as Carolyn Collins shows in this engaging and comprehensive history, Save Our Sons was a politically sophisticated movement that engaged in daring, innovative protests involving a wide cross-section of women. The National Service Scheme was not unpopular with the Australian public, but the 1964 decision to send conscripts overseas to fight was – and in the case of women, they were two to one against it.

Collins makes judicious use of newsletters and interviews – as well as ASIO records – to tell the story. In May 1965 nine women met in Sydney to set up an organisation of *Save Our Sons* to oppose conscription and it quickly spread to other cities. The women came from a range of backgrounds: there were Quaker pacifists, but there were also those who opposed conscription, but not the war. Some had strong working-class and union roots, some were communists, and others were Liberal voters. ASIO archives show that even that organisation – obsessed as it was with tracking communist influence – had difficulty pigeonholing the women of SOS. Respectability was in fact a carefully curated image. The group's aim was limited to that of preventing conscripts being sent to fight overseas. None of the long-term peace activists who were part of the founding group took a public role initially, in order to avoid the taint of communism. It worked, and many conservative women joined and had their first experience of direct action through SOS:

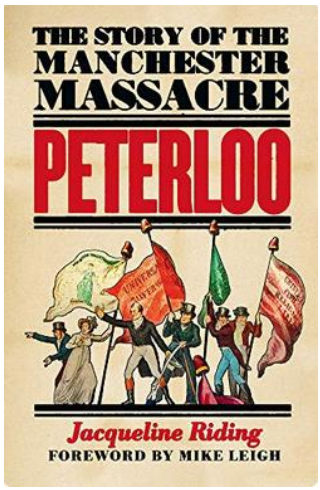
The signature action of SOS was the silent vigil, with its emphasis on orderly, quiet and dignified behaviour. Brisbane SOS held 30 silent vigils in six months, the participants wearing their slogans on their clothes – holding placards was illegal in Queensland! At every intake of conscripts they were there at the army barracks, often dressed in black, silently handing out leaflets that explained alternatives to conscription. After the 1966 federal election in which the Coalition was returned with a record majority, SOS changed its tactics. Petitions, vigils, letter writing and lobbying were joined by more courageous and inventive forms of protest. A group of women hijacked the spotlight at the 1967 Melbourne Cup with miniskirts and capes with messages including 'Gamble On Horses Not With Lives'. In New South Wales, an anti-conscription caravan toured country towns, facing disruption and intimidation from the RSL. In 1970 SOS members were closely involved in organising the first and second Moratoriums against the war, with SOS convenor Jean McLean being the deputy chair of the Victorian Moratorium committee. Having worked only with other women up till then, they were dismayed by the male organisers' chauvinism.

By 1971 they were still no closer to their goal. The SOS newsletters became more strident – there were discussions about the pros and cons of non-violent civil disobedience, to the consternation of the more conservative members. Just before Easter of that year, five SOS women were arrested and jailed for 14 days for 'wilful trespass' following a sit-in outside the Department of Labour and National Service office. The jailing of the 'Fairlea Five', as they became known, is considered by some to have been pivotal in galvanising

opposition to the war. Continual protests outside the jail brought the anti-conscription campaign new attention and led to new protests. The election of the Whitlam government signalled an end to conscription in 1973 and SOS branches around the country rolled up their banners.

The final chapter of *Save Our Sons* considers the influence of the organisation across many fronts. It gave financial and practical support to draft dodgers, helping establish a series of safe houses to hide them from the authorities. It brought middle-class women out of their houses and onto the streets, changing their lives for ever. The women of SOS were criticised and patronised – younger women found their maternal rhetoric old-fashioned. But they achieved their aim, and they largely avoided the bitter infighting of other anti-war groups. Most women involved with Save Our Sons were driven simply by the desire to right a fundamental wrong. This important history does full justice to a small but mighty organisation and its dedicated members.

The booklet ***Moratorium Now! Memories of protest against the Vietnam War in South*** **Australia** is a record of the conference on the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War Moratorium campaign in South Australia held at the Box Factory on Sunday 20th September 2020. Limited copies ($15) are available at Labour History Society meetings.



***Peterloo – the story of the Manchester Massacre*, Jacqueline Riding**

Apollo Books; first published 2018; 384 pages

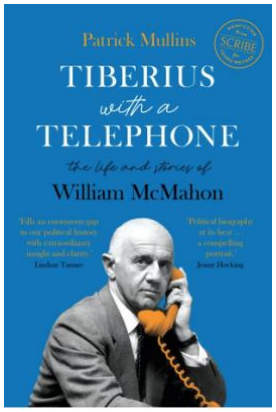
Reviewer: Doug Melvin – LHS(SA) member

On 16 August 1819, a peaceful crowd of some 60,000 gathered in St Peter's Field in Manchester to protest against high unemployment and low wages (following the end of the Napoleonic wars, and intensified by high food prices as a result of the Corn Laws); they also demanded manhood suffrage, coupled with reform to England's corrupt electoral system (the 'rotten borough' system ensured that more than half of the English MPs were returned by a total of just 154 voters). The massive but orderly gathering on St Peter's Fields was attacked by local yeomanry and British army regulars, many recently returned from the European wars ('Peterloo' being an ironic reference to the famous Waterloo battle in 1815) and at the day's end 15 were dead and 650 injured.

Jacqueline Riding's book (which Mike Leigh based his film *Peterloo* on) covers the horrific events of the massacre in great detail, as well as the political and economic background. What I found particularly interesting was the account of the growth of the cotton industry in Manchester, with the exploitation of workers (some as young as 8 years) and damage to the environment leading to all kinds of medical issues:

> *To quote Swiss industrialist Hans Escher in August 1814 '… in Manchester there is no sun and no dust. Here there is always a dense cloud of smoke to cover the sun while the light rain – which seldom lasts all day- turns the dust into a fine paste which makes it unnecessary to polish one's shoes" (pp23-24).*

The book also provides great detail on the surveillance networks the Government established to infiltrate the many democratic reform societies that had arisen in northern England at the time and outlines the laws that were established to smash them. Overall, I found Riding's book a very thorough and interesting analysis of the Peterloo massacre and an excellent complement to the visually powerful Mike Leigh film.



Tiberius with a Telephone: the life and stories of William McMahon

Patrick Mullins *Scribe Publications* 2018/2020

Reviewer: Daryl Regan – LHS(SA) member

At 635 pages (plus 140 pages of references) this book is daunting, especially being a biography of one of the most maligned prime minister in Australian history – scarcely remembered except for the stir about his wife's revealing dress at a 1971 White House State Dinner hosted by President Richard Nixon in 1971. Yet it is well worth the read - for its detailed account of Australian federal politics at the time, as well as for McMahon's 'backstory' which is probably more interesting than William McMahon himself. A virtual orphan (with an invalid mother and a busily absent father), slightly built, and with few social skills, the young McMahon learned to succeed by working extremely hard -a practice which he continued throughout his political career.

It was Gough Whitlam who called him "Tiberius with a Telephone", Tiberius Caesar Augustus being a great Roman general who came to be remembered as a reclusive, dark and sombre ruler. But while Tiberius never wanted to be the Emperor, for McMahon the desire to be Prime Minister was an overwhelming ambition. It was McMahon's Liberal colleagues who had to put up with his persistent telephone calls to advance his own cause, and he had little consideration for others unless it could be of value to him in his quest for the PM job. McMahon also had no sense of Cabinet confidentiality and there are many examples of him ringing journalists to disclose who said what at a Cabinet meeting.

Elected to Parliament in 1949, McMahon was a member of the Liberal Government in Australia until 1972 - his 21 years a remarkable achievement. McMahon served as Minister for the Navy and Air, Social Services, Labour and National Service, and Treasurer - and eventually attained the Holy Grail of Prime Ministership.

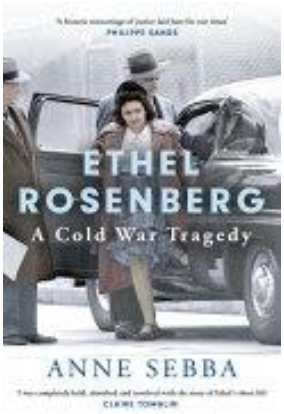
In his time as Labour and National Service Minister (1958 -1966) he clashed often with the very formidable Henry Bland, the then permanent head of the Department, who described McMahon as having "absolutely no feel for industrial Relations and he never understood them". The book also describes battles between the Government and the Waterside Worker's Federation of Australia (WWF), then led by the communist Jim Healy. The overriding concern for McMahon was to keep Industrial unrest to a minimum - yet he distrusted Unions and was not keen to use the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) as a conduit to the union movement. With the WWF lobbying for long service leave, Bland wanted to have a Commonwealth system which was less generous than the State scheme and also serve to discipline the WWF by having penalties for industrial action while 'winnowing' out older (and probably more truculent) workers into an "irregulars register". McMahon reluctantly agreed to these provisions for the Stevedoring Industry, but the WWF - appalled by the proposed penalty clauses - went on strike. However under Charlie Fitzgibbon (the new WWF leader after Jim Healy's death) together with Government propaganda on the evils of communism the new measures were accepted- a triumph for Bland, as well as an undeserved electoral benefit for McMahon. As PM, McMahon was also at odds with Bland over the removal of the historic marriage bar in the Commonwealth public service, firm in his belief that it could result in the "neglect of the children in favour of paid employment".

The book then takes the reader through McMahon's role as a (successful) Treasurer and, finally, as Prime Minister - thanks to the incompetence of John Gorton. As PM McMahon was hard-working and quite innovative – setting up the Department of the Environment, Aborigines and the Arts, the Australian Institute

of Marine Science, the Wool Corporation and the Henderson Commission into Poverty as well as increasing Commonwealth funding to education and childcare. While McMahon hated Gough Whitlam with a passion, McMahon saved most of his venom for the arch-protectionist John Mc Ewen who had stymied his previous attempts at becoming PM.

McMahon finally allowed his life and work to be published in the 1980's but the project was rejected by publishers, and potential editors found him impossible to collaborate with. David Bowman, a Fairfax journalist, eventually agreed to act as a ghost-writer based on McMahon's draft memoir - and 27 filing cabinets of documents from the National Library; Bowman eventually resigned the job (McMahon died soon afterwards).

Despite having no access to McMahon's family or his papers from the National Library, Paul Mullins' research has been exemplary. As writer Jenny Hocking comments on the book's back cover: "(His) skilful use of an innovative structure, and engaging biographical narrative shows a complete picture of McMahon for the first time. This is everything a political biography should be."



***Ethel Rosenberg: A Cold War Tragedy,* Anne Sebba, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, $32.99**

Why did an innocent woman choose to die with her husband, the spy? *Review by Phillip Deery* *The Age* August 20, 2021

The unsettling opening of Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* – "It was a queer, sultry summer, the summer they executed the Rosenbergs" – echoes the disturbing death of Ethel Rosenberg. At 8.08pm on June 19, 1953, Ethel was informed that her husband, Julius, had been pronounced dead minutes previously. The rabbi implored her, for the sake of her children, to recant and make a statement, any statement. She remained silent. Then she spoke: "I am ready." She was led to the white-walled death chamber and strapped to the same oak chair in which Julius had just been electrocuted. When the electrodes were attached, she stared defiantly into the faces of the guards. A leather mask was lowered over her face. At 8.11pm, the executioner sent 1800 electric volts through Ethel's body. But she died slowly. The doctors applied their stethoscopes and found her still alive. Two more currents of electricity were administered, which triggered a plume of smoke arising from her head. At 8.16pm she was dead.

Ethel Rosenberg was the only woman in American history to be executed for spying. The evidence against her was, at best, flimsy, and spousal knowledge of espionage was not in itself a crime. The chief assistant prosecutor, Roy Cohn, persuaded Ethel's brother, David Greenglass – whose trial testimony was, literally, lethal – to commit perjury. The FBI sought to use Ethel as a pawn (J Edgar Hoover used the word "lever") to force Julius to confess and to name accomplices. But she refused to buckle ("she called our bluff", stated the assistant attorney-general) and her stoicism and her silence sealed her fate.

The bigger story of the Rosenbergs' arrests, trials, appeals, world-wide campaigns for clemency, and the historical contexts of McCarthyism at home and the Korean War abroad, is well known. Bookshelves overflow with analyses of the case. So what does Anne Sebba, a British biographer, say that is new? In *Ethel Rosenberg: A Cold War Tragedy*, she disentangles Ethel from "the Rosenbergs" and, uniquely, enters her skull.

By tracing Ethel's short life, from a harsh and difficult upbringing by an unloving mother in New York's Lower East Side to her final heartbreaking "death house" letter scribbled to her two young sons only hours before execution, Sebba lays bare her many complexities: strong willed but emotionally fragile, independent but deeply anxious about motherhood. The result is a nuanced and empathetic portrait of an ordinary woman trapped by extraordinary circumstances. Although depicted publicly as impassive, cold, unfeminine and unmaternal, privately Ethel – as her prison letters to her husband, sons, lawyer, and psychiatrist clearly reveal – was intensely emotional: her love for Julius and concern for her children ("my brain reels picturing their terror") was passionate, palpable and overwhelming. In her three-year incarceration, two in solitary confinement, she oscillated between self-loathing, despair and depression, and a courageous determination not to yield, not to betray Julius, not to name names.

Until motherhood (Michael was born in 1943), Ethel was a committed communist (she helped organise a strike in 1935) and knew of Julius' wartime espionage activities. But awareness is not complicity. The top-secret *Venona decrypts* directly implicated Julius in espionage but not Ethel. Soviet codenames, indicative of active Soviet agents, were assigned to all members of Julius' spy ring, but not to Ethel. She was described in a Moscow cable as one who "does not work", where "work" refers to espionage. If her brother had not cut a deal and lied in court so that his wife could escape prosecution – which he admitted in 2001 – Ethel would have been spared the death sentence. But once sentenced, she had only a Hobson's choice: disavow Julius or accept death.

Yet, the question still lingers: if Ethel was innocent, how could she allow her children to become orphans? Sebba answers that Ethel was driven "by a sense of ethics and loyalty". Ethel's life of economic hardship, isolation from family, and recurring health problems steeled her. In her last letter, she wrote "I have no fear and no regrets". According to Sebba, Ethel's determination to forge her identity, based on her own moral standards, displayed "an extraordinary single-mindedness, a source of both strength and of her eventual destruction". Nonetheless, it remains difficult to understand how Ethel reconciled her moral compass with maternal devotion ("I love them so much"); her attempt in prison to "mother them from a distance"; or her nightmares, haunting her until death, after seven-year-old Michael uttered a long, anguished scream over the telephone when she told him she had been arrested and may not return home. In the end, Ethel faced an unimaginable dilemma and chose death with Julius over life without dignity or honour.

This immensely readable biography confirms that Ethel Rosenberg was a victim of a flagrant miscarriage of justice. It may fortify her sons' continued campaign to secure a presidential exoneration. Joe Biden, they hope, will be more sympathetic than Donald Trump.

Phillip Deery is Emeritus Professor of History at Victoria University, Melbourne

Listen to: *Reconsidering Ethel Rosenberg*: Philip Adams' interview with Anne Sebba on *Late Night Live*

Ethel and Julius Rosenberg sit in a police van after being convicted of espionage in 1951

Meanwhile in Adelaide, another (minor) espionage story – from a self-confessed spy:

The Little Sparrow - the ASIO spy inside the Communist Party

In the early 1950s an Adelaide housewife named Anne Neill made a life-changing decision: she joined the Communist Party of Australia. This leads her to travel behind the Iron Curtain to Stalinist Russia, and to become friends with notorious KGB spy Vladimir Petrov. But what did this extraordinary woman really believe in?

The Little Sparrow story begins over 60 years ago in Cold War era Adelaide. **To listen to this fascinating story follow this link click** here:

Interviewees: Emeritus Professor Phillip Deery, Victoria University; **Professor Sheila Fitzpatrick**, University of Sydney; ***Beryl Miller***, veteran Communist Party member in South Australia.

***Beryl Miller**
Born in Geelong in 1926 of English parents – WW1 veteran and shop assistant – Beryl grew up surrounded by discussions of socialism and opposition to war. She joined the Eureka Youth League at 16, the Labour Party at 20 and (disenchanted with the ALP) the Communist Party at 26. Becoming secretary of the Union of Australian Women at 35 Beryl campaigned for the rights of women, the welfare of children, and a world without war or nuclear weapons.

From *Movers and Shakers*, Jim Douglas (ed), SA Unions 2004 (NB: *free copies of the book are available from Unions SA, and meetings of the Labour History Society*)

RESEARCH REPORT

Australian POWs in the Miike mine – a forgotten story David Palmer - LHS(SA) member

"As we passed through the gates [on January 16, 1945] we saw a few Japanese soldiers grouped about a charcoal brazier in the open porch of a small building. ... It seemed that this was the largest prisoner-of-war camp in Kyushu, if not in Japan. ... The camp held four nationalities: English, American, Dutch and Australian. ... We were warned that our existence in and out of camp was governed by a multitude of rules and regulations. ... Whenever we met one of the Australians who had been in the camp before our arrival and worked in the mine, we asked the same questions but could never get an accurate picture of what the mine was like down below. We only learnt we'd 'work like slaves'." *Private Roy Whitecross, 8th Division, Australian Army*

Mitsui's Miike Coal Mine is World Heritage listed by UNESCO as one of Japan's "Sites of the Industrial Revolution." The Japanese government, however, has failed to tell the full story of this mine, instead promoting bland tourism. In World War II, Miike was Japan's largest coal mine, but also the location of the largest Allied POW camp in Japan. Korean and Chinese forced laborers also were used by Mitsui in the mine. The use of prisoners was nothing new, as Mitsui and other Japanese companies used Japanese convicts as workers in the early decades of the Meiji era. The role of Australian POWs in particular reveals that there was resistance inside Miike even at the height of abuse by Japanese wartime authorities. Japan has a responsibility under its UNESCO World Heritage agreement to tell the full history of this and other "Meiji Industrial Revolution" sites.

The story deals with what was Japan's largest coal mine, the Miike Mine in Omuta, Kyushu owned and run by Mitsui, one of the two largest *zaibatsu* during World War II - the other was Mitsubishi. Both these companies are still major world corporations, of course, and we know both of them well in Australia. The largest Allied POW camp in Japan was also at this location - Fukuoka 17. Mitsui, with the Japanese imperial government, used POWs as slave labor at the mine - these included 440 Australians, 20 of whom died there.

Japan now has a number World Heritage sites called "Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution," and the former Mitsui Miike Coal Mine is one of them. But Japan makes *no mention* of POWs, or Korean or Chinese forced laborers, there during World War II. The South Korean government has raised protests over how Japan refuses to tell the "full history" of these locations (a UNESCO document they agreed to says they would relate the "full story"). But the Japanese government won't budge. However, there are Japanese would like this to change, including my friends in Nagasaki who helped me get some of the materials I've used for research on this labour history. This is labour history – and it is Australian labour history.

Australia has a representative on the World Heritage Committee – meeting this month – with a four year term, but they haven't said a word on this, from what we know. While there has been lots of coverage of the Great Barrier Reef being endangered – also World Heritage listed – and justly covered, the media in Australia has totally ignored this story, as has the Morrison government. But the story is getting coverage in other countries, including the United States. Here is a link to one of the US news stories on the Japan "Meiji Industrial Revolution" sites and their failure to tell the full history.

David Palmer's full article is available online: "Japan's World Heritage Miike Coal Mine: Where prisoners-of-war worked 'like slaves'"

The Other 9/11: Chile's constitutional rewrite aims to extinguish the lingering legacy of the 1973 coup

Catherine Osborn, ***Latin America Brief*****,** September 10, 2021

One Way to End an Era

In the run-up to the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States this month, a leading Chilean university, the University of Concepción, held a series of panel discussion on their legacy. The program referred to the events as "the other Sept. 11." "Other" because, in Chile, Sept. 11 is best known as the date of the country's own national tragedy: the 1973 U.S.-backed coup against leftist President Salvador Allende that ushered in over 16 years of military rule.

The Nixon administration worked to help foment the coup as part of its broader Cold War efforts against real and perceived Soviet-friendly governments across the globe, including in many Latin American countries. In its wake, Washington supported the government of general-turned-dictator Augusto Pinochet, despite knowledge that his security forces had killed political opponents. By the Pinochet dictatorship's end in 1990, over 3,000 Chileans were dead or missing, and thousands more had gone into exile.

Even for today's Chileans, the Pinochet years loom large. That's because the economic and political rules codified in Chile's 1980 constitution remained in place long afterward, eventually becoming a target of mass demonstrations in October 2019. At the time, Chileans chanted that they were in the streets "not because of 30 pesos"—the price of a recent metro fare hike—"but because of 30 years."

Now, the momentum behind the 2019 protests has transformed into a full-blown constitutional rewrite—and many Chileans see a chance to turn a final page on their own Sept. 11. But stepping into a new era requires overcoming the hurdles of legislative design and earning public buy-in. In May, a 155-person assembly was elected to draft the new constitution. In July, they set to work. If the assembly jointly approves a draft, its fate will be decided in a final vote by all Chileans.

Solidifying social rights. The new Chilean Constitution could shift the government's responsibilities on social services. Under the current, Pinochet-era constitution, "the state has a subsidizing rather than a guaranteeing role" for rights such as health and education, Chilean journalist Beatriz Michell said in an interview with *Foreign Policy*.

Pinochet's constitution established a framework in which the state transferred significant amounts of money to private health and education providers while also offering free services in those areas. Critics say this system widened inequalities—worsening the quality of public provisions while driving many Chileans into debt to access the private sector. Indeed, objection to mounting student debt was a key issue in Chile's 2019 protests: That year, Chilean households held total debt loads that were equivalent, on average, to 75 percent of their annual disposable incomes.

A new constitution could stipulate social rights that require stronger government guarantees. Brazil took this approach on health care with its 1988 post-dictatorship constitution, which states that "health is a right of all and a duty of the state." This led to the creation of a no-fee, universal public health system modeled after Britain's National Health Service. Chile's Constituent Assembly appears to be moving in this direction: Among the guiding commissions it has elected since it began work in July is a commission for social, economic, and cultural rights.

Solidifying broader participation. Under Pinochet's legal code, some Senate seats were appointed rather than directly elected, and other deputies were chosen using a quasi-direct voting system that made it extremely difficult for small parties to gain seats. While those rules have since been abolished, other exclusionary parts of the constitution—such as its scant provisions for Chile's 10 officially recognized Indigenous groups—have not. The Constituent Assembly has an 11 percent quota for Indigenous members—who make up 13 percent of the country's population—and is headed by an Indigenous linguist, suggesting that this is likely to change. In addition, many assembly members—half of whom are women—are in favor of instituting gender parity quotas across different levels of government.

Demilitarization. During the 2019 demonstrations, Chile's national Carabineros police force unleashed brutal violence on protesters, including killings, torture, and rape. For many, the trauma recalled memories of the Pinochet dictatorship. A new motion inside the Constituent Assembly aims to demilitarize the police and introduce a focus on citizen policing. Proponents say that could help bring about a redesign of police training and, in turn, their role in society.

Ghosts of the past. Ivonne Domange, 71, a Chilean sociologist who fled to Ecuador for eight years after the 1973 coup, described the current constitutional process as “an open horizon” in an interview. After living through exile and fear, followed by the progress and disappointments of Chile’s democratic period, she said she welcomed the chance for a collective policy rethink, living “with tremendous hope.” The broad public debate surrounding Chile’s constitutional rewrite stands as an example for other countries grappling with the far-reaching legacies of national trauma. This includes the United States as it considers the legacy of the wars that followed 9/11. In fact, the two 9/11s are linked: The U.S. role in the 1973 coup helps explain why Chile and other Latin American countries were reluctant to embrace the U.S.-led military interventions at the turn of the century.

SPEAKERS CORNER

AUKUS’s nuclear submarines threaten global peace and Australia’s independence

IPAN The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network

The shocking announcement of a trilateral security partnership between the U.S., U.K. and Australia (AUKUS) which will be tied to Australia receiving nuclear submarines, is a blow to Australia’s independence and peace in the region. The security partnership, Aukus, was announced without any public scrutiny or engagement. While China was not mentioned in the announcement it is clear that this partnership is designed to confront and contain China, in a belligerent and dangerous manner. Australia’s receiving of a nuclear submarine fleet as part of Aukus will only cement Canberra’s subordination to Washington.

There are also serious practical considerations to having nuclear submarines that received no public consideration. Australia will be the only country that has nuclear submarines without nuclear weapons and a domestic nuclear industry. While Prime Minister Morrison has said the submarines will not necessitate the development of said industries – despite the Government’s close relationship to the pro-nuclear lobby – this only highlights our further dependence on, and integration into, the U.S.

Furthermore, this deal will likely see an end to the $90 billion contracts with the French company Naval Group, which marks one of the most egregious wastes of public funds. During an economic downturn and a pandemic spending on public healthcare, education and public services should be the priority, sinking billions into submarines that will only put Australia in danger is irresponsible.

> **IPAN spokesperson, Dr Vince Scappatura, said**: “Embracing Aukus means undermining Australia’s sovereign defence capabilities and contributing to further militarisation of the region. Australia should be working to reduce tensions and promote peaceful relations. Never has such a monumental decision been made with such little consultation and public engagement. We have only just withdrawn from Afghanistan, a generation-long invasion that is still causing untold devastation. Without taking a breath we have gone from following the U.S. into one catastrophe to committing ourselves to another.”

When will Australian Politicians listen to the public and learn from history?

Campaign for International Co-operation and Disarmament (CICD)

Less than a month after the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, US leaders began an all-out aerial assault against Afghanistan, the country supposedly protecting Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda. 9/11 was the perfect justification for US plans for the region.

Since feudal times land holding in Afghanistan had remained unchanged, with more than 75 percent of land owned by 3 percent of the rural population. In the mid-1960s, democraticrevolutionary elements formed the People's Democratic Party (PDP). In 1973, the king wasremoved and replaced by an oppressive, badly managed and unpopular government whichwas forced out in 1978.

The military officers who took charge invited the PDP to form a new government under theleadership of Noor Mohammed Taraki, a Marxist poet and novelist. Taraki legalized labour unions, and set up a minimum wage, a progressive income tax, a literacy campaign, and programs that gave ordinary people access to health care, housing,and public sanitation. Afghan women held government jobs—-in the 1980s, there were seven female members of parliament. Fifty percent of university students were women studying agriculture, engineering, and business. The Taraki government moved to eradicate opium cultivation, abolished debts owed by farmers and introduced land reforms. With a genuinely popular government, people lookedto the future with hope.

The feudal landlords opposed land reforms, while tribal leaders and fundamentalist mullahsvehemently opposed the government's dedication to gender equality and a right toeducation. Soon after the PDP came to power, the CIA, the Saudi government, and the Pakistani military, launched an intervention into Afghanistan on the side of landlord's reactionary tribal leaders, mullahs, and opium traffickers. In late 1979, the PDP government asked the Soviet Union, which supported their progressive changes, for help against the foreign funded and armed mujahideen (Islamic guerrilla fighters) and foreign mercenaries.

The Soviet intervention was used as an opportunity by the CIA to transform the tribal resistance into a jihad to expel the godless communists from Afghanistan. The United States and Saudi Arabia went on to spend about $40 billion on the war to destroy not build. The CIA and its allies recruited, supplied, and trained almost 100,000 radical mujahideen fighters from forty Muslim countries, which included a Saudi-born millionaire fundamentalistOsama bin Laden. The Soviets withdrew in 1989, after an agreement with the US that it would stop funding the Mujahedin.

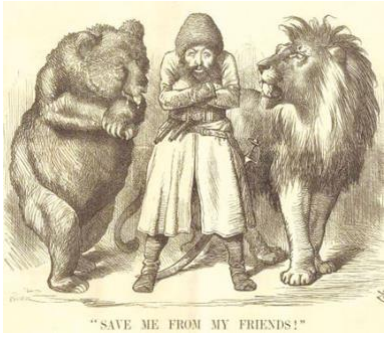
The US continued its support and two years later they overthrow the progressive government of Afghanistan. The new rulers of the country operated as gangsters looking for income, the tribes ordered farmers to plant opium poppy. The Pakistani ISI, a close partner with the CIA, set up heroinlaboratories. Within two years of the CIA's arrival, the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderland became the biggest producer of heroin in the world. The Taliban promised to end the mujahideen factional fighting and violence. But they wenton to impose an even stricter interpretation of Islamic law than that used by most of the Kabul clergy.

Before 9/11, leaders in Washington got along famously with the Taliban. As recently as 1999, the US was paying the entire annual salary of every Taliban government official. While claiming to fight terrorism, US leaders and allies like Australia have other reasons for plunging deeper into Afghanistan. Because it was part of the Central Asian region whichis rich in oil and gas reserves. A decade before 9/11, US policy makers were contemplatinga military presence in Central Asia.

US intervention in Afghanistan has proven not much different from intervention in Iran, Iraq,Libya, Syria and elsewhere. It had the same intent of preventing egalitarian social change, and the same effect of overthrowing an economically reformist government. In all these instances, the intervention brought backward elements in that have corruptly dominated and ruined the economy and destroyed innocent lives. Is Australia going to follow the US to another war when asked? It is time for Australia to have an independent foreign policy.

Another view:
Communism – Afghan-style

from *New Internationalist*



On 27 April 1978 Daoud was overthrown and killed in a communist coup (the Sawr Revolution) led by Afghanistan's People's Democratic Party (PDPA). Internal conflict soon split the party. The leaders of one faction – Parcham ('banner') – were expelled while the other faction, the Khalq ('the masses'), headed by Noor Mohammed Taraki, took power. The latter attacked Islam, ruled by decree and enjoyed little popular support. Radical reforms sparked local rebellions and army insurrections; troops defected to resistance groups. The USSR increased aid to Taraki's regime; the US, meanwhile, actively supported resistance groups. Although urged by the Soviets to modify its unpopular policies, the Taraki regime refused. Fearing the US would take advantage of mounting chaos, USSR President Breshnev sent in troops in December 1979. He believed Soviet troops would be able to withdraw after six months.

Before you go… A blog from Brian Abbey, LHS(SA) member, September 24, 2021

Political crimes and the death of democracy?

The Morrison Government has set the pace in making corruption and deceit in government in all its major forms a common and supposedly acceptable - or at least unpunishable - practice in the way it conducts business on our behalf. When crime - recognisable as such whether declared or not - is clearly accepted in practice by bodies supposed to detect and defeat it, it spreads - slowly at first and then stands up unashamed, well on its way to becoming the expected norm.

Let's state the obvious, because it needs doing: political crime, and breaches of long-established custom and boundaries, constitute a pandemic that nobody seems to have recognised as such. No borders have been closed; nobody is required to make themselves and their activities more clearly traceable; no new punishments have been legislated; no extra police or detective squads have been mobilised; no daily reports are issued at media briefings; and no up-to-date statistical evidence or maps of where outbreaks have occurred are being displayed on big screens as part of each TV news bulletin. And yet it is spreading, and imposing huge costs that will be felt long into the future.

Why is it so? And why do we not seem to care? Why are the media's reports of outbreaks of political crime, not hot items at the head of the news bulletin? Yes, it is sad, very sad, that you can't go interstate to see your Mum when she is ill. It must hurt to have to wave to your Dad through the closed windows of his nursing home's dementia ward..... yes, a real shame. But I haven't seen any evidence of comparable sadness or sense of loss/outrage at the news that state and federal politicians have recently taken billions of our tax-harvested dollars and given most of them as free, non-reportable, unaccountable, non-returnable gifts to their big business pals, their favourite local bowls club or bunch of pistol-shooters, and quite often, directly or indirectly, to themselves.

Just for starters, consider the following surprisingly brazen play by SA's normally invisible governing body: South Australia's corruption watchdog ICAC just had her powers slashed in sweeping legislative changes passed yesterday, ***The Advertiser*** ($) reports. Now SA's Independent Commissioner Against Corruption (ICAC), **Ann Vanstone**, can only investigate corruption - and not misconduct or maladministration. So what does it mean? Vanstone says politicians suddenly face much less scrutiny from the watchdog, and the parts of her job dedicated to prevention and education will likely disappear. Indeed Vanstone indicated to **ABC** she might quit her post if this happened, asking "what's the point of the ICAC" then?

The unanimous legislation was dedicated to a former police officer **Doug Barr**, who took his own life while awaiting the result of an ICAC investigation that ultimately cleared him. It also comes in the wake of a SA government scandal that saw a mass data harvest of website visitors via at least 100 government website links, as **ABC** reported. But the bill has been slammed as a massive conflict of interest - Former Liberal turned independent **Troy Bell** and Liberal **Fraser Ellis** both face charges following ICAC investigations - and yet both MPs voted to pass the legislation limiting its power.

Although it needs a far more careful explanation/exploration, the above is one of the reasons I will no longer go even halfway towards politely accepting the description of Australia as a functioning democracy. I don't and you don't live in a democracy that deserves the name. A key consequence is this: democracy legitimised certain oppositional measures and forbids going beyond those limits. When democracy dies those borders die with it. What follows is usually very ugly, and damages all concerned. Yes, I know: in real life, ideals are rarely fully achieved. That much, I accept, might as well be accepted as inevitable. But they don't have to be ignored or abandoned, whether brazenly or little by little.

Cheers, Brian