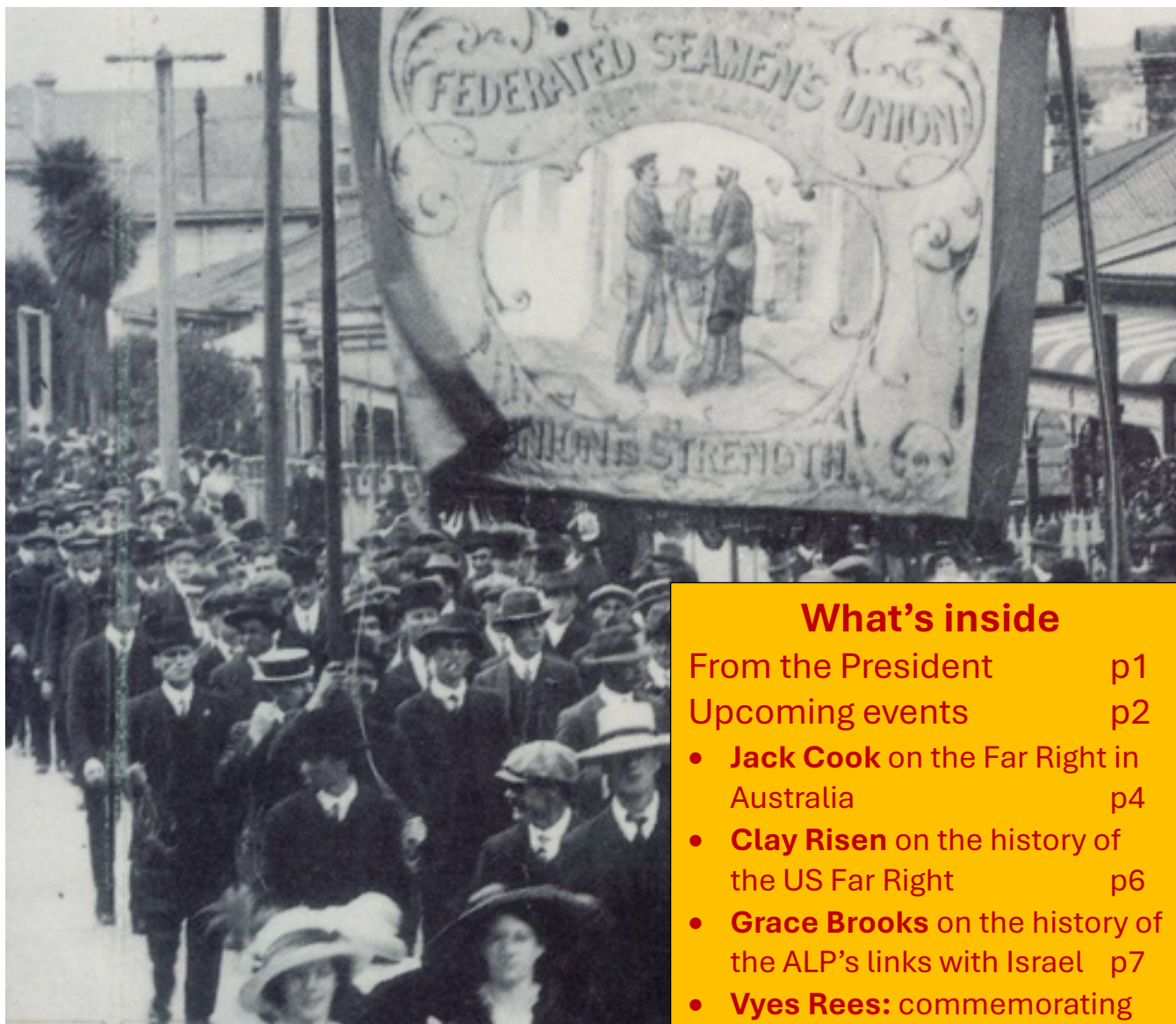


# LABOUR HISTORY NEWS

LABOUR HISTORY SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA SPRING 2024



## The Maritime Strike Aug-Sept 1890

*The largest strike in pre-Federation Australia began when shipowners objected to the Mercantile Marine Officers' Association's affiliation with the Melbourne Trades Hall Council. At the same time, the Shearers' Union was campaigning to protect working conditions in its industry through a boycott of wool produced by non-unionists. The Shearers asked maritime and dock workers not to handle wool that was shorn by non-union labour, merging the disputes into one. The Employers' Union refused to negotiate, leading to an elongated and bitter dispute involving around 50,000 workers. Strikers were prosecuted under long-disused provisions in the anti-union Masters and Servants Act and 'special constables' were enrolled to police the strikers' actions. This strike is one of the major reasons for the founding of the Labor Party. [ACTU Institute](#)*

## What's inside

- From the President p1
- Upcoming events p2
- **Jack Cook** on the Far Right in Australia p4
- **Clay Risen** on the history of the US Far Right p6
- **Grace Brooks** on the history of the ALP's links with Israel p7
- **Vyes Rees:** commemorating feminists with a racist tinge p12
- **Carol Johnson:** the Albanese government is in trouble p12
- **Don Sutherland:** the CFMEU in crisis p14
- **Celeste Liddle** on the Voice referendum – a year after p16
- **Sam Bradbrook** revisits the *Robe Walk* p18
- **Doug Melvin** reviews Svetlana Alexievich's *Secondhand Time-the last of the Soviets* p19

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Following my last two years as Vice-President of the LHSSA, I'm looking forward to building on the good work of our Executive Committee and the Society's members as President. When seeking support for this position I told members that if elected I'd be collegial, transparent and democratic. What is needed for Labour History to have a strong future is teamwork with the President working cooperatively with the Executive on behalf of all members. The new Executive of 7 elected at the AGM resulted in a more balanced committee, which now includes three women (Lyn, Vini and Roz) and two new younger members (Nix and Liam).

An important focus for the Executive is to make sure our general meetings are well publicised because they are fundamental to our community profile and membership growth. I am pleased to report that our two most recent general meetings have attracted a good crowd – more than 40 attended at both the celebration of the 140th anniversary of the United Trades and Labour Council (now called SA Unions) held on 16 June) and also the panel discussion on the Rise of the Far Right on 18 August. The Executive is currently considering 2025 general meeting options.

**Ron Slee**



*The Australian Society for the Study of Labour History is a non-profit organisation, founded in 1961 to study “the working class situation ... and social history in the fullest sense”. The Society encourages teaching and research in labour history and the preservation of the records of working people and the labour movement. It desires to make history a vital part of popular consciousness and a matter for reflection and debate.*

*The Society relies on the passion and energies of its members and has six branches across Australia. Each holds events and documents their region's history, commemorating the long activist tradition of workers in Australia and the world. We would love you to join us. [Here, you can read more about who we are and what we do.](#)*

(from the Society website)

***The South Australia branch of the Australian Society holds public meetings bi-monthly at 2pm on Sundays at the Box Factory, Regent Street South, CBD. At these meetings we present speakers and panel forums on a range of labour history topics and perspectives and generate robust debate and engagement with our members.***

**At its first meeting on 11 September the new executive committee co-opted three extra members, each with longstanding expertise: Ralph Clarke, Doug Melvin & Greg Stevens.**

**The committee also made the following appointments for 2024-25:**

**Vice-Presidents: Vini Ciccarello & Jim Phillips**

**Secretary: Lyn Longo**

**Treasurer: Kevin Kaeding**

**Public Officer: Greg Stevens**

**SA Branch Representative on National Executive: Lyn Longo**

**Trade Unions Liaison Officer: Doug Melvin**

**Newsletter Editorial Collective: Ron Slee, Ken Bridge & Liam Horwood**

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## UNION

The Mercury Cinema  
13 Morphett St, City West-End.

3:00pm Saturday 26 October  
Tickets - \$25 (\$20 concession)



**The 'David and Goliath' story of a fired Amazon worker daring to take on the multi-national, fighting for workers' rights**

*Union* is a compelling and timely documentary that takes viewers inside the bold attempt to unionize Amazon, one of the world's most powerful corporations. Directed by Stephen Maing and Brett Story, the film follows Chris, a former Amazon worker who, after being unjustly fired, decides to fight back. Gathering a group of fellow ex- and current employees who've endured similar treatment or are fed up with the gruelling

conditions, Chris leads the charge to create a union despite Amazon's relentless efforts to stop them. Winner of the Sundance U.S. Documentary Special Jury Award for Art of Change, *Union* offers an eye-opening look at the determination and courage required to challenge a corporate giant. Through hidden cameras and candid interviews, the film reveals the harsh realities inside Amazon and the uphill battle faced by those seeking change. Yet, the ultimate success of the union hinges on its ability to remain strong and not implode from within, a challenge as daunting as the corporate fight itself.

# CAMPUS BATTLE

**Rocks hurled  
as 70 police  
called to Uni.**



## **Next General Meeting of the LHSSA**

The Box Factory  
Regent Street South, City East-End.  
2:00pm Sunday 1 December.

### **Nix Herriot will speak on the 1974 student occupation of Flinders University Registry**

Nix's History Honours thesis was an oral history of the occupation, and **Andrew McHugh**, one of the participants, will also speak. 2024 is the 50th anniversary of the occupation which has been called the heyday of student radicalism in SA.

*At the conclusion of this presentation at 3.30pm on Sunday 1 December, LHSSA will hold a special general meeting to consider 5 amendments to its Constitution. Financial members will get a copy of the proposed amendments at least 21 days beforehand.*



## UNVEILING OF THE MEMORIAL AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE (SPANISH CIVIL WAR) COMMITTEE INC.

5:00 pm Wednesday 13 November 2024.  
Victorian Trades Hall Courtyard  
54 Victoria Street, Carlton, Melbourne

The Victorian Trades Union Choir will sing songs that were sung by the International Brigades and others during the Spanish Civil War

Drinks and finger food supplied  
**RSVP essential** – please contact Trevor Dobbyn on 0408 121 934 or at [dobhin@bigpond.com](mailto:dobhin@bigpond.com)

## TAKE ACTION AGAINST AUKUS

26.10.2024



Help develop actionable strategies for our community to oppose **AUKUS** & the radioactive waste it brings

Hear from speakers including  
Tammy Franks Jo Vallentine  
Rex Patrick Michael Williss  
Al Rainnie Amanda Ruler  
WAWAN

KEEP PORT ADELAIDE NUCLEAR  
PORT ADELAIDE NUCLEAR FREE  
ADELAIDE NUCLEAR FREE KEEP PORT  
NUCLEAR FREE KEEP PORT ADELA  
FREE KEEP PORT ADELAIDE NUC  
PORT ADELAIDE NUCLEAR FREE  
ADELAIDE NUCLEAR FREE KEEP P  
NUCLEAR FREE KEEP PORT ADEL

2PM SAT 26 OCT  
ST BEDES COMMUNITY HALL  
200 MILITARY ROAD SEMAPHORE



Mary Smith (above) was a “knocker-upper” who earned sixpence a week shooting dried peas at windows to wake people up for work (East London, 1930s). In [Ferryhill](#), County Durham, miners' houses had slate boards set into their outside walls onto which the miners would write their shift details in chalk so that the colliery-employed knocker-up could wake them at the correct time. These boards were known as “knocky-up boards” or “wake-up slates”. Generally, the job was done by elderly men and pregnant women but sometimes police constables supplemented their pay by performing the task during [early morning patrols](#).



# THE RESURGENCE OF THE FAR-RIGHT IN AUSTRALIA

BY JACK COOK

*This article is from Jack Cook's talk at the seminar at the LHSSA General Meeting held on 18 August 2024. An article on the Australian League of Rights by **Richard Stone** (who also spoke at the seminar) was published in the **LHSSA Winter 2024 Newsletter***

Internationally the Far-Right has been gaining influence for decades, with strong Far-Right parties in France, Germany, Britain, the UAS, Spain Denmark, Norway, Finland and Austria – as well as actual political control in Israel, Netherlands, Russia, Argentina, Turkey, Hungary, Sweden, Switzerland and the Philippines (the good news is that two countries, Poland and Brazil, have recently voted out Far-Right governments). Meanwhile in Australia, the Far-Right (remembered for De Groot's New Guard in the 1930s) has become active again.

**The Far Right in Australian politics** had a shaky re-start. Liberal Senator Cory Bernardi founded the Conservative Leadership Foundation in 2009, and in 2017 left the Liberal Party to

set up the Australian Conservatives Party, However after its disastrous results in the 2019 federal election, Bernardi immediately deregistered the Australian Conservatives Party and resigned from the Senate the following year. (*Wikipedia*)

However at the first Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC-Aust) - also held in 2019 - its powerful US backers [[the American Conservative Union](#)] announced their commitment to making the event a



*“multi-year, forever-type project” aimed at galvanising the right wing of Australian Politics’.* The guest speaker list for the Sydney event included Brexit campaigner Nigel Farage, NSW One Nation politician Mark Latham and former Australian prime minister Tony Abbott. One of the main local backers of the 2019 CPAC conference was the newly established organisation *Advance Australia* (later notorious for its promotion of the NO vote in the recent referendum on indigenous representation) with personnel and/or ideological links to a number of prominent right wing entities in Australia and overseas: *“The Centre for Independent Studies, the Institute of Public Affairs, LibertyWorks, the Bennelong Society (now defunct) and the [US-based] Conservative Political Action Conference all of which are integrated with the global Atlas Network, “an umbrella organisation coordinating 515 ‘public policy research institutes’ across ninety-nine countries.” (Tim Rowse, Inside Story 29 June 2024)*

Meanwhile, **outside of public politics** in Australia there has been an alarming level of local infiltration by with extremist Far Right groups:

*“Organisationally, ties between Australian and international right-wing extremist movements have resulted in the establishment of local franchises of international right-wing extremist groups. This includes, for example, the founding of Australian branches of violent street-level organisations like the Proud Boys, proscribed by the Canadian government in 2021, and the Finnish anti-immigration vigilante organisation, the Soldiers of Odin, which also emerged in Australia in 2016. Similarly, international neo-Nazi skinhead groups such as Blood and Honour and Hammerskins (known as the Southern Cross Hammerskins in Australia. Which have been linked to multiple violent crimes have been active in Australia since the 1990’s. Most alarmingly, in January 2019 the formation of an Australian branch of the neo-Nazi terrorist organisation, The Base, was announced”. Submission 18 on Right wing extremist movements in Australia submitted to the Enquiry Conducted by the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2024.*

The Far Right threat is increased by fears of **social and environmental disasters**. Currently there are constant threats of a cost of living crisis, a continuing housing crisis, an accelerating climate crisis and a new global financial crisis bigger than the one in 2008.-With soaring temperatures, rising unemployment and a worsening financial crisis, growing social unrest, economic insecurity, fear, and the prospect of escalating



Members of the National Socialist Network performing a Nazi salute, March 2023

wars, plus Coalition scare campaigns, society will be tested as never before. We could be heading in that direction. If so, the Far-Right will seize the opportunity as they did in the 1920s and 30s in Europe recruit members, build their organisations and move us to a new Dark Age.

Moreover, the Far Right threat can be intensified by the development of **new technology (AI)**, especially in the context of elections and the overall political system. USA professor Oren Etzioni a world leading expert on AI his been involved in AI research for more than 30 years recently said this about the coming US Presidential elections:

*The fabricated images, videos and audio clips known as deepfakes have started making their way into experimental presidential campaign ads. more sinister versions could easily spread without labels and fool people days before an election. I expect a tsunami of misinformation, “he said “I hope to be proven wrong. But the ingredients are there, and I am terrified” Oren Etzioni and others have developed ways of detecting what is a “Deepfake”.*

[ABC News Dec 2023](#)

**Jack Cook reports that An Anti-Far-Right group has been formed, the Democracy Alliance Australia (DAA).** Its values, aims & objectives are as follows.

- Identify Far-Right Groups.
- Monitor Far-Right Actions and Statements.
- Work collectively for a Fair, Equitable and Safe Society.
- Promote Transparency, Equity, and Human Rights.

To date the group has conducted 5 workshop meetings. Among other things, it will be working to expose the Coalitions Fascist policies in the run up to the coming Federal elections. **For more information contact Jack Cook (acting convenor) - [jmcook@esc.net.au](mailto:jmcook@esc.net.au)**



# WHAT'S SO NEW ABOUT THE 'NEW RIGHT'? CLAY RISEN

**JD Vance and his allies represent a mind-set that dates back to the McCarthy era and the dawn of the Cold War.**

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**Published in New York Times, 10 Aug 2024**

*This is an extract only - click [here](#) for the full article behind the NY Times paywall.*

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Over the last few years, a loose coalition of conservative thinkers, journalists, publications and think tanks have emerged under the banner of the New Right. With Senator JD Vance, Donald Trump's running mate, as its flag-bearer, this still-disparate group has been hailed as the intellectual heft behind the MAGA movement, and even as the future of American conservatism. Its very name declares a radical break with the Republican past — “very nascent, very bleeding edge,” is how Vivek Ramaswamy, a former presidential candidate, [described it](#). But how new is the New Right? It is risky to ascribe

coherence to a grouping like this, especially when its ranks range from the relatively buttoned-up Vance and his Senate colleague Josh Hawley to a ragtag assortment of self-described neo-monarchists, technolibertarians and right-wing Marxists.

Still, there are some unifying features. At the heart of the New Right is a belief that most of what ails America can be blamed on a liberal elite that has burrowed into the federal government, the news media, Hollywood, big business and higher education — what Vance calls “the regime,” and Curtis Yarvin, one of his New Right influences, calls “the Cathedral.” The New Right's position goes beyond rhetorical populism about out-of-touch bureaucrats: To them, liberalism is actively hurting the country, funneling fortunes from hard-working Americans into Washington and Wall Street and then casting any criticism as racist or fascist.

In contrast, the New Right posits a nationalistic nostalgia for a small-town America of decentralized government — a “[front porch republic](#),” in the words of another Vance influencer, Patrick Deneen of the University of Notre Dame — in which “good” jobs are available to all and faith is the cornerstone of society. “If conservatives care about healthy towns and schools and churches, as they always say they do, they should support the kind of work and wages that nourish those institutions and make them possible,” [Hawley wrote earlier this year in Compact](#), a leading New Right outlet. Achieving that end involves paring back a long list of longstanding policies embraced by establishment politicians from both parties — the New Right would cease military aid to Ukraine, slash immigration numbers and jack up tariffs.

On the surface, much of this does seem new, inasmuch as it breaks with recent Republican Party orthodoxy. But pull back far enough and the newness is less apparent. “The right-wing populism that’s gotten such a strong foothold in Trump’s Republican Party has a long lineage,” said David Greenberg, a professor of history at Rutgers University. “In the early 20th century, there was a similar rural backlash against the changes in society that were making America more centralized, urban, cosmopolitan and interconnected with the world.” That backlash reared up against the New Deal and again during the Red Scare of the 1950s. It fueled the Buchananite revolt of the early 1990s. In fact, rather than representing anything fundamentally different, the New Right is better understood as a persistent, if not always powerful, tendency within the Republican Party, pushing back repeatedly against liberals and establishment conservatives. Dormant for decades, it has returned in the form of JD Vance — along with a circle of like-minded figures who are poised to join him in a second Trump administration.



Senator Penny Wong and Israeli President Isaac Herzog in 2024

## THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY HAS ALWAYS BEEN LOYAL TO ISRAEL

GRACE BROOKS (UWA academic)

JACOBIN, OCT 2024

When Israel launched its campaign of ethnic cleansing in Gaza last year, hundreds of thousands of Australians who support the Palestinian cause organized and attended protests, including many rank-and-file Australian Labor Party (ALP) [members](#). Labor prime minister Anthony Albanese did not join them. Instead, he quickly affirmed Australia’s solidarity with Israel. In an October 11 [parliamentary speech](#), Labor foreign minister Penny Wong bolstered these sentiments, noting that in 1947, under Labor prime minister Ben Chifley, Australia was the first country to vote in favor of the UN plan to partition Palestine and formally recognize Israel. Citing Herbert “Doc” Evatt, Chifley’s foreign minister, Wong stated that “we remain as steadfast

and unwavering as ever in our support for Israel.”

This response would be unremarkable for a prime minister or foreign minister from Labor’s right, and as Wong noted, Labor’s support for Israel is in keeping with the party’s record. However, both Albanese and Wong hail from the Labor Left. Indeed, Albanese cofounded the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine and, early in his political career, spoke at pro-Palestine [rallies](#). Given this seeming paradox — and the fact that Labor’s stance is out of step with many of its rank-and-file members and voters — it’s necessary to explain the party’s support for Israel.

### EXPLANATIONS

Perhaps the most popular theory blames Labor’s

right-wing position on the [Israel lobby](#), in particular on the Australia Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC). And it's true that the AIJAC has steadily increased its lobbying efforts, which include taking MPs and journalists on [sponsored trips](#) to Israel and running [smear campaigns](#) against politicians who criticize Israeli policy. However, lobbying alone cannot explain Labor's position. To begin with, while there are plenty of influential supporters of Israel in Australia, there is no local equivalent to the evangelical Christian Zionist movement, which now comprises the [largest](#) pro-Israel lobby group in the United States. And on a broader level, exclusively blaming the Israel lobby implicitly absolves Labor of responsibility. Rather, we need to explain why pro-Israel lobby groups have found a sympathetic ear in Labor. Exclusively blaming the Israel lobby implicitly absolves Labor of responsibility.

Alternately, many on the Left argue that Labor's pro-Israel position stems from the fact that both Australia and Israel, as settler-colonial states, share historical and cultural affinities. As journalist [Antony Loewenstein](#) argues, both nations were founded by dispossessing indigenous populations that they have continued to oppress. However true this may be, it misses important differences between Australian and Israeli colonialism. While both countries are settler-colonies, the British who colonized Australia never claimed they were returning to their historic homeland. Further, both countries have different relationships with the indigenous peoples whom they displaced.

British colonizers were more "[successful](#)" than their Zionist counterparts in reducing the land's indigenous people to a tiny minority. As a consequence, twentieth-century Australian governments were able to eventually grant Aboriginal people civil and political rights without risking radical change. The Zionist settler-colonial process, by contrast, did not lead to a Jewish majority in historic Palestine. Taken together, Israel and the occupied territories are home to as [many](#) Palestinians as Israeli Jews. Consequently, to maintain itself as a Jewish state, Israel has to restrict the democratic rights of Palestinians via a system of apartheid.

A more plausible analysis of Labor's stance points to Australia's status as a "[sub-imperial power](#)." In this view, Australia trades its sovereignty and foreign policy independence to an imperial power — first Britain and then the United States — in return for the political-economic benefits of being in the [imperial core](#). This approach helps because it proceeds from the class interests of Australia's rulers and explains how Australia has made its foreign policy interoperable with US policy, resulting in support for Israel. However, this is only a starting point for explaining Labor's position. The danger of a broad-brushstroke analysis is that it misses key moments — such as the Yom Kippur War of 1973 — when Labor *did* assert a more independent and progressive foreign policy. Then Labor prime minister Gough Whitlam

[criticized](#) US arms shipments to Israel while refusing to publicly condemn Syria or Egypt for their attacks on Israel. To understand how this happened and how the Labor Party, its Left included, reverted to a staunch pro-Israel position under Bob Hawke, it's necessary to look at the history of Labor's support for Israel.

## **LABOR AND ISRAEL'S FOUNDING**

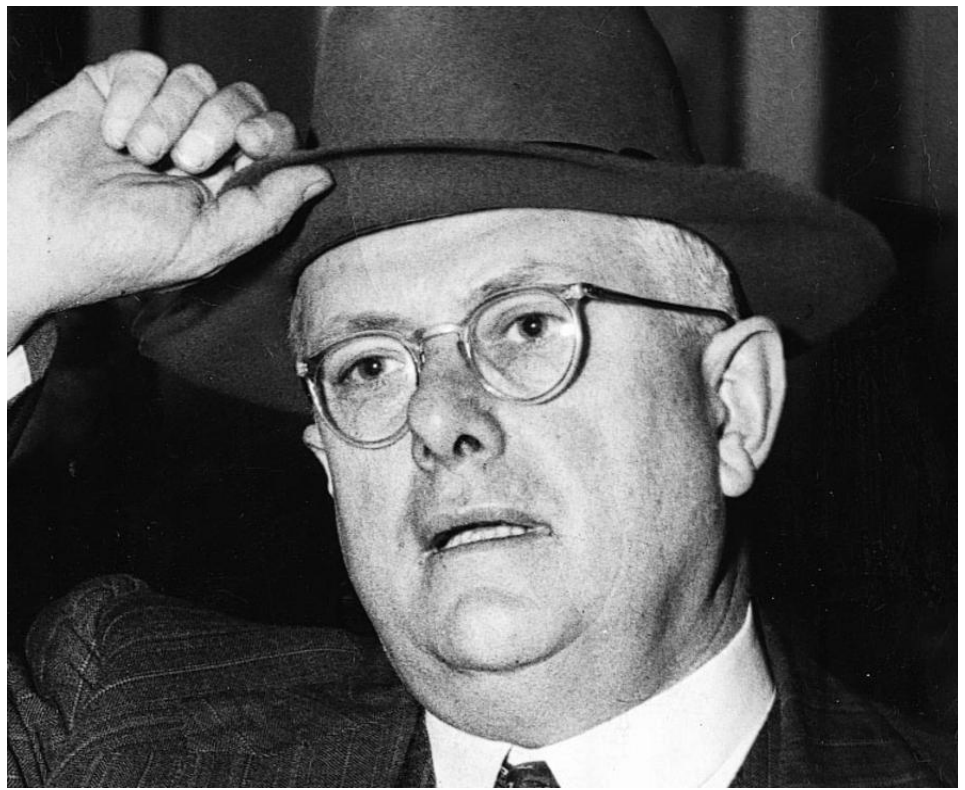
In 1948, the Australian left almost universally supported the establishment of Israel, thanks to the efforts of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, and the Labor Party. The CPA's policy echoed that of the USSR, while the ALP's policy evolved in step with other social democratic parties worldwide and in response to pressure from progressive Zionist campaigning.

Indeed, the ALP is notable because of the outsized role it played in drumming up support for the 1947 United Nations (UN) Partition Plan that allotted most of British Mandate Palestine to the soon-to-be-formed state of Israel. At the time, this was somewhat unexpected. Largely out of fidelity to Britain, Labor prime ministers John Curtin and Chifley had been lukewarm toward Zionism and the end of the British Mandate in Palestine. Yet by 1947, the British Empire was transforming into the Commonwealth and Cold War concerns were ascendant. Doc Evatt — Curtin and Chifley's minister for external affairs from 1941 to 1949 — understood this and intervened to rally Labor behind the Zionist cause.

Evatt's role in the UN was crucial on two counts. First, in May 1947, on Evatt's initiative, the Australian delegation to the UN successfully moved to establish the UN Committee on Palestine. The committee voted in favor of partition, strongly influencing the later UN General Assembly vote. Second, Evatt himself chaired the Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian Question, appointed by the General Assembly to develop recommendations on Palestine. This committee also recommended partition.

Although the United States also [supported](#) partition and supplied arms to Zionist forces during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Evatt was not acting on America's urging. As a committed liberal internationalist, Evatt was suspicious of American postwar ambitions, especially in the Pacific. Rather, his position reflected the consensus on the Australian left, which was shaped by progressive Zionist campaign groups. The most influential of these was the Melbourne Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, a coalition of Zionist social democrats, communists, and liberals.

In the late 1940s, the council stepped up its campaign to win the Australian left over to a pro-Israel position. For example, the council organized a [petition](#) demanding that Australia recognize Israel, which was signed by prominent left-wing figures including the leftist intellectual Brian Fitzpatrick, socialist union leader Clarrie O'Shea, and Labor MP Frank



H.V. 'Doc' Evatt

Crean. The council also pitched its argument in leftist language. Their pamphlet, *Israel Reborn* [argued](#) that the Arab ruling class opposed the partition of Palestine because they feared the enlightenment Jews had brought to the Middle East. These arguments made little reference to concerns held by Palestinians. The council did not acknowledge that Palestinians were being asked to compensate Jews for crimes committed by Europe, nor did they heed their well-founded fears that the creation of a Jewish state would lead to Palestinian dispossession and exile.

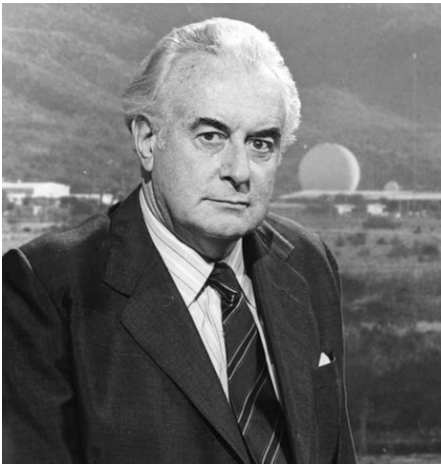
By the late 1940s, the Australian left overwhelmingly supported Zionism, and Evatt's view reflected this consensus. At the same time, there was no significant or organized Australian-Arab movement to present an opposed view. In fact, the only forces in Australia to

articulate remotely pro-Arab views were the conservative Liberal and Country Parties. They opposed establishing Israel out of concern it would undermine the British Empire and drive Arab states into the arms of the Soviets.

In short, by the late 1940s, the Australian left overwhelmingly supported Zionism, and Evatt's view reflected this consensus. So, as the two emerging Cold War superpowers threw their support behind Israel and Britain scaled back its empire, the Zionist cause found itself ascendent. Shortly after Israel declared independence in May 1948, then Labor prime minister Chifley recognized the new Jewish state.

### THE WHITLAM YEARS

After taking power in 1949, Liberal prime minister Robert Menzies did not seek to alter his predecessors' stance. By the



time Labor returned to power under Whitlam in 1972, however, the situation had transformed, both domestically and internationally, creating space for Whitlam to take a more progressive, independent position. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Labor's left faction took up the Palestinian cause. Following the [1967 War](#) — when Israel officially occupied what remained of historic Palestine — they lauded the Palestinian Liberation Organization as underdogs fighting for justice and pushed Labor to recognize them. At the same time, Australia's strong anti-war movement pressured Labor to take a more neutral position on the Arab-Israeli conflict, as did the non-ALP left, many parts of which were nevertheless closely tied to Labor.

Internationally, America's weakness following the Vietnam War also facilitated the shift. As US forces withdrew from Vietnam, America found itself forced to pursue détente with the USSR and a [less offensive](#) foreign policy. At the same time, buffeted by high oil prices, US policymakers [entrenched](#) America's "special relationship" with Israel.

A turning point came shortly before the 1973 [October War](#) and subsequent Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil embargo. Up to and during the October War, Australia departed from the United States and took a neutral position on the Arab-Israeli conflict. At its federal conference, the ALP adopted a [resolution](#) that called for Arab recognition of the state of Israel. However, it also called upon Israel to withdraw to secure boundaries and for a just settlement of the Palestinian refugee problem. For the first time in 1974, the [Australian ambassador](#) to the UN General Assembly indicated that "if the Palestinians want to create a state of their own alongside Israel, we will accept this," in principle committing Australia to supporting a two-state solution.

Indeed, under Whitlam, the Australian delegation to the UN changed its vote on African and Third World issues. Instead of voting with America, Australia began voting alongside the [nonaligned movement](#), without, however, officially joining it. Whitlam's shift toward a more progressive, independent foreign policy was, in part, motivated by economic and domestic political concerns. For example, the Whitlam government's condemnation of South African apartheid was part and parcel of dismantling the [White Australia](#) policy and enshrining new antidiscrimination laws. Similarly, following the 1973 oil crisis, the Whitlam government drew up [ambitious plans](#) to

develop Australia's national resources independently of US capital. Under the purview of [Rex Connor](#) — committed left nationalist and then minister for minerals and energy — the Whitlam government sought Middle Eastern petrodollars, including via [controversial](#) and [unconventional](#) channels. This rendered a less pro-American policy advantageous.

Key Labor Left politicians also encouraged the Whitlam government's shift. Although Whitlam himself was not from the Left, notable members of his cabinet were. Of particular importance was treasurer and deputy prime minister [Jim Cairns](#), a New Left socialist and popular leader of Australia's anti-Vietnam War movement. Indeed, Cairns had led some of the biggest political marches Australia has ever seen and had even been [arrested](#) for his activism. His appointment as deputy prime minister both reflected the strength of Australia's anti-imperialist movement and legitimized the Whitlam government in the eyes of the progressive wing of civil society. As deputy prime minister, Cairns called for an end to Labor's in-principle commitment to the US alliance. Ministers [Clyde Cameron](#) and [Tom Uren](#) — also from Labor Left — supported him, with Cameron stating that "maniacs" were in charge of US foreign policy and Uren denouncing Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger as mass murderers.

Still, it's important to note that Whitlam's shift was as much motivated by pragmatism as

principle. In other areas — including his [shameful support](#) for Indonesia’s dictator General Suharto — Whitlam’s foreign policy positions were in line with those of his conservative predecessors. Nevertheless, the Whitlam years are important insofar as they prove that it’s possible for the Left to pressure governments to adopt more progressive foreign policy positions.



**Golda Meier and Bob Hawke  
(ACTU President) 1971**

### **HAWKE: THE TURNING POINT**

Australia’s increasingly independent foreign policy was a casualty of the 1975 constitutional coup that toppled Whitlam and his government. Indeed, there is evidence that Whitlam’s independent stance motivated the CIA’s [partial](#) involvement in his dismissal. In particular, the CIA was worried that Whitlam was about to inform Parliament about the secret US intelligence presence in Australia via their spy base at [Pine Gap](#).

The Whitlam dismissal badly disoriented the Labor Left and paved the way for Labor’s shift to the right under Hawke. Indeed, after taking office in 1983, Hawke visited the United States and [declared](#) that Australia “is not and cannot be” a nonaligned nation. There was little internal

opposition. The same was true when Hawke [personally reassured](#) America that he would unapologetically commit to increased defense cooperation. Under Hawke, the ALP also recommitted to Israel, partly a product of Hawke’s strong personal attachment. As president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, he [organized](#) a visit to Israel by a “learning group” of young ALP activists and was also the first serving Australian prime minister to visit Israel while in office. In a [1987 speech](#) to a Bondi synagogue, Hawke explained his admiration for Israel and Labor Zionism, noting that:

*I was impressed too by the strength of the Trade Union Movement. . . . And as a social democrat, I could not fail to respect the way in which Israel had incarnated the vision of David Ben-Gurion of a working class building its own nation through its own physical and intellectual labor.*

Note: In the speech, Hawke did not make a single mention of Palestinians.

Hawke’s campaign to discipline the Labor Left — part of his broader agenda of reigning in union militancy and restraining wages — was overwhelmingly successful at the parliamentary level. Nevertheless, some ALP members continued to demand Labor pursue an even-handed policy on Israel-Palestine. As a result, Hawke occasionally acknowledged the Palestinian cause. However, rather than speaking in favor of Palestinian

statehood, he supported a Jordanian-Palestinian [confederation](#).

Labor leaders and foreign ministers have paid lip service to the plight of Palestinians or the two-state solution while simultaneously deepening defense cooperation with the United States and Israel. After taking office in 1991, Labor prime minister Paul Keating did not initiate a significant change in Australian policy with respect to Israel. However, lacking Hawke’s emotional attachment to Israel, Keating did [welcome](#) the Oslo Accords and promoted the Palestine Liberation Organization’s role in the negotiating a two-state solution.

### **THE 2010S**

During the 2010s, Labor’s approach to Israel-Palestine followed the formula Hawke and Keating established. This has seen Labor leaders and foreign ministers pay lip service to the plight of Palestinians or the two-state solution while simultaneously deepening defense cooperation with the United States and Israel. Perhaps the main difference is that after the Hawke years, leaders from the Labor Left have defended Israel just as loyally. Indeed, the Left’s anxiety to prove they are not *too* left-wing has sometimes placed them to the right of their factional opponents. For instance, Labor Right’s Tony Burke recently gave an interview in which he [strongly](#) implied that Israel was an apartheid state. It’s a view well to the left of any expressed by Albanese or Wong.

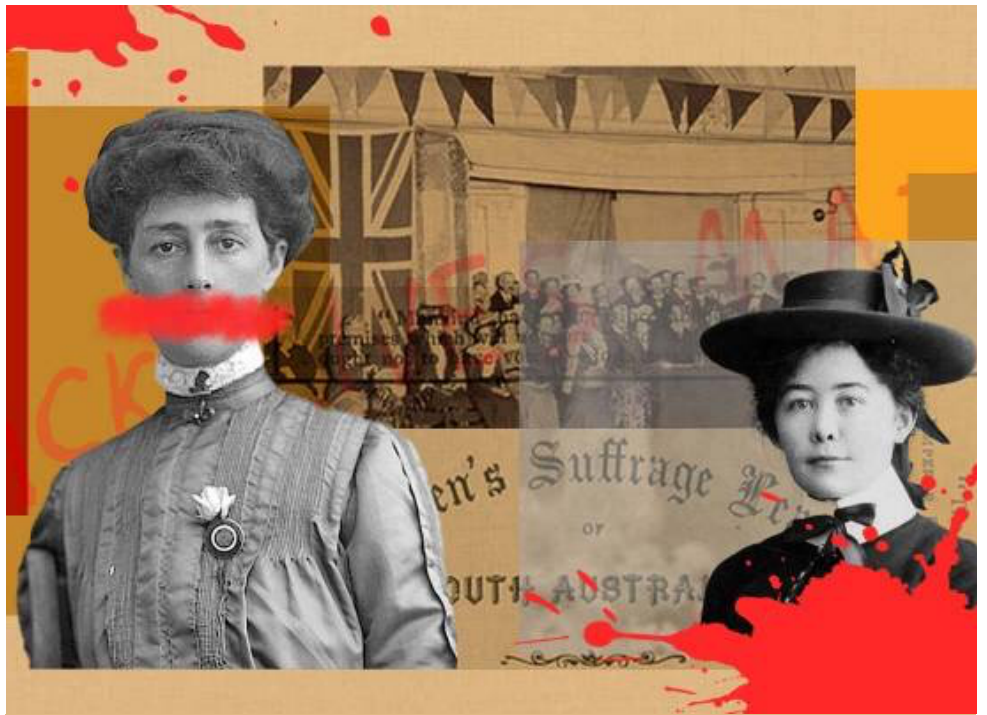
Consequently, supporters of Palestine should view the Labor Party — its Left included — without illusions. If anything, the 1960s and '70s, during which Labor entertained a more independent, critical position, were the exception to a long-standing historic commitment to Israel. At the same time, we should look back to the Whitlam years, but not because of Whitlam himself or to discover a more principled Labor Party. Rather, those years show that with a strong enough peace movement and non-Labor Left, it's possible to wrench Australia away from its dogged loyalty to the United States and Israel.

*Grace Brooks is a labour historian at the University of Western Australia. She currently works in the Business School, researching Australia's social policy landscape with the UWA Centre for Public Value.*

**SOME EXTRA READING  
WHILE WAITING FOR THE  
KETTLE TO BOIL:**

**[Failure to launch: why the  
Albanese government is  
in trouble](#)**

Carol Johnson, Emerita  
Professor, University of Adelaide,  
**[Conversations, October 8, 2024](#)**



**AUSTRALIA'S FEMINISTS ARE FINALLY  
BEING MEMORIALISED. CAN WE  
GRAPPLE WITH THEIR RACISM?  
YVES REES**

***CRIKEY, JUNE 14, 2024.***

Some of Australia's early feminist pioneers supported the White Australia policy and actively espoused racist views. How should they be remembered?

*This is an extract only. The full article can be found [here](#), behind the Crikey paywall*

In April, the City of Melbourne launched [a funding campaign](#) for a statue of Vida Goldstein, an internationally renowned leader of the Australian suffrage movement. The statue is the first in a series depicting notable women aimed at addressing the gender imbalance in Melbourne's monuments, with [only 15%](#) currently representing women. But at a time of global reckoning with the politics of

commemoration, when monuments of colonisers and racists are being [defaced](#) and [toppled](#) on this continent and around the world, what does it mean to erect new statues of the likes of Goldstein?

**GOLDSTEIN, FRANKLIN AND MORE**

The Goldstein statue is part of a growing memorialisation of white feminists (or suffragists) active around Federation, when Australia became the first nation in the world to grant white women the dual rights to vote and stand for Parliament. Long relegated to the margins of a male-dominated national story — think bushrangers, Anzacs, lifesavers, cricketers — suffragists and fellow travellers have, over the past decade, risen

to newfound prominence in national memory and culture.

Stella Miles Franklin — women’s rights campaigner and the author of *My Brilliant Career* (1901) — is at the forefront of this commemorative drive. Following Jill Roe’s 2008 biography, the writer’s name was used for the creation of the Stella Prize in 2012, a literary award aimed at challenging the male dominance of the Australian literary landscape...

To date, the mainstreaming of these feminist pioneers has been widely celebrated as a win for women’s history and feminist politics. In 2023, independent MP Zoe Daniel (who represents the seat of Goldstein, named after Vida) gave [an impassioned speech to Parliament](#) in favour of the mooted Goldstein statue, arguing it would give contemporary girls a woman “to literally look up to”.

Yet there is an elephant in the room: the question of race. Not only did these white women hold racial privilege that was, in Aileen Moreton-Robinson’s terms, “tied to colonisation and the dispossession of Indigenous people”, but they also actively espoused racist views. Goldstein supported the White Australia policy, endorsed eugenics, fetishised the supposed racial kinship between “Anglo-Saxons” in Australia and the United States, and feared that World War I’s death toll threatened the “British race”. Franklin also supported the White Australia policy and was, according to David Bird’s *Nazi Dreamtime: Australian*

*Enthusiasts for Hitler’s Germany* (2012), a member of the fascist Australia First Movement led by her close friend P.R. Stephensen.

### WRESTLING WITH COMPLEXITY

In the 1900s, these views were mainstream in settler Australian culture, including among “progressives” and on the left. The ALP [explicitly supported the White Australia policy](#) until 1965. White suffragists were, in this respect, typical creatures of their time, not extremists or outliers. However, Franklin’s alleged fascist sympathies arguably sets her apart. But typical or not, what do these facts mean for how we remember such women? Australia’s suffragists were significant figures who undeniably merit historical attention, but the challenge is to do so without whitewashing their racial views. University of Melbourne historian James Keating, author of the award-winning *Distant Sisters: Australasian women and the international struggle for the vote* (2020), believes it’s imperative to grapple with this issue:

“If the suffragists and their fellow travellers are to be seen as nation-builders, whose bravery and vision offers Australians a founding story bound to the principles of democracy and justice, historians must also reckon with the extent of their complicity in the Commonwealth’s foundational injustices, such as the racialisation of political citizenship in 1902. This shouldn’t be considered a performative exercise of our

contemporary moral superiority by indicting or casting out certain ‘bad’ feminists, but matters because if we believe that stories about the past are important we need to wrestle with them in all their complexity.”

In this spirit, the new Goldstein statue can hopefully prompt us to sit with hard questions about remembering feminist pioneers without sanitising their politics. To do so is imperative for racial justice in the present but is also an essential part of recognising the full humanity of these historical individuals.





# DEFENDING CONSTRUCTION WORKERS AND THEIR UNION - OBSERVATIONS FROM THE OUTSIDE

**DON SUTHERLAND**

*SOLIDARITY DYNAMICS, SEPTEMBER 18, 2024.*

In July, there was a [self-indulgent and ill-judged industrial threat from the Victorian Branch Secretary of the Union](#), John Setka, to shutdown Australian Football League-linked building sites because it employed the former boss of the industrial police force (the Australian Building and Construction Commission – ABCC) against construction industry workers. Not long afterwards Setka resigned during a union’s National Council meeting.

[Mainstream media reports](#) alleged widespread union corruption, violence and other misbehaviour in the Construction & General Division of the CFMEU (“the Construction Division”). They decided [the focus should not be](#)

[on the corporations and business networks](#) that own and control the industry:

Without proper legal testing, the Labor government [decided the allegations are true](#) and that normal due process should be put aside, and has created “[a Scheme of Administration](#)” that drills into the union – not employers, their associates, or their organizations. [The Fair Work Commission \(FWC\) has appointed Mark Irving](#) as the Administrator to take charge of the Scheme and the Union.

Since then the [Construction Division’s own investigation](#), started before the Scheme, has said the Victorian Branch of the union has been infiltrated by “criminal elements” and is now

“influenced” by them and “vulnerable to corruption”.

Parliament, in collaboration with Dutton’s LNP Liberal-National Party (LNP) amended both Acts to permit the special statutory *Scheme* that, among other things, imposes an external Administrator to run the union and investigate everything for the next 5 years. The *Scheme* in effect defines the union and 250 odd of the members’ representatives as agents of corruption.

## **THE SCHEME: A CLOSER LOOK FIRST.**

The *Scheme* vacates and terminates 292 positions (waged and volunteer) held by 250 odd-named officers and officials, properly elected by the

members or appointed under the rules. The Rules are properly registered under industrial relations law. Many are volunteer delegates elected by their peers to sit on various committees. They are assumed guilty of media allegations, legally untested, and nothing in the *Scheme* provides for their redress. Maybe new legal action will test whether the general legal arrangements for any union employee to challenge and reverse termination from employment can be applied against the *Scheme*.

### OTHER KEY FEATURES

- The Administrator has exclusive power to investigate who in these 292 positions (and any others remaining) might be further charged and how beyond their immediate punishment.
- The 71 who have not been removed must act according to the Administrator's rules, not the Rules they were elected or appointed to uphold and, the Administrator can vacate any of those 71 other positions at any time. There is no internal due process from now on, except for what the Administrator decides.
- Members have no say whether they wish their contact details to be handed over to the Administrator.
- The Administrator has full power to refer the conduct of the removed persons to any Commonwealth or state body, including allegations or other information about unlawful conduct, requiring further investigation to

appropriate law enforcement or similar investigators. This power extends to any other person, business, entity or organization, and thus may be applied against employers and others in the industry.

- The Administrator controls all future elections.
- The "Responsibilities" of the Administrator regarding the all-important members' rights are defined by the word "may". The Administrator is not required to protect and improve members' rights or adopt recommendations from members about them.
- The Administrator's new "complaints procedure" about "improper, unlawful or criminal" behaviour can only be about "an officer or employee of the CFMEU or any of its branches, divisions or parts working in the Construction and General Division or any of its branches". Thus, members cannot submit complaints about such behaviour by employers or their agents.

The scheme is a thorough system of autocratic inquisition and governance that pays lip service only to established or improved union democracy. Unlike Royal Commissions, the investigating power is set up inside the union. Thus, it intends to disrupt from within the normal, democratic, practical and lawful operation of the union, including established, effective assistance to workers and their reps on construction.

Membership control over their union is one of the basic principles of unionism in any democratic society: members should be enabled to be their union; to determine who their representatives shall be, how others can be employed to represent them and their membership dues managed, the strategy and methods to improve their job security, wages and conditions, retirement protections and so on, and to spread their presence in the industry. That core principle, essential for any union in a democratic society, is stolen and denied in this Scheme. The deliberate intent is for a weak and bureaucratic union, bereft of membership dynamism.

### The employer advantage: conflict and corruption

Every industry develops within a framework of conflict that starts with each employer seeking enough profit by winning the contract against other employers. Competitive advantage requires sub-standard safety, pay and conditions, and exploitation of the workers.

In the construction industry, the competition conflict has specific features created in the first instance by the employers, especially the biggest. Starting with the principal contract, every project is a cascade of sub-contracts with any number of employers competing to get one. The big corporations do not have a problem with this. They get their competitive advantage and profits from the dog-eat-dog

relationships between competing employers at all levels. The Scheme and its rationale ignore this. The workers must find continuity of work inside that framework. Everything their unionism does seeks continuity of wages and safety at work against the main tendency of the contract system. Their unionism develops within the context of the contracting system, as the antithesis of the employers who own and control the industry, in interaction with government.

#### **STRATEGY AND TACTICS: PUT THE MEMBERS IN COMMAND**

It is no surprise that those who have had their union stolen from them are resisting, nor that many within the union movement are willing to help them. How that struggle develops requires a strategy based on classic union principles.

#### **THE HISTORY OF UNION GROWTH IS FOUNDED ON EPISODES OF EFFECTIVE UNION DEFIANCE OF UNJUST LAWS. UNION DEFIANCE IS NOT THE SAME AS CORRUPTION.**

*Note: The above article has been abridged. The full article can be found [here](#).*



## **I DON'T WANT TO REVISIT THE TIME AND THE FALLOUT OF THE VOICE REFERENDUM. BUT WE CANNOT MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO**

**CELESTE LIDDLE**

*GUARDIAN AUSTRALIA, 14 OCTOBER, 2024*

***Truth-telling and treaty cannot be allowed to fall by the wayside in the failure of the voice to get up***

A year has passed since the ill-fated [voice referendum](#). In that time, and indeed in the time leading up to the referendum itself, I repeatedly expressed my views. There was so much that was wrong with the process, that was dehumanising, and that was distressing about the entire situation. But while Indigenous community members have had to pick up the pieces, regroup and begin discussions about the way forward, the majority of Australia has maintained the status quo.

The voice was never going to be a magic bullet. No matter how much the Albanese government attempted to sell it as such, the reality was that what was on the

table was a smidgen better than nothing. Despite this, the proposal was still a bridge too far for the majority of Australians when it came to recognising the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

I don't want to revisit the time and the fallout. It is depressing to recall just how readily vast proportions of the Australian public allow themselves to absorb misinformation campaigns, or how readily they see Indigenous people gaining a bit more than "no power" as an existential threat. As I have been clear too, the misinformation was not just in the no camp – the yes camp were more than willing to paint themselves as champions for anti-racism when the reality was that any reform to actually conquer racism in Australia was not on the table. It was window dressing, plain and simple.

I do, though, at this juncture want to look at how Australia can move forward. The Uluru statement from the heart was, after all, a three-part proposal, and the agendas of truth-telling and treaty cannot be allowed to fall by the wayside in the failure of the voice to get up, even if our prime minister is [dodging these responsibilities](#).

Here's a few truths to kick off the truth-telling process:

**First**, the lack of basic civics education that Australians receive is telling. Adding to this, many Australians choose to remain ignorant about our political systems and structures for their entire lives. There was a reason why the conservative no campaign's "if you don't know, vote no" slogan was so successful – most Australians do not know, nor are they particularly willing to find out. If they feel happy and secure in their own back yard, there really is no reason to step outside it. I maintain that many Australians went to the ballot box having no clue what they were voting for. Do they actually know what the constitution is and how it works? Do they understand the political system Australia uses and how it would interact with a proposed body that had no power of political veto? Both sides of the debate drew on public ignorance of the constitution, framing the document and our inclusion in it as alternately reconciliatory and threatening. I find this frustrating. The constitution is a still-racist document that reinforced a foreign regime without Indigenous people's consent

but this is something that most people don't want to confront. Future generations cannot be allowed to grow up with this same ignorance.

**Second**, we will get nowhere unless Australia gets significantly more comfortable with confronting its history, and how this history informs the present. It would be nice, for example, to see a dual-naming exercise happen in Australia that is accepted as a symbol of pride, rather than an opportunity to jump on social media and complain about how any such move is "political correctness gone mad". Education about massacres, assimilation policies, the mission system, wage theft, the wardship systems, land theft, etc, cannot remain the sole interest of those already at the table. There is a colonial arrogance that permeates society suggesting there is nothing to be learned from its First Peoples, despite this country being home to the longest continuing cultures in the world. If we want to begin the process of moving forward, people need to begin opening their ears and their hearts.

**Finally**, a mature nation *must* come to an agreement on how to move forward. This means the Labor government honouring the treaty process that is part of the Uluru statement that they said they were committed to implementing upon their election. The prime minister attempted to dodge this by pointing out that treaty processes were already under way in a few states and territories. To my mind, though,

this does not preclude the federal government taking action, particularly considering it is the one with the direct link to the crown under whose name this land was claimed as a colony.

Decisions can be made federally on what the non-negotiables would be in a treaty process – items such as the right to land and compensation, the protection of language and knowledge, dual naming, equal service provision, designated representative seats in all levels of governance, no imposition of policy without proper consultation, etc. There are so many ways this country could commit not only to a healthier and more equitable way forward but also to a more tolerant and racially diverse society. It is time to remember that this country was founded on the erasure of those who were already here and to rectify that enormous historical wrong. I truly hope that in my lifetime we are never faced with another toxic campaign like the voice referendum again. It's a fool's hope – Australia loves to debate the humanity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and seems to find ways to put us back in our place. At the very least, a population making more informed decisions after some truth-telling and education would be a welcome change.

***Celeste Liddle is an Arrernte woman living in Melbourne. She is a freelance writer, social commentator and activist. Liddle was a Greens candidate for the seat of Cooper in the 2022 federal election. She left the party in February 2023***



## ROBE WALK RE-EVALUATED BY HISTORIANS STUDYING MASS CHINESE GOLD RUSH MIGRATION TO SA TOWN SAM BRADBROOK

ABC NEWS 14 MARCH 2024

If you have ever walked along the beach in the South Australian town of Robe, it is likely you came across a Chinese-inspired monument, seemingly out of nowhere. It is a nod to one of the most significant events in the town's history which experts say has become misunderstood across decades. The monument pays tribute to the thousands of Chinese people who travelled with others from all over the world to strike it rich as the Victorian gold rush took hold in the 1850s. The majority of the 16,000 Chinese people who arrived at Robe came in 1857. They would set off on a 400-kilometre walk to the Victorian goldfields at Ballarat, in what became known as the **Robe Walk**.

The arrival of thousands of Chinese prospectors prompted the young Victorian government to impose a £10 poll tax on arrivals to the country via the

sea. The tax didn't apply to arrivals over the state's land border though, so during the 1850s and 1860s about 16,000 people landed in the town of Robe, which had a population of about 200. But Chinese-Australian historian Dr Michael Williams said the view of Robe as a small town at the time was the first in a long line of myths surrounding the event:

*Robe was a booming town at the time, not because of Chinese gold seekers but because wool was booming. It was never a big place, but not as obscure as people might think.*

Dr Williams said another myth surrounding the landings was they were unorganised, and people arrived without a plan to reach the gold fields. Instead, he said, their ships were full of provisions for the walk and they would bring goods to sell upon their arrival:

*One of the first myths people had was that the captains suddenly decided to divert from Melbourne and dump people at Robe and no one knew where they were. These ships were all chartered from Hong Kong by agents in Hong Kong who had already recruited people from the Pearl River Delta, set them up, put them on a boat and told the captains exactly where to go.*

Dr Williams said he was working on the first comprehensive academic study of the Robe Walk. He said records were relatively scarce and the stories passed through generations often perpetuated damaging stereotypes about Chinese people:

*After two generations when people had forgotten the history, they talk about this 'invasion' of the Chinese in Robe and you get this exaggerated sense of fear and loathing. It all has to do with White Australia [Policy] and all has to do with attitudes at that time to Chinese people rather than what was actually happening. There you get these myths of tremendous hardship, people starving on the road, or people being forced to do work.*

The walk was long, but he said making the trek to the Victorian gold fields was common at the time. He said more than 20,000 people walked from Adelaide during the same time period. Dr Williams said the experience of Chinese people on the Robe Walk may have been more

peaceful than first thought, but on the Victorian gold fields they were subject to violence and anti-Chinese riots. Laws were passed after the gold rush which limited the migration of non-white people to Australia, forming the White Australia Policy. Dr Williams said the lack of records stemmed from that policy:

*By the time Australia gets through its White Australia period in the 1900s it starts systematically eliminating non-white people from its history. It does that not just through immigration but through its history as well. If you read history books from that era, you barely get any mention of Aboriginal people, let alone anyone else who's non-white.*

While Chinese arrivals and the growth of wool led to an influx of money into Robe, within two decades business through the town's port had shrunk. The story of the Robe Walk is on display at the town's Customs House Museum.

Click [here](#) for another story on the Chinese walk to the goldfields.



***“History will be kind to me, for I intend to write it.” Winston Churchill, British writer and politician (1874-1965)***

# REVIEWS



## **Secondhand Time: the last of the Soviets**

**Svetlana Alexievich,**  
*Text Publishing Co. 2016*

Review by Doug Melvin

*From the 2015 winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, Svetlana Alexievich, comes the first English translation of her latest work, an oral history of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of a new Russia. Bringing together dozens of voices in her distinctive documentary style, Secondhand Time is a monument to the collapse of the USSR, charting the decline of Soviet culture and speculating on what will rise from the ashes of Communism. As in all her books, Alexievich gives voice to women and men whose stories are lost in the official narratives of nation-states, creating a powerful alternative history from the personal and private stories of individuals. Svetlana Alexievich says her method is simple: “I do not ask people about socialism, I ask about love, jealousy, childhood, old age, the myriad sundry details of a vanished way of life. I am writing a history of human feelings.”*

The conversations throughout the book indicate a breakdown of society in general. There are many quotes such as 37yo worker Yelena Razduyeva: ‘When Gorbachev came to power, we ran around mad with glee. We lived in our dreams, our illusions. Baring our souls to one and another in our kitchens. We wanted a new Russia. ... Twenty years down the line it dawned on us: where was the new Russia supposed to come from? It never existed and it still doesn’t today.’ (interview 2011).

There are plenty of other quotes about the joy of the Gorbachev’s *perestroika*, but time and time again it is recorded that there was not a transition plan to move

from a socialist economy to a capitalist economy. With no transition plan this led to absolute chaos - factories stopped producing goods, shops were empty of basic commodities, public transport all but stopped. 'Ration cards and coupons were provided for everything, from bread to grain to socks - we would stand in line for hours to get what was available' stated one interviewee. The only books available in schools in the early days were those of the Soviet era. Gangs were taking over the streets and people were scared to go out after dark, so citizens armed themselves with guns.

These were the dark years not only with regard to material needs, but to people's emotional needs too. Many of the older interviewees were at a total loss - their beloved Motherland was no longer theirs. Many had family members who had fought fascism in the name of the communist ideal. They were used to a reasonable life, with medical services, free education, employment, and housing all provided by the State. Interviewees felt there was no plan for them, often resulting in demoralisation, depression and cases of suicide.

Many interviewees praised Stalin as a visionary leader, who not only led the WW2 war effort but also led the Soviet Union peoples into a period of relative peace and prosperity. However, there are also horrifying stories of Stalin's purges. Anna M's father and mother were arrested in 1937 when she was 3 and she

was sent to a camp with her mother and then to an orphanage. She describes her terrible memories of events in the camp, especially when young children died, and their bodies were left to rot throughout winter and only buried in spring. *Secondhand Time* also has a series of interviews with ethnic minority groups who were part of the old Soviet Union and lived and worked with Russian in cities and small towns in harmony. But once the Union collapsed, they were turned upon, beaten in the street, kicked out of their apartments and treated totally as second-class citizens - told to go back to where their families came from (a bit familiar to Europe and UK today).

However, the book is not just about the terrible period for Russians after the fall of the Soviet Union, it does show the development of the new society with the younger people starting small business adventures, taking advantage of the void across many sectors of the society. It also records the immediate growth in the Orthodox Russian Church once the old way was gone. Overall, the book gives a very honest view of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

**On a personal note**, the book reflects the period we told by a Russian historian when we were in Russia in November 2019. In October/November 2019 we took a small boat cruise on the Volga River from Volgograd (Stalingrad) to Moscow, then on to St Petersburg (Leningrad) and

we had interesting conversations with the Russian historian tour guide during the trip. What he conveyed was a similar story to that outlined in *Secondhand Time*, about the period after the fall of the CCCP. For 10 years the country people were paralysed since no one really understood how the future would unfold as there was no real transition plan, and there was social collapse, with an explosion of the unemployment rate, and crime rates through the roof. However, as our Russian guide said, after about 10 years a new capitalist class rose and took over. In a later one-on-one chat with him, he said that since the capitalist transition the rich had become very well off and the middle classes had grown, but the working class continue to struggle and the vulnerable and poor were being left behind - which sounds familiar! Another snippet: We were in the supermarket just looking at what was on the shelves (you could be in any supermarket anywhere in the world, with basically the same goods) when our historian tour guide (who comes from Moscow) came over and said: "Your bag, where did you get it? I have not seen such a bag anywhere we have visited, nor a shop that sells such things!" I explained to him that it was in fact the Adelaide May Day tote bag, and I explained a bit about our May Day committee and the celebrations in Australia. He was quite bemused and admitted that he thought May Day was just a Soviet-era parade and celebration and was totally unaware that it was a world-wide celebration for workers.