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P R E F A C E

In 1976 five research papers in Australian history, written by second year students in the ordinary History IIB course, were presented in this format. The favourable response that they received suggests that the project is a worthwhile one and it will therefore be continued annually. This year, however, publication of the papers has been undertaken by students under the auspices of the History Club and the S.R.C.

Each year students in this course are asked to investigate some aspect of Australian history, preferably through research in primary sources. They are encouraged to look wherever possible at questions through which light can be thrown on significant problems by the study of local history. Over a hundred such projects were undertaken this year, and the variety of topics as well as the quality of the papers presented was very encouraging.

The papers published here were chosen not only because they are good papers, but also to show the variety of issues that interest students. Many other papers could have been chosen.

Peter Stephens :	Morpeth in the era of the Steamship.
Mary Livingstone :	The First General Strike in the Coal Industry
Adelle Harding :	The Copeland Gold Rush
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Peter Crotty :	Henry Dangar, Pioneer Explorer, Surveyor and Pastoralist
Gregory Gamage :	Attitudes of the People of Newcastle towards the Chinese 1978 - 1888
Lynda Allomes :	A Study of Bushranging in the Hunter Valley
Susan Murray :	The Robertson Land Acts
Lynn Rutherford :	The Bellbird Mine Disaster 1923
Peter Jeffrey :	The Paul Bunyans of Cedar Arm

C. Bacchi

P. Hempenstall

N. Rutherford

The works presented in this collection are not only a tribute to their authors, but also to Carol Bacchi, Peter Hempenstall and Noel Rutherford who provided the opportunity, the support, and the encouragement that made it all possible. The History Club is pleased to be associated with such a worthwhile project.

History Club Executive

EDWARD CAPPER : HARDWARE AND SOCIETY

BY

IAN BOWREY

SYNOPSIS:

The history of nineteenth century Australia has been recorded by many historians in terms of the conquest of the continent and the filling of the open spaces. Because of the 'Hancock tradition', urban history has been relegated to a role of lesser historical importance. This paper examines the effort of an urban storekeeper, Edward Peter Capper, to establish a hardware and ironmongery business in West Maitland in the 1840's.

Capper's commercial practices are looked at in the light of the social conditions that affected contemporary society in the Hunter Valley during that period.

Edward Capper was born in England in 1799 and in his youth had served an apprenticeship with his father, a hardware merchant and ironmonger in Birmingham. His first attempt to establish his own hardware business occurred in Argentina in 1825. It proved a financial disaster for Capper, and his partner, because political upheavals swept Buenos Ayres and seriously disrupted commerce. He returned to England in 1831 and almost immediately decided to sail for the colony of New South Wales.

Capper arrived in Sydney on New Years Day in 1833 with £47 and a small quantity of hardware. Again his enterprise failed, this time because his capital and stock were insufficient.

Those days were difficult but Capper's fortune began to change when he found employment with the Sydney branch of an international hardware firm, Livicks and Younger. The earliest documented evidence of Capper's interest in opening a store in Maitland appeared in 1834 ¹ while he was employed by that firm. It took Edward Capper seven years to fulfil his commercial intention but the need to raise sufficient capital undoubtedly affected his plans.

At that time, the northern settlement at Maitland had grown rapidly. Its location on the banks of a navigable river and the attraction of its fertile land had provided the stimulus. Travelling time from Sydney had been reduced from a difficult three day overland trip to twelve hours by steam packet to Morpeth. A regular service had commenced in 1831 and the passengers on the packet tended to be the new immigrant capitalists and the merchants. ² In 1841 Capper embarked as one of the merchants.

By the time, Edward Capper was 42 years old and had had experience as a hardware merchant on three continents. ³ This led him to establish his store in High Street, on the principles of caution, service and integrity. The principles helped his business to survive the troubled 1840's and to grow while others around him failed, and they can be recognized quite clearly, in his correspondence and in the columns of his ledgers.

In the early days of the colony, credit transactions had formed a substantial part of commerce. Capper granted credit with care to men of property, and to skilled artisans. His debtors included pastoralists such as the Bettingtons of Merriwa; R. B. Dawson of Belford, the son of Robert Dawson; W. C. Wentworth who leased the vast "Windermere" and "Luskintyre" estates; and the Blaxlands from Merriwa and Jerry's Plains. ⁴ A second category included the merchant/entrepreneurs, people like David Cohen; the Dickson Brothers; and Henry Rourke a saddler, who had built the first store in West Maitland in 1836 and had become a large employer of skilled labor. A hardware store provided essential goods for skilled manual workers and Capper gave credit to a number of artisans. As individuals their purchases were small, easily out-valued by those of the upper classes, but collectively they outnumbered the Bettingtons and the Wyndhams.

In the Hunter Valley a wealthy elite headed society. By 1827 a mere 792 people had appropriated 372, 141 acres.⁵ The size of the grants varied from 60 to 12,000 acres and more than 140 grants exceeded 1000 acres.⁶ Although a cross-section of colonial society, ex-convicts, currency lads and free immigrants, held land, it has been conceded that "the balance was in favour of the wealthier class." ⁷ The introduction of the Land Regulations in 1831 favoured those with capital and by 1841 the "gentry" had become well established along the Hunter. Their influence dominated the valley's society and, as a class, they were not disposed to rely upon the improvisation of green-hide and stringybark.

The 1830's had been years of boom for pastoralists and the colonial economy, but during the early 1840's, the colony reeled with a rash of insolvencies in a sudden sharp recession. Although further research is needed to determine whether the middle class storekeepers at Maitland were advantaged by the presence of these wealthy landholders, Capper's Ledgers indicate that he escaped almost unscathed. Table 1 is a list of debtors that Capper wrote off as insolvents during the recession.

TABLE 1: "INSOLVENTS" 1841-1845

	<u>Debtor</u>	<u>Amount Owed</u>
1842	Captain Livingston	£10. 8.10
	Solomon Levein	£ 1.15. 9
1843	Peter Hitt Rapsey	£ 5. 0. 0
	Turner and Martyr	£ 1.19. 1
1844	W. H. Garmain	£ 4.16. 0
	Charles Fairs	£ 6.15. 5
1845	George Hobbler	£ 1.18. 3
	Captain Bidulph	£ 9.11. 1½

As Capper did not always list the occupation of his debtors, it is impossible to gauge every person's status. Levein had been an inn keeper at Hinton while Livingston, Garmain, Hobbler and Bidulph had been settlers and property owners.

To understand the limited effect to Capper's business, the insolvencies should be compared with the overall credit transactions allowed during the same period. The following table shows the total amount of credit given each year from July, 1841 to 31 December, 1846.

TABLE 2: CREDIT PURCHASES 1841-1846

	<u>Yearly Total</u>
1841	£425.14. 2½
1842	£885.14. 2
1843	£840. 0. 5
1844	£522. 9.10
1845	£716.10. 7
1846	£1316.11.10

Source: Customers Purchases 1841-1846, AB2222.

Capper's credit appeared reasonably liberal considering the economic conditions in 1841 to 1843, but it was probably a calculated move to establish himself commercially in that region. The amount of credit allowed in 1846 demonstrated the improvement felt in the colony.

Between 1846 and 1847, about 200 people obtained goods on credit from Capper's store. ⁸ The amount varied considerably but usually it was small. Table 3 is indicative of the usual extent of individual debts accrued in a monthly period.

**TABLE 3: EXAMPLES OF EXTENT OF MONTHLY
CREDIT PURCHASES**

			<u>Monthly Total</u>
1846	April	W. C. Wentworth	£1. 13. 6
	May	James Taylor	£1. 3. 0
	December	Dr. Liddell	£1. 11.10
1847	March	William Todhunter	£1. 14. 0
	March	James Taylor	£4. 2. 0

Source: Ledger 1846-1847, AB2238.

Although few individual debts exceeded £10 at any one time, there were notable exceptions, and over a period of time some of these owed Capper substantial amounts. The most prominent debtors between 1847 and 1852 are listed in Table 4. This table summarises the total yearly credit they obtained in that period.

**TABLE 4: SUMMARY - TOTAL ANNUAL CREDIT -
MOST PROMINENT OF CAPPER'S DEBTORS**

Name	<u>Year</u>					
	<u>1847</u>	<u>1848</u>	<u>1849</u>	<u>1850</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1852</u>
David Cohen & Co.	£ 124. 9. 3	132. 1. 9	52. 2. 6	37.11. 8	50.12. 2	37.15. 8
D. & J. Dickson	£ 24. 8. 2	69. 4. 8	55. 5. 0	72. 4. 7½	59. 3. 2	54. 6. 9
Henry Ikin	£ 37.10. 9	11. 6. 1	27. 0. 8	68.16. 1	72. 9. 7	49. 1. 9
John Fenwick	£ - -	100.17. 4	103.10.11	197. 9.11	89. 3. 8	- -
James Moore	£ 32. 0. 8	148. 1. 4	119. 1. 6	159.13. 7	108.17. 3	495.19. 0

Source: Ledgers and Ledger Index 1847-1853, AB2234.

Cohen and Co. at that time, was one of the largest importers in the colony. It also traded extensively in wool, shipping to England the produce from the norther stations. ⁹ The Dickson brothers had a large store in West Maitland and in November, 1847, they acquired portions of the Bolwarra Estate. ¹⁰ Ikin and Fenwick were self employed artisans and Moore had a store at Singleton. Each of these people or firms conducted commercial ventures. As they were not direct competitors, Capper profitably afforded them substantial credit because their assets and business acumen provided ample security, in contrast to many of his debtors who owed lesser amounts.

Despite the provision of credit, cash sales dominated Cappers transactions. He appeared to recognize the dangers of over-extending credit. For example, his Cash Book entries for September, 1846, showed that while credit sales amounted to £96.13.4, he received in cash £270.15.5 for goods sold. Payments totalling £68.15.0 were made in cash for outstanding debts. ¹¹ Capper maintained a favourable cash balance throughout his commercial career in High Street, a lesson he had learnt from his early experiences.

Promissory Notes and cheques were a common medium of exchange but other methods had to be adopted to suit the times. Table 5 demonstrates the flexibility of both debtor and creditor in the troubled 1840's, in meeting their obligations.

TABLE 5: EXAMPLE OF EXCHANGE MEDIA

J. Conner, Painter, West Maitland.		
1842		
15 March	By work done for Capper	£16. 5.11
	By goods	11. 3
	By cash	3. 9½
	By goods returned	1. 5. 4
		<hr/>
		£18. 6. 3½

Source: Ledger 1841-1852, AB2223.

The Media of exchange, apart from labour, included a wide range of goods such as hay, glass and cedar. They were utilised by people from all social classes and included pastoralists and doctors, artisans and labourers.

In the mid 1840's Capper's Stock Book inventoried more than 270 separate items ¹² and the following tables indicate some of the goods that Capper sold.

TABLE 6: EXAMPLE - SALES TO LOWER CLASS

1842	Jas. Cahill	
1 September	2 bars Shoeing Iron 41 lb	8/6 ^a
	1 lb Rivets	9 ^a
	1 lb Solder	3/-
	1 lock	1/-
	2 Tiles	1/6 ^a
	½ lb Glue	6 ^a
		<hr/>
		15/3

Source: Cash Book 1842-1843, AB2004.

TABLE 7: EXAMPLE - SALES TO UPPER CLASS

1847	George Wyndham	
14 October	1 doz table knives	1 doz dessert spoons
	1 doz table spoons	1 doz tea spoons
	4 doz pocket knives	1 doz shaving boxes
	1 doz razors in cases	1 doz rag stones
	6 doz sheepshears	20 lb raddle
	2 packs twine	20 lb 6 inch spides
	20 fathoms rope	10 lb hurdle nails
	2 doz quart/pint pots	
	69 wool packs	
	$\frac{1}{2}$ doz spades	
	$\frac{1}{2}$ doz shovels	
		Cash Sale £56.0.2

Source: Ledger 1846-1847, AB2238.

The above tables show more than the diversity of goods sold by a colonial hardware store. They demonstrate the tremendous gap in the purchasing power between the pastoralists and the working class. Wyndham was a landowner of significance. He had 3600 acres at Dalwood as well as stations on the Liverpool Plains, the Mac Intyre and the Clarence Rivers. Like a number of Hunter landowners he claimed descent from the landed gentry in England. ¹³ To the working class, £56 would have been a fortune and some perspective can be gained by comparing the two amounts with the wages of the working class. In 1852, carpenters, smiths, wheelwrights, bricklayers and masons received an average of 9/- a week. By 1855, the carpenters, smiths and wheelwrights received 15/- a week while the bricklayers and masons earned 17/-. ¹⁴ It is no wonder that social distinctions were so apparent.

Capper's hardware business continued to grow and in 1851 he began to import his stock direct from England for the first time. The goods included pioneer items such as axes, mattocks, farriers' knives, gunpowder and shovels, but they also included an increasing number of articles for a more affluent and acquisitive society. His order requested tea trays, horse rugs, food scrapers, ladies' saddles, ivory-handled cutlery, and glass. Not only the ubiquitous looking-glass, but cut-glass carafes, decanters, and wine glasses were ordered along with tulip glasses and finger bowls. ¹⁵

As an astute businessman, Capper placed his order with a view to satisfying his customers. He directed his agent to forward only merchandise of good quality, but many of his "luxury" items were obtained in two grades: a superior finish for the wealthier class and a secondary quality for the lower classes who "were convinced that acquisitive competitiveness produced improved circumstances." ¹⁶ Even the simple candle snuffer was ordered in two qualities: a highly polished metal for the wealthy, a common unpolished metal for the workers.

Capper did not sell musical instruments like pianos, but for those who wanted to entertain themselves he imported dozens of Jews Harps. They are rarely seen or heard today but in the mid nineteenth century the little instruments were highly prized. In his 1851 order, Capper requested "2 gross cheap Jews Harps . . . and . . . 2 dozen pair tuned Jews Harps in separate tin boxes". ¹⁷ The working class paid 1/6 for theirs while the upper class were charged five shillings. So popular was this form of amusement that Capper sold 3 gross 3 dozen in 1849 and 11 gross in 1850. ¹⁸

Luxury goods represented only a portion of Capper's stock. His goods were essentially hardware and iron, the materials needed to develop the surrounding region and to construct the houses, shops, sheds and factories. At the beginning of 1850 there were 842 houses in Maitland, of which 433 were brick or stone. ¹⁹ While many were of simple construction, others were more substantial and throughout the district were the grand houses of the elite who spared no expense:

"Aberglasslyn" completed in 1842 . . . has upstairs and downstairs bathrooms with a septic service.

The interior of these early houses are very similar. Almost every room contains a fireplace . . . In later houses . . . marble mantelpieces in every colour, size and shape . . . ²⁰

Because of the wealth of the social elite in the Hunter Valley, a great social gulf lay between the classes. It has been argued that none was greater than between the free-immigrant capitalist settler, like George Wyndham and the convict and ex-convict population. ²¹ Capper's ledgers provide an insight into the social divisions, in the 1840's, as they reflect something of the purchasing power of the classes, and of the goods they considered essential. An example of this is the common lock.

Russel Ward has subscribed to Harris's assertion that "... in the country parts of the colony every door is without bolt or lock..." ²² But was that really so? Capper conducted a brisk trade in locks not far from Harris's Port Stephens. He sold mortice, sash, French, plate, cupboard and till-locks. And, as well, carpet bags with locks, padlocks, and locks for doors crossed his counter. The [c 1845?] Stock Book listed forty separate headings for locks which evidenced a complex range in many sizes. Even their value, £41.10.3, was a significant amount for an item at that time. ²³

The buyers had to be people who wanted to protect material goods. Capper's ledgers indicate they were the wealthy pastoralists and the urban bourgeoisie, and also the artisans from the lower classes who were "acquisitively competitive". Harris's description appears to apply to the rural paupers, whose poverty was such that they had no material goods to protect.

Capper's customers came from all social classes. He profited from the presence of the wealthy landowners, he treated the bourgeoisie with favour, and he was sustained by the working class. As the Hunter Valley prospered so did his business. In 1854 Capper had purchased a High Street allotment for £600 and erected a two-storey hardware and ironmongery store on it. Later he acquired other capital assets that were estimated in 1867 at £7,140. ²⁴ Add to this the value of his trading stock (Capper anticipated ordering £1,000 worth every three months ²⁵) and an image of a successful capitalist begins to emerge.

But the outlook of the man was not restricted to hardware, and any assessment of Capper must include his community service. Shortly after his arrival in Maitland, Capper became involved in a number of community activities. He worked for a new bridge to link the East and West townships, for a town fire engine and for the abolition of transportation. ²⁶ He was elected a trustee of the Building and Investment Society, and a committeeman in the Hunter River Agricultural and Horticultural Society. ²⁷ His community spirit, however, appears most strongly linked with the construction of St. Paul's Church, for which he was the prime mover.

The records that have survived, suggest that Edward Capper was more than an insignificant bourgeois storekeeper. In an age of rapid change, and growth, he was a man of perception, energy and fellowship. Men like Capper, who put down the foundations of the towns and cities in which most Australians live today, have a story to tell that could help us to re-assess Ward's legend of egalitarianism.

FOOTNOTES:

- (1) The foregoing is expressed in detail by W. J. Goold, "Capper of Maitland", Journal of the Newcastle and Hunter District Historical Society, Vol. 1V, pp. 17-21.
- (2) H. W. H. King, The Urban Pattern of the Hunter Valley, Maryville, 1963, p. 53.
- (3) Goold, op. cit.
- (4) Ledger and Ledger Index, 1841-1852, Records of Cappers Pty. Ltd., Maitland Merchants, 1829-1863. Newcastle Public Library, AB2223. (The Records are referred to below as "Cappers Records".)
- (5) H. W. H. King and E. R. Woolmington, "The Role of the River in the Settlement of the Lower Hunter Valley", Australian Geographer, Vol. VIII, p. 9.
- (6) J. Jervis, "The Hunter Valley : A Century of its History", Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, Vol. XXXIX, p. 102.
- (7) H. J. C. Green, "The Pioneer Settlement of the Hunter Valley 1821-1831", unpub. M. A. thesis, University of Newcastle, 1975, p. iv.
- (8) Ledger 1846-1847, Capper Records . . . AB2238.
- (9) W. J. Goold, "Old Maitland", Journal of the Newcastle and District Historical Society, Vol. X, p. 138.
- (10) C. Mitchell, Hunter's River, Maitland, 1973, pp. 78-79.
- (11) Cash Book, 1845-1846, Cappers Records . . . AB2224.
- (12) Stock Book, [C1845?], Cappers Records . . . AB 2226.
- (13) Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 134-135.
- (14) New South Wales Statistical Register 1861, p. 142.
- (15) Capper to Thomas Lloyd, 7 June, 1851, Out Letters, Cappers Records . . . AB1999.
- (16) H. McQueen, A New Britannia, Ringwood, 1975, p. 174.
- (17) Capper to Thomas Lloyd, op. cit.
- (18) Stock Book, 1849-1850, Cappers Records . . . AB2225.
- (19) Goold, "Old Maitland", op. cit., p. 138.
- (20) Mitchell, op. cit., p. 17.
- (21) Green, op. cit., p. iii.
- (22) R. Ward, The Australian Legend, Melbourne, 1975, p. 85
- (23) Stock Book C1845?, op. cit. More than 270 item headings were listed in this stock book. The items of greatest value were:

Iron	93. 2. 3.	Knives	68. 6. 1.
Nails	55.19. 9	Tin Dishes	49.11.10
Locks	41.10. 3	Files	37. 5. 2
- (24) Dodds to Manager, Bank of New South Wales, 8 March, 1867, Legal and Financial Documents, 1835-1898, Cappers Records . . . A164.
- (25) Capper to Thomas Lloyd, op. cit.
- (26) Goold, "Capper of Maitland", op. cit. p. 21.
- (27) The Maitland Ensign, 21 September, 26 October, 1864.

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DANGAR'S DISMISSAL

BY

RUSSELL ERNEST SETON

SYNOPSIS:

Henry Dangar's valuable contribution to the development of the Hunter Valley in the role of surveyor and explorer has been the subject of a number of historical papers. Most writers, however, give but scant attention to the events which led to his dismissal from the post of Assistant Surveyor in the colony of New South Wales during the rule of Governor Sir Ralph Darling. This paper examines the evidence presented to the Land Board inquiry into the allegations made against him. It seeks to evaluate the justice or otherwise of the penalty imposed on him. Some attempt is also made to analyse the personalities and motives of those most closely involved and to assess their effect on the outcome.

The Land Board inquiry which led to the dismissal of Henry Dangar from the post of Assistant Surveyor resulted from allegations of 'misrepresentations and corrupt conduct' made by Peter McIntyre.¹ Following the inquiry, Governor Darling also suggested that Dangar should be deprived of the Hunter River Land to which he was entitled in addition to the land he had 'so improperly appropriated to himself.'² His punishment was to serve as 'an example to others.'³

McIntyre originally claimed that Dangar had continually placed obstacles in the way of his selection of suitable lands for his 'constituent', Mr T. Potter Macqueen, M.P., and for himself and his brothers. He accused Dangar of falsely claiming land to which Macqueen and/or McIntyre had a prior right of claim. Later he added further charges of breach of regulations in the splitting of sectional lines, an offer of a bribe, and an attempt to coerce him to accept Dangar's disposition of land grants and purchases by withholding completion of the survey of portion of Macqueen's grant.

A further accusation levelled against Dangar during the inquiry was that he had illegally purchased land orders from two men (Dunn and Rapsey) in order to extend his own land-holdings in the district under dispute. Darling conceded that Dangar was the first to draw attention to his dealings with these men. But he imputed to Dangar ulterior motives for his admission: a dishonest claim to merit for the making of it, and a desire to reduce the impact of a possible disclosure of the facts by McIntyre.⁴ McIntyre never directly referred to these transactions but he did suggest that he had other information which he would produce at an appropriate time. This lends support to the Governor's assumption. Even if Dangar was not sure just what other revelations McIntyre might be in a position to make, he probably felt that the safest course open to him was to try to justify his actions in advance of any such disclosure.

Dangar's action in using the names of Dunn and Rapsey on the early map to disguise his own interest in the land only compounded his guilt and cancelled out any redeeming effects of his disclosure of these dealings to Oxley. Nor could his claim that such dealings were commonly practised by 'some of the highest officers in the Colony under the Crown, and openly sanctioned by the local Government' sufficiently excuse his conduct.⁵ On the other hand if, as he claimed, he purchased the orders before 18th May, 1825, Governor Brisbane's public order of 10th November would appear to have closed the door to any right to reclaim the land on behalf of the Crown.⁶ There was a further condition though that 'Fences, Clearings or Buildings shall have been completed.'⁷ No attempt to verify the dates of purchase of the orders for grants, or to ascertain the extent of any improvements to the land is recorded. The fact that Dangar did not pursue this aspect suggests that he might not have been able to support his claim if it had been put to the test.

The dispute over priority of claims was relatively uncomplicated. Despite the efforts of McIntyre to cast doubts on ALL of Dangar's claims to land in the area, there was sufficient documentary evidence to establish the latter's right to his original reserve of 1,300 acres made by Governor Brisbane in March, 1825.

Dangar's answer to McIntyre's claim to priority over the remaining land appears to depend on McIntyre's indecision as to just what land he wished to select.⁸ In this he was supported by Oxley, who said that McIntyre's choice of land was 'Governed by the opinions of others, and so cautious that he usually states his wishes for Reservations to be only until he had made a better selection.'⁹ The obvious implication here was that if McIntyre could not make up his mind it would be unreasonable to expect others to withhold making a selection in the areas to which he had taken a fancy. The fact that Dangar was the chief beneficiary under this scheme weakened the force of their argument. Even so, the weight of evidence in the correspondence put before the Land Board inquiry substantially supports their opinion of McIntyre.

Apart from Dangar's original 1,300 acre tract, the Land Board was satisfied that Macqueen and the McIntyres had an 'indisputable claim' to choose their land 'before the Messrs. Dangar could be permitted to make any further selection whatever.'¹⁰ The Board recommended that Dangar be allowed to retain the 1,300 acres but that he should be required to select the balance of the land to which he was entitled in some other area 'with the survey and distribution of the Lands in which he is totally unconnected.'¹¹ Governor Darling took a much harder line at first. In a letter accompanying the Land Board Report his meaning appears unequivocal:

. . . and I beg to submit to your Lordship that Mr. Henry Dangar may not be permitted to retain the 1,300 acres, . . . or be allowed to possess any land in the District of Hunter River.'¹²

Darling took the precaution of reserving the 1,300 acres pending the decision of the Secretary of State, Lord Bathurst. He was not prepared to concede that McIntyre had any right to this land. No doubt also he was unsure of his ground in depriving Dangar of any title to it. At all events he had modified his stand by December, 1829. He then claimed to be unaware of any objection to the 1,300 acres remaining in Dangar's possession.¹³ Dangar should be deprived of his right to this land as a grant without purchase. Instead, he should be allowed to retain it as part of the 2,000 acres reserved for him with a right to purchase. This interpretation might perhaps be applicable

to the rather vague suggestion of the Land Board that he be allowed to 'receive' the 1,300 acres, and that he should 'make his selection of the rest of the Land ordered in some other District.'¹⁴ It is clearly contrary to the Governor's earlier recommendation. Possibly by this time he was having second thoughts about the severity of his treatment of Dangar and sought to use this means of mitigating the punishment.

The arguments used by Dangar and Oxley to rebut McIntyre's claim to the land selected by Dangar would appear to be a sufficient answer to the charges of obstruction and coercion. By his own admission, McIntyre had unsuccessfully sought to persuade Oxley to change the location of his own 4,000 acre selection. He wished to include in Macqueen's grant this land which he had originally selected for himself. But the substitute land he sought for himself included land already claimed by Messrs. Hall and Cox. Despite his 'remonstrances' Oxley 'pointedly refused' his requests.¹⁵ McIntyre's continued efforts to force him to vary the boundaries originally agreed upon for Macqueen's land drove Dangar to cease his survey of this land pending further advice from Oxley.¹⁶

That regulations forbade the splitting of sectional lines for survey purposes, and that Dangar acted contrary to those regulations is not in doubt. The Land Board took a serious view of this behaviour. They saw the regulations as 'a very salutary check on the conduct of Surveyors', while failure to adhere to them 'would introduce endless confusion and complaint.'¹⁷ Oxley defended Dangar's actions with the assertion that it was impossible to avoid section-splitting if they were to provide for necessary stream frontages.¹⁸ But McIntyre took the attitude that Dangar had resorted to 'highly irregular and improper admeasurements of his own Land' to exclude him (McIntyre) 'altogether from the neighbourhood.'¹⁹ No matter how much truth there may have been in any of these claims, the obvious conclusion is that Dangar was intent on reserving for his own use the choicest land in the area. Because of the clash of personalities which had developed between these two men, the exclusion of McIntyre from the land he sought would have been an added bonus for the Assistant Surveyor.

McIntyre contended that Dangar had attempted to bribe him with an offer of six hundred acres of choice land 'under an expectation that I would acquiesce in the boundaries which he had marked off for himself, facilitate his views of further acquisition and forego all public exposure of his scandalous breach of official trust'²⁰ This was a most serious charge. But an examination of the available evidence suggests that 'bribe' was hardly the appropriate term, or that Dangar was openly attempting to buy his silence. However, bearing in mind Dangar's public office and the methods he had used to obtain the land he was seeking to protect, this was still a rather questionable deal. On the surface it appeared to be a simple arrangement involving the transfer of Dangar's claim to six hundred acres of land near Dart Brook in return for McIntyre's interest in land sought by Dangar elsewhere.²¹ If they had been two private citizens vying for the land in question there would have been nothing unusual in this. But this was far from being the case here. Dangar quite obviously hoped to divert McIntyre's attention from this land in order to avoid any challenge to his claims to it.

Perhaps he might have succeeded if he had been more diplomatic in his dealings with McIntyre. But both men were hot-tempered and prone to speak their minds rather forcefully when they felt they had been slighted or unfairly treated. Dangar in particular exhibited this failing in a number of situations. With some justification, he expressed a 'very deep sense of injury' at being passed over by the appointment of three additional surveyors at a higher salary than that paid to him.²² Lord Bathurst was not particularly impressed by Dangar's arguments at the time. But later (too late), he directed that Dangar should replace the retiring First Assistant Surveyor. Ironically Bathurst suggested when giving this direction that men holding such positions should receive sufficient remuneration to raise them above temptation.²³

When he considered that he had been cheated over the purchase of a horse from Robert Lowe he wrote a letter of complaint to the Sydney Gazette. Lowe was not specifically named in the letter, but his identity was made clear enough. His honour, his principles and his right to the title of 'gentleman' were questioned. As a result, Lowe successfully sued Dangar for libel.²⁴

Henry Dangar's clash with the Highlander was bound to strike sparks. When McIntyre demanded that Dangar send Oxley a map indicating the areas surveyed for each individual, including Church and Crown Reserves, 'upwards from the Forbes Lands', Dangar was provoked to respond in a manner which was far from placatory:

It is not, Sir, my duty or convenience to forward Maps to the Surveyor-General, at this time, as you are pleased to "demand" and which demand I must observe is another marked instance of your unreasonable ideas. 25

McIntyre reflected the arrogant nature of the man he represented in the colony. Thomas Potter Macqueen at one stage harboured visions of himself as the first civilian governor of the colony.²⁶ Before McIntyre arrived Macqueen informed John Macarthur that the Governor had received 'strict orders' to make available to him a grant of 20,000 acres 'wherever my agent may require.' To forestall any attempt to circumvent these orders he had 'procured private

orders of a still more peremptory nature.²⁷ McIntyre's certainty that the full resources of the colony would be made available to him as Macqueen's agent, and that Surveyor-General Oxley would hasten to guide him in his selection of land was obviously based on Macqueen's inflated opinion of his own importance.

Both Dangar and Oxley reacted sharply to his imperious demands for assistance. Dangar 'refused to obey any order which did not come from the Surveyor-General.'²⁸ Oxley could not see why he should be 'called upon to state to a private individual the reasons which govern me in declining to suffer the employment of a public Officer of my Department in the private interests and concerns of individual Settlers.'²⁹ McIntyre apparently construed this attitude as an example of the type of obstruction which Macqueen had expected. He set in train the correspondence which resulted in the Land Board inquiry and Dangar's dismissal.

The personalities of two other protagonists also played a large part in the course of events. Governor Darling, because of his position in the colony, played a major role. Oxley, as Dangar's immediate superior, played a less obvious but quite important one.

Darling came to the colony fresh from a distinguished military career, culminating in the command of troops on the island of Mauritius. For eighteen months of this five-year command he acted as governor of the island. He appears to have applied military standards to this civil post. Naturally this did not endear him to the populace, particularly when he put an end to the lucrative slave traffic. Frederick Watson suggests that this 'profound respect for discipline' rather than valour under fire characterised his military career.³⁰ This authoritarian propensity probably influenced his choice as successor to Governor Brisbane who had failed to deal effectively with misconduct by and opposition from his subordinates. The severity of the penalty which Darling recommended should be applied to Dangar was an indication of this attitude. His insistence that the penalty should be sufficient to serve as an example to others was also typical of the man. Similar motives dictated his treatment of Sudds and Thompson, two soldiers who deliberately committed offences punishable by transportation in order to obtain their discharge from the army. Because this was not the first time disgruntled soldiers had used this ploy, Darling commuted their sentences to seven years hard labour in the chain gangs. As a salutary warning to others of a like mind they were publicly drummed out of their regiment in chains.³¹

Oxley's wholehearted defence of Dangar may have had an adverse effect on the latter's treatment at the hands of the Governor. Darling on several occasions demonstrated his antipathy towards the Surveyor-General. In a letter outlining his frustrations in dealings with Macarthur and the 'exclusives', he pointed out that the Surveyor-General, 'who is a clever Man and a Useful Officer is also of this Party.'³² Several months later, in a letter proposing William Dumaesq for the position of Deputy Surveyor-General, he became even more critical of Oxley.³³ McIntyre's complaint against Dangar was sent to the Colonial Secretary in August 1826. Dangar was not at that time Deputy Surveyor-General; no such post existed then. But he was being considered for the position of First Assistant Surveyor when William Harpur retired. Darling's attempt to place his brother-in-law in a senior position in that department may have operated, whether consciously or not, to influence his decision to remove a leading contender.

There is no escaping the conclusion that Henry Dangar used his public position for private gain. Equally plainly, the motives of the complainant, Peter McIntyre, were highly suspect. Not all of his charges were justified. Some of Dangar's actions, while not strictly honest, were commonplace in the colony. This was particularly true of the rather easy-going period of Governor Brisbane. Perhaps it was unfortunate for Dangar that the complaint was made when the strict disciplinarian Darling was at the helm of the ship of state. Nevertheless, Dangar's attempt to shift the blame on to his superior does him little credit, particularly when Oxley was so staunch in his support throughout the inquiry.

FOOTNOTES:

1. McIntyre to Colonial Secretary Macleay, August, 1826, N.S.W. Governor's Despatches, (G.D.). Vol.10 (1827). Mitchell Library A1199, p.537.
2. Darling to Bathurst, 11th March, 1827, Historical Records of Australia. (H.R.A.), (1), Vol. XIII. p.149.
3. Ibid.
4. Darling to Goderich, 10th August, 1827, Ibid., p.500.
5. Dangar to Under Secretary Twiss, 15th November, 1828, H.R.A. (1), Vol. XIV. p.528.
6. Ibid., p.529.
7. See H.R.A. (1), Vol. XIV, p.927.
8. Dangar to Oxley, 4th September, 1826, G.D. Vol. 10, p.641.
9. Oxley to Macleay, 8th September, 1826, Ibid., p.655.
10. Report by Land Board to Macleay, 28th February, 1827, H.R.A. (1), Vol. XIII, p.152.
11. Ibid., p.154.
12. Darling to Bathurst, 11th March, 1827, Ibid., p.149. (His italics.)
13. Darling to Murray, 19th December, 1829, H.R.A. (1), Vol. XV, p.296.

14. Land Board Report, H.R.A. (1), Vol. XIII, p.154.
15. McIntyre to Macleay, August, 1826, G.D. Vol.10, pp.569,570.
16. Dangar to McIntyre, 11th July, 1826, Ibid., pp.598,599.
17. Land Board Report, H.R.A. (1), Vol.XIII, p.153.
18. Oxley to Macleay, 8th September, 1826, G.D., Vol.10, p.665.
19. McIntyre to Macleay, August, 1826, Ibid., pp.572, 573.
20. Ibid., pp.579,580.
21. Ibid., p.581.
22. Dangar to Bathurst, 12th December, 1825, H.R.A. (1), Vol.XII, pp.495-497.
23. Bathurst to Darling, 12th December, 1826, Ibid., p.714.
24. E.C. Rowland, 'The Life and Times of Henry Dangar' in the Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society (J.R.A.H.S.). Vol. 39 (1953), pp.11-14. (The dates given by Rowland for these events are apparently wrong. On 2nd January. 1828. when the letter was said to have appeared in the Gazette, Dangar would have been in England - Ibid., p.49.)
25. McIntyre to Dangar, 11th July, 1826 and Dangar to McIntyre, G.D., Vol.10, pp.602, 603 and 605.
26. Macqueen to John Macarthur, 12th July, 1824, Macarthur Papers, Mitchell Library A2900, cited by Rachel Roxburgh. 'Thomas Potter Macqueen of Segenhoe, New South Wales in J.R.A.H.S., Vol. 58 (1972), p.178.

27. Ibid.
28. John Macarthur to Macqueen, 12th July, 1824, Macarthur Papers, Mitchell Library A2917, cited ibid., p. 180. 'Thomas Potter Macqueen of Segenhoe, New South Wales' in J.R.A.H.S., Vol.58 (1972), p.178.
29. Oxley to McIntyre, 12th May, 1825, G.D., Vol.10, p.562.
30. H.R.A. (1), Vol. XII, Introduction, p.xii.
31. Darling to Bathurst, 4th December, 1826, H.R.A. (1), Vol.XII, p.717.
32. Darling to Hay, 1st May, 1826, Ibid., p.256.
33. Darling to Hay, 4th September, 1826, Ibid., p.535.

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THE 'WANTED COLUMNS' OF THE MAITLAND MERCURY, 1850-55:
EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS DURING THE GOLD RUSHES

BY

JAN E. HORNE

SYNOPSIS:

The aim of this paper is to examine the "Wanted" columns of the "Maitland Mercury" in 1850 and 1855, in order, firstly, to determine the nature of employment available for men and men in the Hunter Valley in those years, as an indication of urban development. Secondly, it aims to analyse any immediate changes in the employment pattern after the first peak of gold discoveries.

The active discouragement of the "Maitland Mercury" towards gold prospecting, is seen as an important factor in reducing the labour shortage. The jobs available in 1855 point to an expanding urbanization and industrial development, and Census figures support this view. It is concluded, therefore, that, in the period 1850 to 1855, expansion outstripped the availability of labour, and this, rather than the discovery of gold, exacerbated the labour shortage.

During 1849 and 1850, 4,769 men and 6,285 women emigrated to New South Wales, by far the majority coming at public expense. ¹ What livelihoods could these people expect to find in their new home? The 'bounty' system had been discontinued, but agents were contracted by employers to meet the immigrant ships and arrange employment. Other sources of employment information for the new arrivals, as well as the native born, were the columns of newspapers and labour exchanges, such as the Servants Registry Office and Female Immigration Depot which operated in Sydney, Newcastle and Maitland. By 1850 the colony had experienced one depression but the economy was now recovering and employees could anticipate a market in which their labour, and especially their skills, were in demand.

A carpenter or blacksmith could expect to receive in the country 36 p.a., a farm labourer or shepherd 17, a female cook 15-19, a domestic servant 10-14. ² The majority of men were still employed in rural industry, but from 1850, there was also a period of town development, especially in the Hunter Valley. The extension of steam power to brickyards, saw-mills and flour mills in this period, also created an industrial labour market.

The years 1850 and 1855 have been particularly selected to determine the extent to which urban, rural and industrial developments in the Hunter Valley are reflected in the demand for labour as advertised in the 'Maitland Mercury.' Such a survey may also indicate any immediate effects on this demand as a result of the gold discoveries.

In the 1850s Maitland was the second largest town in the colony, the centre of an extensive wheat growing area and the economic link with Morpeth, the port to which bullock drays brought wool and produce from all the north for shipment to Sydney. By 1850, the Maitland Police District had a population of 10,240, ³ there were Courts, churches, banks, warehouses and 842 houses of stone or brick. The columns of the 'Maitland Mercury' indicate a wide variety of artisans and merchants to provide goods and services for the hinterland settlements.

The demand for skilled tradesmen was high, particularly those needed for basic building. Carpenters were most in demand each position being advertised 2 or 3 times. Five years later, a change occurred in the development and prosperity of the region, as well as an increased demand for basic building skills, the more refined and sophisticated trades make an appearance. Brickmakers were heavily in demand, but as well, Stonemasons, a Plasterer, Morticers and Painter. Carpenters' wages had increased from 4/6 per day to 15/- per day, "liberal" wages being a feature of advertisements. One blacksmith was offered as well "a full set of tools and stock of iron." ⁴

Another feature which appears by 1855 is the demand for Drapers, Grocers, Shoemakers, Tailors and a Coachsmith (advertised eleven times), thus indicating the advance of civilization and a thriving economy. This is also indicated in the demand for educators. In 1850, positions for 4 governesses were advertised; this increased to seven in 1858 and all of these were advertised twice at least, some three or four times, and one, "to teach 9 or 10 children and be treated as one of the family" appeared seven times. The Board of National Education advertised in 1850 for teachers in state schools, but in 1855 wealthy families were demanding private master and tutors.

Service industries had also appeared by 1855 and were seeking labour. Monthly advertisements were inserted for men for the Police Force; a position for a "Practical man to Superintend Road Making and Repairs" was offered at the attractive salary of 200 p.a. Labourers for the Northern Road were offered 7 per month, with "tents provided." The new Maitland Hospital had been opened in 1849 and advertised for Wardsmen in 1855, one for "An Active Middle Aged Man" appearing thirteen times.

The demand for Married Couples as House Servants was high in 1850 but increased by 190% in 1855. The wife was generally required for domestic service as housemaid, cook or laundress, and the husband as groom, gardener or "general useful". Salaries were quoted in 1855 as 100 p.a. without rations. Couples required for farm work showed a greater increase (800%), all positions being advertised three times.

One area particularly reflects urban growth and the acute shortage of young labour. In 1850, five positions were offered for boys, three of these being for apprenticeships. In 1855, twenty-eight were required, of which fifteen were for apprenticeships. These were now for the more refined trades of an expanding economy and prosperous community, such as the Upholstery and Paperhanging Trade, wholesale and retail businesses, coachsmith and cabinetmaking trades. The 'Maitland Mercury' advertised for an "Apprentice to the Press" in almost every edition in 1855; an other was advertised 27 times and several over 10 times. The 1851 and 1856 Census figures show decreases in the numbers of youths aged 14 to 21 years in relation to the rest of the population. If we assume that each juvenile group in the 1851 Census corresponds to the next age group in the 1856 Census, it can be seen that a net increase took place for every group except 7 to 14 age group in 1851 - i.e. the 14 - 21 age group in 1856. This would strongly suggest youths in the 14 - 21 age group had been attracted to other areas by 1 March, 1856.

Maitland 1851 - 1856					
Male Population					
2 yr	2 - 7 yr	7 - 14 yr	14 - 21 yr	21 - 45 yr	
509	1151	1428	928	2787	1856
420	913	928	485	1981	1851

Single unskilled women were restricted to positions in Domestic Service. The demand for female house servants, excluding the more skilled cooks, laundresses and needlewomen, increased from 1850 to 1855 by 240%. Census figures for the 14 to 21 age group conform to the pattern of general population increase for females. The increase in demand for labour in this age group is therefore likely to be due to the expanding prosperity of townships.

Maitland 1851 - 1856					
Female Population					
2 yr	2 - 7 yr	7 - 14 yr	14 - 21 yr	21 - 45 yr	
475	1084	1585	1238	2343	1856
409	942	913	581	1534	1851

The Australian Agricultural Company was of great importance in the pastoral development of the Hunter Valley, conducting stock sales at Maitland two days each week until 1853.⁵ Tobacco was extensively grown and an estimated 32 vineyards established.⁶ The effects of a labour shortage in the wine-growing industry had already been felt, as indicated by requests for the application of the Bounty system to European labourers. The first shipload of German immigrants for local winemakers had arrived in 1849, under the agency of Kirchner and Co. This apparently satisfied the demand, for in 1850 the 'Maitland Mercury' carried only one advertisement (for 6 Spademen) for a Valley vineyard. However, by 1855, Kirchner & Co. were again engaged in the search for European labour. The following advertisement was inserted in the "Maitland Mercury" three times in January, 1855:

GERMAN IMMIGRATION - Kirchner & Co. beg to intimate to those colonists who are desirous of importing labour from Germany, that he continues to take orders for the introduction of vinedressers, shepherds, farm servants, mechanics, domestic servants etc. to be selected, engaged and forwarded under the direction of Mr. Kirchner, now in Europe.

Permanent jobs for farm labourers were 2½ times more plentiful in 1855 than in 1850; for stockmen 5 times more and for station overseers 8 times more. Drovers were offered 3 per week and a bullock driver 80 p.a. plus 12 lb beef, 12 lbs flour, 2 lbs sugar and ¼ lb tea. Temporary positions for rural workers, such as drivers, splitters, well-sinkers, fencers and horsebreakers were four times more plentiful in 1855 than in 1850. The shortage of labour is indicated by the great frequency of advertisements - those for farm labourers were repeated up to 6 times; for stockmen up to 10 times; and all others 2 or 3 times. This is pinpointed in the 1856 Census. On March 1, 1851, 1,312 people were employed in the rural industry, on March 1, 1856, 1,629 people were employed, an increase of only 24%, whereas those employed as "artificers and Skilled Tradesmen" increased by 500% and unskilled labour by 285%.

The period 1850 - 1855 was one in which a diversified and industrialising economy became firmly established. In 1852 the Hunter River New Steam Navigation Company was established; by 1855 Maitland had a brewery, 2 soap and candle factories producing 183 tons of soap and 168 tons of candles, 4 tobacco factories, an ironfoundry, 4 canneries, brickworks, flour mills and 4 coal mines producing 20,344 tons of coal. The shipbuilding industry was thriving and the starting of the railway line from Newcastle occasioned much approving comment in the editorials and correspondence of the 'Maitland Mercury'.

Advertised positions in industry increased from 1850 to 1855 by 90% and all jobs were advertised in 1855 several times. The coal industry shows a particular boom, demand for miners increasing by 180% and the A. A. Co. offering 30/- per day. The need for more skilled workers such as Engineers and Managers reflects also an increase in industrialised techniques.

Census figures for this period show a significant increase in the 21 - 45 year age group, yet a labour shortage still occurred, as the Wanted Columns of the 'Maitland Mercury' show. The reason for this must be seen in the expansion of urban, rural and industrial developments rather than the desertion of labour to other areas, such as the gold diggings.

A comparison of Occupation figures show a decrease in those employed in Trade or Commerce, sheep grazing and (male) domestic service, but a very great increase in skilled workmen, unskilled labourers, female domestic servants and clerical workers. These increases were still not sufficient to meet the demand - advertisements for skilled workmen increased by 220%, for unskilled labourers by 333%, female domestic servants by 400% and clerical workers by 750%.

The increased advertising for employees in Trade and Commerce from 1850 to 1855 suggests an increase in urban development, whereas the demand for male domestic servants may have had to compete in 1855 with jobs such as retail assistants, waiters and industry workers.

Effects of a labour shortage were thus certainly being felt in the Hunter Valley by 1855, particularly in commerce, skilled trades and industry. But the 'Maitland Mercury' generally reflects an atmosphere of thriving prosperity and expansion. Within 5 years, the rawness had given way to established civilization. In 1850 merchants were only concerned with advertising basic commodities such as oil, seed, hides and coffins, but by 1855, they were announcing the arrival of "splendid" pianos, "smart" phaetons, "elegant ribbons – just imported." The quality of entertainment had advanced in sophistication and 1855 saw the proliferation of "academics".

In its reporting of the gold discoveries, the 'Maitland Mercury' maintained throughout the period the conservative stand it had taken over the Californian discoveries. Readers would have derived little incentive from the regularly published reports from San Francisco to set off for the diggings. The prevailing tone was pessimistic about success and emphasised the lack of shelter, disease, high cost of food and lawlessness. – "the awful pictures of a tent town are horrifying in the extreme." 7

The reluctant acknowledgement of the discovery of a 9 oz "piece of gold" at Summer Hill first appeared in the 'Maitland Mercury' on 21st May, 1851, but reports of other findings were discounted. – "In the absence of confirmation, we are inclined to regard these statements as exaggerations." The gloomy results of this discovery preoccupied the first editorial:–

"All the ordinary industrial pursuits are likely to be neglected . . . Some engaged in productive industry- in pastoral, agricultural and manufacturing pursuits – will be induced to desert their present occupations . . . Our power of producing our staple articles of export and consumption may . . . be seriously crippled. The withdrawal of a considerable amount of labour from farm(s) . . . will tend to raise the price of the necessaries of life . . . and still further cripple those engaged in the production of wool and tallow" . . .

The Editor called for the cessation of all expansion, immediate searches for a temporary labour source and government protection from "rough and lawless characters."

Subsequent editorials emphasised the defiance that would result from the high licence fees and a week after the first announcement predicted (with less accuracy) the economic destruction of the colony:–

"The discovery (of gold) is sweeping over the country like a terrific storm which bends or breaks down all before it, and in its track will be found the ruin of many who have spent years of toil . . . Men . . . must submit as they would to a shipwreck or an earthquake: they must strive manfully to save as much as they can from the wreck, and gird up their loins to replace the properties which have been thus suddenly shattered or destroyed."

The gloom then gave way to a consideration of ways in which Maitland could capitalise on the strike. The transportation of goods directly to the diggings was advocated and the hope offered of gold discoveries being made in the nearby area. The "selected" extracts reprinted from the Sydney papers emphasised factors to deter prospective diggers – "cold and hunger", "not being provided with any shelter", "miserable provisions". By June, editorials were more preoccupied with the Transportation debate, the floods and the mails. Subsequent strikes began to be viewed more favourably – immigration would be encouraged and so "will do much towards solving the hitherto puzzling problem of how this country is to be peopled." The panic had subsided now that it was clear that "propensity for migrating to the diggings has sensibly abated". The seven-point advice to Intending Gold Diggers" sums up the propaganda campaign mounted by the 'Maitland Mercury' as spokesman for the commercial and pastoral industries which dominated the area.

By 1855, with the experience of Eureka behind, and complacent about the continued prosperity of the area, news of the gold diggings was relegated to occasional reports of the Hanging Rock and Rocky River findings. These emphasised the shortage of water, extreme heat and depressed state of the gold market.

The evidence studied points to the success of the 'Maitland Mercury's' campaign – the Hunter Valley did not suffer a crisis as an immediate result of the discovery of gold. The labour shortage was a continuing problem, but increased advertising in 1855 must be seen in relation to a thriving economy in which urban, rural and industrial expansion created a demand for labour which immigration and normal population growth, at this stage, could not satisfy. The gold discoveries, rather than depleting labour reserves, must be seen as eventually contributing to its prosperity.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Statistical Register of N.S.W. 1849-1856. Govt. Printer Sydney 1859.
2. Ibid.
3. Census, 1st March, 1851.
4. "Maitland Mercury", May, 1856.
5. Goold, W. J. "Old Maitland" N.D.H.S. Vol. x Part x
6. Driscoll, W. P. "Beginnings of the Wine Industry in the Hunter Valley"
7. Reported in 'Maitland Mercury' from "People's Advocate" 2/3/ 1850.

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 1855

WORKING—CLASS WOMEN AND THE SUFFRAGETTES : A STUDY OF URBAN
NEW SOUTH WALES AND VICTORIA, 1890—1900

BY

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SYNOPSIS:

By 1890, the greater proportion of the Australian population lived and worked in urban areas. At least half were women. (1) A large number of these urban women were working class. Their history is largely unwritten. What is overlooked, by feminists and traditional historians alike, is that women do not constitute a common united entity. Women, like men, have many places in history. They had, in the period 1890 to 1910, differing and often conflicting aims. This period, for the working-class woman, was socially disastrous. This effectively removed her from the mainstream of the motivations and aspirations of the middle-class suffragette.

Working-class women, if viewed from the level of the 'New Left' or traditional historians, are not found in Australian history. The former, by applying strict ideological criteria, eliminate a working-class altogether.⁽²⁾ The latter, though less concerned with the validity of class identification, generally neglect to include women in their historical interpretations. Sociologists and social historians have less difficulty in locating social stratification (and women) in society and this criteria will be used. A working-class, for the purposes of this study, will be defined in terms of socio-economic status.⁽³⁾ Working-class conditions have, to some extent, been subject to a similar analysis. Historians have tended to take literally Coghlan's assertion that Australia has been a 'working-man's paradise.'⁽⁴⁾ Economic historians are questioning this assumption, especially for the period 1890 to 1900. The working-class of the south-eastern metropolis, more so than any other urban area, reached a nadir of misery during the 1890's with record unemployment alleviated only by sporadic inadequate relief. Working-class women were affected by these circumstances enough to initiate a move of their own. It had no relationship to the program followed by the middle-class suffragette.

The nature of the battles fought in Australia over legal and political equality for women illustrates very clearly . . . , that far from being an homogeneous group, women were seriously divided according to class as well as marital status.⁽⁵⁾

Beverley Kingston recognizes the divisions of which the women's movement in 1890, and until recently, appeared largely unaware.⁽⁶⁾ Anne Summers, on the other hand, rejects the premise that the movement was class based. She admits to its middle-class composition but as,

'The feminists represented their policies as being in the interests of women of all classes and certainly as long as they were the sole champions of female suffrage and a host of other issues affecting women it was not possible to assign a class label to any of these policies.'⁽⁷⁾

Summers concentrates on stressing the active force of the suffragettes. She is not concerned with the worsening economic conditions of the period in which their action took place. The economic depression of the 1890's depressed all classes, but none more so than the semi and unskilled worker. Economic historians have suggested that their plight, as a working-class, was worse than anywhere in the world at the time.⁽⁸⁾ The middle-class suffragette, secure in her higher status and financial security, could have little identification with this group or any understanding of the plight of the woman who experienced such conditions daily.

Summers and others demonstrate the sympathy of the women's movement toward the working-class woman by the attention paid to pressing for better conditions in factory employment for women. Rose Scott, a prominent suffragette, is cited as having exerted much influence in the framing and passing of the New South Wales Factories and Shops Act and Early Closing Act of 1889.⁽⁹⁾ Kingston contends that these reforms were more the result of pressures from ' . . . benevolent liberal patriarchal sources.'⁽¹⁰⁾ Rose Scott may have had influence or she may not; what is more important is the proportion of women in the workforce who received this support from the suffragettes. Males were, in the 1890's, proportionately larger as breadwinners and females still predominately dependent. According to Coghlan's estimates, see Table I, 82.64 per cent of females were dependent in New South Wales in 1891. Victoria's figure was comparable at 78.85 per cent. Women were not in the workforce in large proportions and were therefore largely

Table I: Proportion of Male and Female Breadwinners in New South Wales and Victoria, 1891

State	Proportion of Breadwinners		Proportion of Dependents	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
	%	%	%	%
New South Wales	63.13	17.36	36.87	82.64
Victoria	65.42	21.15	34.58	78.85
Australia	64.01	18.12	35.99	81.88

Source: T. A. Coghlan, A Statistical Account of the Seven Colonies of Australasia, 1899-1900, Government Printer, Sydney, 1900, p. 596.

dependent on the increasingly uncertain incomes of the male population. Though exploited and in need of better pay and work conditions, working women were only a small proportion of all women. The majority of working-class women were dependent; their needs, as will be demonstrated, were of a different kind. They received scant recognition of this from the suffragettes.

Prostitution was abhorred by the suffragettes and Temperance Unions alike. The suffragettes saw the prostitutes as victims and sought to advance schemes of rehabilitation and homes for working girls. For example, Louisa Lawson, the radical feminist and outspoken champion of women in the workforce, founded the Darlinghurst Hostel for working girls as a bulwark against prostitution.⁽¹¹⁾ In their zeal to eradicate this socially unacceptable profession they sought to enforce middle-class morality onto those women, who through choice or circumstance, chose this avenue to survive the depression. Cannon suggests that in the 1890's there were, in Melbourne, 10,000 prostitutes.⁽¹²⁾ A high percentage of women were intent on solving their economic problems in the only way they saw as possible. As Kingston states,

... the only choice she (the working-class woman) had to make was whether she would try to hold body and soul together by 'respectable' means or whether she would take the easier path of easy virtue. Either way she would age quickly and still be socially unacceptable.⁽¹³⁾

Summers describes the double standard of morality which prevailed between men and women. She approaches seeing the double standard of morality prevailing between middle-class and working-class women when she notes that women from the working-class were 'Damned Whores' until they proved otherwise.⁽¹⁴⁾ Prostitution was a profession of the lower socio-economic groups. There was no pressure from them to have it abolished.

Maybanke Anderson, active in a wide range of issues that assumes her views were widely known and supported,⁽¹⁵⁾ illustrates a further division in the aims and needs of women in the 1890's. Girls of a 'better sort' did not attend government schools. These 'of necessity' were suitable only for the children of working-class origin.⁽¹⁶⁾ The pressure, by the suffragettes, for better quality and higher education was an aspiration of middle and upper-class values. They were aware of the need for scholastic training to gain professional employment and recognition in traditionally male dominated areas. It was a necessary paradigm of the 19th century women's movement to acquire educational equality with men. It was not considered a necessary goal for working-class women. Elementary education was reasonably equal for both boys and girls in that decade. The daughters of working-class families achieved an adequate preparation for the strata of society in which they were to be placed. It is probably unlikely that they aspired for anything more. Higher education was not an integral issue in feminist propaganda and University graduates were not prominent in the suffrage movement.⁽¹⁷⁾ Nevertheless, education reform was supported, in the hope of achieving a larger representation of women in tertiary education. This was an interest of the middle-class and had no common bond or wider implication to include the woman in lower socio-economic groups.

The right to vote was the main vehicle for the suffragette's claims. In this they included all the injustices which were to them, in the 1890's, so clearly evident. Once gained they would have equality, with men, in the pursuits of personal and national life. It became, '... symbolic of the self-determination which women sought in all areas of life.'⁽¹⁸⁾ The fervence of their belief initiated such action as petitions to Parliament, Committees and Leagues, suffrage oriented journals and newspapers, and attempts to enter Parliament, (for example, Vida Goldstein.) Why didn't working-class women respond to such wide publicity? They were literate and communications were adequate. The Government Statistician, T.A. Coghlan, records that by 1889, education had improved the reading ability of the population to the extent that few were now illiterate.⁽¹⁹⁾ Only Britain, he claimed, had a larger correspondence and newspaper distribution per head of population.⁽²⁰⁾ The Labor Party eventually came to include female suffrage in its platform, but working-class women despite their apparent awareness, remained outside the pressures for the 'right to vote.'

In 1891, Vida Goldstein reported that in a petition containing over 30,000 signatures that,

"Very rarely were refusals made by wives of working men, ... These women came face to face with a adverse conditions of human existence" ⁽²¹⁾

This supposed enthusiasm from the working-class woman did not last, for the adverse conditions became too great. As the depression pushed the working-class deeper into hopeless circumstances the realities of class division became too apparent. Each group, working-class and middle-class, became deeply imbued with their own particular grievance. The suffragette pressing for justice and equality for all women but in reality for a conservative and virtuous middle-class elite. The working-class responding to the adverse social conditions with a desperation born of personal suffering and lack of public concern.

An indication of the social dislocation suffered by the working-class can be gained from a study of the serious poverty of the 1890's and on whom this fell most harshly. This was the unemployed. In Victoria, where the rate of unemployment was the highest, there were 28 per cent of the male workforce out of work by 1893. As Table 2 demonstrates, high levels of unemployment persisted until 1900. Real incomes were not regained until two decades later.

Table 2: Victorian Unemployment, 1891-1900

Year	Unemployed per cent
1891	8.3
1892	17.6
1893	28.3
1894	24.9
1895	21.7
1896	10.8
1897	11.5
1898	10.2
1899	9.1
1900	5.3

Source: P. G. Macarthy, "Labor and the Living Wage, 1890-1910", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 13, April, 1967, p.83.

Macarthy claims that the working-class did not achieve any improvement in their depressed standard of living until 1914.⁽²²⁾ The conditions of the unskilled worker, in particular, were considered so deplorable and hopeless that a Royal Commission was demanded in 1897 in New South Wales. Two reports by the Unemployed Advisory Board, 1899 and 1900, stressed that it was the unskilled worker who was adversely affected by the depression and the attendant lack of Government expenditure on Public Works.⁽²³⁾

It was inevitable that women should increase their participation in the workforce in an attempt to alleviate their financial distress. Victorian women were able, with that State's earlier industrial expansion, to enter manufacturing employment more readily. There was an increase in female participation in Victorian manufacturing of 14 per cent by 1900, and in New South Wales of 7 per cent.⁽²⁴⁾ Such a small increase in New South Wales does not illustrate a large-scale marshalling of women into the workforce. Victorian women were underpaid, sweated and worked long hours.⁽²⁵⁾ The reward for employment was small and accompanied, during the 1890's, by the hostility of the unemployed male population. It remains clear that there was a general dependence on the male breadwinner. The members of the working-class remained, for the most part, poverty stricken or, if in work, on uncertain depressed wages. In 1892, at least two thousand people in Melbourne were reported to be starving. The same year, in Sydney, starvation was reported for a large number of men, women and children.⁽²⁶⁾

A description of the squalor of working-class life becomes more telling when it is remembered that many Australians were massed into the urban cities of the Eastern seaboard. Sydney contained some of the worst slum areas imaginable and these produced shocking social effects for the working-class woman. Of the individual woman, one observer wrote that,

"... the women of the poorer classes look prematurely old: many of them are absolutely frightful."²⁷

For Melbourne's poor, the 'Age' wrote revealingly of the depressed state of industrial suburbs,

"... the forlorn and destitute workers are hiding in alleys and lanes... can be found the emaciated and wasted faces of the women and their little ones."⁽²⁸⁾

Cannon asserts that contemporary observers claimed that every second man, in Melbourne, was unemployed. This, he says, may be guess work, but there can be cited shocking individual cases of deprivation and horror.

The social conditions facing the working-classes in the 1890's imply needs of a basic kind. Economic security was necessary and this led to the seeking, by the male population, of assurances that real wages would be maintained. They feared, with the prevailing economic conditions, that a drop in wages would not be regained in such a competitive labour market. Employment for those out of work was a further necessary aim. Some kind of Government intervention into the plight of those affected so harshly was also of prime importance. None of these needs were seen as being readily or quickly obtained. In Sydney, as an answer to the starving conditions, rations only were made available to keep families, that is, wives and children of the unemployed, at '... just above the pressure of actual hunger'⁽²⁹⁾ Apart from this measure and the efforts of the Labour Bureau, (which sent men to be employed in the country with little success⁽³⁰⁾) there was no real attempt to introduce relief of a substantial nature until much later in the 20th century. The 19th century philosophy of leaving the poor to manage as best they could was not easily dismantled. In the meantime, work-class women turned to other avenues to achieve recognition of their unique position in society.

"The melancholy line filed down the street - Some hundreds, seedy, pale, their wistful eyes Stared strangely at the well-dressed crowds who saw Them pass along, for it was evening: ... (31)

The words of the above poem express succinctly the abject position of the unemployed and the apparent unconcern of those who were not so affected. The standard bearers of the unemployed processions were often female whose, '... genteel scruples have been silenced by the sobs of their hungry children.' (32) Working-class women began to agitate for relief from their distress. In Melbourne they supported the mass of demonstrations aimed at gaining employment for the thousands out of work. In June 1892, carrying small children, they joined the men in the attempts to convince the Government of the seriousness of their plight. They marched among the 500 unemployed on Scots Church much to the amusement of the congregation consisting of members from a better class suburb. (33) In Sydney there were public meetings which were '... even dangerous to the social order', in the same year. (34) Peyser does not mention the attendance of women at these highly volatile gatherings. Newspaper reports are vague as to the composition of Sydney demonstrations. Most refer to mass meetings of citizens. (35) Women may have been included in this description. If not there, it might be assumed that they, as members of the working-class so affected, shared the same sentiments as those who did attend.

The radical nature of the working-class woman was not part of a wider political gesture. It was a response to a specific need. In these terms, it was a selfish narrow aim to gain relief for a section of people who were in great distress. This can be further illustrated by the highly spontaneous outbursts of 'radicalism' displayed by the even narrower class category, the miner's wife. Newcastle and Wollongong, both coalfields, and characterized by small dense settlements clustered around the workings, were notorious for these angry uprisings. From the 1860's, their skill and vehemence at 'tin-kettling' was variously reported until the 1890's and early 20th century when the miner's strikes reached their peak and ultimate failure. The women were invariably more successful in putting the 'blacklegs' to flight than the men were in obtaining success for their claims and complaints about their uncertain work conditions. It is easy to judge the motives of such women as either narrow or unimaginative, but it is more difficult to imagine what other response they could have given. (36) Their position in the society precluded them from any link to the suffrage movement to attain their aims through that avenue. The right to vote may have been just as central to achieving their goals. They could not know it when just the need to survive was so important in their lives.

The move by working-class women lacked the organization which grew among the suffragettes. Apart from the attempts by Labor women such as Lilian Locke to gain votes from working-class women for Labor candidates there were no direct moves to create a consciousness of unity in working-class women. (37) Their 'radicalism' remained fragmented and ephemeral. This does not however detract from their importance in Australian history. During the 1890's, working-class women became overtly active in support of better wages, work for the unemployed and relief for those in distress. They demonstrated convincingly, in the suburbs of Melbourne and Sydney and on the coalfields, that they were capable of stepping outside conventional moulds to achieve desired social ends. Many risked injury and arrest and were abused (as were the suffragettes) for overstepping the accepted bounds of their sex. (38) The failure of the women's movement to recognize the basic social and economic needs of poorer women lost them a potential ally in their fight for political equality. The depression heightened the differences existing between middle-class and working-class women. Without social dislocation and economic disarray, working-class women might have remained as responsive to middle-class aims as they had been in 1891. The suffragettes, on the other hand, could not comprehend a lifestyle that was so dissimilar to their own. They were immune to the hopeless circumstances of working-class depressed conditions. Their political aims, in the end, bore no relationship to the socio-economic hardships imposed on the working-class woman during the 1890's in colonial New South Wales and Victoria.

FOOTNOTES:

- (1) S. Glynn, Urbanization in Australian History, 1788-1900. Nelson Australia, 1970, p. 3.
G. Clark, "Urban Australia," in A. F. Davies and S. Encel. (Ed's), Australian Society : A Sociological Study. Cheshire Publishing Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1974, p. 43.
M. Cannon, Life In The Cities, Thomas Nelson (Australia) Ltd., 1975. p. 10.
Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1901-1907, pp. 164-165.
- (2) T. Irving and B. Berzins, "History and the New Left : Beyond Radicalism." in R. Gordon, The Australian New Left, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1970, p. 79.
- (3) R. Lawson, Brisbane In the 1890's, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1973, pp. 42-43.
- (4) T. A. Coghlan, A Statistical Account of the Seven Colonies of Australasia. 1895-1896. Government Printer. Sydney. p. 82
- (5) B. Kingston, My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann. Nelson. Melbourne. 1975. p. 12.
- (6) Editorial, Refractory Girl, No's 13-14. March. 1977, p. 2.
- (7) A. Summers, Damned Whores and God's Police, Penguin Books Ltd.. Australia. 1975. p. 353.
- (8) P. F. McDonald, Marriage in Australia, Australian Family Formation Project. Monograph No. 2. Australian National University. 1974, p. 146.
- (9) D. Scott, "Woman Suffrage: The Movement in Australia." Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, 53. Part 4. December, 1967, p. 304.
A. Summers, op cit, p. 354.
- (10) B. Kingston, op cit, p. 63.
- (11) A. Summers, op cit, p. 364.
- (12) M. Cannon, The Land Boomers. Melbourne University Press, 1967. p. 24.
- (13) B. Kingston, op cit, p. 120.
- (14) A. Summers, op cit, p. 370.
- (15) A. Summers, ibid, p. 334.
- (16) M. Anderson, "Women in Australia," in M. Atkinson, (Ed.) Australia Economic and Political Studies. MacMillan and Co. Ltd. Melbourne. 1920, p. 267.
- (17) A. Summers, op cit, p. 351.
- (18) A. Summers, ibid, p. 359.
- (19) T. A. Coghlan, A Statistical Account of the Seven Colonies of Australasia, 1891. Acting Government Printer. Sydney. 1891. pp. 261-262.
- (20) T. A. Coghlan, A Statistical Account of the Seven Colonies of Australasia, 1895-1896. Government Printer. Sydney. 1896. pp. 82-83.
- (21) D. Scott, op cit, p. 315.
- (22) P. G. Macarthy, "Wages in Australia, 1891 to 1914". Australian Economic History Review, 10, No. 1. March. 1970. p. 73.
- (23) P. G. Macarthy, ibid, p. 75.
- (24) P. G. Macarthy, ibid, p. 72.
- (25) E. Ryan and A. Conlon, Gentle Invaders, Thomas Nelson (Australia) Ltd., Melbourne. 1975, pp. 34-35.
- (26) D. Peyser, "A Study of the History of Welfare Work in Sydney from 1788 till about 1900, Part 1," Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, 25, Part 3, 1939, p. 210.
M. Cannon, Life In The Cities, op cit, p. 264.
Sydney Morning Herald, 20th June, 1892.
- (27) M. Cannon, Life In The Cities, ibid, p. 264.
- (28) M. Cannon, The Land Boomers, op cit, p. 22.
- (29) D. Peyser, op cit, p. 210.
- (30) T. H. Kewley, Social Security In Australia, Sydney at the University Press, 1965, p. 24.

- (31) The Bulletin, 9th July, 1892.
- (32) The Bulletin, 9th July, 1892.
- (33) M. Cannon, The Land Boomers, op cit, p. 27.
- (34) D. Peyser, op cit, p. 210.
- (35) Sydney Morning Herald, 2nd May, 1892.
- (36) W. Mitchell, "Wives of the Radical Labour Movement," in A. Curthoys, S. Eade and P. Spearritt. (Ed's), Women at Work, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Canberra, 1975. p. 7.
- (37) N. MacKenzie, "Vida Goldstein : The Australian Suffragette." Australian Journal of Politics and History, 6, No. 2.. 1960, p. 196.
- (38) Newcastle Morning Herald, 14th February, 1894, (Elizabeth Wilson, carrying a child, was 'accidentally' struck severely across her shoulders and knocked to the ground. It was estimated. that out of 2,000 persons demonstrating, that half were women.)

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AUSTRALIAN THEATRE : A REFLECTION OF THE NATIONAL
SELFCONSCIOUSNESS

BY

J. HARRIS

SYNOPSIS:

The 'New Britannia' syndrome with its materialism, lack of radicalism, lack of social involvement, and petty bourgeois inclination can be proved by a study of Australian drama. The fact that Australians refused to accept their own speech patterns on stage, refused to accept the 'bushman', preferring the gentle English sounds of the drawing room, shoots holes in Russel Ward's myth. The left-wing New Theatre League which successfully produced 'Reedy River', the all Australian musical, saw fit to publish a glossary of the expressions, the 'ockerisms', used, on the programme.

Newcastle has had a tradition of theatre, and it is with regret that more of this tradition did not find its way into the paper. But while working on the research it became more important to search out the nature of Australiana, the ostrich quality, the quality that McQueen defines so well. The paper attempts to argue that no national theatre has been established because no real national feeling, no real community spirit has emerged. What the drama has shown in the late sixties and early seventies is violence, materialism, alcoholism, racism, a hollow tradition of mateship and Anzac, and an overall feeling of insecurity. Australians have never had a real liking for the drama, nor a desire to establish a National Theatre, for the Nation's immaturity has manifested itself in its people's desire to see themselves as they 'would like to be', rather than as they are.

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Australia's first inhabitants, her aborigines had a vital outdoor drama that expressed both their own life style and the nature of their country. The stock of the continent's second and third groups of inhabitants, the convicts and the free settlers, have failed in developing such a national theatre. The convicts, dregs of the London slums, used to protecting 'self first' were a poor base for an institution that demands community involvement. Similarly the free-settlers, while not as 'anti-social' as the convicts, were a mixed bag of opportunists; retired army men who had often sold their commission for a new life in the colonies, disgraced young gentlemen of minor and major families, those down on their luck and hoping to find it, urban tradesmen and capitalists. All these factions had a common aim, to better their own lot. In a new country with no set standard to reach for, yet with a desire for respectability and 'success', they therefore brought with them, and continued to import the cultural and moral values of Britain; "The transplanted culture did not strike quickly in the new soil". (1)

The first theatrical performance in Australia took place on the King's birthday, June 4, 1789; the play "The Recruiting Officer", a hit of the previous London season, was Australia's first 'imported success'. Convicts fittingly served as Australia's first troupe of 'rogues and vagabonds', in a hut fitted out to resemble a theatre 'back home'. It is not surprising that Englishmen transplanted in a new land would wish to set up an institution that was so entrenched in their own culture. English theatre had passed from a mass popular entertainment in the middle-ages, and Elizabethan times, to the aristocratic theatre of the Restoration, to a general acceptance by the growing English middle classes; the English class system was translatable through the seating arrangements in her theatres. What is surprising is that the English tradition lasted so long in the history of Australian theatre; so concerned were Australians in 're-establishing' the values of the 'old country' that moral and cultural as well as monetary value became tied to the pound sterling. The history of theatre in Australia, even through the supposed radical days of the 1890's has been a history of imported successes, and froth and bubble escapist melodrama, until the late 60's early 70's.

During the 1850's an era in which Australia saw massive changes in population, the cessation of transportation, free universal education, the establishment of universities, little theatre of any merit was produced. Although there was a boom in escapist theatre, no drama developed. In fact the argument that there was a boom is often broached on the basis that 'many distinguished actors visited Australia about this time'. Actors and actor managers had discovered there was more than one way to mine colonial gold and 'artists' like Lola Montes flocked into the country to start a tradition that has continued ever since. Theatre in this era was always purely commercial with interest in quick profit with no intent to build up actors or writers. In fact when former patrons of the Prince of Wales theatre began flocking to the gold fields, it was suggested that the theatre, no longer commercial, should be turned into a giant casino. Although the 1850's are often seen as a period in which the national spirit awoke, little of the energy seems to have found its way into the theatre.

Rees in 'The Making of Australian Drama' suggests that in the 1880's Australian plays were produced on a professional scale yet it seems that they received little public support. Although Darrell and Dampier used local colour, incidents and character, the 'Bulletin', the literary voice of early Australia was not impressed. In 1886 of Dampier's adaption of For the Term of His Natural Life it wrote:

"an agony in six convulsive fits with a prologue and several corpses"

Australian audiences were by this time already seeing only what they wanted to see. Robbery Under Arms was an outstanding success in this period because it showed Australians a vision of the myth they believed to be their heritage. The stories of the egalitarianism, the bravery, devilry and sheer manliness of the authority-flouting bushrangers excited the people, reinforcing the myth. (2)

"The theatre of the time (80's and 90's) was the actors and the managers. It excelled in realistic properties, melodramatic effects and the exploitation of obvious emotions" (3) Rees suggests that the 'admitted inferiority' went back to 'an awareness of convicts in the colonial background'. (4) Rees like McQueen sees the strong link between the convict and the bushranger.

"In a physically vigorous, if mentally unsubtle people, revolt against the convict inheritance took the form of justifying the convicts in song, story and play, asserting that they were 'falsely accused', the victims of a merciless governmental rather than judicial system, with which Australians had no sympathy". (5)

Not only did the convict heritage produce slow community development; it seems possible that fear of 'the stain' closed Australian's eyes to their own worth and potential. An article in the Royal Australian Historical Journal suggests of this early theatre (and is an Australian's view of theatre):

"In fact, in some respects there was better provision in those days (for theatre) than there is now; . . . the plays were much better, not being vehicles for preaching or unfolding some difficult complex in psychology. We went to the theatre for recreation and amusement, and it gave us what we sought". (6)

When the New Victoria Theatre opened in Newcastle in 1876, the colonial wonder at all things British and generally imported was exhibited. From Allan Watkin in the Newcastle Morning Herald 22.3.1966:

"The auspicious occasion demanded a gala opening night . . . Nell, the California Diamond was performed, thousands of people filled the theatre and the street. Long before the rising of the curtain crowds thronged to admire both the interal and external decor".

The leading lady, the report goes on, wore an 'imported gown' from Paris at the cost of £500.

"No theatre in the colonies is more tastefully fitted up or has more through ventilation".

It is perhaps the wonderous 'picture palaces' and 'theatres' that show up the national materialism and insecurity best. If we couldn't produce home grown overseas sensations we could build just as well; the feeling continued as the following taken from the programme of the opening of the Civic Theatre, Newcastle, in 1929 shows:

"The audience has sat spellbound gazing at the wonderful ceiling . . . underneath your feet is further beauty . . . the finest carpets procurable".

"The Louis seat of Milady's boudoir - is a feature of beauty not to be denied".

and finally a description of the 'stalls Grand Promenade':

"a restful vestibule distinguished by the quiet dignity of its appointments . . . while fortunes have been spent, it leaves not the impression of cost, but of culture".

If the buildings could be copied, the 'stars' imported, the culture could be bought; like the piano, theatre buildings are monuments to a petit bourgeois culture borrowed from Britain. (7)

Throughout the 1920's the scrapbook of the Victoria Theatre reveals a continual line of farce, melodrama, revue and vaudville; with the occasional Hamlet, Operatic season, and boxing match. Plays with such intriguing titles as 'Getting Gertie's Garters (a play with a kick for cold nights)', 'Not to-night Dearie' and 'Up in Mabel's Room', billed as 'America's gayest and giddiest farce for the first time in Australia', and followed by 'The Honeymoon Girl', 'London's sparkling musical comedy triumph'. Only one review of an Australian play from the Newcastle Morning Herald on 'The Sentimental Bloke' was to be found, dated 17.1.1928, with Bert Baily as Ginger Mick:

"Mr. C. J. Dennis, the author, struck a note of originality and the audiences were vastly amused by the quaint expressions of Ginger Mick, and Bill . . . Busker, bonzer, struth, coot - are these words latin?"

Theatre prices had been 5/- dress circle, 3/- stalls, 1/- pit when the theatre opened in 1876, on the eve of the depression 'popular prices' or 'peoples prices' were introduced, Dress Circle 1/6, stalls 1/-. Still keeping up the gentile pretense, but in a true spirit of egalitarianism the 'popular prices policy' was explained in the press:

"to allow for reservations of stall seats . . . and those patrons who prefer seats in the lower part of the house are just as sure of a seat as those in the dress circle". (8)

Louis Esson whose name has become one with development of a national drama is a fine example of the Australian mixture of radicalism, nationalism and socialism. Of upper-middle class stock Esson, like so many of his class became the champion of a working class that he didn't understand; and it showed in his plays. Like Australia herself, Esson was full of contradictions; he, like so many other hopeful writers travelled first overseas, then returned to seek solace in the bush. A professed socialist and radical he could write:

"We need a society wherein the man who thinks will be more esteemed than the man who only works". (9)

Yet he also said:

"the factory worker has no spirit of revolt . . . Australia is the country of the satisfied working man . . . a cowardly conservative he hates Internationalism, he is British and imperialistic". (10)

But the nationalist in Esson was stronger than the socialist, and the desire to create an 'elite' stronger than both. Esson in his letters to Vance Palmer writes of meeting D. H. Lawrence, Nov. 23, 1925 and suggests a close tie between them:

"Lawrence's Australian adventure is the most astounding literary episode in the history of the country. Katie may get a letter from him soon". (11)

Esson was very much involved in establishing a new political party, the 'Young Australian Nationalist Party' a party he suggested that would be 'more radical than the workers' and 'more cultural than the conservatives'. Suggesting that the new party would be composed of reformers, radicals, socialists, and Bohemian poets he saw it as helping to create 'a sense of nationhood'. Given the recent research into Lawrence's Australian adventure further research into Esson may also reveal socialist involvement in New Guard activities. Although undoubtedly Esson tried to foster a national drama, particularly with the ill fated pioneer players, he was too fine an example of the national insecurity to succeed. (12)

The era of the 1950's, a time when national confidence and prosperity was mounting, saw developments toward a national theatre. Although the labour Prime Minister Ben Chifflery had promised support for a National Theatre, the funds for setting up what became a shadow of the idea, The Elizabethan Theatre Trust, came from public donations; government funding for the arts always being an uncertain vote catcher. The name 'Elizabethan' itself was somewhat odd, a commemoration of an English Queen's visit for an emerging nation's National Theatre. The Trust never became national in any sense other than it toured companies in every state; and it too pursued a policy of importing the 'best' from overseas, and in producing the classics; largely ignoring developing Australian Drama. Similarly the Union Repertory Company, founded on the campus of the University of Melbourne, never met its aims of training Australian actors, writers and theatre personnel. In the period 1953-59 only five Australian plays were produced by this Company.

It was during the 1950's that the New Theatre League, founded in 1932, began to thrive and encourage radical theatre in Australia. In the University Archives, the Dungeon Theatre Papers suggest that an active New Theatre existed in the basement of the Trades Hall building in Union Street, Newcastle, in the 1950's. Within this collection is a booklet of the history of the New Theatre. Of the boom of theatre in the fifties it says:

"It was part of the general renaissance of art, embedded with the very ardent nationalism which had grown up during the war years. In the tradition of Joseph Furphy, life was very much in 'temper democratic; bias, offensively Australian' ". (13)

Much of the clamour for a national theatre came from the New Theatre League; another example of the curious mixture of left and nationalistic sentiments that have always existed in Australian 'radicals'. 'Reedy River' the first 'all Australian' musical was produced by the New Theatre League in the fifties. Although the various New Theatres had had a history of industrial agit-prop theatre, in the thirties and the forties with demonstrations against the loading of the 'Dalfam' in 1938 with scrap for Japan, and with the Glen Davis miner's strike, Reedy River was given an 'outback setting'. 'Reedy River' was so typically Australian that the programme in the Collection reveals a glossary of 'bush slang' on its cover. Yet the New Theatre League, as Rees and Kippax both agree, did do much to foster Australian writers and actors. The League fostered drama by community involvement, by holding such festivals as the 'Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship' and by establishing what is called 'contact' groups; and above all by attempting to produce Australian drama; through trade unions and the general Australian community. (14)

It is typical that Hugh Hunt the English Director recruited to start up the Elizabethan Theatre Trust could see and understand the problems of Australian Theatre. Theatre he writes:

"is not a hobby to indulge the surplus energy of people whose main interests are centred in other activities, or who seek easy access to social position". (15)

As a nation Australia until the late 60's tried to import culture as she imported technical skills and capital equipment; and it could not be done:

"there is no short cut - no cheap way of achievement; nor will success come by borrowing from or imitating other countries". (16)

Hunt also speculated on the value of the Opera House's influence on drama; once again Australia has built a material monument to art rather than art itself. There will be no real drama until Australia 'has broken off this sense of inferiority which at every turn stunts the growth of the arts'. (17)

The theatre 'holding up the mirror' reflects all the New Britannia's inferiorities, particularly her desire to keep up with 'standards' rather than to develop any of her own. Immature nations do not produce drama.

FOOTNOTES:

- (1) Paul McGuire, Betty Arnold, Francis Margaret McGuire, The Australian Theatre, Melbourne, 1948, p.4.
- (2) Leslie Rees, The Making of Australian Drama, Sydney, 1973, pp. 20-98.
- (3) Current Affairs Bulletin, "Australian Drama And Theatre", Vol. 22 No. 7, July 1958, p. 116.
- (4) Rees, op-cit., p. 49.
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) A. P. Backhouse, "From the Pigeon Holes of my Memory", The Journal of the Royal Historical Society, Vol. 19, p. 40, 1937.
- (7) Information collected from general file on 'theatre' in the Local History Collection – much of which is undated. Newspaper article by Allan Watkins, Newcastle Morning Herald, 23.3.66.
"Victoria Theatre's Last Days" Untitled undated article by Norm Barney. Programme of the Opening of the Civic Theatre, 1929.
- (8) Ibid.
- (9) David Walker, "A Bohemian's Progress; Louis Esson in Melbourne, 1904-1914", Meanjin, Dec. 1972, p. 420.
- (10) Ibid, p. 424.
- (11) Vance Palmer, Louis Esson and the Australian Theatre, Melbourne, 1948, p.66.
- (12) Walker op. cit., p.420.
- (13) From a booklet "The New Theatre". Found in Dungeon Theatre Papers, Archives, University of Newcastle, p.11.
- (14) Ibid.
- (15) Hugh Hunt, The Making of Australian Theatre. Melbourne, 1960, p.2.
- (16) Ibid, p 11.
- (17) Ibid, p. 22.

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THE 1929 COLLIERIES LOCKOUT AND THE ROTHBURY INCIDENT

BY

WILLIAM HILL

SYNOPSIS:

In 1929 the member proprietors of the Northern Collieries Association locked out ten thousand miners in an attempt to force their union, the Miners' Federation, to accept a decrease in wages and conditions. The New South Wales government, under Premier T. R. Bavin, took up the coal-owners cause because their demands coincided with the State's economic policy, and moves were begun, publicly and behind the scenes, to force the miners back to work on dictated terms.

The Rothbury colliery, its owners and employees, became embroiled in the conflict between the polarized forces. Why was Rothbury chosen by the Premier to be the point of confrontation in the dispute, and what was the role of Mr. Bavin himself in the whole affair?

Throughout the history of the coal-mining industry there has been continuous conflict between the employers and the employees over wages and conditions, each side jealously guarding any concessions gained from the other. The northern coalfields of New South Wales were no exception. In 1928, when the members of the Northern Collieries Association, ¹ fearing economic collapse within the industry due to increasing costs, began to demand a reduction in wages and conditions to the 1914 level the stage was set for a prolonged struggle with the miners. The Association argued that until the Great War the industry had been stable but because the miners had made unreasonable demands during the war years the industry was now badly in need of rationalization which could best be achieved by reducing wages. Australian coal would then be able to be sold at a more competitive rate on the open market while the increase demand would stabilize the industry guaranteeing miners regular, instead of intermittent, labour, which would in turn ensure a regular wage above the present level.

The Miners' Federation opposed any reductions whatsoever. The union felt that members had earned the little they had gained and argued that any drop in wages, combined with the irregularity of work, could only lead to a further decline in weekly earnings and destroy their already meagre standard of living. ²

The miners may have been able to stand their ground against the owners and triumph if the world economic situation had not been deteriorating as well. The Premier of New South Wales, T. R. Bavin, was determined that the state's economy should be supported and to his eyes the two things liable to upset the economy were wages, because they threatened business prosperity, and militant unionists, collectively described as the "Reds". ³ Bavin therefore supported the colliery owners in their battle against the miners and their unions and took it upon himself to see that they won.

In January, 1929, Bavin announced that the miners must accept a drop in their rate of 1/- per ton, and that day labourers wages would be reduced by 6d. per day. If these new rates were accepted the colliery owners would drop their profit by 1/- per ton, the State government would subsidize freight rates at 2/- per ton and the Federal government offered a bounty of 1/- per ton on export coal; in all a reduction of 5/- per ton which the owners believed would bring their prices back into the market.

While the Premier and the Association members were trying to bluff the mine-workers into accepting the new rates without a fight a special request was made to the Premier of South Australia to keep a tender for the supply of 800,000 tons of coal open till the end of January, though it had been due to close on 28 September, 1928. Bavin was hopeful of a solution to the wages problem because if the South Australian business terminated, he said, "the effect on the northern coalfields will be nothing less than calamitous, and the unemployment which is now so acute will be worse." ⁴ On the 23 January it was announced that the South Australian government would buy its coal from England at 24/6 per ton, which was below the supposedly best New South Wales price.

But Bavin could have met the overseas price! The following day the Newcastle Morning Herald reported that the Rothbury Colliery had offered to supply coal at 19/10 per ton to the Government for the State railways. A critic of the Premier considered that he had a good deal to explain if the offer had been made and ignored because Rothbury coal was the equal of any other and could be just as plentiful. He also wished to know "why the South Australian Government was not made aware of the Rothbury offer. Had it been accepted many other collieries would have been found offering at the same price". ⁵

Little protest was heard from the owners or administrators of the Rothbury Colliery over this lost business. Surely some protest would have been expected? But there is none in evidence in papers relating to the property, although there is room for speculation. The Rothbury property was part of the estate of David Scott Mitchell which, upon his death in 1907, passed into the control of the executors of his estate, Messrs- W. D. M. and E. R.H. Merewether. Mitchell's will provided for a bequest of £80,000 to the New South Wales government to establish an investment fund, the interest from which was to be used to provide books and materials for what was to be named the Mitchell library. ⁶ The full sum of the bequest apparently was never received by the State because of a continual lack of ready cash and the method of paying dividends to the beneficiaries of the will, ⁷ though the Government continued to spend the interest on the "bequest". Presuming that the Government set up the library fund with its own monies, in anticipation of eventually receiving the gift which was never completed, the Mitchell estate would have been indebted to the Government, which in turn may have given the Government the opportunity to decide some of the affairs of the colliery to the Premier's advantage, in particular the suppression of a cheap coal offer which would have given the lie to the coal-owners campaign for lower wages.

The Miners' Federation, backed by its members refused to accept the new rates and would not concede the right to hire and dismiss to the mine managers. ⁸ The Association retaliated on 2 March, 1929, by locking out ten thousand miners employed in the group's collieries. The miners of the Rothbury lodge were undecided about whether to down tools or work out their notices but they were united with their fellows in the decision not to give in to the owners. They had for too long been told that such conflicts were unavoidable in a capitalist society and drew moral strength from the justice of their cause. ⁹ These men amongst all the miners had the most to lose if wages fell because since 1924 they had only averaged 113 days per year for each man ¹⁰ whereas men in the other pits were averaging about 170 days each. ¹¹

The Northern Collieries Association continued in their efforts to gain more power over the unions. Major coal-owners were seeking amendments to the Commonwealth Arbitration Act to make lockouts and strikes legal. The Miners' Federation was resolved to oppose changes because the new legislation, if passed, would allow proprietors and managers to lock-up the mines or dismiss men without fear of prosecution. At the same time the unions would be weakened considerably if single lodges could strike without the support of the union executive because without union solidarity small disputes would crumble.

The coal-owners need not have worried about altering the Act to protect themselves from court action over the March lockout. In the Legislative Assembly Premier Bavin avoided the issue by contending that prosecution of the owners would only prejudice the Royal Commission hearing into colliery profits which had begun in February, and, anyway, such action would serve no good purpose! ¹² Bavin reminded members that "... the coal industry was subject to an award or order of a Federal Tribunal, but in May Prime Minister Bruce debated that the issue was not a federal matter because only one state was involved, and, besides, his interference would only prejudice negotiations. ¹³ Questioned again about prosecuting the owners when the lockout was actually in progress the Premier refused to recognize that the men had been locked out or that the law had been broken. ¹⁴

Federal and State Labor Party members thought that Bavin was obsessed by reduction. J. E. Smith, M.P., claimed in Parliament that "Mr. Bavin's masters had spoken" in reference to his support of the colliery proprietors demands. ¹⁵ The Bulletin attacked the Premier from another angle accusing him of "craven imitations of Langism" for paying out £10,000 a week in "sustenance" amongst the northern miners instead of taking strict action with the men. ¹⁶ Perhaps in June the Premier was still hopeful of the miners going back to work of their own accord though, of course, at the new rates, if they weren't unduly antagonized.

"Dai" Davies, General Secretary of the Miners' Federation, accused the Premier of sidestepping the issue. If Bavin was avoiding trouble union agitators were not. Mass picketing was going on at associated and unassociated mines that were still working and extremists, particularly Militant Minority Movement members, were coming up from Sydney urging the men to stay out. Tempers were rising with the hardships of a winter of privation, and rumours of extra police on the coalfields and suggestion of the use of free "scab" labour kept the miners on edge. Also, in September, the Royal Commission handed down its decision on the owners' profits stating that in the twenty five pits belonging to the ten companies examined profits averaged 2/1.6 per ton, though neither the owners nor the miners could agree on which items constituted legitimate deductions from gross returns so the dispute over profits dragged on. ¹⁷

More peculiar information to do with the Rothbury mine came to light before the Royal Commission. ¹⁸ "Dai" Davies alleged that a dump of small coal at Rothbury was "practically given away to 'kill' Catamaran", which was a small mine in Tasmania that the unions had tried to operate as a co-operative. Nobody came forward to confirm or deny Davies' charge.

The following day, 2 November, the Premier made public his intention to open three or four mines to supply coal for essential services if the compulsory conference then sitting before the Coal Board failed. ¹⁹ The State would operate the mines at the reduced rates, though the only people prepared to work for the new rates would be free labourers, but Bavin would not concede this fact when questioned.

In his private correspondence with the Premier at a later date the Bishop of Newcastle made the point that few people really believed there was a desperate demand for coal, other than for gassiferous coal, which might have been more sensibly procured from a larger mine such as Pelaw Main or Richmond Main. An "urgent national necessity" for a particular class of coal "should have been met from the miners able to supply that coal expeditiously, and in quantity, and which could have been worked at a profit on the pre-stoppage basis". Taking a more critical tack Bishop Long added "I do not say that the Government is guilty of double dealing, but that the Government has always put forth as the justification for going into Rothbury the urgent national necessity for coal. People say that necessity is not apparent, and will not be met at Rothbury, therefore the real purpose of the Government is to force the new terms." ²⁰

Bishop Long made these comments after Rothbury had been re-opened and it had become obvious that the Government was not going to open any more mines. This fact, and some of the Bishop's queries, are worthy of closer examination.

To begin with the Government claimed coal was needed urgently but it was common knowledge that mines on the western and southern coalfields, and the northern unassociated mines were working good hours and keeping up with demand. The Newcastle Morning Herald, throughout the whole period, published weekly and monthly figures of coal shipments, ex. Newcastle, for interstate and export supply and, though the quantities involved decreased, the trade was continuous.

Secondly, did Bavin seriously expect a small mine like Rothbury, with its notoriously dangerous and difficult to work sloping seam, and consequent low output, to meet the requirements of a "national emergency", especially considering that it was to be worked by inexperienced scab labour? Why did he chose to open the Rothbury colliery in particular? Bavin had nominated other mines for re-opening but these were closer to large concentration of miners in Cessnock and Kurri Kurri, where, if scab labour was used, it would be easier for the unionists to gather in large numbers of picket and disrupt work in the mines. Rothbury was the ideal choice for re-opening because of its

comparative isolation, (the mine is twenty kilometres from Cessnock) and the local workforce, living in Branxton and Rothbury village and numbering a few hundred. Hence they presented no threat to the safety of the free labourers who would be guarded by armed police.

Premier Bavin also held a trump card. If the executors of the Rothbury estate could not meet their debt to the Government, (money owed from Mitchell's bequest), surely they could be persuaded to let the Government use the mine. The State would work the mine which would save the Merewethers the trouble of supervising operations, and arrangements were made for cash to change hands. On 27 August, 1930, the balance of what was described as "excess income accrued" was paid to the Merewether office by the State; gross profit for the "period of occupation" totalled £2620/15/9. ²¹

Bavin's last offer to the miners was made 27 November, 1929. The "November Compromise" demanded a 12½ per cent reduction in miner's wages, (a small concession in that this represented a decrease of 9d. per ton instead of 1/- per ton first demanded), and 6d. a day off the wages of day workers and off hand men. The miners still had to concede the right of dismissal to the management, loss of seniority, ²² and agree not to work the darg. ²³ Fearing the worst for the men a conference of owners and miners representatives advised the miners to go back to work but the executive of the northern Miners' Federation urged the men to stay out, arguing that they had suffered too much to give up now. The miners' leaders were openly disgusted with the findings of the Royal Commission. Mr. H. P. Lazzarini, in the House of Representatives, spoke for the miners when he described the proceedings as an "abomination . . . nothing but a frame-up between the Bruce-Page Government and the Bavin Government". ²⁴

The main reason for the intense anger towards the Government and coal-owners was the fact that, though a better wage deal had been offered, it was now apparent from the other demands that a frontal attack was being made on union militancy. This was a far more valuable goal and the importance of the new demands was not lost on the miners. ²⁵

With no end to the dispute in sight the Premier instructed the Minister for Mines, R. W. D. Weaver, to advertise for, and hire, free labour to work at the Rothbury mine at the reduced rate. Behind the scenes Bavin arranged to have the mine made available for when he was ready to move. Early in December E. R. H. Merewether wrote to the manager of his Burwood office, B. E. Drew, advising him, "The Government are (sic) going to commandeer Rothbury and work it." Thomas, the mine manager, would be responsible for the operation of the mine although the Government would supply the labour and Thomas should obey the instructions of Government officers. Finally, on receipt of a wire reading "Get ships ready Wednesday next", Drew was to prepare the pit for work with all haste. ²⁶

Bavin announced that the Rothbury mine would not begin operating till after Christmas so that the ten day break would not disrupt work in the mine. Then, suddenly, police and free labourers were sent by rail to Rothbury on Friday, 13 November. On the following Monday morning some five thousand men gathered from all over the coalfields. ²⁷ Part of the crowd rioted and tried to get through the colliery fence to stop the scab labourers entering the pit whereupon the police guards repulsed several attacks on the mine compound. Men were wounded and injured on both sides and a young engineer from the Greta lodge, Norman Brown, ²⁸ was killed by a stray bullet.

Privately Bavin expressed many regrets for those injured in the affray and he wrote to his friend Bishop Long asking him to intercede on his behalf and convey a message of sympathy to young Brown's mother. Publicly he was unrepentant. In the Legislative Assembly J. T. Lang accused the Premier of having said at a Nationalist meeting in August, "If I had the power I would force the issue. I will stand for a rigid and, if necessary, a ruthless attitude towards the employees", ²⁹ implying, in effect, that Bavin had carried out his threat. Bavin denied responsibility for the confrontation and blamed the Communists and extremists for persuading the men to demonstrate.

Over the next few months Bavin was greatly criticized for maintaining his position. The free miners were kept at work at Rothbury even though the cost to the State of the very low output must have been considerable, and there was the added expense of maintaining the police guard. The Federal Arbitration Court called a compulsory conference to settle the matter. Claiming that it was not a federal affair the Premier ignored Judge Beeby's ruling. In the High Court the decision was ruled bad in law and therefore null and void. Bavin appeared to be unbeatable, a fact that the Miners' Federation finally came to accept, and in June, 1930, the free labourers were withdrawn and the Rothbury miners went back to work at the reduced rate, beaten and impoverished.

Premier Bavin held to his belief that wages must be reduced to the end, the worsening international situation strengthening him in his resolve. ³⁰ The methods he used to achieve his ends, however, leave much to be desired. To take up the employer's cause with complete disregard for the miner's interests was unconscionable. The methods he used to force the demands of the Government and the coalowners on the workers were equally unscrupulous. Tendered prices and orders for coal, which could have kept the mines working, were ignored in order to force the miners to accept work at reduced rates. The Federal Arbitration Court and High Court decisions made during the period was overlooked or enforced depending on the best advantage to the Government. Information contrary to the Premier's line of action was neglected or suppressed; moderate unionists were branded, with the radicals, as Reds, and publicized as such to sway public opinion.

In all the owners were too sure of their ground which made the struggle hopelessly unequal, especially when the miners were deserted by the Federal Labor Party, their natural ally, and the courts failed to support them when they were legally in the right. Premier Bavins' behavior throughout the whole affair made the final outcome inevitable.

FOOTNOTES:

1. The Northern Collieries Association was the representative body of the proprietors of forty mines on the northern coalfields. These mines produced 86 per cent of the total coalfield tonnage and the twelve largest owners produced 53 per cent of the N.S.W. output. Miriam Dixson, "Stubborn Resistance : The Northern New South Wales Miners' Lockout of 1929-30; in John Iremonger, et. al. (Ed's), Strikes, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1973, p.128.
2. British miners had taken a wage reduction for these same reasons which had resulted in further poverty, unemployment, and in places starvation.
3. To the Government and the industrialists union organizers and militants were equally tarred with the same brush. The Reds were, particularly, the professed Communists, anarchists, the remainder of the I.W.W. movement and the vocal militant cliques in the unions. The most conspicuous of the latter being the Militant Minority Movement, inspired by the Red International of Labour Unions, the industrial wing of the Communist International which wanted to turn union policies to social revolution. They openly challenged the Miners' Federation leadership and the later caused splits in union solidarity. Edgar Ross, A History of the Miners' Federation of Australia, (Pub. by) The Australasian Coal and Shale Employees Federation, Sydney, 1970 p. 331.
4. Newcastle Morning Herald, 23 January, 1929.
5. Ibid., 24 January, 1929. The Premier's Critic was unnamed.
6. Personal communication with Mr. Denis Rowe, Archives Officer, University of Newcastle, May, 1977. Documentary proof is hard to establish because of lack of adequate sources but the Merewether archives at the Newcastle Reference Library do lend a general credence to this interpretation.
7. Merewether Archives, Rothbury Estate papers show that there were a number of beneficiaries of the estate whose dividends were paid from the gross profits of the Rothbury Colliery though the colliery hardly ever made a net profit after tax and deductions. This may explain why the mine was never fully capitalized, thus unproductive and little likely to meet the debts caused by Mitchell's will.
8. Given this power management could dismiss union delegates in the mines and destroy the middle line authority within the union until a new man was thrown up from the ranks.
9. Miriam Dixson in John Iremonger, et. al. (Ed's.) Strikes, 1973, p. 128.
10. Newcastle Morning Herald, 2 November, 1929.
11. Edgar Ross. A History of the Miners' Federation of Australia. 1970. p.325.
12. Newcastle Morning Herald, 27 February, 1929.
13. Ibid., 6 May, 1929, and Edgar Ross: A History of the Miners' Federation of Australia, 1970, p.339.
14. Newcastle Morning Herald, 13 March, 1929.
An interesting point is that the victorious Federal Labor government elected later in the year, denied the miners any aid in the Federal Courts although deputy leader Theodore had promised before the election that the mines would be re-opened in the "name of the people" if Scullin won. Arguing fear of influence, pre judice, and etc., they accepted the Bavin plan as being most suitable to settlement of the situation.
15. Ibid., 29 January, 1929.
16. The Bulletin, 5 June, 1929.
17. Newcastle Morning Herald, 24, 25 September, 1929.
18. Ibid., 1 November, 1929.
19. Rothbury, Pelton, and Cessnock collieries were the chosen few.
20. Bishop C. M. Long's Correspondence, Vol. 1, 13 January, 1930. University, of Newcastle Archives.
21. Merewether Archives, Rothbury estate papers, Newcastle Reference Library.
22. The miners had only been granted seniority in the mines in 1917 by the then Labor government.
23. The darg was the agreed maximum amount that miners would draw daily.
24. Miriam Dixson, "Stubborn Resistance", John Iremonger, et. al. (Ed's.), Strikes, Angus and Robertson, 1973, p.139.
25. Ibid., p.138.
26. Letter from E. R. H. Merewether to B. E. Drew, December, 1929. Merewether Archives, Rothbury estate papers, Newcastle Reference Library.

FOOTNOTES: (Cont.)

27. Various commentators set the number of men gathered in the range of 3,000 to 10,000. 5,000 seems to be the most popular and more probable estimate.
28. It seems that Norman Brown only went to Rothbury because the Greta miners insisted that all members attend to show solidarity. He was wounded while playing cards some distance from the fighting. Edgar Ross also reports that a Rothbury lodge member, Tom. Flannery, collapsed and died during one of the clashes. Edgar Ross, A History of the Miners' Federation of Australia, 1970. p. 341.
29. Newcastle Morning Herald, 18 December, 1929.
30. Bavin wrote to Bishop Long in February, 1930, detailing Australia's desperate financial position in London. He stressed that if the situation deteriorated "it may not be a question of 9d. or 1/-d per ton reduction but a far more serious one for everybody." Bishop C. M. Long's Correspondence, Vol. 1. University of Newcastle Archives.

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