

THE RED NORTH

Diane Menghetti



Studies in North Queensland History No. 3

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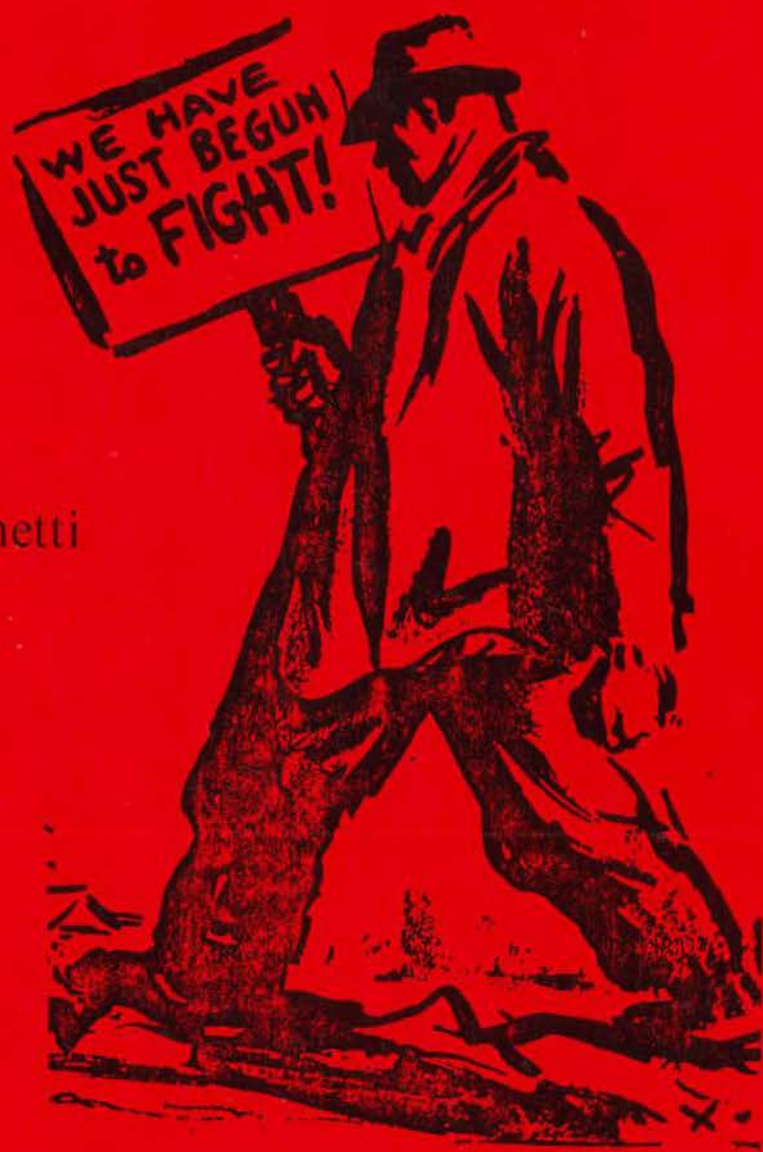
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History Department
James Cook University of North Queensland
1981

James Cook University of North Queensland 1981

Wholly set up and printed at
James Cook University of North Queensland

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication data

Menghetti, Diane.

The Red North.

(Studies in North Queensland History, ISSN
0155-381X; 3.)

Includes indexes.

ISBN 0 86443 006 X.

1. Communist Party of Australia (Qld) - History.
1. James Cook University of North Queensland.
11. Title. (Series.)

324.2943'0975

FOREWORD

A political episode in which North Queensland behaved differently from the rest of Australia should perhaps occasion little surprise: after all, it is well-known that North Queensland is not like the rest of Australia. A political episode in which North Queensland differed from the rest of Australia by showing itself better informed about international events, more committed to democratic values, more generous in sympathy, less obsessed with local issues and factional jealousies, may be another matter: North Queensland is not usually thought to differ in that direction. This publication concerns just such an episode.

Upon young men and women of the late 1930s the Spanish Civil War had a political and emotional impact as profound as that of Vietnam in the late 1960s. In most democratic countries men and women who thought of themselves as progressives, as committed to political and social reform, saw in Spain both a symbol of, and a stage in, the worldwide struggle then developing between "the masses and the classes", between the forces of progress and reaction, between the left and fascism. Spain represented, moreover, a crucial stage in that struggle, one which would go far towards determining the ultimate outcome. Forty years on it is not difficult to see that in some respects these convictions were naive, founded upon imperfect knowledge and sometimes cynically manipulated; but there is no mistaking the idealistic fervour with which they were held, their generous warmth and their lasting effect. For many, these convictions coloured the political beliefs and conduct of a lifetime.

Australia was one country in which the passions aroused on behalf of the embattled Spanish loyalists were felt but dimly; the call for a Common Front of all the left against fascism went largely unheard. Except in North Queensland.

The fact that only in North Queensland did the Australian left respond like their counterparts in virtually every other country, has been forgotten - if indeed it was ever widely recognised - outside the dwindling numbers of direct participants. Diane Menghetti has not

merely uncovered a forgotten episode: she has explored it thoroughly, placed it in perspective against its wider background as well as in its regional setting, and above all has attempted to understand it. She demonstrates it was no mere aberration, but a natural result of the social and political conditions then prevailing in the region. As in other countries where a Common Front came into being, the Communist Party played a central role. Its organization, discipline and purpose gave it decisive advantage over potential rivals, at the same time giving coherence to an otherwise disparate coalition. But it would be quite wrong to speak of the movement as being under communist *control*. In every coalition accommodation and compromise are required of each party: in this one probably the more important, and certainly the more conspicuous, accommodations were required of the communists.

Diane's account should interest readers not only in North Queensland but throughout Australia for the unexpected light it throws upon politics in the shadow of the Second World War. 'Unique' is an expression historians use with caution; it would be rash to apply it to this episode: but *The Red North* certainly brings to life a rare, early instance of migrants participating in a sustained, broad political movement.

Like its predecessors in the series *Studies in North Queensland History*, this publication originated as a thesis submitted for the honours degree of B.A. and awarded First Class Honours. For publication it has been revised lightly, without any major changes, and has been furnished with an index prepared by the author.

B.J. Dalton,
Professor of History.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful acknowledgement is made of the assistance received from the staff of the Library of James Cook University and of the Mitchell Library of N.S.W.; the Communist Party of Australia, the Socialist Party of Australia, members of the Seamen's Union, G. Bordujenko, R. Cali, M. Cazzolino, E.V. Elliott, J. Henderson, J. Hogan, P. Hurd, T. Inkster, F. Matzkows, A. Murgatroyd, G. Ponti, E. Quinn, A. Rose and T. Winkley.

The manuscript was typed for the printer by Barbara Morris; the map was drawn by John Ngai of the Geography Department.

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The cover incorporates a line drawing from the *Workers Weekly*, March 1936.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.E.U.	Amalgamated Engineering Union
A.L.P.	Australian Labor Party
A.M.I.E.U.	Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union
A.R.U.	Australian Railways Union
A.S.P.	Australian Socialist Party
A.W.A.	Amalgamated Workers' Association
A.W.U.	Australian Workers' Union
C.P.A.	Communist Party of Australia
C.P.S.U.	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
C.S.R.	Colonial Sugar Refining Company
E.C.C.I.	Executive Committee of the Comintern (Communist International)
I.L.D.	International Labour Defence
I.W.W.	Industrial Workers of the World
M.A.W.F.	Movement Against War and Fascism
M.M.M.	Militant Minority Movement
O.B.U.	One Big Union
Q.S.L.	Queensland Socialist League
R.I.L.U.	Red International of Labour Unions
S.R.C.(F.)	Spanish Relief Committee (Fund)
U.W.M.	Unemployed Workers Movement
W.P.C.	Women's Progress Club
W.W.F.	Waterside Workers' Federation

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

Date	International	Australian
Oct. 1916		Conscription referendum
Nov.		A.L.P. split on conscription
Dec.		I.W.W. proscribed
Nov. 1917	Russian (Bolshevik) revolution	
Dec.		2nd conscription referendum
Sept. 1920		C.P.A. formed
Oct. 1922	Mussolini called on to form a government	
Oct. 1923		A.L.P. introduces an anti-communist pledge
Sept. 1931	Japan annexes Manchuria	
Dec.		U.A.P. government led by Lyons comes to power
June 1932		A.L.P. government led by Forgan Smith comes power in Queensland
Jan. 1933	Hitler appointed German Chancellor	
March	Japan withdraws from the League of Nations	
Oct.	Germany withdraws from the League and claims the right to rearm	
Sept. 1934	U.S.S.R. joins the League	
Nov.		U.A.P.-Country Party coalition under Lyons
March 1935	Hitler repudiates the Treaty of Versailles by reintroducing conscription for military service	
July	Seventh Comintern Congress	
Oct.	Mussolini invades Abyssinia	Federal government passes Sanctions Act against Italy

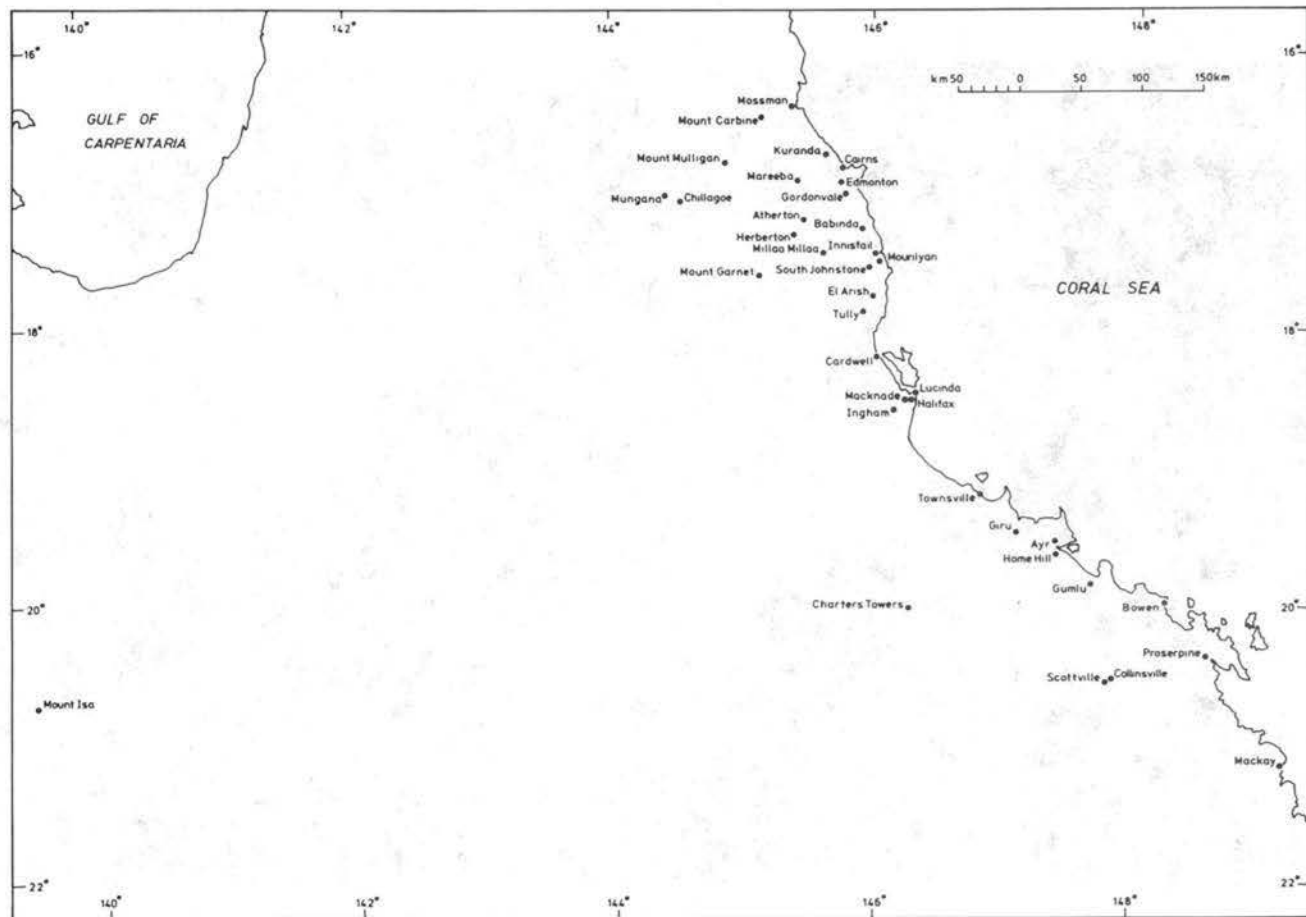
Date	International	Australian
March 1936	Hitler sends troops into the Rhineland	
May		Federal government's 'trade diversion' policy announced
July	Spanish Civil War	
Oct.	Rome-Berlin Axis formed	
Nov.	Germany and Japan sign the Anti-Comintern Pact	
July 1937	Japan invades China	
Nov.	Rome-Berlin-Tokyo triangle formed	
March 1938	Austria joins the Reich	Lyons announces increased spending on defence
April		
Sept.	Munich Conference	Australia urges Britain to persuade Czechoslovakia to offer concessions to Hitler
Nov.	Anglo-German Peace Agreement	Defence spending again increased - the highest in Australia's peace time history Port Kembla W.W.F. refuses to load pig-iron for Japan. Menzies threatens to invoke the Crimes Act
Dec.	Franco-German Peace Agreement	
Feb. 1939	France and Britain recognise the Franco government	
March	Spain signs the Anti-Comintern Pact	Lyons declares that appeasement will not bring peace
April	Germany occupies Prague Anglo-French pledge of support for Poland Italy invades Albania Britain introduces conscription Germany and Italy sign a military pact	Menzies becomes Prime Minister. Favours reconciliation with Germany
May		National Register introduced

Date	International	Australian
Aug. 1939	U.S.S.R. and Germany sign a non-aggression pact Anglo-Polish Mutual Assistance Treaty signed	Commonwealth Bank authorised to control foreign exchange
Sept.	1. Germany invades Poland 3. Britain and France declare war on Germany 17. U.S.S.R. invades Poland 28. Partition of Poland	3. Australia is at war Internments begin under the newly introduced National Security Regulations A section of the Press accepts censorship Compulsory military training introduced
Oct.		
Nov.	Russia invades Finland	
Dec.	U.S.S.R. expelled from the League	
April 1940	Denmark and Norway invaded	Censorship of the press introduced
May	Belgium and Holland capitulate Churchill replaces Chamberlain	Communist press banned
June	Fall of Paris Italy enters the war	C.P.A. and Fascist Parties banned Internment of Italians begins
July		All media placed under the control of the Director-General of Information (Keith Murdoch)
Sept.	Japan occupies Indo-China	Federal government returned without a majority
Oct.		All-Party Advisory War Cabinet set up
Jan. 1941		National Security regulations tightened
June	Germany attacks U.S.S.R.	
Aug.		Government falls.
Oct.		A.L.P. comes to power, led by Curtin
Dec.	Japanese attack Pearl Harbour U.S.A. enters war	

Date	International	Australian
Feb. 1942	Fall of Singapore	Darwin bombed. Internment of naturalised Italians and others begins
March		Jehovah's Witnesses and Australia First Movement suppressed
May		Battle of the Coral Sea
Nov.		Kokoda recaptured
Dec.		Ban on C.P.A. lifted
Jan. 1943		Australia and Russia exchange ministers
May	Comintern dissolved	



May Day, Townsville 1939. (*North Queensland Register*, May 1939).



INTRODUCTION

"Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer
We'll keep the Red Flag flying here."

The student of North Queensland history frequently encounters evidence of widespread political radicalism which is difficult to reconcile with his personal experience of the district. Aspects of this phenomenon range from the republican agitations of the Charters Towers miners in the 1890's to the militancy of the emerging trade union movement in the years preceeding the Great War and to the early establishment of, and considerable public support afforded to the Communist Party in the region north and west of Mackay during the three decades after 1920. Although an analysis of the nature of what Bolton described as "...the old irreverent Northern radicalism...."¹ awaits the writing of a far more comprehensive work, this study was undertaken to gain some insight into how and why some sections of the northern communities came to give their allegiance to international socialism.

The period chosen for the study, July 1935 to June 1940, did not constitute the period of maximum communist support in North Queensland; this occurred in the following decade. Nevertheless there is evidence that it was during this period that public distrust of the Party was gradually eroded. The years cover the first popular front period, from the Seventh Comintern Congress which determined the policy, to its reversal, in September 1939, occasioned by the Nazi-Soviet nonaggression pact and the subsequent declaration of war. The time span has been expanded necessarily to begin with an outline history of the Communist Party in Queensland, so as to provide a background against which the significance of the popular front may be assessed. Little work is available on the subject, a notable exception being Andrew Jones' unpublished study of Paterson's electoral victory in Bowen.² A description of the popular front policy and the form in which it was adopted in

-
1. G.C. Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away: A History of North Queensland to 1920* (Canberra 1972), p.337.
 2. Andrew Eric Jones, *Electoral Support for the Communist Party in North Queensland: A Study of F.W. Paterson's Victory in Bowen, 1944*. (B.A. Hons. thesis, University of Queensland, 1972.)

Queensland has been included in this chapter. Reference has also been made to the eight months between the end of the popular front and the proscription of the Communist Party of Australia under the National Security Regulations.

The aspects chosen for examination: the Weil's Disease strike, the Spanish Relief Campaign, the anti-fascist movement, women's activities, the Party's social role and the communist press, are those which are perceived to have contributed to the erosion of public prejudice. An important omission is communist trade union activities which have received attention only when they impinge on issues under review. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, only a detailed study would be of value to an attitudinal approach of this type; and secondly, it is likely that, outside the sugar industry, which has been examined in chapters two and three, much of the trade union activity resembled work being carried out elsewhere in Australia, and therefore a description would contribute little to a study of the special case of the Party in North Queensland. A structure based on groups rather than events has presented formidable problems of chronology. While each chapter attempts to trace the group under consideration through the popular front period, cross membership often frustrates this aim. Nevertheless it has been possible to draw conclusions from the evidence assembled.

These conclusions suggest that during this period popular antagonism was modified both because of the Party's identification with issues important to some sections of the northern community, and because of the nature and extent of its interaction with that community. Furthermore the Communist Party may be seen to have made a valuable contribution to North Queensland society, in terms of both concessions won, and more importantly, the effects of its campaigns on community attitudes. Interaction, however, does not only affect one of the groups involved; it impinges on all parties. The Communist Party's constant preoccupation with fund raising and

social functions, leading gradually to ideologically questionable developments such as "Younger Sets", balls, and "Miss Spanish Relief" and "Miss Popularity" contests, suggests that it was undergoing a process of naturalisation. Yet another reason for the widespread acceptance of communism in North Queensland then, was that, despite the allegiance to Russia which was an article of faith for communists of the 1930's and 1940's, the C.P.A. in the north was rapidly becoming an indigenous political party.

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGINS OF THE NORTH QUEENSLAND COMMUNIST PARTY

"There is no reason why the workers of Townsville should not have a first-class revolution on high-class lines."¹

1. Fred Martyn, Far Northern District Secretary of the Australian Workers Association (A.W.A.), cited in E.H. Lane, *Dawn to Dusk: Reminiscences of a Rebel* (Brisbane 1939), p.103.

The earliest attempts of Queenslanders to take part in international socialism were made by the Lane brothers, William and Ernest, during the 1890's. In the bitter aftermath of the strikes of 1891, Brisbane journalist William Lane believed that Queensland was in a revolutionary situation. He decided therefore to send his brother to Paris to contact the French communists and form an international organisation. Nothing came of this as the younger Lane was unable to find a ship which would allow him to work his passage to France.² A new plan was then formulated, by which William Lane led his first group of colonists to Paraguay on the *Royal Tar* in 1895. The colony was called New Australia, and it was intended that within thirty years it would grow into a powerful communist state from which a large and disciplined army would lead the world revolution.³ After Lane's departure the Social Democratic Vanguard, which he had founded, functioned solely as a propaganda organisation, and the socialist movement in Queensland made no further progress towards an international connection until the conscription struggles of the first World War.

The conscription campaigns caused deep divisions in the Labor Party, and even the large section which opposed conscription was split into pro-war anti-conscriptionist and anti-war groups. Alliances were formed on the one hand between the Parliamentary Labor Party and the Roman Catholic Church, and on the other between the militant trade unions, the Industrial Workers of the World

2. Lane, *Dawn to Dusk*, p.48.

3. For details of the program see E.N. Birks, "As a Boy in Paraguay", *Australian Quarterly* 7 (June 1935); J.B. Henderson, "William Lane, the Prophet of Socialism - the Tragic Paraguayan Experiment", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* 8 (1967-68); J.T. Sutcliffe, *A History of Trade Unionism in Australia* (Melbourne 1921), pp.161-2. One year after the colony had been settled dissent within the group had led to the founding of a second colony: Cosme. By 1900 a disillusioned Lane had left Paraguay to settle in New Zealand.

(I.W.W.)⁴ and the Russian Association. It was this Association which afforded the anti-war group its connections with European socialism.

The Russians had arrived in Queensland as political refugees, and had settled in various parts of the state. An unknown number worked as field hands on cane farms in the Cairns and Innisfail districts, and Russian members dominated the I.W.W. Local which was established in Cairns early in 1915.⁵ Other families lived at Chillagoe where the men worked in the smelters; about eighteen more settled in Townsville and found seasonal employment at the meatworks.⁶ The Russian Association was the creation of a group which had migrated to Brisbane, and its members forged links with indigenous militants through their enthusiastic participation in the anti-conscription campaigns.⁷

When the Bolshevik Revolution erupted in November 1917 news and propaganda were channelled into the state through the Russian Association, its accessibility improving when local Russians left Australia to play their part in European events. Theodore A. Sergayeff, who lived in Queensland from 1910 to 1917, became a member of the Comintern Central Committee,⁸ but maintained contact with Brisbane. In his book, *Dawn to Dusk*, E.H. Lane boasted that one of his *Daily Standard* articles had been translated by Sergayeff and printed in a Russian newspaper.⁹ From the north at least one

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4. For further information about the I.W.W. see L.G. Churchward, "The American Influence on the Australian Labor Movement", *Historical Studies* 5 (1952); R. Coates, "Notes on the Industrial Workers of the World", *Labour History* 6 (May 1964); and I. Turner, *Sydney's Burning* (Melbourne 1967).
 5. E.W. Campbell, *History of the Australian Labour Movement: A Marxist Interpretation* (Sydney 1945), p.70.
 6. George Bordujenko, interview, 30 April 1979.
 7. Lane, *Dawn to Dusk*, p.168.
 8. M.G. Sullivan, *Dissent in the Labor Party, 1938-1944*. (B.A. Hons. thesis, University of Queensland, 1968), p.70.
 9. Lane, *Dawn to Dusk*, p.194.

family, the Pilenkeno's of Chillagoe, returned to Russia after the revolution.¹⁰ To disseminate the news from home the Association established a newspaper, *Knowledge and Unity*; published in Brisbane, it printed the full texts of Soviet Congress Reports, while not neglecting Australian material which was largely One Big Union (O.B.U.) propaganda.¹¹

World War One ended on 11 November 1918. In Queensland it left in its wake widespread unemployment and great dissatisfaction with the continued enforcement of the War Precautions Act. In January 1919 the Russian Association, the Brisbane Industrial Council and the Queensland Socialist League (Q.S.L.) organised a series of protest marches which involved several thousand people. Among their grievances were censorship and Allied intervention in Russia, and the proceedings usually included three cheers for the Red Flag and the Bolsheviks.¹² The protests continued for several months, and during a demonstration in March 1919 a number of people were arrested and charged with unfurling the Red Flag. As a result the chairman of the Russian Association, Zuzenko, was deported and Russian nationals Herman Bykoff, Paul Leischman, Mark Ostapenko and Steve Tolstobroff were imprisoned. Another eleven political prisoners were sent to Boggo Road jail on the same charges, and the list includes the names of several men who later joined the Communist Party as well as others, such as R.J. Carroll and G. Taylor, who became prominent in the Australian Labor Party (A.L.P.). During counter demonstrations thousands of people marched on the Russian Association's rooms in Merivale Street and the *Daily Standard*

10. George Bordujenko, interview, 30 April 1979.

11. For example *Knowledge and Unity*, 31 December 1918. Militant Queensland unionists had shown an interest in the O.B.U. and the state was represented at the Melbourne O.B.U. Conference of 1910 by Tim Moroney (Railways) and Billy Wallace (Painters).

12. *Brisbane Courier*, 23 January 1919, 24 January 1919 and 23 March 1919.

office was stoned. One night twenty men were injured by gunfire.¹³

By March 1919 the alliance between the Russian Association and the militant unions appears to have been firmly cemented. *Knowledge and Unity* had become the joint publication of the Russian Association and the Q.S.L.;¹⁴ and the secretary of the League, E. Turner, was sharing an office with T. Moroney, Secretary of the Queensland Railways Union and an ex officio of the O.B.U.¹⁵ Although the newspaper was dominated by international news, local articles slowly began to appear. Herman Bykoff, still in Boggo Road Gaol, contributed an article on nihilism in March 1919, while E. Turner and feminist Jennie Scott-Griffiths were regular contributors. The paper fought for the recognition of Russian Association secretary, Peter Siminoff, as Soviet Consul-General, and claimed it had the support of federal Labor leader Frank Tudor and N.S.W. Labor leader John Storey on this issue.¹⁶ During 1919 the Association, renamed the Russian Workers Association, devoted much energy to an attempt to persuade the Queensland Government to assist its members' return to Russia.

The cost of publishing the paper was defrayed by the North Queensland Russian families, who sent their donations through the Russian Workers' Association. In September 1920 the paper acknowledged contributions from Townsville, Innisfail South (F. Folkin), Styx River (P. Kurtish), Mourilyan (W. Livtine) and

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13. Sullivan, *Dissent in the Labor Party*, pp.22-24. The other people convicted were: Ludwik Roslan (a Pole), Normal Jeffrey, Herbert James Huggett, Jerome Gillis Cahill, Edward Cahill, William Elder, Gus Orance, Percival James and Joe Doyle.
 14. It was published in the name of the Combined Propaganda Committee of the Queensland Socialist League.
 15. Kent's Buildings, Adelaide Street, Brisbane.
 16. Letter from the Russian Association to David Lloyd George, reproduced in *Knowledge and Unity*, 22 March 1919.

Tarzali. Further lists published in November suggest that the publication was also being read in Cairns, Mossman and Babinda.¹⁷ Despite the relatively strong organisation of the Russian Workers Association and kindred groups, however, the first Queensland Communist Party was formed by the Brisbane branch of the Australian Socialist Party (A.S.P.).

The Communist Party of Australia (C.P.A.) was founded at a unity conference of socialist groups held in Sydney on 30 October 1920, at which the Queensland A.S.P. was represented by J.B. Miles. In his absence secretary W.J. Thomas declared his Party to be the "Queensland Communist Group", and its journal, *The Communist*, thus became Australia's first communist newspaper.¹⁸ When the Sydney headquarters of the A.S.P. objected to the move made by its Queensland branch on the grounds that national Communist Party leader Jock Garden's O.B.U. background was antipathetic to the aims of the A.S.P., the Queensland group was dissolved. On Miles' return to Brisbane his colleagues combined with members of the Q.S.L. and the Russian Association to form the Queensland Communist Party. *Knowledge and Unity* became the Party's official journal in March 1921.¹⁹ Delegates from Cairns and Innisfail attended the first State Conference held in Brisbane in 1921, at which a provisional executive was elected. It comprised A.G. Rees, J.B. Miles, H. Huggett, C. Wilson, W. Meers and N. Lagutin, and was based in the Brisbane Trades Hall.²⁰

17. *Knowledge and Unity*, 2 September 1920, 27 November 1920.

18. *The Communist* (editor W.J. Thomas) published only three issues. The first was published in August 1920 as the journal of the Queensland A.S.P.; there was no edition in September. The second paper, dated October 1920, called itself the Official Organ of the Queensland Communist Group. The third, in November, was the last edition.

19. Information concerning the founding of the Queensland Communist Party has been culled from *The Communist*, *Knowledge and Unity*, and A.B. Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia 1920-35: Policy and Organisation*. (Ph.D. thesis, A.N.U., 1966).

20. Alistair Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia: A Short History* (Stanford 1969), p.11.

Organisation in Queensland was considerably in advance of its federal counterpart, which was plagued by the struggle between the old socialist parties competing for recognition as the official Communist Party. Two Australian groups were represented at the Third Comintern Congress held in Moscow in 1921,²¹ and the matter was not settled until June 1922. Thus it is likely that the official branches in Cairns and Townsville which were set up by a touring state organiser early in 1922, actually predated the establishment of a national party structure. J.B. Miles, then secretary of the Brisbane Building Trades Council, represented Queensland at the first united Party Conference in December 1922.²²

The Third Comintern Congress outlined a policy of isolation from social democratic parties, since designated the "united front from below". It implied penetration of the labour parties with the intention of destroying their leadership and converting their rank and file members to international socialism. Neither the C.P.A. nor the A.L.P. appear to have recognised this manoeuvre until 1923 when the A.L.P. removed Jock Garden from its N.S.W. Executive, and expelled all known communists from the Party. The Third Annual Conference²³ of the Communist Party of Australia was held in Sydney in December 1923; both Brisbane and North Queensland were represented,²⁴ and it would seem that this conference instituted the practice of secret membership in response to A.L.P. hostility.

The interpretation of the united front policy which the

-
21. The Comintern or Communist International was founded in 1919. Its second Congress in 1920 prescribed twenty-one conditions for the admission of other Parties, including acceptance of control from the Executive Committee of the Comintern (E.C.C.I.).
 22. Campbell, *History of the Australian Labour Movement*, p.115.
 23. The Conference of December 1922 was called the Second Annual Conference.
 24. Campbell, *History of the Australian Labour Movement*, p.116.



J. B. MILES.

(Workers Weekly, 10 January 1936)



L. SHARKEY
**Who Reported on the Seventh World
Congress of the Comintern**

(Workers Weekly, 10 January 1936).

delegates took back to Queensland probably had more relevance to the industrial than the political situation in that state. By 1924 the Queensland communists had become locked into the battle for control of the Labor Party which was being waged between the A.W.U. and militant unions led by the Australian Railways Union (A.R.U.).²⁵ In 1924, when the Party journal *New Order*²⁶ began publication, its Russian editor persistently attacked the A.W.U. leadership, and some success in infiltrating the union is suggested by the publication of contributions from Ingham under the signature of "F. Rylands, A.W.U. representative".²⁷ Nevertheless in southern Queensland at least the Party stressed the political aspects of the policy.

In Brisbane weekly classes in politics were being conducted by J.B. Miles, and in political economy by F.W. Paterson. H.J. Huggett conducted children's classes every Saturday afternoon.²⁸ Little is known of activities in the north of the state during 1924, although branches existed in Cairns, Innisfail, Townsville, Collinsville, Scottville and Mount Mulligan.²⁹ At the end of the year a new organisation was established to spearhead the attempt to penetrate the Labor Party. In an article printed in *The Toiler*³⁰ in December 1924 its first president, Fred Paterson, outlined the aim of the Minority Labour Movement:

The immediate task of all militant workers is to get inside the A.L.P. in order to show these workers how the reactionary leaders are betraying them and the cause of their class.

Readers' responses to this statement suggest that even in 1925

25. For a discussion of this conflict see K.H. Kennedy, "Queensland Labor's Anti-Communist Pledge Crisis", in D.J. Murphy et al., *Labor in Power* (Brisbane 1979).

26. *Knowledge and Unity* ceased publication in August 1921. *New Order* was first published 5 May 1924.

27. *New Order*, 5 May 1924, 28 June 1924.

28. *Ibid.*, 24 May 1924.

29. Jim Henderson, written communication, 15 October 1979.

30. *New Order* ceased publication in August 1924, its successor *The Toiler* first appeared 25 October 1924.

there were many members who did not find the policy acceptable. *The Toiler* published several letters from angry idealogues who believed that to work within the parliamentary system was to betray the revolution.³¹

While the first united front policy aroused controversy, its effect on the Queensland membership was small compared with the problems it raised at the national level. N.S.W. members were alienated to such an extent that in 1925 Central Committee member L. Barrachi moved that the C.P.A. go into liquidation. Although the motion was defeated, most of the Executive, including secretary Jock Garden, left the Party.

Despite the wide distribution of *The Toiler*, the North Queensland unit of the Party appears to have been undisturbed by ideological debate during this period. In September 1925 a national organiser, Norman Jeffrey, toured the north visiting Cairns, Mareeba, Mount Molloy, Mount Mulligan, Mossman, Port Douglas, Gordonvale, Babinda, Innisfail, Ingham, Halifax, Lucinda, Inkerman and Bowen.³² The next year Townsville was visited by a representative of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (C.P.S.U.). Two thirds of the Townsville Russian families had joined the Australian Communist Party, although most of them spoke little English. These families met the Russian organiser at Alex Bordujenko's house in Stanley Street, and were invited either to return to Russia or to subscribe to post-revolution reconstruction there. Each family pledged the astonishing sum of fifty pounds, in some cases a third of their annual income. The money was sent to America where it purchased a tractor for a Soviet commune.³³

31. *The Toiler*, 19 December 1924, 9 May 1925.

32. Jones, Electoral Support for the Communist Party in North Queensland, pp.82-83.

33. George Bordujenko, interview, 30 April 1979. These families earned between three and five pounds a week. Most of the men worked in the freezers at the meatworks, and were therefore unemployed during a part of the year.

The Townsville branch established its headquarters in the Meatworkers' (A.M.I.E.U.) Hall in April 1926; then, amid deteriorating economic conditions, the Party took part in the South Johnstone strike and railway lockout of 1927.³⁴ This dispute, and the victimisation which followed it had a devastating effect on the Communist Party in the far north. Several branches collapsed and organisation within the sugar industry did not recover until the 1930's.³⁵ When organiser Herbert Moxon visited the north that year he devoted his time to the expanding branches in Bowen, Collinsville and Townsville, where, as a result of his visit, a North Queensland Executive was established. The secretaryship was conferred on E.G. Tripp, a former member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, and an active and able leader.³⁶

In the meantime the national executive was again preparing to tear itself apart. In October 1927 the E.C.C.I., in cooperation with members of the C.P.A. Central Committee, had drawn up a document known as the Queensland Resolution, which gave instructions on tactics to be used during the forthcoming state elections. These tactics amounted to a policy change based on a Comintern prediction that economic depression would shortly overtake the western capitalist nations. As the depression was expected to create revolutionary conditions, the policy of working within the labour parties was to be abandoned, and organisation tightened to enable a direct challenge to the political system. The document was brought back to Australia by Norman Jeffrey and Jack Blake who attended a conference in Moscow in early 1928. In Sydney it became the focus of a power struggle within the Central Committee, which reached its climax at the 1929

34. For details of the dispute see K.H. Kennedy, "The South Johnstone Strike and Railway Lockout, 1927", *Labour History* 31 (November 1976).

35. Jim Henderson, written communication, 15 October 1979.

36. Jones, *Electoral Support for the Communist Party in North Queensland*, pp.87-88.

Annual Conference, when Moxon and Sharkey emerged as the new leaders of the C.P.A.³⁷

Despite Miles' support for the new leadership, reactions of the Queensland members to its policy were mixed. Its industrial and organisational aspects seem to have been acceptable, particularly in the north where the Party was making considerable progress within the trade unions. During 1929 Tripp was elected Amalgamated Engineering Union (A.E.U.) representative on the Townsville Trades and Labor Council, where he worked in cooperation with the A.R.U., Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union (A.M.I.E.U.) and Waterside Workers' Federation (W.W.F.) delegates.³⁸ There was however opposition, particularly from Paterson, to the withdrawal of support from the rank and file of the A.L.P., and Paterson was censured by the Central Committee, although he did not leave the Party. Had he done so, the Queensland organisation would probably have split.

Within a year the new leaders completed their organisational reforms. The "bolshevisation" of the C.P.A. involved building a hierarchical party structure, based on units established within industries. These were connected into groups known as Districts, each of which elected a District Committee. Above these was the Annual Party Congress of District delegates, which elected the Central Committee. Above the Central Committee was the E.C.C.I. All lower bodies were bound to carry out the decisions of the higher body, ultimate control thus resting with the Comintern. Deviation from the Comintern line could, and often did, result in expulsions.³⁹

37. For a discussion of the Queensland Resolution see J.D. Blake, "The Australian Communist Party and the Comintern in the early 1930s", *Labour History* 23 (November 1972).

38. Jones, Electoral Support for the Communist Party in North Queensland, p.89.

39. Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, p.283.

Purges of "right deviationists" during 1930 removed Tripp from the Party, and the loss of the northern leader combined with the harsh attitudes of Party members, who regarded A.L.P. trade unionists as "social fascists", to decimate the remaining North Queensland branches. The Collinsville and Scottville branches collapsed⁴⁰ and Townsville was considerably weakened. At the Christmas Conference of 1931 Queensland lost J.B. Miles who was elected federal General Secretary of the Party, an election necessitating a change in the Party constitution which had previously limited eligibility for this position to members of the N.S.W. Party.⁴¹

As Miles moved to Sydney, a new leader was emerging in North Queensland. Jack Henry developed his political ideas as a canecutter in the Tully district and joined the Communist Party in Brisbane during the slack season of 1931. He returned to the canefields for the 1932 cutting season and became the driving force of the Party in North Queensland.⁴² Henry left a strong impression on those who met him. He was a dedicated Party worker who undermined his health cutting cane and organising for the Party by day, and studying Marxism at night by the light of a candle balanced on his chest.⁴³ Under his direction the issue of British Preference in the sugar industry became a focus for rank and file discontent with the A.W.U. leadership in the far north during 1932.⁴⁴ When, in 1933, the Queensland Party reorganised into two Districts - Three, centred on Brisbane, and Nine, covering Mackay and all areas north - Henry was appointed District Nine leader.⁴⁵ During that year three northern branches reformed and a new one was created. In Collinsville mine office worker and former school teacher, Jim Henderson,

40. Jim Henderson, written communication, 15 October 1979.

41. Campbell, *History of the Australian Labour Movement*, p.130.

42. *Queensland Guardian*, 26 November 1943.

43. Eileen Quinn, interview, 16 April 1979.

44. See chapter 3.

45. *Queensland Guardian*, 26 November 1943.

reconstituted the Collinsville branch with an initial membership of nine, among them Tom (Bluey) Miller, later President of the Queensland Miners' Federation. Four kilometres away the little mining town of Scottville was inspired to reform its branch, largely with former members.⁴⁶ A new branch with predominantly Italian membership was established in Ingham in September, and in November the Innisfail branch reopened. Also in 1933 Fred Paterson moved to Townsville, affording the District an extremely able and well-balanced leadership. When the *Communist Review* congratulated District Nine on its organisation in March the following year, party members were given a great boost in morale.⁴⁷

1934 was a successful year for the North Queensland Communist Party. Three candidates for the federal elections: Henry, Paterson and Jim Slater, demonstrated that electoral support was increasing; and militancy in the sugar industry continued to grow. During this year the focus of discontent was an outbreak of Weil's Disease in the Ingham district, and orders for burning the cane were won for the Victoria, Macknade, Mourilyan, South Johnstone and Goondi mill areas.⁴⁸ Rank and file committees were built up within those branches of the A.W.U. in which sugar workers predominated. By July 1935, when the Seventh Comintern Congress announced its Popular Front tactic, the North Queensland Communist Party was politically and industrially organised to incorporate the new policy into its activities.

Although the new leaders undoubtedly contributed to the reconstruction of the North Queensland Party in these years, their work was assisted by a relaxation of the "social fascist" line during the years following Hitler's appointment to the German Chancellery.

46. Jim Henderson, written communication, 15 October 1979.

47. *Communist Review*, March 1934, p.12.

48. See Chapter 2.

The official policy change, however, was not made until 1935 when the Seventh Comintern Congress announced that from that date all Party activities were to be subordinated to the fight against international fascism. The new line was scarcely more appropriate to Australian conditions than its predecessor; neither "revolutionary condition" nor "fascist threat" provided an adequate description of the realities of the political situation in this country. There were however three aspects of the new policy which proved to be effective in Australia.

Firstly, the struggle against fascism required the formation of a united front with the social democratic parties. Unlike the first united front which sought to undermine the influence of their leaders, this was to be a genuine attempt to cooperate with other working class organisations, and was accompanied by the extension of the base of the Party to include "intellectuals", small shopkeepers and working farmers. Secondly the Congress announced that from 1935 policy for each country would be determined individually, taking into account "national peculiarities". In the years preceeding the Congress all communist policy had been formulated on the basis of an expert analysis of the international economic situation. After the Seventh Congress, although the aim of the policy remained the same for all members of the International, individual parties acquired greater flexibility in the formulation of policies to achieve this aim. Thirdly, the Red International of Labour Unions (R.I.L.U.) was dissolved, allowing all trade union policy to be determined by the national parties.

In late December 1935 the Eleventh Annual Conference of the Communist Party of Australia officially adopted the policy, which had already influenced local decision making for some months. Australian policy centred on a proposed alliance with the A.L.P. to remove the ruling U.A.P. federal government from office. At the meeting moves were made towards an approach to the A.L.P.

on the subject of C.P.A. affiliation,⁴⁹ and for the first time in its history the Party called for a Labor Government to replace Lyons. The official report of the Conference expressed optimism on the outcome of this line; Dixon wrote:

The time is arriving, however, when it [the A.L.P.] will not be able to [ignore our requests for unity] ... when acceptance will be necessary. We look forward to that moment and work for it daily.⁵⁰

Nevertheless a more realistic appraisal of the situation was implied by the new slogan: "A United Front Against *War* and Fascism,"* and by the stress given by the delegates to trade union strategy. Work within the unions was to undergo several fundamental changes. The general strike tactic was dropped, and the Conference announced that from that date each dispute was to be considered on its merit. A more flexible attitude to A.L.P. unionists was urged, and control through communist industrial organisations such as the Militant Minority Movement (M.M.M.) was to be replaced by the use of central trade union machinery.

The popular front policy was formally adopted in Queensland in January 1936, Sharkey himself attending the District Nine Conference to explain the new developments to northern delegates.⁵¹ In that state however the situation was complicated by two factors: firstly the A.L.P. was in power and indeed held all the North Queensland seats in the Legislative Assembly. Furthermore, that party held a decidedly isolationist view of foreign policy, and the process of simplification which linked the Lyons government with war and fascism and called for unity with the Labor Party to bring it down

49. Ralph Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party* (Melbourne 1966), p.52.

50. R. Dixon, "Fifteen Years of Communism", *Communist Review* 2 (January 1936), pp.39-40.

* author's italics.

51. Jim Henderson, written communication, 15 October 1979.

was not possible in the north. Secondly, much of the political conflict in Queensland hinged on the struggle for control of the political wing of the labour movement between the conservative and radical trade unions. The policy which emerged, therefore, was one of opposition to conservative or corrupt leaders within the Labour Party and the trade union movement. Dixon outlined this in a speech given at the Southern and Northern Conferences of the Communist Party on "The immediate programme for communists in Queensland". He told delegates:

We Communists are anxious to see the bad situation in the Labour (sic) Party corrected above all because of the menace to the working class from war and fascism A united labour movement politically active, would be the most effective defence of the people's interest. Working class unity is the burning need of the moment.... We declare our readiness to affiliate with the Labour Party for establishment of a lasting unity....⁵²

It was within the framework of this policy that, between 1935 and 1939, the popular front emerged in North Queensland.⁵³

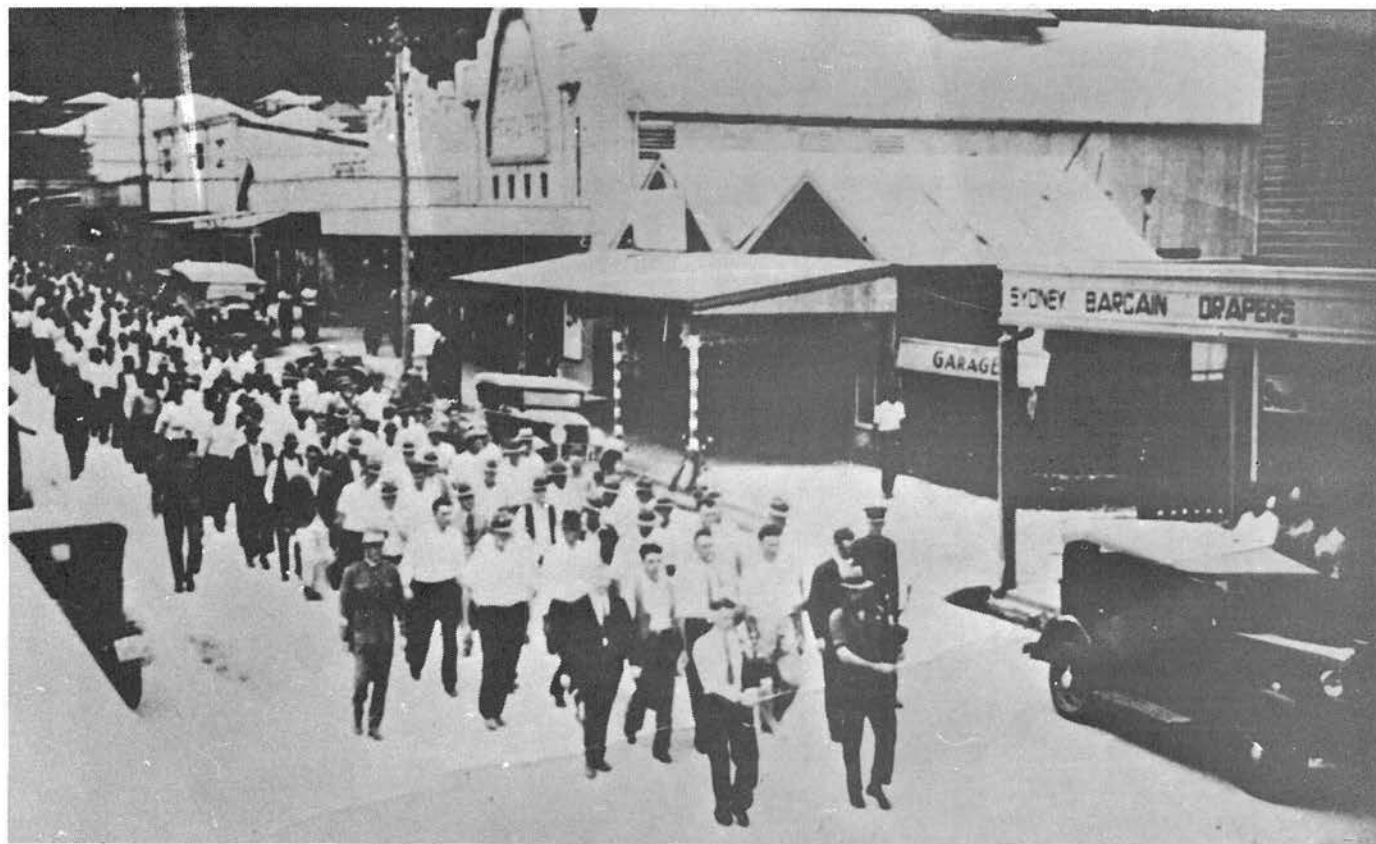
52. R. Dixon, *Labour in Queensland* (Brisbane 1937), unpaginated.

53. In addition to the works cited, this description of the united front policy draws on Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*; L.L. Sharkey, *An Outline History of the Australian Communist Party* (Sydney 1944); Blake, "The Australian Communist Party and Comintern"; and Reports to the Central Committee Meeting of 24 July 1936, given by J.B. Miles and Jack Henry.



JACK HENRY

(Workers Weekly, 10 January 1936).



Strike March, Tully 1935. (J. Henderson).

CHAPTER II

THE SUGAR WORKERS' STRIKE OF 1935

"Not a struggle for wages but for life; for the living labor forces upon whose backs the tentacles of the giant sugar industry of the Northlands are fastened."¹

1. Jean Devanny, *Sugar Heaven* (Sydney 1936), Dedication.

Possibly the Australian Communist Party District for which the aims of the united front against war and fascism were most attractive was District Nine in North Queensland. In this District even sections of the Labor Party's rank and file found the Communist Party's proposals to affiliate with the A.L.P. seductive. Despite A.L.P. rules, dating back to the mid 1920's, precluding communists from party membership, these sections became increasingly disenchanted with the Queensland Central Executive's (Q.C.E.) rigid stand on the question. North Queenslanders traditionally distrusted the state government which was often regarded as neglecting northern development in favour of southern interests. Paradoxically, almost continuously since 1915, this government had been formed by the A.L.P., relying heavily on the vote of northern and western Queensland. It was understandable therefore that some of the distrust should focus on the A.L.P. leadership, especially the influence of Clarrie Fallon and the A.W.U. machine which exerted its authority from its Elizabeth Street headquarters in the Workers Building. In time this attitude led to electoral support for a variety of rebel groups not only in provincial cities but also in the capital itself: none of them conservative but all expressing discontent with the Q.C.E.²

A similar situation existed in the industrial wing of the labour movement. Many North Queensland trade unionists were seasonal workers, for whom continuity of employment was never assured. Therefore action for improved wages and conditions was sometimes less cautious and controlled than elsewhere, and industrial policy was

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2. In the provincial cities, parliamentarians were elected under the banners of Hermit Park Labor, King O'Malley Labor, North Queensland Labor and Andrew Fisher Labor. In Brisbane, Taylor (Enoggera) and Marriott (Bulimba) were expelled from the A.L.P. for their activities in the Aid to Russia organisation. The Protestant Labor Party, which fielded twenty-three candidates in 1938 was highly sectarian in character, but also reflected disenchantment with the A.L.P. machine.

likely to be accepted on the basis of short term gains. The dominant union however was the A.W.U., a body which was deeply conservative and committed to arbitration. Its leaders were often career unionists, many of whom regarded their work as a springboard to a political future. Thus, while cooperation with the Communist Party was anathema to the A.W.U. leadership, for many rank and file members the immediate policy was the deciding factor, and the origin of such policy a matter of some indifference.

Another condition which favoured the united front in the north was the existence, at least in the sugar districts, of an unusually clearly defined class system.

On one side stand the bosses; on the other the men. We haven't the complicating factors they've got down south in the industrial areas. The non-party workers can see the struggle, therefore it's easy to wage it.³

Finally, in North Queensland there was a high concentration of working class people for whom fascism had real meaning: the Italians, Yugoslavs and Spaniards of the sugar areas. A significant number of these were refugees from fascism,⁴ and many communicated regularly with relatives and friends in the fascist countries. These four factors emerged during the first campaign of the popular front period: the Weil's Disease strike of 1935.

3. Devanny, *Sugar Heaven*, p.298.

Some of the detail in chapters 2 and 3 has been taken from this novel, the accuracy of which has been vouched for by eye witnesses of the strike. (Eileen Quinn, interview, 2 April 1979, and Mario Cazzolino, interview, 5 August 1979). Twelve years after publication a Central Committee member recommended *Sugar Heaven* to a Sydney Party Conference as a "classic report of an excellently conducted strike". A Russian edition of the book was released 17 August 1963. (Pat Hurd, interview, 17 June 1979). The names of the participants have been established through several oral sources.

4. See chapter 5.

Weil's Disease was the name given by canecutters and local doctors to fevers caused by three varieties of leptospirae (including leptospira icterohaemorrhagiae: classical Weil's Disease) encountered in the sugar areas during the 1930's. Fevers had always been a problem in North Queensland, but diagnoses were often imprecise. Local legend insists that, during the construction of the Mourilyan Harbour tramway in 1883, a man died for every sleeper laid, and in 1886 at least 50 of the 76 inhabitants of Burketown died of an unidentified fever.⁵ Undoubtedly leptospirae were among the viruses responsible for diseases diagnosed as "typho-malaria", coastal fever or cane fever before 1933. However the first clinical diagnosis of Weil's Disease was made by Gordon Morrissey, an Ingham doctor, during the 1933 cane crushing season.⁶ The summers of 1933 and 1934 were unusually wet in the Ingham district, and the town and surrounding farms were invaded by a plague of rats. By October Dr. Morrissey was treating cases of fever among the canecutters, and by the end of the season these numbered forty. The patients complained of fever, muscular pains, intense headache and extreme mental depression. Sixteen of them became jaundiced, and in the worst cases the symptoms included internal haemorrhages and black vomiting. Four cases developed acute mania and died at the end of the second week. When the 1934 season opened in June, thirty-six new cases appeared within a month, two of them proving fatal. *Post mortems* revealed haemorrhages of the kidneys, lungs and bowel wall, and the

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5. E.H. Derrick, "The Challenge of North Queensland Fevers", *Australasian Annals of Medicine* 6 (September 1957), p.177.
 6. For information about Weil's Disease in North Queensland see: E.H. Derrick and G.E.B. Clayton, "The Presence of Leptospirosis of a mild type in Queensland", *Medical Journal of Australia* 1 (1937); T.J.P. Cotter and D.P.H. Sawers, "A Laboratory and Epidemiological Investigation of an Outbreak of Weil's Disease in Northern Queensland", *Medical Journal of Australia* 2 (1934); D.W. Johnson, "The Australian Leptospirosis", *Medical Journal of Australia* 20(1950); G.C. Morrissey, "The Occurrence of Leptospirosis (Weil's Disease) in Australia", *Medical Journal of Australia* 2 (1934); W.C. Sawers, "Some Aspects of the Leptospirosis Problem in Australia", *Medical Journal of Australia* 1 (1938).

spleens were found to have disintegrated. In August eighty cases were reported in ten days, and a further six in September. All the patients were healthy adult males, and all were working in the sugar cane.

Both Morrissey, the local clinician, and Tim Cotter of the Commonwealth Health Laboratory in Townsville reported that the virus was spread by rats urinating in the wet ground and on the cane stalks, and invaded the cutters through abrasions received while handling the cane trash. They considered that if the cane were to be burned before harvesting the trash would be removed and both the cane and ground would acquire a degree of sterility. After a short but effective strike in the Ingham canefields, during which emotion ran high and sporadic violence occurred, the A.W.U. applied to the industrial magistrate for an order to burn the cane in the Victoria and Macknade mill areas. This was gazetted on 1 September 1934, and the cutters agreed to accept one shilling per ton less for cutting burned cane.⁷ The growers, however, did not consider this adequate compensation. During burning a proportion of the sugar content was lost, and in addition there was a danger of losing stands which could not be harvested immediately after the burn. Therefore an appeal was lodged against the order, and this was heard during September. At the hearing E.S. Smith, appearing for the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (C.S.R.), gave evidence that Weil's Disease was a mild illness contracted from contaminated water in creeks outside the canefields. Nevertheless members of the bench were "...of the opinion that we would not be justified at the present

7. *The Queensland Industrial Gazette*, 25 September 1934, p.291. The 1934 strike has received little attention from historians. It is afforded half a paragraph in G. Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants: Fascism and Italian Anarchists in Australia", *Australian Quarterly* 51, (March 1979) p.14; the viewpoint of the Herbert River Cane Growers' Association is mentioned in A.V. Ford, *Operations of the Queensland Cane Growers' Association in the Herbert River District, 1927-1965* (B.A. Hons. thesis, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1970) p.30.

time in rescinding our order...." On 27 October orders to burn cane in the Mourilyan, South Johnstone and Goondi Mill areas were handed down, and the cutting price was set at the Ingham rate. At the end of the 1934 crushing season the Cane Growers Association approached the court again, and this time was successful in having the orders revoked.⁸

The following June the sugar workers' award was changed so that the Ingham rate only applied to specific stands of cane burned on the written order of the Health Inspector. When the State Sugar Industry Award for the 1935 season was handed down later that month, clause 19 (3) stipulated:

Burnt cane 20 per cent per ton less than the above rates in case of crops 10 tons to the acre and over; in the case of crops 10 tons to the acre 15 per cent less than the above rates.

In the meantime however, the A.W.U. had successfully applied to have the order to burn cane in the Ingham area reinstated, and the price in that district restored to green cane price less one shilling a ton.⁹ Thus, at the beginning of the 1935 crushing season all cane in the Victoria and Macknade mill areas (Ingham District) was to be burnt before cutting, and the cutters were to receive what came to be known as "the Ingham rate". In all other areas cane would only be burned on the written order of the Health Inspector. Payment for such cane would be at green cane rates less twenty per cent.

Devanny claimed that strike action to obtain burning orders was decided on by the Mourilyan Italians before the 1935 season opened. Certainly the Italian farmers had anticipated disturbances after the

8. *The Queensland Industrial Gazette*, 25 September 1934, p.470, 23 March 1935, p.40.

9. *Ibid.*, 21 September 1935, pp.422 and 426.

sign on. There were migrations within the district as farmers gathered their families around them: the Guerra brothers for instance, left their own farms and took their families to live on the large (2,000 acre) property of the oldest brother Ferruccio near Mourilyan. One sister-in-law recalled:

It is clear that Ferruccio foresaw (*premuniva*) something, because he insisted that we leave everything and go to his farm.¹⁰

Fear of Weil's Disease was intense, and there was a general lack of understanding about its symptoms and likely results. As late as 27 August the *Workers Weekly* called on "sugar field comrades" to supply more details so that readers' inquiries might be answered.¹¹ Stories circulated that the disease recurred years after infection, and that death could result from such "relapses". In Tully a woman claimed that her child had died from the disease during the previous season.¹² Three factors were clearly perceived by the cane cutters: that Weil's Disease was incurable (some years later it was discovered to be susceptible in its early stages to penicillin);¹³ that it was preventable through burning the cane; and that Health Inspectors were unlikely to sign burning orders until after the disease had broken out in the district concerned. Shortly before the season opened fear was heightened by the discovery of infected rats in the Cairns and Innisfail districts.¹⁴

A week before the start of the Mourilyan crushing season on 28 July, the local Communist Party secretary Karl King called a meeting of all sugar workers to discuss tactics. The three hundred cutters and mill hands in attendance elected an Area Committee and

10. Giacomina Guerra, interview, 10 June 1979. (Translated from the Italian).

11. *Workers Weekly*, 27 August 1935.

12. Eileen Quinn, interview, 16 April 1979.

13. Johnson, "The Australian Leptospirosis", p.730.

14. Sawers, "Some Aspects of the Leptospirosis Problem in Australia", p.1090.

decided to approach the Cane Growers Association and the A.W.U. to obtain a burning agreement. The approaches failed; the Cane Growers Association stood firm, and the A.W.U. organiser understandably regarded the formation of the Area Committee with some indignation. A further meeting of cutters was scheduled for 4 August, when King addressed the men on the issue, and Ernie Baratto outlined their grievances in Italian for non-English speaking workers. After a fiery meeting they voted to declare all unburned cane "black". At this stage, however, the Mourilyan mill workers had not been consulted, even though King himself was a mill hand. When they were asked not to handle unburned cane they voted 62 to 53 to treat the 1,100 tons already in the mill yard, but to refuse to handle "black" cane. In the event the Mourilyan mill did not strike, for after another cutters' meeting had confirmed the stoppage on 6 August, the management notified its employees that the mill had been closed indefinitely.¹⁵

On 11 August a meeting was held at Tully, where both cutters and mill hands decided to strike, thus bringing out another eight hundred men.¹⁶ The next day a conference of delegates from Mourilyan, Tully, Goondi and South Johnstone was held at Innisfail. No decision was reached, but Goondi went out on 21 August and South Johnstone the following day. Thus by late August more than 2,000 cutters were "on the grass": in a normal season 300 cut in the Mourilyan area, 400 at Goondi, 600 at South Johnstone and 700 at Tully.¹⁷ With four mills out of production and the farmers thus immobilized, some 4,000 people were affected. Strike committees were formed in each centre, the most important being at Innisfail and Tully, both of which had strong Communist Party branches. The centres were linked by a

15. *Workers Weekly*, 2 August 1935 and 9 August 1935.

16. *Ibid.*, 16 August 1935.

17. *The Worker*, 24 September 1935.

coordinating committee which quickly called for a combined meeting at Innisfail. This was chaired by the president of the Goondi strike committee Les Sullivan, and was addressed by Karl King, J. Jessup and Lino Cazzolino from Mourilyan, and Angelo Biletta, Con Doyle and Jack Henry from Tully. All the speakers were communists except Jessup who joined the Party during the strike and later became secretary of the Innisfail branch. Henry, leader of C.P.A. District Nine, analysed the strike in terms of the international sugar industry and the world class struggle. Apparently by this time the leaders had realised that a quick victory was improbable. Indeed, since the campaign had been organised in opposition to the wishes of the A.W.U. some of them must have been aware that victory of any sort was unlikely. The main purpose of the meeting therefore was the formation of relief committees,¹⁸ funds for which were already being received from other unions. The first donation was one hundred pounds, sent by the Collinsville Miners' Federation.

This, together with the efficiency and speed with which the separate districts were organised and coordinated suggests that the Communist Party had orchestrated the strike in advance of the season. An important part of the preparations was the organisation which had been carried out among the Italians, without whose cooperation success would have been impossible, particularly in the Innisfail district.

On 27 August, while the Brisbane Trades and Labor Council adopted a resolution condemning the Communist Party for its tactics in the sugar strike, an attempt was being made to extend that strike further north to Cairns. There, two hundred and fifty men attended a stop work meeting which carried a resolution of no confidence in the A.W.U., and called on the Government to direct the Industrial

18. See chapter 3.

Court to sit in North Queensland and receive evidence on the incidence of Weil's Disease. The meeting, which consisted of sugar workers from the Hambledon mill area, declared that it would strike if the arbitration machinery had not been put in motion within five days. Their stand influenced a meeting of seven hundred canecutters in the South Johnstone district, who, on the following day, decided against any return to work.¹⁹

The Hambledon cutters met again on 1 September and 108 of them signed a requisition for an A.W.U. meeting, which was subsequently handed to the union organiser. Supporting resolutions were carried by the crews of the sugar lighters *Time*, *Ullooloo*, *Manoora*, *Kypara* and *Wortana*,²⁰ all of which were manned by A.W.U. members. The requisition was refused, and thus the strike was temporarily extended to the Cairns district. Alarmed by developments, the A.W.U. secretary Clarrie Fallon²¹ travelled to North Queensland to take charge of the campaign, and called a union meeting in Cairns for 4 September. When A.W.U. organisers attempted to hold a secret ballot three hundred of the cutters walked out, and those remaining declared the strike off. Within two days the entire Hambledon mill area was back at work, and with the refusal of the Babinda cutters to come out, the perimeters of the strike were set within the mill areas of Mourilyan, South Johnstone, Goondi and Tully.

Meanwhile the Canegrowers Association was determined to open one of the mills to cope with cane cut by the farmers and their families. Farmers had met on 3 September and pledged themselves to

19. *Workers Weekly*, 30 August 1935.

20. *Ibid.*, 3 September 1935.

21. *The Worker*, 3 September 1935. In 1935 Fallon was State Secretary of the A.W.U. and Vice-President of the Q.C.E. Within a year he was State President of the A.L.P. and A.W.U.

work a mill, preferably Mourilyan, if labour was not made available. Extra police were moved into the district. The industrial court announced a compulsory conference and secret ballot for 7 September, and both sides began a series of tactical manoeuvres. On the one hand an attempt was made to split the strikers by ordering simultaneous but separate meetings at Goondi and Innisfail, and, on 6 September the Government enacted an Order in Council, which was paraphrased by the *Workers Weekly*:

Any person who is guilty of inciting any person not to attend a compulsory conference or not to take part in a ballot or who induces any person to refrain from accepting any work covered by an award of the Court is liable to a penalty of up to £100 fine.²²

On the other hand, the strike committee countered with an attempt to unite the strikers. It distributed leaflets calling on the workers to reject the secret ballot on the grounds that it "imputed cowardice to the workers"; the slogan for the day was announced: "Unity means victory! No secret ballot! No scabs!"

Six hundred mill hands and cutters in the Mourilyan area were transported by truck to Innisfail where the meeting was to be held at the Regent Theatre. No trucks were provided at Goondi where the meeting was to be held at the mill. Instead of walking to the mill however, they marched into Innisfail led by Les Sullivan, and joined the Mourilyan men who were singing the *Marseillaise*, the *Internationale* and the *Red Flag* from the trays of their council lorries. At least a thousand workers formed up at the river end of Edith Street where banners were produced. These declared: "War on all rats!" (illustrated with caricatures of rats with the faces of A.W.U. leaders and members of the Canegrowers Association); and "United they stand...and how!" (drawings of the Canegrowers Executive, A.W.U. officials and millers in close embrace). The men marched up Edith Street singing, although their banners were

22. *Workers Weekly*, 17 September 1935.

confiscated by police en route. At the Regent Theatre the Mourilyan men went inside. The Goondi marchers were reinforced by a contingent from Tully and another from South Johnstone during their two mile walk back to the mill. These contingents continued their singing but remained outside the conference room. Sullivan was restrained by the police from addressing the crowd from the back of a truck.

The strike committee's tactics were only partly successful. At the Regent Theatre meeting, when the industrial magistrate W. Rillie, assisted by Italian and Sicilian interpreters, announced the secret ballot, pandemonium broke out. It was later alleged that only thirty-six votes were cast,²³ and though the majority of these favoured a return to work, this result was ignored by the strikers. At Goondi, however, a significant number of cutters voted, and the poll favoured ending the strike. The committee lost little time retrieving the initiative. The same afternoon it convened a meeting in Innisfail of a thousand men from every district. The resolution:

That in the event of the Goondi mill management and farmers endeavouring to man the mill with "scab" labour, we workers of all the strike area give our wholehearted support to those engaged in the Goondi struggle to fight it to a finish.²⁴

was carried, precipitating a new phase in the struggle, as reports announced that a large force of police was being sent from Brisbane to North Queensland.²⁵

On Monday 9 September thirty-six canecutters returned to work in the Goondi fields; they were joined the following day by another thirty. Pickets arrived from Tully, Silkwood and Mourilyan, and stationed themselves on the roads leading into the paddocks. On Tuesday the police reinforcements, numbered by the *Workers Weekly*

23. *Ibid.*, 10 September 1935; also *The Worker*, 24 September 1935.

24. *Workers Weekly*, 13 September 1935.

25. *Sunday Mail*, 8 September 1935.

at one hundred and fifty,²⁶ arrived from Brisbane. Striking cutters were evicted from the Goondi barracks and some of the police were billeted with the volunteers.

Despite the success of a public meeting held at the Innisfail Park on Wednesday night, and attended by fifteen hundred people, the Goondi mill crushed for three hours on Thursday morning. Fifty canecutters were still working, while two hundred and eight remained on strike. The next day ninety-nine cutters reported for work and the mill crushed twenty truckloads of cane. Striking Goondi cutters were summoned to an emergency meeting to review the defections from their ranks. The speeches laid greater stress on politics than at any previous meeting: Italian cutter Ernie Baratto²⁷ linked police action at Goondi with that of the *Squadre d'Azione* in Italy, and spoke darkly of Abyssinia.

On 14 September the Industrial Registrar gazetted the cancellation of all cane cutting agreements for the Mourilyan Sugar Mill area.²⁸ The police moved immediately to eject the strikers from the cutters' barracks in the district. The evictions were not accomplished easily. Many of the cutters and farmers were Italian, and on some farms the police had to contend with opposition from both. A strike camp was hastily set up at Mourilyan and it was reported that much of the food donated to it was supplied by these farmers,²⁹ whose two concerns were the safety of their kinsmen among the cutters and the harvesting of their crops, green or burnt.

Three days later summonses were issued for a secret ballot in the South Johnstone region. They were delivered by the police during

26. *Workers Weekly*, 17 September 1935.

27. See chapter 5.

28. *The Queensland Industrial Gazette*, 21 September 1935, p.409.

29. Eileen Quinn, interview, 2 April 1979.

the night. Learning from the Mourilyan ballot, the court announced that voting was to be held in three separate booths: South Johnstone, Silkwood and Japoon. At Innisfail the coordinating committee promptly brought out leaflets in English and Italian, urging the men not to vote, and copies were delivered to barracks throughout the district in the Communist Party's blue utility. The next morning the Tully committee sent speakers to the three polling centres in an attempt to influence the men before the ballot was held. The Silkwood cutters refused to vote, but both at South Johnstone, where the vote was 200 to 170, and at Japoon where it was almost even, the men decided to return to work. Again the strike committee called an emergency meeting in a desperate attempt to retain some control over the course of the dispute. However only one hundred and fifty-nine cutters attended the meeting at South Johnstone on Wednesday 18 September, and though they voted to stay out it was a futile gesture. Amidst violent scenes between opposing factions of Italians in the Innisfail streets during the weekend, Mourilyan decided to follow South Johnstone. On Monday 23 September the committee called on all cutters in that area to return to work: only Tully remained on strike.

There was now no question of a favourable settlement. In Tully however, where the committee was led by Jack Henry and Tully C.P.A. secretary Les Lock, the political aspects of the stoppage were dominant. The Tully mill began to crush on 23 September, using volunteer labour. The same day the cancellation of all cutting contracts for the Tully mill area was gazetted.³⁰ A meeting was hurriedly called, and the men marched to the Plaza Theatre behind a bagpiper and drummer enlisted for the occasion. The strikers declared the hotel which was accommodating the volunteer mill hands "black", and mill pickets were organised. The branch secretary of the A.W.U. announced that a meeting of all cutters and mill hands

30. *Queensland Industrial Gazette*, 24 December 1934, p.618.

would be held the following day.

On Tuesday 24 September hands attempting to enter the mill under police escort were met by picketers. Considering the number of police in the little town, and the desperate stage the strike had entered, the encounter was notably free of violence. Four picketers were arrested on charges of disorderly behaviour, but were quickly released on two pounds bail, additional charges of using indecent language being withdrawn.³¹ During the previous night the committee had worked to turn the A.W.U. meeting to the strikers' advantage, and when the hour of the conference arrived, over a thousand strikers and sympathisers formed up at the top end of Tully's main street. This street slopes fairly steeply down to where the Plaza Theatre is situated, almost at the end of the main town area. Thus the great procession, led by the Tully Pipe Band, marched right through the business area before the start of the conference. The A.W.U. organiser opened the meeting with a call for nominations for the chair. Eric Driscoll, communist A.W.U. mill representative was duly elected, and the executive of the strike committee took its place on the platform, reflecting its control over the local strike. The expressed purpose of the meeting was the election of delegates to represent the men at a compulsory conference of millers, farmers, strikers and the A.W.U. Towards the end of the meeting the "scabs" from the mill arrived to cast their vote. They were escorted by police, and their entry was considered by the strikers to be an act of provocation. Nevertheless, at Henry's urging, the election was concluded peacefully.³² The conference was never held.

Crushing continued throughout the week, but on Monday 30 September the strikers voted 550 votes to 57 to continue to press for burned cane at "Ingham rates". At a separate meeting of mill

31. *Workers Weekly*, 27 September 1935.

32. Eileen Quinn, interview, 16 April 1979.

hands on 2 October, Driscoll managed, despite some dissent, to carry a motion of support for the decision of the combined meeting. The following day a farmers' conference, held at the Euramo Hall, revealed that attempted sign-ons at Euramo had failed, although one cane farmer at Feluga had enlisted nine volunteers, and another at Lower Tully had signed on ten men. On Friday 4 October, the Lower Tully cutters and the mill hands were evicted from their barracks, and thirty policemen were billeted at the mill. During the afternoon another procession and strike vote were staged. The strikers voted seven to one to remain out, but lifted the ban on the hotel.

However this meeting revealed that many of the men were ready to return to work. By Monday the mill hands were drifting back, and in the afternoon they decided to return to the mill as a body. More than fifty were refused work. That night the strike committee called another meeting at Tully, and sent lorries to collect the men from Lower Tully and Euramo. The El Arish men arrived at 7.45 p.m. and were met by the other strikers, with whom they marched to the Plaza Theatre. The strike was finished, and it remained only to wind it up without losing face. The committee called for cheers for the last mill hands to return to work, and then advised cutters to go back the next morning, as all striking cutters would lose their jobs once the mill was back to full crush. Jack Henry told his audience that the cutters had not suffered a defeat, but had decided to change their tactics. They were to return to work where they would organise within their gangs in preparation for the next strike. The motion was carried by a majority of twenty, and the meeting agreed to impose a levy of 2/- in the pound on single men, and 1/- for married workers, to support any striker who might be victimised through the remainder of the season.

The strike had lasted from 4 August to 7 October and had caused great hardship for both workers and small farmers. Some thirty cutters were not reemployed, and the farmers received very little

compensation from the Canegrowers Association. In June 1936 two cases of Weil's Disease were reported in Daintree, two at Mossman, one at Gordonvale and five at Innisfail.³³ On 21 July a general order for the burning of the cane before harvesting was handed down by the industrial court.

33. *Workers Weekly*, 5 June 1936 and 7 July 1936.

CHAPTER III

WEIL'S DISEASE AND THE POPULAR FRONT

"Particularly was I impressed with the women; therefore it is to the wives of the strikers that I dedicate this book. Not only to those who stood shoulder to shoulder with their men, but also to the wives who have yet to learn that only through struggle can they attain to that destiny of free and joyous life to which humanity as a whole has a right."¹

1. Devanny, *Sugar Heaven*, Dedication.

The TOILER

Official Organ of the Brisbane District Group of the Communist -
Party of Australia

W.J. THOMAS EDITOR.

ROOM 3 TRADES HALL.

VOL. I. No. 1.

OCTOBER 25, 1924.

PRICE: 2d



"If Labour is to reach its goal the wage-reducing rats must be
hunted from their holes."

Printed for the Proprietors by John McDonald Hardcastle and William Morrow Cook, at the SWIFT PRINTERS, Brunswick
Street, Valley, Brisbane, in the State of Queensland.



May Day, Tully 1937. (*North Queensland Register*, May 1937).

It would be difficult to imagine a more suitable issue to open the popular front campaign than Weil's Disease. Concern about the illness, and Party organisation within the sugar industry both peaked at the time of the Seventh Comintern Congress. Weil's Disease was an emotive issue in which conflicting class interests could clearly be defined, and by extension linked with alleged conflict of interest between the leaders and the rank and file of the A.W.U. Because entire communities were involved in the dispute it also offered unique opportunities for the participation of normally apolitical groups such as the women and the migrants. Perhaps the most important development resulting from the strike was that for some North Queenslanders during 1935 the Communist Party changed from an alien threat into a source of strength and protection.

Throughout the strike both the A.W.U. and the C.P.A. treated the dispute as a struggle for control of the sugar workers. The conflict between the two organisations was not new; indeed it was almost as old as the Communist Party itself. In 1924, for instance, *The Toiler* devoted an entire front page to a cartoon depicting a communist using a pest spray to flush rats labelled Crampton, Reardon (Riordan) and Hanlin (Hanlon) out of the A.W.U. building. The caption read: "If Labour is to reach its goal the wage reducing rats must be hunted from their holes."² After 1935 however, each group appears to have regarded the other as its main opponent, and in 1936 the *Workers Weekly* devoted more words to A.W.U. Secretary Clarrie Fallon than to any other individual, including Hitler. *The Worker* though lacking an individual focus, was if anything even more virulent in its abuse of the Party.

Each side clearly identified its enemy during the first days of the strike. The communist press reported the first stop work meeting

2. *The Toiler*, 25 October 1924.

on 9 August, adding: "This action has been taken in opposition to the traitorous A.W.U. officials, who have openly sided with the courts and employers."³ The A.W.U. newspaper *The Worker* only reported the strike on 24 August, when it published a full page article under the headline "The Communist Party's Latest Stunt". Damaging insults were hurled at local strike leaders: it was hinted that Karl King had once "scabbed" during a strike, and Les Sullivan was accused of having tried to join the police force.⁴

General tactics were also laid down from the outset. The policy of the A.W.U. was to divide the strikers into the smallest possible groups and then to conduct secret ballots. The Communist Party, on the other hand, aimed at uniting the four mill areas into one great display of strength. Party speakers stressed the alleged corruption of A.W.U. ballots, and appreciative audiences cheered references to ballot boxes with sliding panels.

Both sides acknowledged the presence of non-British cutters in the district and printed posters and leaflets in Italian as well as English. The A.W.U. however regarded the Italians as the dupes of the Communist Party, and *The Worker* frequently referred to them as not speaking English, and therefore being unaware of the issues involved. It wrote of "...intimidation against people who do not understand our language...who are weak or indifferent...."⁵ The Communist Party on the other hand, made use of prominent Italian communists and anti-fascists such as Ernie Baratto, Lino Cazzolino and Angelo Biletta, as speakers as well as translators. In accusing the A.W.U. organisers of removing the ballot slips from Italian

3. *The Workers Weekly*, 9 August 1935.

4. *The Worker*, 24 August 1935.

5. *Ibid.*, 27 August 1935.

canceutters' trade union tickets,⁶ Party speakers did not suggest that the foreign cutters were "dupes" but rather that militant unionists were being robbed of their votes.

Throughout the campaign, both organisations were at pains to represent each other as outsiders. A.W.U. pamphlets emphasised the Party's Sydney connections, and stressed that the strike was a response to Central Committee orders to undermine the A.W.U. The C.P.A. for its part insisted that the struggle was between local "rank and file" members and their Brisbane based executive. The leadership was linked with the State Government, the Canegrowers' Association and the C.S.R. By the final night of the strike it was clear that two issues were at stake: Weil's Disease and the authority of the A.W.U. leaders. Part of the last resolution carried by the strikers in Tully on 7 October illustrates this:

We repudiate the slanders of the A.W.U. officials that our leaders are disruptors who led us into defeat. We affirm our unbroken confidence in the strike committee. We the sugar workers of the Tully area, declare the A.W.U. officials to be strike breakers, organisers of scabs, and agents of the bosses.⁷

For the strikers and their families, however, it is likely that the policy difference which had the most impact was demonstrated in the Relief Kitchens.

While it is rarely comfortable to take part in a strike, the sugar workers found themselves in a particularly difficult position. The "lay-off" in the sugar industry lasts for seven months and when the strike was declared few cutters had worked for more than two

6. Evidence of this practice was received by the federal arbitration court at its hearing of W.B. Hay's application for directions regarding the ballot for General Secretary of the A.W.U. in 1944. *Queensland Guardian*, 19 May 1944.

7. Devanny, *Sugar Heaven*, pp.289-290.

weeks. Many local families were in debt to storekeepers who gave credit in anticipation of the season. Most single men were dependent on their employers for accommodation, as both cutters and mill hands lived in barracks during the crushing season. Some, particularly amongst the Italians, lived on the farms throughout the year, working as field hands in exchange for keep during the slack.⁸ The *Workers Weekly* reported that mill workers who were not on strike, but who were unable to work due to the strike, were refused sustenance.⁹ Thus the tiny sugar towns were flooded with penniless and later homeless people.

One of the first actions of the strike coordination committee was to call on the A.W.U. for strike relief, which, since the union had not authorised the stoppage, it was clearly not going to provide. Therefore a public meeting called at Innisfail elected a relief committee, and centres were set up at Mourilyan and Tully. They were funded initially with £100 sent by the Collinsville miners,¹⁰ and with donations from other sugar centres. Mossman, where cane was burned voluntarily, sent £75 a fortnight throughout the strike, and members of the Ingham Communist Party took up collections among the Herbert River cutters.¹¹ Within two weeks of the beginning of the strike the *Workers Weekly* was calling on individuals and trade unions to send donations. G. McKinnon and another delegate left Innisfail to tour the state explaining the strike to other unionists and taking up collections.¹²

Little money was available within the strike area, as business-

8. Giuseppe Ponti, interview, 28 August 1978.

9. *Workers Weekly*, 3 September 1935.

10. Jim Henderson, informal communication, 20 July 1979. The cane-cutters in their turn sent relief to the miners during their 1938 strike.

11. Mario Cazzolino, interview, 5 August 1979.

12. *Workers Weekly*, 10 September 1935 and 27 September 1935.

men and farmers were adversely affected by the stoppage. Nevertheless both groups provided considerable aid. Many of the northern businessmen had earned their capital in the cane, and all were to some extent dependent on the cutters for their future prosperity. Though in some cases facing bankruptcy, either through fear of later retaliation or through sympathy with the aims of the strike, they lent premises and equipment to the relief committees. Similarly the smaller cane farmers had almost invariably begun their careers as cutters, and although fear of losing the crop naturally generated hostility to the strike, some were sympathetic. The Italian farmers in particular were often related to their cutters, or had sponsored their migration. Thus the relief kitchens received regular supplies of vegetables from the cane farms.

At Mourilyan, relief committee secretary R. Coleman set up a kitchen in an empty bakehouse. Italian gang cooks served meals to the strikers in relays of thirty-five. The kitchen made its own bread, and men with money were expected to pay for their meals.

In Tully the relief system was more elaborate. The committee, headed by Con Doyle issued relief tickets which could be cashed at local stores. Soon, however, in the belief that the shopkeepers were raising their prices for goods purchased on relief tickets, Doyle decided to open a store of his own. A sympathetic businessman offered an empty shop, and "Bricky" Hanson was installed as manager. Hanson bought his goods wholesale and exchanged them for strikers' relief tickets or occasionally for cash. Any profit made on cash sales was put aside for extra relief. A staff of eight ran the shop, four behind the grocery counter and another four controlling the stock and keeping the books. A "special investigation branch" sought out people in special need of items such as lactogen or orange juice, and ran dances to provide shoes and clothing. The store was so popular that there was some talk of retaining it as a co-operative after the end of the strike. Tully also had a "cookshop" or relief kitchen, which operated from a disused butcher's shop equipped with

a stove and some home-made furniture. Cutlery was collected from the townspeople and pots and pans were lent by cafés. Three relays of cooks, assisted by eight stewards, fed the single men who paid for their meals with relief tickets. Initially these tickets, or invoices, had the value of 6/- a week, but as money arrived from militant trade unions outside the district the sum was raised to 7/-. The Tully committee even sent some relief money to wives of striking cutters who were stranded in southern cities.

When the cutters and mill hands were evicted from their barracks new problems arose. Some of them camped on the beaches; a strike camp was set up at Mourilyan. However, though the climate is mild in far north Queensland, the strike began in mid-winter, and in the Tully district in particular there is no season which is free from rain. The Tully strike committee rented a disused boarding house where many men were accommodated. Others slept in the back of the relief store and kitchen, or with families in town.

In all these activities Communist Party members were energetic and clearly visible. Funds arrived from communist-led trade unions in answer to appeals published by the communist press. Party members issued relief tickets, collected and distributed food and generally made themselves responsible for the well-being of the families of striking workers. In Tully the strike committee also organised social activities such as dances and card parties in an effort to relieve the boredom of the strikers. A.W.U. portrayals of the Party as sinister and foreign were difficult to substantiate in the face of contacts made in the cookshop and at the card table: it would be difficult to discover anything foreign about a euchre party.

Contact with the A.W.U. on the other hand was irregular. Cane-cutters had no union representatives, and though the mill hands had them, Tully mill had elected communist Eric Driscoll. In Mourilyan the situation was complicated. Karl King had been elected mill

rep. in 1934, but during that year had been called on to show cause why he should not be expelled for his part in the Ingham Weil's Disease strike. He refused to pay the fine imposed on him, and was declared unfinancial. Throughout the strike, however, he was still referred to as the strikers' A.W.U. representative. The sugar workers therefore had little contact with their union, and the image of its leaders as outsiders was fostered by their refusal of strike relief. The only assistance available from the A.W.U. was aimed at ending the strike, and this was to be achieved through secret ballots, a process already surrounded in many minds by scandal. In this situation support for the popular front could only increase.

One interesting aspect of this is the support which developed among women during the strike. Its growth was in part spontaneous, and in part the result of Jean Devanny's being in the district when the strike broke out. Devanny, a New Zealand novelist and feminist, was the wife of *Workers Weekly* publisher Hal Devanny, and herself a lecturer and recruiter for the Movement Against War and Fascism (M.A.W.F.), for which she was touring at the time.

Women first became actively involved in the strike during the Innisfail meeting which elected the relief committee. Several women were on this committee, and as the kitchen was to be run by cane cutters' cooks, they devoted themselves to organising entertainments. Under the headline "Workers Display Initiative at Mourilyan", the *Workers Weekly* listed activities including "...concerts, card parties, cricket, football, picnics, swimming, all forms of sport, debates, community singing, dancing, wheelbarrow races, etc."¹³ Recognising a rare opportunity they held dancing classes for the canecutters during the afternoons at the Mourilyan School of Arts. The lessons were put to use at evening socials which consisted of

13. *Ibid.*, 3 September 1935.

dancing, supper and a sing-song, for which the Communist Party provided song sheets. Devanny reported that *Avanti Popolo* (Forward the People) was a great favourite among the Italians, and that all enjoyed the Red Aviators' Song, for which words and music had recently arrived from Melbourne.

It was among these women that the first Women's Progress Club (W.P.C.) was formed in Innisfail. Its object was the building of a "mass organisation" through which contact could be made with the wives of the workers, so that in future strikes their attitudes and needs would be understood and catered for. As women played only a minor part in the tightly organised Tully relief operations it was not until mid-September that a similar club was founded in that town. It is likely that Devanny was instrumental in its foundation as the first president was her Tully hostess, Eileen Quinn, around whose invalid bed the inaugural meeting was held.¹⁴ The Tully club gave as its aims: social activities, educational work in maternal and child welfare, Red Cross work, relief for the very poor, sewing circles, the sponsoring of lectures by specialists on subjects connected with the men's jobs and the facilitation of work amongst women in the event of a future strike. This group was particularly important in the development of the North Queensland Women's movement, since the Townsville W.P.C. and later associations grew out of its activities.¹⁵

Another significant development occurred in the relationship between British and non-British sugar workers. There were many non-British workers in the industry, but Italians formed by far the

14. Eileen Quinn, interview, 2 April 1979.

15. See chapter 6.

largest migrant group.¹⁶ In 1891, in an attempt to fulfil its election promise to rid the colony of Kanaka labour, the Queensland government had assisted the migration of 335 Italians to the sugar plantations. These early arrivals began a process of chain migration which led to the presence of some three thousand Italian born North Queenslanders by the beginning of the First World War. During the war immigration ceased, but in 1918 Italians began to arrive in numbers which Queenslanders found alarming. Several factors contributed to this: firstly conditions in post-war Italy were poor, secondly, America, which had always received the bulk of Italian migration, introduced a quota system, thirdly, the war had produced a "bank up" of prospective migrants, and lastly, the process of chain migration is by its nature a geometric, not an arithmetic progression. Between 1921 and 1930 there was a net gain of 23,928 Italians, most of whom had settled in North Queensland.¹⁷

In the far north the depression set in early with a slump in world sugar prices. With economic hardship came xenophobia. Some of the agitation came from the trade unions, particularly the A.W.U., which objected to the influx of migrants on the grounds that it would lower working conditions. However much of the problem would appear to have been economic envy. Many of the migrants of

16. For information about Italian migrants see: J.M. Bertei, Innisfail (B.A.Hons. thesis, University of Queensland, 1959); W.D. Borrie & D.R.G. Parker, *Italians and Germans in Australia: A Study of Assimilation* (Melbourne 1954); M.A. Gurdon, *Australian Attitudes to Italy and Italians 1922-36*, with Special Reference to Queensland (B.A.Hons. thesis, University of Queensland, 1970); L.D. Henderson, *Italians in the Hinchinbrook Shire, 1921-1939* (B.A.Hons. thesis, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1978); C.A. Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia* (Melbourne 1963); N. Pyke, "An Outline History of Italian Immigration into Australia", *Australian Quarterly* 20 (September 1948).

17. For details of numbers of immigrants see Pyke, "An Outline History of Italian Immigration into Australia", p.105.

of this period were peasants, that is experienced farmers, accustomed to living frugally and to working hard. For many the driving force of their lives was the desire to own a farm. Their tradition of mixed farming taught them to achieve a degree of self sufficiency and cooperation unusual in Australia, so they weathered recessions more tenaciously than their Australian neighbours. In consequence, the banks tended to regard Southern European families as good investments, and loans were made available for the purchase of farms. Although this often meant that they took up virgin land or derelict properties rather than going concerns, the great increase in Italian proprietorship appears to have alarmed British Australians.

Attempts were made to stop Southern Europeans entering the farming districts, and when these failed, to prevent them from leasing or purchasing land. Despite many expressions of indignation, public meetings and considerable political pressure, these attempts only resulted in occasional directions to enforce the laws requiring all persons owning real property to be natural born or naturalised British subjects. (These laws were a part of the White Australia Policy legislation, and were never intended to be used against Europeans).¹⁸ To make matters worse, some of the blocks taken up by Italian farmers were those which returned soldiers had failed to make viable. The R.S.S.A.I.L.A. became the sworn enemy of the Italian settlers, and the League in Queensland enthusiastically supported the perpetrators of the "anti dago" riots in Western Australia.

The form the criticism took was often undeniably racist. Some Australians still clung to a quaint nineteenth century racial ideology which divided Caucasians into three distinct racial groups: Nordic, Alpine and Mediterranean. These races were supposed to possess inherent qualities which enabled them to be ranked hier-

18. Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia*, p.211.

archically. British Australians were Nordic people, Northern Italians, who were believed to be tall, blond and blue or hazel eyed, were Alpine, while Southern Italians, who were stereotyped as short and dark, were Mediterranean people, and often had their blood polluted by the dreaded strains of Africa or Arabia. This idea was voiced by a correspondent of the *Brisbane Courier* in 1924 when he wrote:

Some anthropologists are asking whether the Nordic race which has given mankind its highest civilization, is being bred out, even in England....Does not there arise here a responsibility on the part of...Australia... to keep pure the long skulled race strains.... Mediterraneans breed like rabbits, crowding out the Nordic with his higher living standard....¹⁹

During the 1920's agitation against the immigrants became intense, and the *Sydney Labour Daily* reported that "The whole of Northern Australia is a volcano which may burst into an eruption of racial feud at any moment...."²⁰ As a result the Queensland Government found it necessary to appoint a Royal Commission to enquire into the situation in the sugar districts. The Ferry Report restated the racial mythology of the era in temperate official language:

...the population of Italy is divided into two distinct groups - the Northern and the Southern Italians. The latter are shorter in stature and more swarthy.²¹

The Commissioner found that the British gangs were the best workers, followed by the northern Italians, with southern Italians a poor last, and added to this nonsense by announcing, incorrectly,²² that

19. *Brisbane Courier*, 1 April 1924.

20. *Sydney Labour Daily*, 4 April 1924. In a collection of newspaper cuttings compiled by L. Henderson.

21. Report of the Royal Commission appointed to Inquire into and Report on the Social and Economic Effect of Increase in Number of Aliens in North Queensland. (The Ferry Report). *Queensland Parliamentary Papers*, 1925, Vol.3, p.12.

22. Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia*, p.97.

the recent arrivals were almost all southerners. He concluded that "...the admission of races that can never make good Australian citizens only widens the breach between the Australian and the better type of foreigner."²³ While Thomas Ferry was making his enquiries the A.W.U. attempted to protect its British-Australian members by refusing cutting tickets to Italians and trying to negotiate a 75% Australian to 25% migrant quota system with both farmers and millers.²⁴ A "preference" agreement was signed by the A.W.U., the Australian Sugar Producers' Association and the Queensland Cane Growers' Council in June 1930.

Although the numbers of new arrivals dropped during the depression there was no corresponding decrease in hostility. After Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia, the Australian Natives Association led the attack, since the R.S.L. had to reconsider its stand in the light of its admiration for Mussolini's strong anti-bolshevik government. At the A.N.A.'s 1938 Annual Conference the president told the members:

We need population in Australia, but first in importance is the need to populate our Commonwealth with "A1" Australian children rather than "C3" migrants from an alien land. (cheers)
In our population, Australia would welcome from overseas, within reasonable limits, our own kith and kin; beyond that, men and women of the Nordic strain. (applause)²⁵

With such attitudes prevalent in the community the extent of the cooperation engendered by the strike was remarkable. Every strike meeting included an Italian speaker; some, like Cazzolino

23. The Ferry Report, p.17.

24. Bertei, Innisfail, pp.60-68.

25. Gurdon, Australian Attitudes, p.106. The speaker was Arthur Murgatroyd.

already communists, others, like Baratto, joining the Party during the stoppage. Devanny noted that there were always Italian women in the audiences of meetings held at Innisfail and Mourilyan. For the North Queensland community however the social contact made during relief work probably had the greatest significance. Italian gang cooks Victor Manaserro and Lino Cazzolino ran the Mourilyan relief kitchen, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that they handled the job of feeding large numbers of men on the supplies available better than their Australian counterparts. Even the eating of Italian food was a novel experience for the British cutters, who, in the 1930's, regarded the Southern Europeans as "living off the smell of an oily rag". Devanny reported that the militant cooks "harangued" the men in Italian as they ate.

The migrants were made welcome at picnics and dances, and the almost unprecedented sight of Australian girls dancing with Italian men became commonplace. Sing-songs were held in Italian and English, great enjoyment being derived from the discovery of songs which could be sung in both languages: notably the *Internationale* and the *Red Flag*. British workers began to realise the pressures felt by the migrants for whom militant action in Australia could result in repercussions for relatives at home.²⁶ For many the contact led to an important stage in the breakdown of racist attitudes: that of differentiation between members of the "out-group". Thus Italian cutters who "scabbed" at Goondi on 11 September were described as "fascist Italians", while the Goondi strikers listened to an address by Ernie Baratto on the following day.²⁷ While it is difficult to gauge the extent to which the 1935 strike resulted in the handing down of burning orders for the 1936 and subsequent seasons, its effect on community attitudes is undeniable.

26. Giuseppe Ponti, interview, 28 August 1978.

27. Note, however, an alternative view expressed by Bertei, Innisfail, p.75.

Because its time span and geographical boundaries are known, the strike is one of the few issues which it is useful to examine in isolation in terms of its effect on the membership of the Communist Party. C.P.A. membership figures are always difficult to ascertain, but Davidson, working from reports published by the *Workers Weekly* and the *Communist Review*, has estimated that the Party had 500 members in the whole of Queensland in July 1935.²⁸ Since membership was reported as 255 in District Three (South Queensland) this would leave 245 in District Nine. At the end of the year when Defence Fund²⁹ quotas were allotted, Brisbane was asked for £500 compared with Townsville's £650. This would suggest heavy recruiting in the north between July and December. Furthermore, when the District quota was reallocated between the local sections the sugar towns were asked to donate heavily in terms of their comparative population. The figures were: Townsville £350, Innisfail £300, Cairns £200, Tully £175, Collinsville, Tablelands, Mackay, Ingham and Mount Isa £150, Ayr £90, Home Hill and Proserpine £70, Winton £40, Longreach £30, and Giru £20. District Nine was the first in Australia to fill its quota in 1936, and again figures suggest that it was dependent on sugar workers for this achievement. After being in fourth place until August the District suddenly forwarded the remaining 40% of its quota. A *Workers Weekly* editorial attributed the response to the opening of the harvesting season.³⁰

28. Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, p.222.

29. See Chapter 8.

30. *Workers Weekly*, 29 February 1936, 28 August 1936, 12 January 1937.

CHAPTER IV

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

"I fear also that the vast majority of Australians regard the Spanish War as a thing with which they have no connections."¹

1. Editor of the *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, cited in the *North Queensland Guardian*, 17 February 1939.

The Spanish Civil War broke out on 18 July 1936, as a *pronunciamento* or army revolt against the government. This revolt was preceded by a series of political upheavals. Municipal elections held in 1931 had returned republican majorities in the large cities, resulting in the departure (though not the abdication) of the king, and the replacement of the monarchy with a republican coalition government. This Coalition ruled for two years, and introduced a broad range of reforms into what had previously been almost a feudal country. It decreed the separation of church and state, enacted Spain's first divorce law, expanded secular public education, reduced the size of the army, introduced a public works programme and instituted a system of compensated land reform. Alarm at the rapidity of change weakened the government's support, and in an election in November 1933, a coalition of conservative and clerical parties gained office. Over the next two years they tried to reverse the reform programme. The Left countered with general strikes in Madrid and several other cities; and the regional government of Catalonia declared Spain a federal republic. Revolutionary committees established by the Asturian miners invaded their regional capital Oviedo, and held out against the police and Moorish troops for two weeks. The uprising was suppressed with great brutality, and thousands of political prisoners were interned by the Government during 1935. At the subsequent elections in February 1936, the government lost office to a coalition of the left known as the Popular Front. Fearing its designs to reform the institutions of the army and especially the Catholic church, high ranking officers devised a *pronunciamento*. In the first weekend of the revolt the army was defeated in the important centres of Madrid and Barcelona, but the reverses were short lived. The war dragged on for nearly two and a half years.

Its duration may be explained by the strategic and economic

importance of Spain,² which led to large scale intervention by other European powers. Within two weeks of the outbreak of hostilities the Nationalists were receiving massive aid from Hitler and Mussolini. In the course of the war, despite the non-intervention pact, 70,000 Italians and 20,000 Portuguese fought in the Nationalist ranks, and Germany provided several thousand technical specialists and "volunteer" air squadrons. In addition large quantities of armaments, including tanks, 'planes and submarines, were supplied by the Fascist governments. The Popular Front sought aid from the West, particularly Britain, but none was forthcoming, and after it had suffered some reverses the Soviet Union stepped in and provided arms and technicians. As the war continued, from all over the world thirty to forty thousand untrained and unarmed volunteers arrived in Spain where they formed the International Brigade.³

It might have been expected that these events would have little impact on the majority of Australians, who did not display much interest in, or knowledge of foreign affairs. Australia was geographically isolated, and its education system lagged behind world standards. There were almost no free libraries,⁴ and a noticeable lack of educated administration had resulted from the policy of preference for ex-servicemen implemented by the Public Service. The

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2. At this time Spain provided 40 to 50% of the world's supply of quicksilver, and more than 50% of its pyrites. Northern Spanish iron was of a particularly high quality, and the deposits were unusually close to the sea. See Gabriel Jackson, "International Considerations and the Evolution of the Republican Government", in Gabriel Jackson, (ed.), *The Spanish Civil War: Domestic Crisis or International Conspiracy?* (Boston 1967), p.53.
 3. For a discussion of the causes of the Spanish Civil War see Jackson, *The Spanish Civil War*; M. Ercoli (Palmiro Togliatti), *The Spanish Revolution* (New York 1936); Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (London 1961).
 4. There were two free libraries in N.S.W. E.M. Andrews, *Isolationism and Appeasement in Australia: Reactions to the European Crises, 1935-1939* (Canberra 1970), p.4.

conscription disputes of 1914-1918 had encouraged wide-spread distrust of "capitalist wars", and Australia's slow recovery from the depression of the early thirties led to a preoccupation with domestic politics and economic issues. Thus the general response to international affairs was apathy.⁵

Two groups were however strongly affected by the war in Spain: the Catholics and the communists. Elements within the Catholic Church in Australia gave total support to Franco, alleging that the elections had been fraudulent, and filled their press with stories of atrocities against the Spanish clergy.⁶ *The Advocate* of 21 January 1937 declared that the civil war was part of a communist plot to infiltrate and control Western Europe.⁷ During the war Church members disseminated propaganda, broke up Spanish Relief and Communist Party meetings, opposed the League of Nations, defended the invasion of Abyssinia, and generally changed from its traditional anti-capitalist stance to one of anti-communism. This change constituted a problem for the A.L.P. which relied heavily on Catholic support. In a move to consolidate that support and to distance itself from the taint of communism, the Labor Party launched an anti-war committee to compete with the Movement Against War and Fascism, and refused to support Spanish Relief. This expedient was calculated to minimize disunity. Although a small section of its political and industrial wing was alienated,⁸ the isolationist attitudes to foreign affairs of the membership at large were reinforced. Curtin, who led the Party from October 1935, ignored the Spanish War.⁹

5. *Ibid.*, pp.3-8.

6. *The Catholic Worker* of 3 October 1936 spoke of "...the most ferocious persecution since Diocletian". Cited by Andrews, *Isolationism and Appeasement in Australia*, p.78.

7. *Ibid.*, p.80.

8. Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, pp.86-87.

9. Susan Blackburn, *Maurice Blackburn and the Australian Labor Party, 1934-1943: A Study of Principle in Politics*, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, (n.p. 1969), p.11.

The revolution in Spain had a massive impact on the Communist Party of Australia. The campaign against the Nationalists, the leadership of whom Franco was rapidly assuming, was seen as a part of the overall battle against fascism inaugurated by the Comintern Congress of 1935. In addition it had a powerful emotional impact, particularly on the growing liberal-intellectual element in the Party, which provided many of the volunteers from the southern states. On 7 August the *Workers Weekly* informed its readers that Russia was sending money to Spain, and that foreigners were already arriving in that country to join the Peoples' Militia. It called on the trade unions to organise collections in Australia and for the A.C.T.U. to arrange methods of sending donations to Spain. Two weeks later the paper urged all branches of the Communist Party to hold marches and demonstrations in support of the Spanish Government. Party leader J.B. Miles approached the A.C.T.U. and the A.L.P. through Curtin, to propose joint action in relief campaigns, but encountered general indifference.¹⁰

On 26 August the Spanish Relief Committee was formed at a meeting called jointly by the M.A.W.F. and International Labour Defence (I.L.D.). It was a typical front organisation made up of trade unionists, Christian socialists, Labor Party politicians, and Communist Party members. The original committee consisted of Bartlett Adamson, Rev. Stuart Watts, Father Bradley, O. Schreiber, R.A. King, R. Donning (Textile Workers), S. Hudson (Plasterers), W.G. Martin (Hotel, Club and Restaurant Workers), J. Reddie (Moulders), W. Orr (Miners), Nurse M. Lowson, P. Thorne (I.L.D.), and R. Smith (M.A.W.F.). Phil Thorne, communist secretary of the I.L.D., was elected secretary of the new committee. The campaign acquired a specific objective at its second meeting when it decided to sponsor a Red Cross Unit for Spain. Within six weeks the unit had been purchased, nurses were appointed to it, and transport to

10. *Workers Weekly*, 7 August 1936, 21 August 1936, 28 August 1936.

Europe arranged. The nurses, M. Lowson, U. Wilson, E. Johnson and M. MacFarlane, all from Lidcombe Hospital, were given a public send-off at Transport House, Redfern, on the 23 October, at which Fred Paterson, Lloyd Ross and W.J. Thomas spoke. The next day five hundred people, singing the *Internationale* and *Solidarity*, farewelled their ship, the *Oronsay*, from the Sydney wharf.¹¹

By this time the first of the International Brigadeers were also leaving Australia. It is difficult to ascertain the number of Australians who went to Spain during the civil war; many travelled illegally, often smuggled aboard departing ships by sympathetic members of the Seamen's Union.¹² Independent action was discouraged by distance and most Australian volunteers had their passages arranged by the Communist Party. This limited the number leaving for two reasons: firstly there was not the independent liberal idealist component which was so apparent in European volunteer groups; and secondly the Party did not always accept volunteers, particularly when the Central Committee believed that they were needed in Australia.¹³ Ralph Gibson gave the number of Australians in Spain as "more than forty";¹⁴ Nettie Palmer, before the war had ended and therefore presumably before all the volunteers had arrived, gave it as forty-four.¹⁵ Davidson, almost certainly including nurses, interpreters and press reporters, states that fifty-nine people went from Australia to Spain, twenty-eight of whom died there;¹⁶ while Andrews' figure for the International Brigade

11. *Ibid.*, 4 September 1936, 27 October 1936.

12. E.V. Elliott, informal communication, 3 May 1979.

13. Jim Henderson, informal communication, 20 July 1979. He was rejected on this basis.

14. Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, p.50.

15. Nettie Palmer, *Australians in Spain*, A Spanish Relief Committee Pamphlet, p.29.

16. Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, p.86.

alone is forth-eight.¹⁷ One of the problems involved in establishing numbers is the variety of nationalities represented in Australia. Unnaturalised Spaniards and Italians entering Spain through France have probably been disregarded in these figures. But more than mere numbers, Australians provided financial support and supplies for the Republican cause.

From the beginning of 1937 the Spanish Relief campaign was aided by lecture tours and meetings at which members of the Party who had recently returned from Spain described their experiences of the war. The first of these was Vance Palmer who had been in Spain when the war broke out, and the subsequent list includes nurses Mary Lowson, May MacFarlane and Una Wilson; Ron Hurd, who addressed six hundred meetings after his return from the International Brigade;¹⁸ Sam Aarons and Ernie Baratto.¹⁹ The Spanish Relief Committee forwarded a total of £10,860, seven ambulances and large quantities of food and medical equipment to Spain. Aid was organised from August 1936 until the Communist Party was proscribed in June 1940, when the Committee's books were seized and its bank account frozen. These were not released until 1944 when the final audit was made and the balance of £7/9/10 forwarded to the Red Cross Comforts Fund.²⁰

The factors which induced apathy towards foreign affairs in other parts of Australia were present to an unusual degree in North Queensland. Isolation, poor educational and administrative standards, lack of access to information and loyalty to A.L.P.

17. Andrews, *Isolationism and Appeasement*, p.113.

18. Pat Hurd, interview, 17 June 1979.

19. For information about these meetings see *Workers Weekly*, 1 January 1937; *North Queensland Guardian*, 30 October 1937, 21 January 1939, 3 February 1939, 21 April 1939.

20. *Queensland Guardian*, 23 June 1944.

attitudes²¹ were integral to northern society. Nevertheless the Spanish Civil War aroused a strong and immediate response in this region. In Ingham a group of Italians formed a committee, collected thirty pounds and despatched it to the A.C.T.U. in Melbourne before the Spanish Relief Committee was formed in Sydney.²² When the central committee was established it had twenty-one branches, each operating as an independent unit and communicating directly with the national office. One was set up in each of the state capitals of Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Hobart and Darwin; the remaining sixteen were in North Queensland.²³

Given the level of unemployment in 1936, the wages of the period,²⁴ and the size of the North Queensland settlements, some of the contributions sent from this region were remarkable. By the end of October 1936 Innisfail had donated £53; and a month later Ayr, with a population of less than two thousand, despatched £101/13/6 to the fund. This represented nearly twenty per cent of the entire Australian contribution at this time. During 1938 the Innisfail Spanish Relief Committee raised £270/10/7.²⁵

The key factor in the North Queensland response was the presence of an anti-fascist working class group with a sense of involvement in the European situation. In the sugar towns of District Nine it was unnecessary for the Communist Party to explain

21. The A.L.P. won every North Queensland seat in the state elections of 1935, 1938 and 1941.

22. *Workers Weekly*, 6 October 1936.

23. Palmer, *Australians in Spain*, p.31. Branches of the church sponsored Joint Spanish Aid Society were set up in Adelaide and Brisbane.

24. A housewife's budget for early 1941 is reproduced as Appendix F. The basic wage during this period was £3/14/0 a week.

25. For details of these contributions see *Workers Weekly*, 6 November 1936 and 1 December 1936; *North Queensland Guardian*, 3 February 1939.

the link between Franco's Nationalists and the rise of world fascism. The war in Spain had an immediate impact as an event which concerned friends and relatives at home, or at least fell within the range of local political experience. The role of the Communist Party in the north was one of coordination and organisation at national and international levels. The Party, as in the sugar strikes, emerged as the one political group which supported the local cause in the face of the apathy or hostility of other organisations.

The difference in the impact of the Spanish Civil War in North Queensland and elsewhere in Australia was, then, qualitative as well as quantitative. To some extent this is demonstrated by the list of known volunteers given by Nettie Palmer in her Spanish Relief pamphlet: *Australians in Spain*. Palmer gave the names of twenty-eight people, nine of whom came from North Queensland; all of these had connections with the sugar industry and four came from Ayr. Though trade unionists are included in the list, many of the southern volunteers were middle class intellectuals. Aileen Palmer, daughter of novelist Vance Palmer, served as a medical interpreter; Portia Holman, daughter of a former Premier of N.S.W. worked as a doctor. Reporting on the conflict were sons of an ex Labor Prime Minister: John Fisher (*Workers Weekly* and *Labor Daily*) and of a Chief Justice: R.T.E. Latham (*Daily Telegraph*).²⁶ By contrast the North Queenslanders were all working class men who went to Spain to fight with the International Brigade. Canecutters Lou Elliott and Jack Kirkpatrick both left Australia during the first year of the war to be repatriated two years later after being seriously injured in the fighting. Elliott, while with the Brigade, acted as a political commissar.²⁷ From Ayr, an Australian Ned Buckby, and three Spaniards, Salvador Barker, Angelo Plaza and Rosenda Sala joined the Brigade in 1937,²⁸ after spending some time working for the fund

26. Palmer, *Australians in Spain*, pp.6-9, 16-17.

27. *Ibid.*, p.20. Also *North Queensland Guardian*, 13 January 1939.

28. Palmer, *Australians in Spain*, p.28.

through the Ayr Spanish Club.²⁹ Ray Jordana and Joe Garcia both went to Spain from Innisfail. Jordana, who had migrated to Queensland as a child, spoke on behalf of Spanish Relief in Melbourne before leaving for Europe.³⁰ Another Italian, canecutter Ernie Baratto, joined the International Brigade from Mourilyan where he had played an important role in the 1935 sugar strike,³¹ during which he joined the Communist Party. The following year he left for the Spanish war by way of France and served in several battalions until the Brigade was evacuated in January 1939.³² This list is almost certainly not complete. An Ingham Italian called Baracca is remembered as having fought in Spain,³³ and it is likely that other Italians and Spaniards who fought were either registered, like Baracca, as departing migrants, or, like the family of Celia Gallego, were visiting Europe when the war broke out.³⁴ As Nettie Palmer acknowledges, the extent of Italian and Spanish Australian's participation will probably never be known. Nevertheless, from the list available, the difference between northern and southern Australian recruits is apparent.

Some of the fund raising in North Queensland, particularly in towns outside the main areas of migrant settlement, followed the general Australian pattern of collections taken up at public meetings and lantern slide showings. Devanny was touring the north when the war broke out and she promptly aligned the campaign with her M.A.W.F. meetings. The war had been expected and she had brought

29. *Workers Weekly*, 3 November 1936 and 24 November 1936.

30. Palmer, *Australians in Spain*, p.28.

31. See chapter 3.

32. Palmer, *Australians in Spain*, p.25. Also *North Queensland Guardian*, 21 April 1939. Further reference is made to Baratto in Chapter 5.

33. Mario Cazzolino, interview, 5 August 1979.

34. Celia Gallego, interview, 8 July 1979.

the necessary information and literature with her.³⁵ In this way Millaa Millaa came to be one of the earliest Australian towns to hold a Spanish Relief meeting.³⁶ Whenever possible the meetings included eye witness accounts of the war. Sister Mary Lowson spoke in various North Queensland centres late in 1937,³⁷ and International Brigadeer Ron Hurd undertook an exhaustive tour of the north during the following year. His meetings were held at El Arish, Gordonvale, Herberton, Innot Hot Springs, Mount Garnett, Tully, Lucinda, Macknade, Victoria mill, Ingham, Trebonne, Halifax, Townsville, Giru, Home Hill, Ayr, Bowen, Collinsville, Scottville and Mackay.³⁸ Also in keeping with the national pattern were the donations received from the communist led trade unions, among them the Bowen and the Collinsville Miners' Lodges, the Cairns Unemployed and Relief Workers' Union, and the Mackay Waterside Workers' Federation.³⁹ Money received from individual communists and Party units in Townsville, Herberton, Brandon, Winton and Home Hill was soon joined by public donations. These were encouraged by the *North Queensland Guardian* which ran highly emotional articles on Spain, featuring such headlines as: "The Widow's Mite", and "They Shall Not Pass While This Spirit Prevails". Under the latter was published a letter from a seventy-five year old lady who wrote:

Please give this 10/- to the Spanish Relief Committee for me....I just saved sixpence now and again....The Spanish people is in need of it most.⁴⁰

Much of the fund raising in North Queensland centred around the

35. Private papers in the possession of Pat Hurd.

36. *Workers Weekly*, 4 September 1936.

37. *North Queensland Guardian*, 30 October 1937.

38. *Ibid.*, 6 September 1938.

39. For details see *Workers Weekly*, 16 October 1936, 3 November 1936, 10 November 1936, 17 November 1936, 24 November 1936 and 1 January 1937.

40. *North Queensland Guardian*, 23 October 1937 and 30 October 1937.

social life of the local communities. In Townsville, where the Spanish Relief Committee does not appear to have been very active, the Women's Progress Club ran dances to raise money for Spain. Spanish Relief Committee (S.R.C.) and C.P.A. secretary in Tully, N. Edmondson, organised a Cabaret at the beginning of the 1937 cutting season. The Bowen group developed the social aspects of the campaign to the point of establishing a "Younger Set of the Spanish Relief Committee".⁴¹

However the extent of North Queensland's contribution to Spanish Relief was largely due to the participation of ethnic groups, especially in the sugar towns of Ayr, Ingham and Innisfail. One undocumented group is the Yugoslavs, with whose Party work in Cairns, Innisfail and Mareeba Devanny was particularly impressed.⁴² Considerable contributions were made to S.R.C. funds by the Yugoslavs of Mossman and the Yugoslav Club of Mount Isa. Certainly for many of these people the united front against fascism would have been a personal and a patriotic crusade.⁴³

In Ayr the Spanish Relief campaign centred around the Spanish Club under A. Villanueva. The first contribution list from Ayr consists of fifty-six names, only five of which could be British. Most are Spanish, with at least one Yugoslav and two Italians (including "Un Comunista"). One of the British names is that of Con O'Clerkin the Ayr A.W.U. representative who was later to be

41. *Workers Weekly*, 24 November 1936; *North Queensland Guardian*, 8 May 1937 and 6 January 1939.

42. Pat Hurd, interview, 17 June 1979.

43. For details of the Yugoslav contribution see *Workers Weekly*, 23 October 1936 and 10 November 1936. In Yugoslavia fascism and communism came to be associated with the rival provinces of Serbia and Croatia respectively. Under the influence of Germany, the Serbians came to see regional and political differences in racial terms, and their treatment of the Croatian people might best be described as genocidal.

expelled from his union for communist activities. Although much money was raised through collections taken up amongst the Spanish population, social functions were also popular in the Ayr district. In November 1936, for instance, Australians, Spaniards and Italians mingled at a house party at Giru. This was probably a combined Spanish Club and C.P.A. function as thanks were extended at the end of the evening to the Spanish host and to the Ayr Communist Party secretary S. Ransoon. The small Ayr community became more directly involved with the Spanish war when Buckby, Barker, Plaza and Sala left to join the Republican army. After their departure the Plaza family continued to work for the fund. In the neighbouring community of Home Hill Spanish Relief was organised by C.P.A. secretary Doug. Olive, who, at the end of 1936, organised a Spanish Solidarity Day. Although refused a permit by the local Council, at least one hundred people attended the procession and subsequent meeting. The audience was addressed by representatives of the C.P.A., the A.L.P., the Ayr M.A.W.F. and "a Spanish worker", and resolutions were passed condemning Franco, the federal government and the Home Hill Council.⁴⁴

In Ingham the Spanish Relief Committee was organised by the Italian community. The office bearers were two communists: Mario Cazzolino and G. Scagliotti, and an anti-fascist who was not a Party member, G. Governato. The enlistment of Baracca increased the level of personal involvement already established by relatives and friends caught up in the war in Europe. This involvement was so widespread that when the committee organised a door to door collection in the town only two families were reported to have refused to donate. Dances were popular in Ingham; they were held at the Trebonne Hall and were organised by the young Italian girls

44. For details of the Ayr and Home Hill campaigns see *Workers Weekly*, 3 November 1936, 1 December 1936, 5 January 1937; *North Queensland Guardian*, 17 February 1939.

of the town.⁴⁵ The Ingham Spanish Relief Committee marched as a discrete group in the May Day procession of 1937.⁴⁶

Possibly the most interesting of the Spanish Relief campaigns was that conducted at Innisfail. The unique feature of the Innisfail Committee was that it was run by a Spanish woman, secretary Trini Garcia.⁴⁷ Joe Garcia, her husband and a member of the Sub-State Committee of the Communist Party left Innisfail to fight in Spain early in 1937. Trini Garcia and her daughters organised a magnificent campaign which included house parties, May Day contingents and a public meeting to commemorate the first anniversary of the Franco revolt. At the end of 1938 a Spanish Relief Queen competition, during which Lily Garcia alone raised forty-six pounds, was held, and early the following year the fund conducted a New Year Ball at the Innisfail Shire Hall. The greater part of the Innisfail contribution was raised by Spaniards among whom regular collections were taken up and who, at the beginning of 1939, decided to strike a levy on themselves. Wider community participation occurred however, and the groups which were created during the 1935 strike assisted with the Spanish Campaign. The Innisfail and Silkwood M.A.W.F.s held socials, the Women's Progress Club organised functions and the Mourilyan branch of the Communist Party took up collections. There appear to have been close personal ties between Innisfail and the Spanish Popular Front, as in addition to Joe Garcia and Ray Jordana, Mourilyan canecutter Ernie Baratto had joined the International Brigade. He maintained regular contact with Costante Danesi of the Mourilyan Anti-Fascist Club, and in one of his letters, reproduced in the *North Queensland Guardian* in late 1937, Baratto impressed the justice of their cause:

45. Mario Cazzolino, interview, 5 August 1979.

46. *North Queensland Guardian*, 8 May 1937.

47. Palmer, *Australians in Spain*, p.29.

Dear Comrade, Spain is still rich in honest and worthy people. The Government soldiers do and always will dedicate themselves to the greatest sacrifices. Dedicate their lives for the Victory of Democracy....We of the International Brigade have come to Spain to fight - Not for pay but for liberty - for democracy.⁴⁸

Other communist newspapers at various times published letters from the sisters, brothers and friends of Innisfail people, resident in Spain.⁴⁹

The Spanish Civil War, then, had considerable relevance for North Queenslanders; and because the Communist Party was the only organisation which also espoused it the popular front in the north was strengthened. Party membership numbers are not available for the period, although the *Workers Weekly* records that two hundred new members were recruited in District Nine between April and October 1937.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, when quotas for the 1937 election fund were allotted by the Central Committee at the end of 1936 the quota for North Queensland was raised to two thousand pounds, compared with nine hundred pounds for Southern Queensland.⁵¹ Electoral figures for the sugar town polling booths also suggest that support for the C.P.A. was growing rapidly in this period. The Party candidate in the Bowen electorate increased his vote in Gumlu, Home Hill and Inkerman between the 1935 and 1938 elections from 5% to 36%, 20% to 34%, and 9% to 34% respectively; and in the Herbert and Mundingburra districts the Party held or increased its vote in this period

48. *North Queensland Guardian*, 30 October 1937.

49. For details of the Innisfail campaign see *Workers Weekly*, 6 November 1936, 24 November 1936, 1 December 1936, 1 January 1937, 8 January 1937; *North Queensland Guardian*, 1 May 1937, 7 July 1937, 30 October 1937, 13 January 1939, 3 February 1939 and 17 February 1939. For further information about the Mourilyan Anti-Fascist Club see chapter 5.

50. *Workers Weekly*, 30 October 1936.

51. *Ibid.*, 1 January 1937.

despite there being four candidates instead of three in the 1938 election.⁵² In January 1937 Districts Three and Nine were amalgamated into a single State Branch, under the leadership of Jack Henry who was transferred to Brisbane for this purpose. His departure did not have the devastating effect that the removal of Tripp had produced some years earlier: the Communist Party in the north was no longer dependent on any one leader.

For the North Queensland community, the Spanish campaign may be a small landmark. The cooperation between migrant and non-migrant; the acceptance, in some areas of leadership which was not Anglo-Saxon and male; the sharing in an international ideal - all demonstrate a development not usually associated with North Queensland in the 1930's.

52. See Appendix A.

CHAPTER V

THE ANTI-FASCISTS

"The encouragement of foreign clubs in a British community is not desirable. Such organisations assist in promoting what has been described by the United States Congressional Committee as an undigested mass of alien thought, alien sympathy, and alien purpose."¹

1. The Ferry Report, p.26.

During the inter-war years the political divisions of Europe were re-enacted throughout North Queensland. Fascist and anti-fascist, Serb and Croat, White and Red Russian, argued and often fought in the mines and canefields of the north. Probably the most politically complex of all the ethnic groups, however, was the Italians.

Although Mussolini did not form his first cabinet until 1922, anti-fascist sentiments were already widespread in Italy. From late 1920 his *Squadre d'Azione* formed during the metal workers' strike of that year, roamed the country, destroying socialist organisations and even murdering some members. One of the results of the violence was a wave of anti-fascists migrants, which in view of the quota system introduced by the United States in 1921, concentrated on Latin America, and to a lesser extent, on Australia. The anti-fascists were a politically diverse group whose members owed allegiance to socialism, republicanism, anarchism, syndicalism and communism. In Australia this diversity caused many problems of organisation for those who attempted to promote anti-fascist action, especially in Sydney and Melbourne.² In North Queensland however, although the political divisions existed, concerted action was more effective for a variety of reasons.

Firstly, Italians settled in North Queensland as "chain migrants". Early arrivals sponsored relatives and friends from their own regions so that distinct regional groups settled in

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2. For a description of Italian anti-fascism which emphasises the part played by the anarchists see four interdependent articles written by Gianfranco Cresciani: "The Italian Resistance to Fascism in Australia: 1922-1940", *Teaching History* 7 (July 1973); "The Second Awakening: The Italia Libera Movement", *Labour History* 30 (May 1976); "The Proletarian Migrants: fascism and Italian anarchists in Australia", *Australian Quarterly* 51 (March 1979); "Italian Anti-Fascism in Australia, 1922-1945", in E.L. Wheelwright & K. Buckley (eds.), *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, Vol.3 (Sydney 1978).

different areas in the north. Most of the anti-fascist immigrants were from the provinces of Vicenza, Treviso and Belluno,³ and in the small communities of the sugar towns found themselves connected by regional as well as political ties. Secondly, close personal links were maintained between migrants, even though their politics at times conflicted. For example, the leader of the southern anarchists, and founder of the Melbourne Matteotti Club, Frank Carmagnola, travelled to Australia with Ingham communists Campanaro and Cazzolino, and retained his friendship with them throughout the ideological fight which broke up the southern group. Carmagnola's most recent visit to his Ingham friends took place in 1977.⁴ Thirdly, and most important, industrial action in the canefields drew together diverse groups in a common struggle. During the Ingham strike of 1934 the strike committee consisted of Carmagnola and two communists, Mario Cazzolino and Pat Clancy, all of whom worked under the general direction of Jack Henry.⁵ As a result, even before the declaration of the popular front in 1935, the anti-fascist movement in North Queensland was an active, and to some extent, effective force.

Although some socialist Spanish families had settled in the north by 1922,⁶ the first of the anti-Mussolini migrants were the three Cazzolino brothers, Mario, Lou and Lino, and Frank Carmagnola who arrived in Ingham in that year. The largest influx was during 1924 and 1925, after which numbers fell gradually until in 1928 Mussolini, by then in absolute control in Italy, placed heavy restrictions on Italian emigration.⁷ The anti-fascists did not come to North Queensland because they entertained theoretical objections

3. Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants", p.5.

4. Mario Cazzolino, interview, 5 August 1979.

5. Mario Cazzolino, interview 5 August 1979.

6. Celia Gallego, interview, 9 August 1979.

7. For details see Pyke, "An Outline History of Italian Immigration into Australia".

to fascism, but because they had lived under the regime. A school teacher who lived with her brother above his garage in Northern Italy, described her experience thus:

When Mussolini came to power he wanted to boss us around, but my brother did not want to be a fascist....Mussolini took the most violent young people of the town, and they used to come with guns and try to boss us around....There was a squad of fascists which used to come at night, and get angry because we were closed. I used to go down - some of them had been my pupils at school. I would ask them what sort of manners they had not to let my people sleep at night - doing these stupid things. Why didn't they come for petrol during the day? They would say: We can command these things. I would say: You are the same as other people. They would insist and we would give them petrol. Ferruccio said: You are very patient; I would throw something out of the window at them. My first brother went to Australia and wrote saying we should come, because it is a free country.⁸

The family settled in the Innisfail district, where they were active in anti-fascist organisations.

As Cresciani has pointed out, the majority of Italian migrants accepted fascism. Mussolini laid great stress on the necessity, as he saw it, of creating in other countries an impression of unanimous support for his regime. The Italian Emigration Department was replaced by a new Service within the Foreign Office which instructed consuls everywhere to supervise this policy, and even in centres as small as Townsville vice consuls were appointed to spread a knowledge of fascism among the migrants.⁹ The propaganda disseminated in

8. Giacomina Guerra, interview, 10 June 1979. (Translated from the Italian.)

9. Pyke, "An Outline History of Italian Immigration", p.107.

Australia by the fascist government was persuasive and very efficient. Fascism was equated with religion and Italian patriotism, a subject on which, in the racist climate of Australia, the migrants were extremely sensitive.¹⁰ The Italian Chamber of Commerce circulated a monthly bulletin, and social clubs were encouraged among the Italian communities. Two such fascist sponsored clubs existed in Townsville,¹¹ and in Babinda a branch of the Fascist Party was still holding street marches in 1943.¹² Consular officials and priests toured the north speaking on behalf of the Italian government.¹³ These activities received some support from the Australian government which delayed the naturalisation of anti-fascists,¹⁴ raided their clubs,¹⁵ banned their newspapers,¹⁶ and supplied their names to the Italian authorities, to facilitate "investigation" of their families in Italy.¹⁷ Notwithstanding, in North Queensland the movement grew.

The first Australian anti-fascist demonstration was held in Halifax in March 1925, and Australia's only Italian newspaper, which was fascist controlled, reported the incident and remarked: "...the fact is that almost all Italians in North Queensland are bitter and irreconcilable enemies of fascism."¹⁸ In 1926 Carmagnola left

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10. Jean Devanny wrote about a meeting organised by the Italian comrades at a sugar mill outside Ingham, at which the crowd became very hostile because it believed that an attack was being made on Italy rather than on fascism. Private papers held by Pat Hurd.
 11. Club Italiano and S. De Giovanni's. Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants", p.18.
 12. Mario Cazzolino, interview, 5 August 1979.
 13. Cresciani, "Italian Resistance to Fascism", p.45.
 14. Cresciani, "Italian Anti-Fascism", p.92. Also Mario Cazzolino, interview, 5 August 1979.
 15. Cresciani, "Italian Resistance to Fascism", p.42.
 16. *Il Risveglio* and *La Riscossa*.
 17. Cresciani, "Italian Resistance to Fascism", pp.37-38.
 18. *Italo-Australian*, 14 March 1925. Cited by Cresciani, "Italian Resistance to Fascism", p.39.

Ingham for Sydney where he launched the *Lega Antifascista*.¹⁹ Simultaneously the *Comitato Antifascista dell'Herbert River* was founded in Ingham.²⁰ The following year the *Lega* began publication of a newspaper, *Il Risveglio*, which, on the grounds that it was printed at the Communist Party's printery at Annandale, was later banned by the Bruce government.²¹ In 1929, after nearly a year's struggle to obtain a government permit, *La Riscossa* first appeared.²²

The activities of the *Comitato* during the 1920's consisted largely of individual acts of violence against the fascists and their propagandists. Typical was its members' intrusion into a reception given in Ingham in honour of Count Gabrio di San Marzano, Italian Consul to Brisbane. The Count's Fascist Party badge was ripped from his coat, and the band was persuaded to play the *Internationale*. During his tour the consul was attacked at Babinda and Cairns, and forced to visit Innisfail under police protection.²³

The *Lega Antifascista* in Sydney and Melbourne did not survive the depression. Subscriptions became fewer, and the crisis was aggravated by splits within the movement. The Matteotti Club was closed at the end of 1931, and the Melbourne edition of *La Riscossa*, like many small newspapers of the period, was forced to cease publication.²⁴ In North Queensland, however, the anti-fascist movement prospered. In part this was due to the increasing militancy within the sugar industry.

19. Cresciani, "Italian Resistance to Fascism", pp.39-40.

20. Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants", p.6.

21. Cresciani, "Italian Resistance to Fascism", p.40.

22. *Ibid.*, p.41.

23. Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants", p.9. Though two anti-fascists were arrested on this occasion, they were represented by Paterson in one of his earliest cases and acquitted.

24. Cresciani, "The Italian Resistance to Fascism", p.12.

In June 1930 the Australian Workers Union (A.W.U.), the Australian Sugar Producers' Association and the Queensland Cane Growers' Council signed a "preference" agreement, to the disadvantage of migrant cutters. It provided for 75% of the workers in the field to be British subjects. This British preference was effectively fought by the combined activities of the Ingham anti-fascists, the Mourilyan anarchist group, led by Costante Danesi, and the Communist Party. The North Queensland anti-fascists had discovered something that their southern counterparts would not learn for another eight years, that their enthusiasm needed the superior organisation and resources of the Communist Party in order to survive.

At the end of 1931 Carmagnola returned to Ingham, and began to publish *La Riscossa* in reduced format. In December of that year he was arrested after an incident in which the Townsville Vice-Consul was assaulted in Ingham. His trial, which was held on 11 and 12 February 1932, at the Townsville Supreme Court, was remarkable for the strong bias against Italians and anti-fascism displayed by the Crown Prosecutor and the Judge, and for the reaction of the jury to this bias.²⁵ Despite Acting Justice P.B. MacGregor's recommendation that he be convicted, the jury, reported to be mainly composed of waterside workers, found him "not guilty".²⁶

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25. Mr Quinn (prosecutor):...if you took such a big interest in the welfare of your country and your people, why did you come to Australia, and why don't you go back?

Witness (Carmagnola): Because I am ashamed to call myself an Italian under the present regime.

Mr Quinn: Do you think any decent Australian is proud of you?

Witness: Yes, they should be...I would be prepared to fight for Australia if her people were under a tyrant.

Mr Quinn: We don't want you.

Townsville Daily Bulletin, 13 February 1932.

26. Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants", pp.13-14.

During the early 1930's the anti-fascists' tactics remained at the level established during the previous decade. In 1934 the Italian Consul-general, Marquis Agostino Ferrante, needed police protection during his stay in Ingham,²⁷ and a year later, Bruno Rossi, entering an Ingham hotel wearing his Fascist Party badge, was beaten up with his own crutches.²⁸ During these years the Ingham anti-fascists built their clubhouse, as the group grew too large to meet at Cazzolino's house.²⁹

In the sugar strikes of 1934 and 1935 the North Queensland anti-fascists accepted communist leadership. Indeed in Ingham the anti-fascists always had strong Communist Party connections. Despite Cresciani's emphasis on the anarchist component of the movement,³⁰ it contained a small group of communists, notably the Penna and Cazzolino families and Barreri and Campanaro. Both groups met in the Workers' Club building, but only the Communist Party had the resources to provide the pamphlets and posters which heralded the arrival in Ingham of fascist propagandists.³¹ However the proclamation of the popular front heralded a new level of cooperation between the anti-fascists and the Communist Party, particularly among the anarchists of Innisfail and Mourilyan.

Late in 1935 Carmagnola returned to Sydney where he found that the anti-fascist movement had completely disappeared.³² During his absence, however, the Movement Against War and Fascism had been set up in Australia,³³ and by the end of 1935 its committee had organised

27. *Workers Weekly*, 21 December 1934.

28. Cresciani, "Italian Resistance to Fascism", p.46.

29. Mario Cazzolino, interview, 5 August 1979.

30. See Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants".

31. *Workers Weekly*, 21 December 1934.

32. Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants", p.15.

33. M.A.W.F. was set up in Australia in August 1932.

a national anti-war congress, to "unite all lovers of peace".³⁴ M.A.W.F. was a typical "front" organisation in that although many of its members were not communists, Party members were among its most enthusiastic and efficient organisers. In the north branches were set up by communist Jean Devanny during her 1935 tour, and in addition to starting new branches she apparently attempted to incorporate Italian anti-fascist movements into M.A.W.F. Ten Queensland delegates attended the 1935 congress, and while none was Italian, the anti-fascist groups were represented by Yugoslav communists.³⁵ *La Riscossa* had not survived Carmognola's departure, and by 1936 the only newspaper outlet for anti-fascist news was the *Workers Weekly*. Correspondents used its columns to warn northern Italians of fascist spies in the district. Early in 1936 for instance, a correspondent calling himself "Milano" warned of a Red Cross "racket" centred on Mrs Morelly's (sic) cafe in Cairns. The report stated that the local anti-fascists had circulated leaflets in Italian pointing out the "crimes against humanity being perpetrated in the name of the Italian Red Cross".³⁶

On May Day 1936 only the Yugoslavs represented the anti-fascists in the Innisfail march and torchlight rally.³⁷ In Ingham however, Jack Henry marched with the Italians and was reported to have remarked that he had never before seen such a "beautiful" May Day march. Accompanying the marchers was an Italian band which played the *Internationale* and *Bandiera Rossa* (The Red Flag).³⁸

34. *Workers Weekly*, 10 January 1936.

35. *Ibid.*, 21 January 1936.

36. Warnings about the presence of fascist spies in the ethnic communities were featured prominently in *La Riscossa*. Cresciani notes such warnings directed at Townsville, Cairns, Darwin, Innisfail, Ingham, Brisbane and Halifax. Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants", p.18.

37. *Workers Weekly*, 12 May 1936.

38. Mario Cazzolino, interview, 5 August 1979.

The alliance between the anti-fascists and the communists was further cemented by the Spanish Relief campaign during which the Communist Party again demonstrated that it was the only sympathetic organisation which had the resources needed for effective action. Some independence seems to have been maintained by the Innisfail group, however, for one report in the *North Queensland Guardian* noted that a portion of the money raised there during 1938 had been sent to Paris.³⁹ Though not supported by any concrete evidence, it is possible that this donation was sent to the *Comitato Anarchico Pro-Spagna*.

From 1936 the increasing organisation of the anti-fascist groups strongly suggests a growing communist influence. In October the Mourilyan Italian Progressive Club drew up its constitution and elected a committee comprising Costante Danesi, Ferruccio Guerra, Giovanni de Luca and Emilio Campi. Probably only one of these founders, Campi, was a communist,⁴⁰ and the stated purpose of the club was apolitical: to maintain social contact between Italians, to improve their social conditions and to protect them against the British Preference League.⁴¹ A club house was purchased and the Guerra family moved into its upper storey as caretakers and managers.⁴² During a speech made at the club's first anniversary celebrations on 9 October 1937, Danesi announced that the club "had no political views", but went on to note that "most Italians deplore fascist aggression in Spain, China,⁴³ and Abyssinia."⁴⁴ However on the previous May Day the Innisfail Italians marched as a group,⁴⁵

39. *North Queensland Guardian*, 13 January 1939.

40. Ross Cali, informal communication, 14 May 1979.

41. *North Queensland Guardian*, 23 October 1937.

42. Giacomina Guerra, interview, 10 June 1979.

43. Japan's invasion of China was seen as an integral part of the rise of world fascism.

44. *North Queensland Guardian*, 23 October 1937.

45. *Ibid.*, 1 May 1937.

while Danesi himself represented the Progressive Club at the Ingham celebrations. His fellow speakers at the Ingham Workers Club were Filippo Bossone, the Ingham communist who, in 1930, had been jailed after delivering an inflammatory speech in the Brisbane Domain,⁴⁶ and Townsville communist Pat Clancy.⁴⁷

Cresciani gives 1938 as the year during which the influence of the Communist Party displaced that of the anarchists in the anti-fascist movement.⁴⁸ However the North Queensland experience indicates that this displacement occurred earlier, and by 1938 the anti-fascist groups were featuring in May Day parades and were continuing their work for Spanish Relief.

During 1939 the North Queensland anti-fascist movement was subject to further development. At the end of 1936 canecutter Ernie Baratto had left the canefields to join the International Brigade. He served in Spain for two years, surviving at least one wound and a report of his death, which was recounted in the *North Queensland Guardian*:

An Italian worker who returned here some months ago said that Baratto's parents who lived in the area he stayed in while in Italy, had been sent a parcel of dirty clothes by the police, with a note saying it came from Spain where their son had been shot as a prisoner of war.

But on his return to Australia in April 1939 the same journal announced that "...his Innisfail mates are turning on a spread".⁴⁹

46. Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants", p.13. Bossone was accused of inciting the unemployed to raise the red flag and to "send to hell even kings and rulers" in their struggle to achieve freedom.

47. *North Queensland Guardian*, 8 May 1937.

48. Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants", p.15.

49. *North Queensland Guardian*, 21 April 1939.

Baratto arrived back in Queensland with a new mission. He worked to rally anti-fascists among the Italians, Spaniards and other nationalities to "defend Australian democracy against attacks from within or without".⁵⁰ He approached the task with the same enthusiasm and dedication which had earlier taken him to Spain. Arriving in Ingham in time for the May Day (1939) celebrations, he organised the Italian contingent for the march. The meeting that followed was held at the Shire Hall, presumably because the numbers were too great for the Workers' Club. Between three hundred and fifty and four hundred people heard Danesi, once more representing the workers of Innisfail, outline the international situation and conclude that there was an urgent need for anti-fascist unity. Max Jessup, representing the Ingham Communist Party, described the progress of Russia under Stalin, and one minute' silence was held for the dead of the International Brigade. Baratto was the final speaker and it was to cries of "Viva Baratto" that he addressed the workers on the subject of democracy. Later that night the Workers' Club was crowded for the final celebration of the day. Toasts were proposed to the U.S.S.R., and Jessup and Baratto spoke for a movement to rally all forces against fascism. The *North Queensland Guardian* reported two hundred people dancing.⁵¹

With this triumph, Baratto began his tour of North Queensland. From Ingham he visited the migrant communities in turn, conducting meetings and forming an anti-fascist committee in each place. Two hundred people heard him speak at Innisfail. At Babinda the meeting was held in Italian, while at his next meeting, at Mareeba, he used an interpreter, Maria Pedrola, to translate into English "when necessary". The popular front policy was perhaps having an unexpected effect on North Queensland "race" relations. From Mareeba

50. *Ibid.*, 5 May 1939.

51. *Ibid.*

Baratto travelled to Tully, and thence through Townsville, where he was interviewed for the *North Queensland Guardian* to Home Hill and Giru.⁵²

The career of Ernie Baratto encapsulates the history of the popular front in the sugar districts of North Queensland. A radical canecutter at the beginning of the Weil's Disease strike of 1935, he joined the Communist Party while working on the strike committee at Mourilyan.⁵³ His political education was received at the Marx classes run by the Mourilyan C.P.A. branch. During the 1936 season he saved his fare to Spain where he served with the Dimitrov, Lincoln, British, Passionaria and Stakanov battalions of the International Brigade, in the capacities of sergeant, captain and political commissar.⁵⁴ With such credentials he toured the district, attracting large audiences to his Italian language meetings in an area where, a few years earlier, his people had been considered alien and black and therefore beneath contempt.⁵⁵

The anti-fascist groups quickly settled into a familiar North Queensland pattern; the activities of the Mareeba anti-fascist club were typical. At its first meeting at Ballico's Café, fund raising was discussed and it was decided to conduct a series of dances at Grasso's barn. These were subsequently held, and with an admirable display of cultural adaptation the committee set admission at "gents 2/-, ladies a cake".⁵⁶ Baratto's anti-fascist clubs, however, were

52. For details of the tour see *North Queensland Guardian*, 12 May 1939, 26 May 1939, 2 June 1939 and 9 June 1939.

53. See chapter 3.

54. *North Queensland Guardian*, 2 June 1939.

55. As late as 1938 the Townsville delegate to the Australian Natives Association Annual Conference, Arthur Murgatroyd, told the meeting that within three days of landing in Townsville six Italian bricklayers had been employed, while two white men had been put off.

56. *North Queensland Guardian*, 9 June 1939 and 25 August 1939.

not allowed to drift into parochialism. They were formed as part of a national organisation within the popular front movement. On 9 July 1939 delegates from each group met at an Italian Anti-Fascist Conference, held in Townsville, which aimed to create a new organisation to foster cooperation between Italian migrants, to help victims of Italian fascism and to develop social and cultural life among Italian migrants.⁵⁷ The delegates elected a committee which had its headquarters at Innisfail. The branches were instructed to report to the Innisfail group, which, in its turn was to coordinate the work of the branches; a provisional constitution was drawn up.⁵⁸ Italian-Australian anti-fascism had emerged as an organised force.

57. *Ibid.*, 30 June 1939.

58. The Provisional Constitution of the Australian Association of Italian Democrats is reproduced as Appendix D.



CHAPTER VI

WOMEN IN THE POPULAR FRONT

"We are not purely a charitable organisation, but will endeavour to relieve distress whenever possible, always realising that while this unfair system of society exists, distress will be created faster than organisation can relieve it."¹

1. Ann Horne, addressing a meeting of the Townsville Women's Progress Club, March 1939.
North Queensland Guardian,
17 March 1939.

Although feminist writings had been featured by Marxist journals since the time of *Knowledge and Unity*, by the end of the popular front period women constituted only sixteen per cent of Communist Party membership.² Generally, the Party has discouraged independent action by women's groups for both theoretical and organisational reasons. Theoretically, Marxists believe that no true liberation of women can be achieved independently of class liberation. Organisationally, the system of democratic centralism kept policy decisions within the province of the Central Committee. Women's organisations existed to implement these decisions. These factors were reinforced in Australia by prevailing ideas of women's role in society and by the Party's close alliance with the trade union movement.

In North Queensland however, a remarkably strong and independent women's movement grew up during the late 1930's and early 1940's. This movement is perhaps a paradox since neither local Party members nor the northern community in general were more liberal in their attitudes towards women than other Australians. Indeed Devanny reported that the district was extremely "backward" in this respect, and she described local communists as "scarcely less chauvinistic than the rest of the population".³ Several factors may have contributed to the strength of the movement. Firstly, the industrial component of the Queensland Party was not as great as that of other states,⁴ and therefore it may have been less influenced by the male

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2. *Party Builder* (September 1942) p.1. *Party Builder* was the monthly organisational journal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Australia. It published five editions between June and November 1942, while the Party was proscribed. Its function was to coordinate the recruiting campaign of that year.
 3. Devanny, private papers in the possession of P. Hurd.
 4. Industrial component in May 1942: Queensland 39% compared with N.S.W. 53%. *Party Builder* (August 1942), p.5.

dominated trade unions.⁵ Secondly, the movement's founders were the wives of the 1935 strikers: it did not spring from a directive of the District Committee. Thirdly, isolation, and perhaps the general psychological characteristics of the region, made Party discipline a little more relaxed than in southern districts. It is perhaps indicative of such relaxation that while alcohol was strictly proscribed to Party members in other areas, this regulation was ignored in the north.⁶ Fourthly, the current leader of the northern Party was Jack Henry, whose extreme shyness in the company of women⁷ may have led to their activities being allowed to develop without interference. Finally the movement came under the auspices of Jean Devanny, who was not only a militant feminist, but also a communist with some standing in the southern Party. This may have added dignity and status to the local women's movement.

The first Women's Progress Club was established in Innisfail during the strike of 1935.⁸ It was however the second, the Tully Women's Progress Club, which had the greater impact on the North Queensland women's movement.⁹ When the Weil's Disease strike broke out, the Tully Section had only one woman member. She felt so isolated when attending the overwhelmingly male meetings that she confessed a sensation of "immorality". When the W.P.C. was formed two weeks before the end of the strike there were five communists among the twenty-five foundation members. The basic aim of the group was industrial: to make contact with the greatest possible number of sugar workers' wives to persuade them to give the strikers

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5. For information on the effects of the Australian trade union movement on women see Edna Ryan & Anne Conlon, *Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work 1788-1974* (Sydney 1975).
 6. Pat Hurd, interview, 17 June 1979.
 7. Eileen Quinn, interview, 2 April 1979.
 8. See chapter 3.
 9. Devanny, private papers in the possession of P. Hurd.

greater support during any future dispute in the industry. To this end the club held socials and educational evenings which were funded by street stalls.¹⁰

After the strike Devanny continued to tour the north on behalf of the Movement Against War and Fascism. By the end of 1935 she had founded Progress Clubs in Ayr, Home Hill and Townsville.¹¹ The Townsville group however quickly collapsed, possibly due to lack of efficient leadership. In July 1936 the president of the Tully W.P.C. Eileen Quinn removed to Townsville where she reconstituted the club and built it into the most effective women's front organisation of the period.

The constitution of the Townsville W.P.C. stated that the group was "...Non-Sectarian, Non-Party...." and that "...neither religion or (sic) politics shall be discussed at its meetings."¹² Throughout its life the club continued to protest its non-political nature. Early in 1939, the then president, Ann Horne told a meeting:

It [the club] was formed in July 1936 to organise women into an active and energetic body, which will work for the progressive improvement in the lot of women and children. We are not a purely charitable organisation, but will endeavour to relieve distress whenever possible, always realising that while this unfair system of society exists, distress will be created faster than organisation can relieve it. We are non-party and non-sectarian. All are welcome, no matter what their political or other views are. All we ask is that our members are willing to work for the general improvement of the conditions of life of the women and children.¹³

10. Eileen Quinn, interview, 2 April 1979.

11. *Workers Weekly*, 1 January 1936.

12. Rules and Constitution of the Women's Progress Club of Townsville, p.1. This document is given in full in Appendix E.

13. *North Queensland Guardian*, 17 March 1939.

Evidently, and perhaps not surprisingly, this statement was greeted with disbelief as she deliberately reiterated the club's political complexion at a subsequent meeting:

I wish to take the opportunity tonight of stating that the Women's Progress Club is not a Communist organisation as so often referred to by some people of this town. There are a few Communist members in the Club, but because these women are progressive and wish to join a progressive organisation that does not make this club a communist club....¹⁴

Neither the membership nor the club's activities however, vindicate her claim. More than half the members were communists, and others were the wives or daughters of communists.¹⁵ Furthermore the activities of the group were often very political indeed. When Melbourne communist Ralph Gibson visited Townsville on behalf of the International Peace Conference early in 1937, it was the Townsville W.P.C. which organised his meetings.¹⁶ The group supported both the Spanish and Chinese Relief¹⁷ funds, raising money by holding dances.

14. *Ibid.*, 16 June 1939.

15. Eileen Quinn, interview, 16 April 1979.

16. *North Queensland Guardian*, 1 May 1937.

17. The Queensland Communist Party appears to have been committed to the relief of Chinese refugees from the Japanese invasion of China. This would constitute a logical extension of its work against fascism. The subject is difficult to research. Local communists have no memory of any Chinese joining the local Party, although Bordujenko reported that large donations to Party funds were made by the owners of the Ogden Street (Townsville) gambling dens. It is likely that the relationship was similar to that which existed between the Party and the early Italian Anti-Fascist clubs. During 1938 the *North Queensland Guardian* published an appeal from the Chinese Relief Fund's secretary, F.Y. Chun, who called on donors to leave money and clothes at Gee You's store at Babinda. By early 1939 a Cairns branch of the fund existed, and a Mackay branch was instituted by the Trades and Labor Council during January. That year the Chinese community marched in the Townsville May Day procession, and in September the *Guardian* carried a report of a Young Chinese Association dance at the Roof Garden. The Townsville group was affiliated with the Peace Council.

On May Day 1937 the Townsville Club marched as a group, carrying peace slogans; they also marched in the parades of the next two years.¹⁸ From 1937 the W.P.C. sent delegates to the annual District Conference of the C.P.A.,¹⁹ and often the Party's campaigns were reflected in W.P.C. activities. When organised by the Progress Club however, these campaigns tended to be slanted towards welfare interests; for example, while the Communist Party was waging its peace campaign of 1937, the W.P.C. was protesting that the war budget was impinging upon funds available for social services. Work for Spain and China continued throughout 1938 but, as the *Guardian* files demonstrate, the club was less active than in the previous year. As the original President was in Brisbane, it is possible that the group had difficulty in adjusting to her absence. Two magazines were sponsored during 1938: *World Peace* and *Women Today*, and some of the fortnightly meetings were devoted to discussions on articles appearing in these journals. Despite the continued absence of the foundation president, the club's activities once more became extremely political in the following year. In April 1939 the W.P.C. passed a resolution supporting the Watersiders in their attempt to end the export of war materials to "aggressor nations",²⁰ however May 1939 proved to be its most active and exciting period. In addition to the May Day celebrations at the beginning of the month²¹ there was an election campaign to support, and the group ran socials to help fund Fred Paterson's bid in the Townsville by election.²² On 24 May, three days before the poll, Townsville Mayoress, Margaret Gill, called a public meeting at the Town Hall

18. *North Queensland Guardian*, 1 May 1937 and 5 May 1939.

19. Eileen Quinn, informal communication, 20 May 1979.

20. *North Queensland Guardian*, 1 May 1937, 17 March 1939 and 28 April 1939.

21. During the period 1935 to 1944 May Day was celebrated on the first of May in North Queensland.

22. *North Queensland Guardian*, 12 May 1939.

to launch a campaign in support of a National Register of Women complementary to the Federal Government's measure for Australian men.²³ Reports on the progress of the meeting vary. The Women's Progress Club sent delegates to heckle, and the *North Queensland Guardian* reported that they had caused the election of office bearers to break up in disorder.²⁴ The *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, on the other hand, reported that a committee had been elected in an orderly manner, and its first meeting arranged. However, the list of committee members published by the *Bulletin* contains the names of three communist women, and gives the venue of its first meeting as the Young Women's Christian Association (Y.W.C.A.) hall.²⁵ Since the secretary of the Y.W.C.A. at this time was a member of the Party, and her name appears on the list of National Register committee members, it may be assumed that Margaret Gill's patriotic plans had been effectively thwarted, either during the initial meeting, or by infiltration of the committee. The following week the Progress Club called a public meeting at the Tree of Knowledge, (the meeting was later moved to the Theatre Royal due to inclement weather)²⁶ to explain its attitude on the National Register to the public.²⁷

The Women's Progress Club was politically, then, a fairly typical front. This view is reinforced by one member's report that when the club was perceived to have outlived its usefulness, "we changed it into the Trades and Labor Council Women's Auxiliary."²⁸

23. *Ibid.*, 2 June 1939. National Register: introduced 11 May 1939. Consisted of a census of men between the ages of eighteen and sixty-four, to facilitate "...the allocation of the man power of the nation in a national emergency...." Minister for Defence, G.A. Street. *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol.159.

24. *North Queensland Guardian*, 2 June 1939.

25. *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 1 June 1939.

26. *Ibid.*, 7 June 1939.

27. *North Queensland Guardian*, 9 June 1939.

28. Eileen Quinn, interview, 16 April 1979.

It did, however, display an unusual degree of independence for a contemporary women's organisation, partly due to the scope of its activities and their relevance to local women.

Political activities were interspersed with both social work and feminist propaganda.²⁹ Money raised at the fortnightly dances and socials, and through the ubiquitous street stall, was used for charitable as well as political purposes. Needy families were helped whenever possible, and the club sponsored Christmas treats for the children of the unemployed.³⁰ Donations made by the group to the Sister Kenny Memorial Fund led, some time later, to an acrimonious dispute with Tom Aikens,³¹ president of the fund. One Progress Club member, believing that Aikens had inadequately accounted for the money donated, had her query published in the women's column of the *North Queensland Guardian*. Aikens, in reply, somewhat irrelevantly denounced the columnist "Flo"³² as a man. He was rewarded with a public lecture through the column on the Party's policy of sexual equality.³³ During 1939 the Club celebrated International Women's Day,³⁴ and later held a minute's silence for the death of May Holman, M.L.A.³⁵

Probably the most successful issue pursued by the W.P.C. lay in its lobbying for public utilities relevant to women and children in

29. See Constitution, Appendix E.

30. *North Queensland Guardian*, 23 February 1937 and 17 March 1939.

31. Tom Aikens (1900-). Alderman (A.L.P.) Cloncurry, 1924-1930; Townsville 1936-1942; (H.L.P.) 1943-1949; M.L.A. (Hermit Park Labor, N.Q.L.P., N.Q.P.) 1944-1977. Aikens was expelled from the A.L.P. in August 1940.

32. Florence Milburn.

33. *North Queensland Guardian*, 23 February 1939 to 8 March 1939.

34. *Ibid.*, 17 March 1939.

35. May Holman, M.L.A. Forrest, W.A. When elected in 1925 Holman was the only woman member of an Australian parliament.

the district. Among its demands were a free library, relief work for unemployed boys, a children's hospital in Townsville, free milk for school children and for a ladies' retiring room in the city.³⁶ A *Bulletin* report of a club meeting held on 1 June 1939 demonstrates the technique employed in pursuit of these aims. At this meeting the secretary read a letter from the Town Clerk, replying to the Club's request for a retiring room. The letter announced that the Mayor would receive delegates from interested groups at the Town Hall. Two delegates were sent to the meeting, but found that no other group was represented. Nevertheless, they succeeded in extracting a promise that a rest room would be included in the remodelling plan for the Market Buildings. The Club then passed a resolution calling for the provision of a temporary rest room until the remodelled building was completed.³⁷

Communist women in Townsville worked hard to understand the theoretical basis of their Party. For many the study of political, economic and philosophical concepts was quite alien, and the classes held at the C.P.A. rooms in Flinders Street, and the weekend seminars run at a house at Pallarenda and at the Scout Den in Flinders Street represented novel and often difficult experiences. Perhaps the most taxing problem lay in the required attempt to relate these concepts to local circumstances.³⁸ The W.P.C. members did this admirably. Many of the traditional pursuits of northern women were included in the work of the club. It had, for example, a Hospital Committee, whose members were responsible for distributing flowers and books to public hospital patients, who were then interviewed on conditions at the hospital. During 1939 a horticultural and handicraft exhibition was held by the Progress Club at the Townsville Ambulance

36. *North Queensland Guardian*, 1 May 1937 and 17 March 1939.

37. *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 6 June 1939.

38. Eileen Quinn, informal communication, 20 May 1979.

rooms.³⁹ This blending of traditional provincial Australian women's occupations with local, national and international politics demonstrates an effective application of the policy decisions of the 1935 Congress.⁴⁰

The Women's Progress Clubs by no means embraced all the activities of communist women in North Queensland. At a more direct level the District (later Sub-State) women's committee was led by Florence Milburn, who travelled extensively in the region organising groups.⁴¹ Milburn also worked through the women's column of the *North Queensland Guardian*, which, under her editorship, became a happy blend of domestic and political concerns. One edition,⁴² chosen as a random example, featured an editorial written in defence of the Women's Progress Club, which had recently been accused of corrupting the women of Townsville, and three readers' letters. The first of these pleaded for equal opportunities for married female teachers; the second protested the price of shirts at the Babinda store, and accused the storekeeper of "profiteering"; the third advised that children needed play to promote their mental and physical wellbeing; the remainder of the column was devoted to recipes. Perhaps less happy was the idea of running a competition aimed at increasing *Guardian* subscriptions. The column offered a copy of *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* to the woman enlisting the greatest number of new subscribers,⁴³ (this has yet to be read by its winner).⁴⁴

39. *North Queensland Guardian*, 25 August 1939.

40. By 1939 W.P.C.s had been established in Innisfail, Cairns, Babinda, Ayr and Home Hill. Possibly some ideological confusion led to a *Ladies' Progress Club* being formed at Millaa Millaa.

41. *North Queensland Guardian*, 24 February 1939.

42. 21 December 1939.

43. *Ibid.*, 26 May 1939.

44. Eileen Quinn, informal communication, 20 May 1979.

Often the activities of the Women's Committee were based on traditional "women's work". In fund raising drives the women ran street stalls and provided suppers at dances and balls.⁴⁵ They were, however, also engaged in direct political action, both as Communist Party representatives at women's functions, such as International Women's Day,⁴⁶ and as office bearers within the Party. Railway Estate Branch of the Party had a woman president from 1937 to the end of the period under review, and members recall considerable numbers of women attending the District Conference as branch delegates.⁴⁷

Both in Townsville and in other towns in North Queensland, Party members worked within other women's organisations in the hope of spreading their message beyond their normal circle of acquaintance. This tactic was unusually successful in Collinsville, where the secretary reported that every committee in the town had at least one communist member.⁴⁸ Certainly, when J.B. Miles visited the mining town in 1936, representatives of the Ladies Home League and the Ladies Hospital Guild⁴⁹ were among those who welcomed him at the railway station,⁵⁰ while the Collinsville Country Women's Association (C.W.A.) was represented at Communist Party Conferences by Mary

45. *Workers Weekly*, 24 April 1936; *North Queensland Guardian*, 12 May 1939.

46. *North Queensland Guardian*, 14 April 1939.

47. Jim Henderson, informal communication, 20 July 1979.

48. *Ibid.*

49. The hospital guilds and boards were of some political importance prior to 1945. Most were run on the district system, which provided for the constitution of hospital districts and placed all hospital services in such districts under a hospital board. These boards were elected during Local Authority elections. Hospital finance was born by the Government and the local authority, in the proportion 60% and 40% respectively. Clem Lack, (ed.) *Three Decades of Queensland Political History, 1929-1960* (Brisbane 1960). Footnote to p.227.

50. *Workers Weekly*, 10 July 1936.

Miller.⁵¹ However, in Townsville these organisations shared only two members, and communist activities within the C.W.A. were limited to heckling meetings.⁵² Collinsville's penetration of this Association was not equalled in Queensland until the war period, when in 1942, the Gladstone C.W.A. circulated a petition calling on the federal government to lift the ban on the Communist Party.⁵³ Women were also very active in the peace movement, the Townsville Women's Peace Committee becoming an important front by 1938. This group, which met at the Y.W.C.A. rooms and shared an office bearer with this association, pledged its support for Fred Paterson during the election campaign of 1939. A Belgian Gardens branch of the Peace Council was formed at the beginning of June in that year, and shortly after affiliated with the International Peace Council. This group sent delegate Ellen Taylor to the National Women's Peace Conference in Brisbane in August.⁵⁴

With so much activity it would be easy to overestimate the number of women involved. Cross membership between the organisations was high, and although definite numbers cannot be ascertained, it is likely that no more than twenty women formed the core of the women's movement in Townsville. Their energy and dedication, however, attracted many peripheral helpers who manned street stalls and baked cakes for a cause which became less alien as its adherents demonstrated their active concern for the immediate problems of women in a North Queensland community.

51. Jim Henderson, informal communication, 20 July 1979.

52. Eileen Quinn, informal communication, 20 May 1979.

53. *The Tribune*, 2 December 1942. In 1942 *The Tribune* was an illegal news sheet produced by the Central Committee in Sydney.

54. *North Queensland Guardian*, 20 October 1938, 26 May 1939, 2 June 1939, 30 June 1939 and 6 October 1939.

The women's movement, in spite of, or perhaps because of its parochialism, had an important place in the development of the North Queensland Communist Party. Moreover its contribution to the community in general should not be overlooked. During the Second World War women became increasingly important in the Party, and very conscious efforts to recruit them were made on a national scale.⁵⁵ It is unlikely, given local attitudes to women, that these efforts would have met with any considerable success in North Queensland had not strong foundations been laid by the women's movements of the popular front years. Perhaps more importantly, communist women were very much a part of the local community. They worked within the culture of the region to win the status which that culture traditionally denied them. Their importance reaches beyond the material and political benefits they gained.

55. During the recruiting campaigns of 1942 and 1943 the Party aimed at increasing female membership to 25% of the whole. *Party Builder*, July 1942. 1,900 women were recruited during 1942. *North Queensland Guardian*, 5 March 1943.

CHAPTER VII

THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN NORTH QUEENSLAND SOCIETY

"Townsville's First Annual Communist Ball. Continuous Old-Time and Modern Dancing. Miss C. Waters and the Ritzy Reveller's Orchestra. Added Attractions: Old-Time Waltzing Competition, Prize £2/2/-, Entrance Free; Quick Step Competition, Prize £2/2/-, Entrance Free. A Gala Night. Novelties Galore. Excellent Buffet Supper Provided. Admission 2/6."¹

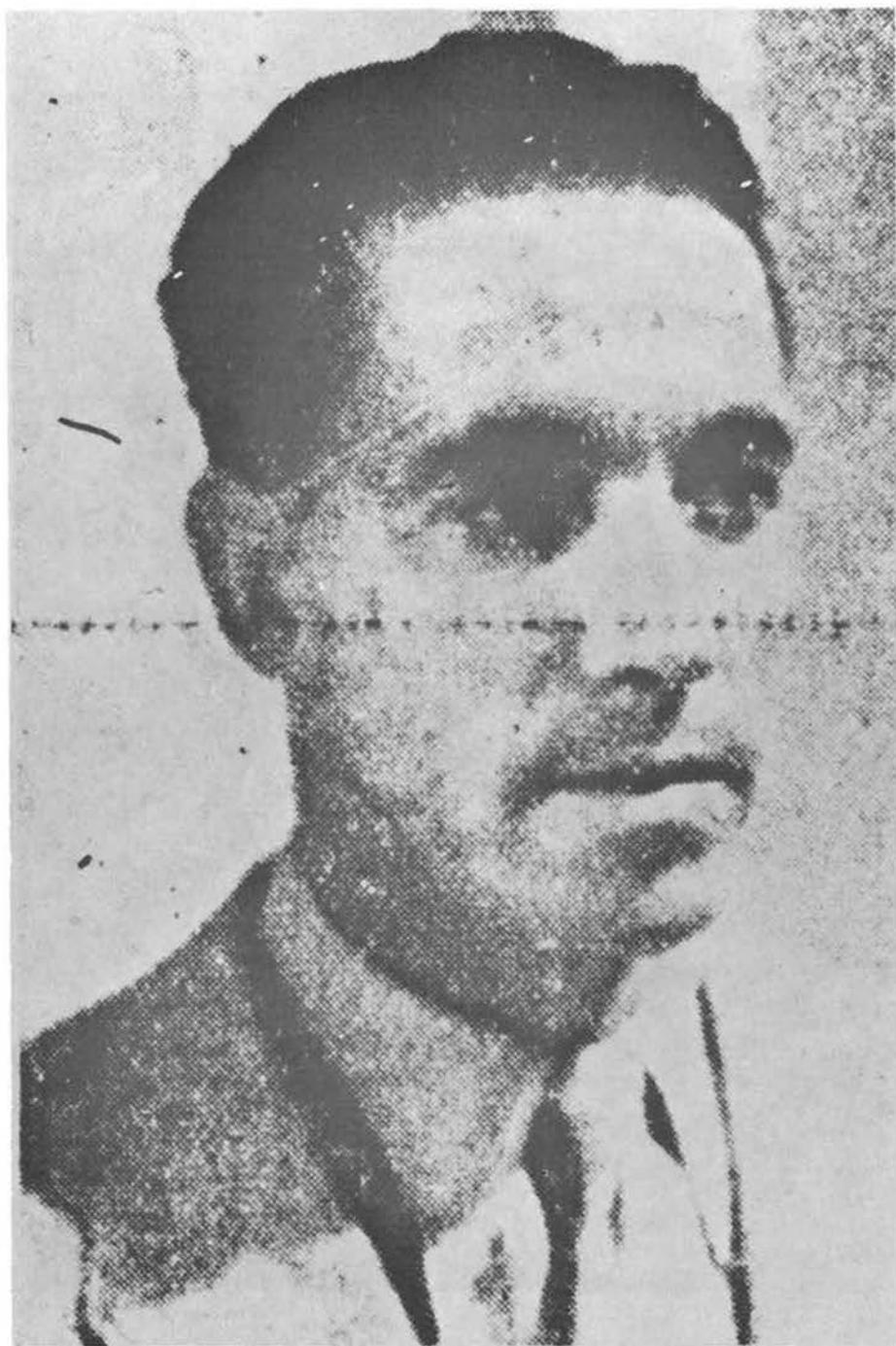
1. *North Queensland Guardian*,
17 March 1939. Advertisement.



(Workers Weekly, 4 February 1938).



International Brigade. (*North Queensland Register*, June 1937).



RAY JORDANA

(Workers Weekly, 1 August 1939).



JEAN DEVANNY.

(Workers Weekly, 30 June 1936).

In North Queensland during the nineteen thirties, among working class people at least, the perception of the Communist Party as sinister and foreign was gradually eroded for a number of reasons. Of these, the day to day contact between Party members and the community, especially in their work to relieve social distress, would have had a considerable influence.

In the years preceding World War Two unemployment remained very high.² The mildness of the northern climate may have reduced some of the distress among the local unemployed,³ but it also had the effect of attracting large numbers of men from the south, either looking for work or merely travelling to fulfil unemployment relief conditions. For many the journey terminated in Cairns where a large unemployed camp was established. Party work among these people took two forms: the formation of unions among them to fight for better conditions for unemployed workers, and the provision of temporary relief.

The Unemployed Workers Movement (U.W.M.) had originally been formed in April 1930 to cope with the depression. By the middle of 1931 it claimed 31,000 members throughout Australia, and in some towns Party activity consisted mainly of running the U.W.M. The Movement's hostility to A.L.P. members, and the creation of rival organisations by the A.L.P. caused a temporary decline in membership in 1932 and 1933; but the following year was one of rapid growth. In 1934 the U.W.M. boasted 68,000 members in Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales.⁴ It would also appear that this front organisation was a major recruiting area for the Party, for at the end of 1935

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2. For details see Robyn Colwill, "Unemployment in Queensland During the Depression, 1929-39", *Queensland Historical Review* 6 (1977).
 3. See Ian Moles, *A Majority of One: Tom Aikens and Independent Politics in Townsville* (St. Lucia 1979), Chapter 4.
 4. Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, pp.60-61.

some 48% of Party members were unemployed.⁵ In North Queensland U.W.M. branches were established in Cairns, Innisfail, Atherton, Tully, Townsville, Charters Towers, Bowen and Mackay.

The formation of unions for the unemployed provided them with the organisation needed to dispute individual issues, and often in this period these issues centred around relief work. Campaigns were waged in support of public works such as the Townsville sewerage scheme⁶ being performed by relief workers rather than by private contractors on tender. Strikes and protests were organised to counter perceived acts of victimisation or petty tyrannies by foremen or administrators of relief jobs.⁷ When, in 1938, new relief legislation was enacted by the Queensland Legislative Assembly, the Townsville group coordinated all branches north of Mackay in a series of protests throughout the region.⁸

In addition to organisation, the formation of unemployed unions provided potential access to power through combination with other unions. During the Townsville sewerage dispute for example, the Movement fought its case with the assistance of six trade unions: the Carpenters', the Amalgamated Engineers, the Railway Workers, the Watersiders, the Seamen and the Plumbers.⁹ The Townsville group attempted to realise its potential muscle by closely aligning itself with the Trades and Labor Council. In March 1936, although rejecting affiliation, the Council agreed to meet with delegates from the U.W.M. every month, and gave permission for members of the Movement to march as a union in the Townsville May Day procession.¹⁰ This

5. *Workers Weekly*, 28 January 1936.

6. *Ibid.*, 4 February 1936.

7. *Ibid.*, 3 March 1936, 31 March 1936, 30 October 1937; *North Queensland Guardian*, 6 January 1939.

8. *North Queensland Guardian*, 17 February 1939.

9. *Workers Weekly*, 4 February 1936.

10. *Ibid.*, 7 April 1936.

marked the beginning of a period of considerable cooperation with the Townsville T.L.C. which included the latter's acceptance of at least a degree of financial responsibility for the Movement. Member unions arranged on-the-job collections for U.W.M. funds,¹¹ and in February 1939 Townsville Unemployed secretary H. Greenfield attempted to formalize this assistance by asking the Council to provide the Movement with a basic income of £10 a month. The Council refused, but did agree to make £2/2/- a month available.¹² The following year it paid the expenses of delegates to the Conference of Unemployed Organisations which was held at the Brisbane Trades Hall on 29 and 30 March 1940.¹³

Although a degree of cooperation was also achieved in Innisfail, other towns were less successful. In Tully in 1940 a meeting of unemployed workers elected a deputation to meet with the May Day celebration committee. The delegates were instructed to ask for permission to march in the procession and have a speaker on the platform, free participation in the sporting events for the families of the unemployed, and preference in the allocation of work connected with the celebrations. The committee ruled the requests out of order because the Movement was not affiliated with the A.L.P. It was explained that:

...if they were given representation on the committee a dangerous precedent would be established that non-Labor movement bodies could seize upon the advantage to the disadvantage of the Labor movement. The Chamber of Commerce was cited as one of these bodies.¹⁴

Outside the trade union movement the U.W.M. occasionally

11. F. Matzkows, interview, 27 August 1979.

12. *North Queensland Guardian*, 17 February 1939.

13. *Ibid.*, 26 April 1940.

14. *Ibid.*

attempted to increase its political impact. For example in 1936 in Tully the Movement endorsed Tully C.P.A. secretary Les Lock as Workers' candidate for the Council elections,¹⁵ and it provided representation for the unemployed on the platforms of other groups such as the Communist Party and the Movement Against War and Fascism.¹⁶

With the assistance of its Women's Auxiliaries the Movement also attempted to fill the social void which accompanies poverty. The Charters Towers group had a particularly striking record of providing activities and entertainments for its members. Of the seven hundred people in the town who were unemployed in 1935, four hundred belonged to the U.W.M. Jean Devanny, whose M.A.W.F. meetings were organised by this branch, later described it as one of the best organised she had encountered, as some form of activity was arranged every night for the unemployed of Charters Towers.¹⁷ The Innisfail U.W.M. had a social committee which organised dances and other entertainments. This group managed to raise money for other causes, and one dance, held at the Rechabite Hall in 1937, raised £60/6/- for the Communist Party's Electoral Fund.¹⁸

Outside the Unemployed Workers' Movement much temporary relief was provided by Party members, sometimes through organised fund raising, but more often through numerous acts of individual assistance. Members collected food and money from their work mates, and delivered it to the homes of families who appeared on the Party's list of needy people.¹⁹ In Bowen, a Women's Welfare League also provided relief for families, and women's groups generally worked

15. *Workers Weekly*, 14 April 1936.

16. Reports of various meetings, especially during 1936.

17. *Workers Weekly*, 1 January 1936.

18. *North Queensland Guardian*, 3 October 1937.

19. F. Matzkows, interview, 27 August 1979.

hard to arrange some sort of treat at Christmas. The Townsville Women's Progress Club for example arranged a Christmas party for the children of the unemployed in 1938, and in 1939 the Bowen Women's League raised enough money to give a Christmas gift of 10/- each to thirty-eight women, and 2/9 each to eighty-two children from unemployed families.²⁰

The men who "jumped the rattler" however belonged to no union, often had no family and appeared on nobody's list. These men were regularly met by Party members when the north-bound goods train stopped at the end of Third Avenue, Railway Estate, before moving into the Townsville railway station. The wife of a meatworker who lived in the suburb nearby remembered the thick sandwiches which were made from the meat allowed to employees, and set aside for such travellers.²¹ Throughout the nineteen-thirties a constant stream of men slept on the floor of the Party office, in the Bookshop,²² and in the homes of members: "...they were always welcome."²³ In the sugar districts, groups of migrants continued to arrive in search of work. When their money ran out they were forced to leave their accommodation. Their plight has been vividly recounted by one Ingham Party member.

There was a lot of poor bastards who came here to get a job, but there was no job at all....When the money is finished they chuck him in the street...and the poor bastard he got nothing to eat, because he got no dole; nothing to eat, no work, no sleep at all. One afternoon it was raining...and one bloke he came - like you see something crazy - I say, "What's wrong?" He say, "You know [hotel owner's name] he chuck ten poor buggers away in the street. They are under the tree."

20. *North Queensland Guardian*, 1 May 1937, 17 March 1939 and 5 January 1940.

21. Eileen Quinn, informal communication, 28 May 1979.

22. George Bordujenko, interview, 30 April 1979.

23. Fred Matzkows, interview, 27 August 1979.

It was raining very, very - he cry.
 I say, "How many?"
 He say, "Nine or ten."
 I go out. I go straight in the street, he
 show me the poor buggers. I say, "What's
 wrong, what for you cry?"
 He say, "We don't know where we are to go
 now: we got nothing."
 I say, "Come on, come with me."
 They take the pots and put them in the
 shop....I have one tarpaulin. I take the
 tarpaulin and put it on the floor. I say,
 "You got a roof; that's all you got."
 I came home. I was worried. My wife says,
 "What's wrong?"
 I explain. She say, "Take something to eat."
 I say, "Yes I came to ask you."
 She say, "I prepare a big stew, and then you
 take him down."
 My wife she starting make a big saucepan
 stew. I can do nothing else because I am
 nothing....I take the bloody stew and a
 couple of loaves of bread, went down there
 to give something to eat. They start to eat.
 Couple of days after we got twenty-five.
 Next to me was the A.W.U. office. The
 Organiser, he got the toilet. I say, "Mr
 [Organiser's name], leave the door open."
 He say, "No, I don't want to do. They make
 everything dirty." He shut the door....The
 Organiser he report to the Health Inspector.
 The next morning the Inspector come to see
 me. He say, "You can't keep."
 I say, "What for I can't keep? Who told you
 I can't keep?"
 "You know you got only three toilets?"
 Sergio [Penna] he come....He say we have to
 go see the Roman Catholic priest, he got big
 dancing hall....I say, "I go see the Method-
 ists, he got one big hall too....you talk
 very good, you born here. You go see the
 Chairman of the Council, he got Drill Hall"
 Two sisters, both in the Party, one
 say, "I go see the English Church."
 The other say, "I go see the Roman Catholic."
 All right. They say, "We very sorry."
 But no chance because they need the hall because
 he have Sunday School....And the English
 Church - can't do. "We got meetings." Got
 a lot of bloody stories, you know. And the
 Council say, "No chance."....Sergio he tried

every way, but no chance. No priest,
not one he accept; no way.²⁴

In its work among the poor the North Queensland Communist Party had an unusual asset. One of its members, Fred Paterson, was a qualified barrister. Paterson travelled widely in the north, defending clients whom he considered would otherwise have been disadvantaged before the law. Paterson's clients, whose impecuniosity caused considerable financial hardship for his own family,²⁵ do not appear to have been chosen because of the justice of their cases, so much as in the belief that everyone, regardless of race or social standing, had the right to first class legal representation in court. In one instance he travelled to Darwin to defend two Chinese who were charged with keeping an illegal gaming house.²⁶ In another, in Townsville, he defended an unemployed "...bloke alleged to have stolen a pig from a farmer."

Fred represented him and got him off. Between the time that he was arrested and charged and the time the case came off, the pig had to be kept. The police fed and fed it, and looked after it very well. One of the strongest points of the defence was when Fred asked for the pig to be brought into the court. There were four policemen carrying the pig. Fred drew attention to the fact that this chap had been alleged to have walked nearly a quarter of a mile with that pig on his shoulder.²⁷

Another important reason for the weakening of the "Red Bogey" in North Queensland was the unusually extensive social life of the Party

24. Mario Cazzolino, interview, 5 August 1979.

25. George Bordujenko, interview, 7 May 1979.
Also Jim Henderson, written communication, 15 October 1979.
"He often 'forgot' to send the bill."

26. *Workers Weekly*, 9 June 1936.

27. Fred Matzkows, interview, 27 August 1979.

in this District. Dances, card parties, "Smoke Evenings", picnics, bazaars and discussion groups provided entertainment throughout the region. Many of these functions were organised to raise funds for specific campaigns, such as Spanish or Chinese Relief, or Party electoral or press funds. Others appear to have been held rather for their social value: for example the W.P.C.s ran regular dances, the proceeds of which were distributed to any currently pressing cause. Both types of entertainment received wide support from non-members.²⁸

Picnics were always popular. Innisfail members picnicked at Ettu Bay, the Tully group went to Mission Beach and Townsville communists travelled to Magnetic Island. For those who were more interested in intellectual pursuits the Left Book Club held fortnightly meetings in Townsville and Tully, and the Townsville C.P.A. ran fortnightly informal gatherings to discuss "matters of up-to-the-minute importance over a cup of tea." Less orthodox perhaps was the *Guardian* Fund Boxing Tournament held at the Townsville Theatre Royal in September 1939.²⁹

Most popular of all, however, were the dances, which seem to have been organised by every Section and Front group in the District. Sometimes these were small functions such as the one reported by Les Sullivan, in Cairns:

A benefit dance will be conducted at Freshwater Hall Saturday 25th. The proceeds of this dance are to be handed to a lady who can well do with a little assistance.³⁰

28. George Bordujenko, interview, 7 May 1979.

29. *North Queensland Guardian*, 1 September 1939, 17 March 1939, 17 November 1939, 5 January 1940.

30. *Ibid.*, 24 February 1939.

Others were more ambitious, such as the Old-Time Dance held at the Roof Garden Ballroom in Townsville in May 1940, at which early arrivals were taught the Empress Waltz by Mr and Mrs King.³¹ Some combined dancing with other activities: for example a Labor Day Dance and Euchre Party was held by the C.P.A. at the Townsville Palais Royal during the same month.³²

Collinsville and Scottville, where support for the Party was very strong,³³ organised some ambitious (and perhaps ideologically questionable) functions such as the Miss Collinsville Popularity Quest which was a successful fund raiser in 1939. Another was the annual Collinsville Red Ball, "the social event of the year". The triumph of the 1939 season however must have been the Townsville Communist Ball. Although planned as an annual event, international affairs intervened, and it was never to be repeated. Three hundred people attended the ball, which was held at the School of Arts (now the Arts Centre). They danced to the music of Miss Waters and the Ritzy Reveller's Orchestra until 1.45 a.m., and enjoyed a buffet supper provided by the Women's Committee of the Communist Party.³⁴

The Communist Ball was reported by the *North Queensland Guardian* under a banner headline which was applicable to so many of the social activities of the North Queensland Party during the popular front period: "Red Bogey Dying".

31. *Ibid.*, 3 May 1940.

32. *Ibid.*

33. See electoral figures, Appendix A.

34. *North Queensland Guardian*, 10 February 1939 and 31 March 1939.

CHAPTER VIII

PUBLIC MEETINGS

"Public Meetings must be made attractive. The Party has many specialists who are very willing to give advice and help. Halls should be attractively decorated, programmes should be brightened. Musical items are a good idea. Lighten your programmes so the people will come again."¹

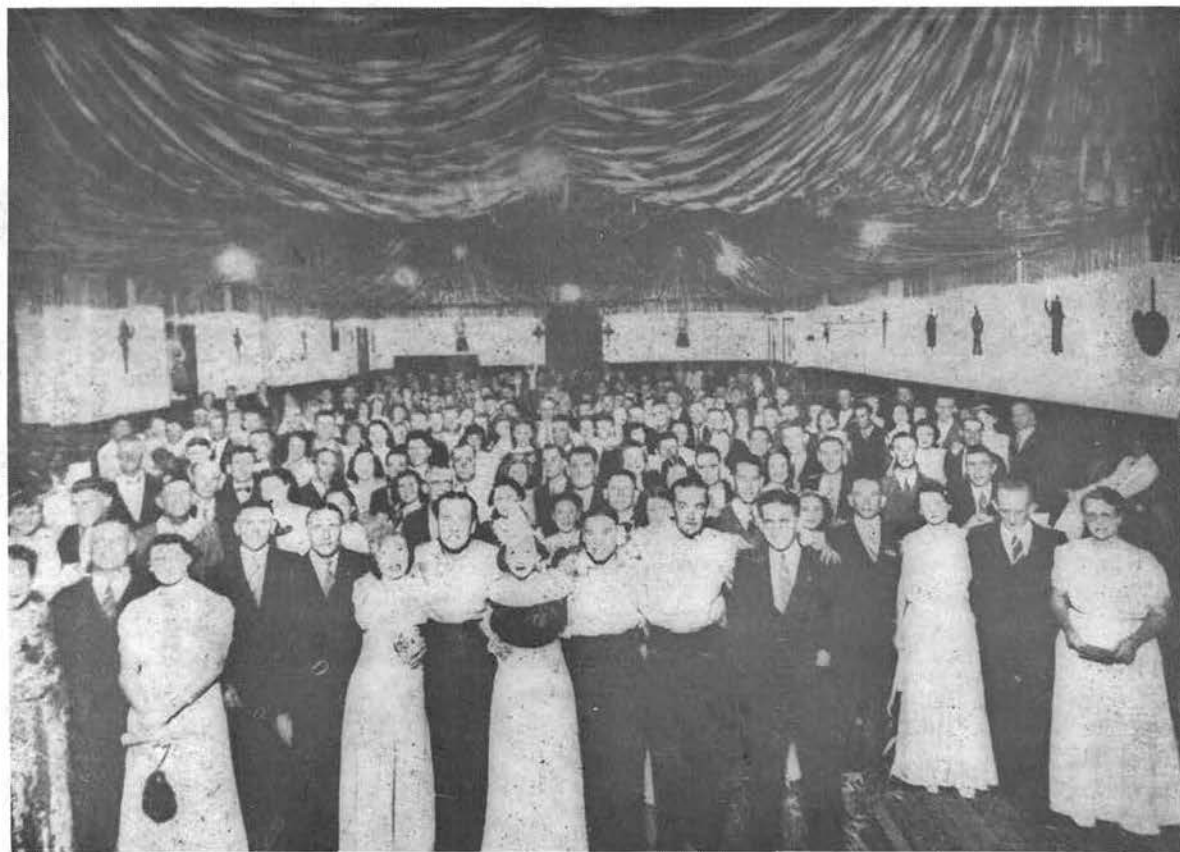
1. *Pep up Party Propaganda!*
C.P.A. pamphlet, n.p.,
n.d. (1941).



F. W. PATERSON.

(Workers Weekly, 30 June 1936).

(North Queensland Guardian, 12 May 1939).



AT THE FIRST ANNUAL COMMUNIST BALL, SCHOOL OF ARTS, TO WNSVILLE, APRIL 27, 1939.

Although much of the day to day contact between communists and other members of the northern communities occurred at a social level, the Party laid great stress on the holding of public meetings. It is possible that the demise of the public meeting and the rise of the mass media as political tools have been responsible for fundamental changes in North Queensland politics, particularly those of the working class. Certainly the entertainment value, which caused spectators to run behind the campaign lorries as they moved from suburb to suburb, no longer exists.² The North Queensland Communist Party, which was often in a position to provide first class speakers and hecklers, made good use of this medium, and during J.B. Miles' tour of 1936 it became evident that District Nine could provide larger and more widely representative audiences than the other Districts.

Federal secretary Miles visited Queensland as the final stage of a nation wide tour undertaken in support of the Defence Fund. During 1936 the C.P.A. was called on to appear before the High Court to show cause why it should not be declared an illegal organisation. The expenses which would be incurred were estimated at £5,000³ and much Party activity during this year was aimed at raising money and popular support for this cause.

Miles entered the District at Mackay on 27 June and Party members who met him at the railway station handed him a telegram of welcome from the District Committee in Townsville. That night, in the heart of Premier Forgan Smith's electorate, he addressed four hundred people at the Britannia Hall, and demonstrated his grasp of local politics by challenging the State Secretary of the A.W.U., Clarrie Fallon, to a public debate.⁴ From Mackay he travelled to

2. Arthur Murgatroyd, interview, 27 June 1978.

3. *Workers Weekly*, 28 February 1936.

4. *Ibid.*, 7 July 1936.

Collinsville where, at 8.30 a.m., his train was met by a remarkable reception committee. The delegates, who later accompanied him to an official welcome at the Pioneer Cafe, represented the Caledonian Society, the Ladies' Home League, the Ladies' Hospital Guild, the Collinsville Miners' Union, the railway workers, the M.A.W.F. and the C.P.A. The breadth of Communist Party activity in Collinsville⁵ was further demonstrated that evening at a public meeting, when these delegates were joined on the platform by representatives of the Scottville miners, the Unemployed Workers' Movement, the Young Communist League and the Ambulance Committee. Miles remarked that he believed this to be the most broadly representative gathering of the tour, and added that if support in the rest of Australia were equal to that in Collinsville "...we would be taken very seriously indeed." Apparently support in Scottville was equally impressive, for during his speech there the following evening Miles referred to the town as "Red Scottville".⁶

These early meetings seem to have set the pace for the remaining centres. An eight man committee had been elected well in advance of Miles' arrival to prepare for his meeting at Home Hill. The local Party branch made an attempt to gain the cooperation of the A.L.P. for the event, but reported that though local Laborites were in favour, the Q.C.E. had vetoed the proposition. The Home Hill Boxing Club was, however, more helpful, and postponed its tournament so as not to clash with the meeting. Miles retaliated by urging his two hundred strong audience to attend the boxing match to be held on the following night. Represented on the Home Hill platform was the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights, whose Chairman, G. Wellington, in his speech stressed the workers' need for unity.⁷

5. Jim Henderson, informal communication, 20 July 1979. Henderson was C.P.A. secretary in Collinsville and Chairman of the Collinsville Hospital Board. He was elected to the Wangaratta Shire Council in 1939.

6. *Workers Weekly*, 10 July 1936.

7. *Ibid.*, 7 July 1936 and 10 July 1936.

On his arrival in Townsville on 4 July the Leader was given an official reception at the Oddfellows' Hall. Among the one hundred and seventy guests were representatives of the trade unions and of the A.L.P. The reception followed the typical Townsville pattern of speeches interspersed by musical items organised by Comrade White-wood, and a toast proposed by Townsville's oldest member, Comrade Wilks. Perhaps it was also typical that in the District's report to the *Workers Weekly* the content of Jack Henry's speech is given in some detail, while that of Miles is not mentioned. Henry's speech on this occasion was notable for its mildness. He told the guests that unity was sought, not on revolution, but on work conditions and problems. A public meeting was held the following Monday.⁸

The Cairns branch did not send a report of Miles' visit to the national press, but Innisfail members, who were his hosts on 10 July reported in detail. On his arrival in the northern sugar town Miles was met by Party members and representatives of various trade unions. His meeting, which was held at the Regent Theatre, attracted an impressively large audience of six hundred, many of whom were reported to have travelled from the Tablelands for the occasion. On the platform were delegates from the A.R.U., the A.F.U.L.E., the W.W.F., the Carpenters and Joiners, and the Unemployed and Relief Workers' Union. Miles' Innisfail itinerary was demanding; it included an open air meeting at South Johnstone on the 11th, one for combined railway unionists at Innisfail on the 12th, and another, which attracted two hundred and fifty members of various unions to the Regent Theatre later the same day. The final meeting of the tour was held at Babinda, where one hundred and fifty sugar workers huddled under the hotel verandah to escape a tropical downpour.⁹

Defence Fund collections from public meetings during the tour

8. *Ibid.*, 14 July 1936.

9. *Ibid.*, 24 July 1936.

appear to have become a matter of regional pride. Mackay collected more money than any non metropolitan city in Australia to that stage of the tour. Three nights later Collinsville broke Mackay's record, only to be defeated in its turn by Scottville. Justifiably proud, this tiny mining settlement reported its collection in per capita terms. Although Townsville did not publicly announce the size of its contribution, this information was apparently obtained by the Innisfail members. When they reported to the *Workers Weekly* that discounting the state capitals the largest collection of the Australian tour had been taken up at their meeting, they tautologically added that it was "bigger than Townsville's".¹⁰

Despite, or perhaps to some extent because of such rivalries, these reports suggest that by the second half of 1936 North Queensland communist meetings were attracting unusually large and varied audiences. Once more Paterson proved himself a valuable asset. Contemporaries of diverging political persuasions describe him as "a wonderful speaker", capable on occasion of converting a casual listener to lifelong enthusiasm for the cause.¹¹ His oratory was not merely of the stump variety; he had a versatility which could cope with a farmers' meeting, an afternoon tea with forty ladies and a large street meeting in the course of a single day's campaigning.¹²

The grinding work of keeping the Party's platform constantly before the public was, however, shared between members throughout the region. An examination of the meetings advertised for a single month, July 1937, demonstrates the energy of these men. In the second half of 1937 the District was waging a persistent, if vain, campaign for the affiliation of the C.P.A. with the A.L.P. Local

10. *Ibid.*, 7 July 1936, 10 July 1936 and 24 July 1936.

11. Celia Gallego, interview, 8 July 1979.

12. Millaa Millaa, August 1936. *Workers Weekly*, 7 August 1936.

members took to street corners and hotels to explain the need for a united front to anyone who would listen. George Bordujenko and Fred Matzkows addressed a meeting at the Hermit Park Hotel on how affiliation would achieve a better life for the people. Two days later the affiliation proposals were described by J. Whitewood, speaking at the old North Ward Fire Station. Meanwhile, Les Sullivan was travelling from Innisfail to Babinda to speak at the State Hotel before joining Les Lock at Hamilton's Corner in Tully. Sullivan then travelled out to Mount Isa to explain the proposals, while Lock moved on to Cardwell to hold a meeting at the C.W.A. Hall there. In the last week of July Matzkows spoke at the Oddfellows' Hall, Townsville, Roly Hills at Belgian Gardens "near Cottrell's store", H. Morgan and Danny McCarthy at the National Hotel in Railway Estate and Les Sullivan and Mick Leahy at Mossman, where they drew an audience of two hundred.¹³

For children growing up in the small sugar towns or on isolated farms, the street meetings held by the Communist Party and later by the Protestant Labor Party, were a constant source of entertainment.¹⁴ Another, rarer, form was derived from the public lectures given by locals returning from visits to Russia. Communist Party sponsored trips of this type were unusual in this period in North Queensland. Thus the occasional working class tourist drew large audiences on his return. One such was Harry Walls who was the Northern (Innisfail) farmers and sugar workers delegate to a trade union conference held in Russia in 1935. He was welcomed back to Australia by a meeting held in Silkwood at the end of December. During the following weeks he addressed sugar and waterside workers at Mourilyan and the Innisfail Unemployed and Relief Workers organisation. His lecture described the "splendid success" of the collective farming scheme in

13. *North Queensland Guardian*, July 1937.

14. Celia Gallego, interview, 8 July 1979.

the Ukraine, the effective health and safety measures regulating dangerous jobs in Russia, the equal wages and conditions enjoyed by Soviet women, and the treatment used to cure "anti socials". He repeated his talks, early in 1936, at Innisfail, Cairns, Babinda and Tully.¹⁵ Two years later Tony McGillick entertained a large audience at the Townsville Theatre Royal with a similar eye-witness account.¹⁶

The effect of the contact made with the general public through these meetings was reinforced by the openness with which policy decisions were discussed. District, later Sub-State, Conferences were large sociable affairs, which attracted as many as sixty delegates from the various branches.¹⁷ The delegates were often accompanied by their families, and the event was rounded up at the local photographic studio where the Conference Portrait was taken. All members were welcome to attend, and they were followed by a series of public meetings at which the decisions taken were explained to the general public. Speakers at such meetings advertised that they would answer any questions asked.¹⁸ The effect of such meetings on non-members is difficult to assess, although extant letters suggest that it was favourable. After a Charters Towers meeting a local trade unionist wrote:

...everything was fair, honest and above board....All unionists will be well advised to co-operate with the Communists....

From Tully came the remark that:

...if we are too sniffishly particular as to who are our associates on the battlefield, we may find we have no choice as to our associates in the prison camp.¹⁹

15. *Workers Weekly*, 17 January 1936.

16. *North Queensland Guardian*, 28 October 1938.

17. Fred Matzkows, interview, 27 August 1979.

18. *North Queensland Guardian*, 20 January 1939.

19. *Ibid.*, 27 January 1939.

Election campaigns were a particularly fruitful source of public contact, and during the popular front period these were fought on federal, state and local authority levels. Indeed the Party often claimed that it contested elections mainly because they presented opportunities for propaganda activities;²⁰ but when the possibility of a victory arose, Party resources were heavily invested in the candidate.

At the federal level only two seats were contested during the popular front period. Both campaigns were used as propaganda exercises for the united front policy, but there was an essential difference between them. The first seat to be contested was the sprawling northern division of Kennedy following the death of the A.L.P. incumbent David Riordan. The Party nominated Jim Slater, and the entire campaign hinged on an attempt to moderate the opposition of the A.L.P. A programme was drawn up and offered to the Labor Party with the suggestion that it might form a basis for coordination of the two campaigns, and although this was rejected, the communists continued to support the Labor candidate. Their key electoral publication was a four page circular which explained to voters how, under the preferential system, they could make Slater their first choice without splitting the working class vote.²¹

The triennial federal elections were held later in 1937, and these evoked a different response. Only one candidate was nominated, Paterson for Herbert, and it would appear that this time the Party made a genuine attempt to win federal representation. Albert Robinson directed the campaign, and twenty-one Party speakers,

20. Jones, *Electoral Support for the Communist Party in North Queensland*, p.23. This work provides a fuller discussion of the C.P.A.'s electoral campaigns. The results of state elections held during this period are listed as Appendix A.

21. *Workers Weekly*, 10 November 1936 and 8 December 1936.

including J.B. Miles and Jack Henry toured on Paterson's behalf. Paterson himself visited all centres from Mackay to Innisfail, and made it known that if elected he would have no conscientious objection to taking the oath of allegiance. In addition Party members claimed to have delivered 125,000 pamphlets, 6,000 posters and 50,000 how to vote cards. Nevertheless the united front policy was pursued with unremitting vigour. Paterson, who claimed to have been promised the A.L.P. preferences,²² informed his audiences that if it were not possible to elect a communist government, the next best thing would be one formed by the Labor Party. At Mareeba an election meeting at which J.B. Miles was the main speaker coincided with one held by the A.L.P. and addressed by Forgan Smith. The Communist Party's opened at 7.15 p.m. at the Tivoli Theatre, and at 8.00 p.m. the audience was told that the Premier's meeting was about to begin and that those who wished to attend might leave without giving offence. It was not without satisfaction that the *North Queensland Guardian* reported that, although some left, about one hundred people remained at the Tivoli. In the Kennedy electorate the Party once more waged a wholehearted campaign on behalf of the A.L.P. candidate. Members claimed to have delivered some 40,000 of his electoral leaflets, and to have held more meetings for him than the Labor Party itself.²³

The C.P.A. gave considerable attention to the elections held for seats in the Queensland Legislative Assembly. State elections were contested in 1935 and 1938, and on both occasions the Party ran five candidates. In Bowen Paterson contested the seat at the two elections, and also ran for the 1936 by election occasioned by the death of the sitting member.²⁴ His vote increased steadily from

22. *North Queensland Guardian*, 23 October 1937, 30 October 1937.

23. *Ibid.*

Also Jones, *Electoral Support for the Communist Party*, p.108.

24. Charles Collins. Another Riordan (E.J. Riordan) secured the seat at this election.

15.63% in 1935 to 24.5% in 1936 and 29.33% in 1938, when four candidates stood, an increase of one on the two previous elections. Particularly strong communist polls were recorded at Proserpine, Collinsville and Scottville, where in 1936 Paterson won 81.1% of the vote. The communist press claimed a high degree of cooperation with the A.L.P. in this electorate in 1936 and 1938, suggesting that during the by election campaign, when meetings clashed, Paterson and Riordan shared a platform.²⁵

In 1935 Alan Tucker contested the Cairns seat, standing as an independent. His 5.63% of the valid vote was not impressive and this seat was not contested in the subsequent election in 1938. Jack Henry campaigned for Herbert in both elections, and although his proportion of the vote remained constant at about 17% this represented a slightly better result in 1938 when four candidates competed.²⁶ On both occasions much of Henry's electoral support was won in Cardwell, Cowley, El Arish, Flying Fish Point (1938), Tully, Silkwood and South Johnstone. In Mundingburra the Townsville C.P.A. secretary Alex MacDonald contested the seat in 1935, standing as an Independent, while Ayr secretary, Doug. Olive stood in 1938. Again Olive's 9.02% at the second election at which four candidates stood represented a slight advance on MacDonald's 8.01% in 1935 when there were only three. However neither result was gratifying. The scattered electorate of the Tablelands was contested by Jim Slater in 1935 and by Les Sullivan in 1938. Slater's only successes were in the small polling booths of Innot Hot Springs (27.69%) and Mungana (20.68%), and his overall result was only 7.32% of the vote.

25. *Workers Weekly*, 26 June 1936.

26. 1935: Sherrington (A.L.P.) won the seat with 5,590 votes or 63.73% of the vote. The second candidate gained 1,661 votes, while Henry polled 1,520.

1938: Pease (A.L.P.) won the seat but polled only 4,852; the second candidate dropped to 1643 while Henry rose slightly to 1,563. The remaining votes (12.2%) were polled by a Protestant Labor candidate.

Three years later Les Sullivan polled a little better at 11.59%, receiving an astonishing 74% of the vote from the mining settlement of Topaz.

Townsville was contested in 1938. Albert Robinson polled a disappointing 6.23% and his campaign received little publicity even from the Communist press. However, in 1939, a by election, occasioned by the death of "Mossey" Hynes gave the Party another opportunity to test its support in the northern city. It nominated Paterson as its candidate, in a bid to increase the communist vote. Undoubtedly, as Jones has demonstrated,²⁷ Paterson could attract a personal following in the district which increased the vote in any electorate he contested. However, this result was also affected by the type of campaign the Party afforded him. While most electoral campaigns were largely propaganda exercises, when Paterson was the candidate the C.P.A. made a genuine attempt to win. On this occasion added impetus was derived from the furore caused by the rejection by the Q.C.E. of popular Labor Alderman Tom Aikens for the pre-selection ballot. The *North Queensland Guardian* was outraged, and called for support for Aikens.²⁸ Nevertheless the rejection of a candidate who was seen as a left-wing Laborite was perceived to favour the chances of the Communist Party in gaining the support of militant Townsville unionists, and a week later the Party chose Paterson for the seat.

Paterson's campaign opened with a meeting at the Theatre Royal, attended by six hundred people. Party members distributed copies of the Townsville "election song" to the audience and led a "warm up" of community singing. Thus when the candidate mounted the stage, which was decorated with two large flags bearing the Party emblem of the hammer and sickle, he received a "wonderful ovation". During his

27. Jones, Electoral Support for the Communist Party.

28. *North Queensland Guardian*, 14 April 1939.

seventy-five minute speech he delivered a policy statement which stressed social and economic reform and civil rights.²⁹ Paterson subsequently defended Aikens and denounced the "extreme right wing clique" in the A.L.P. He insisted that his only motive in standing for election was to strengthen the labour movement, and said that "...the bogies which had separated the Communist Party from the people in the past were being overcome...."³⁰ Although the campaign was brief, it was strongly fought, despite the refusal of the two local radio stations 4AY and 4TO to sell Paterson radio time. The final rally was as emotional as the first, featuring a torchlight procession from the Great Northern Hotel to the Tree of Knowledge, led by the Citizen's Band.³¹ In the meantime however, the A.L.P. had selected George Keyatta as its candidate. Since Keyatta was known to stand to the left of the Labor Party, this choice diminished communist gains from the veto of Aikens' candidature. The Party did raise its vote considerably, to 16.98% (four candidates), but at no time could any realistic hope of victory be entertained.³²

The great success of this period occurred in the Local Authority elections of 1939. In 1936, as the Communist Party was attempting to secure affiliation with the A.L.P., all efforts were made to support the Labor candidates at the local authority polls. Three years later an approach was made by the Townsville Communist Party branch to the Labor Party, in the hope that the two groups might combine to draw up an election platform. It was reported that the A.L.P. rejected the proposition on the casting vote of the chairman after the committee of fourteen divided evenly. In Millaa Millaa

29. This policy statement is given as Appendix C.

30. *North Queensland Guardian*, 28 April 1939.

31. *Ibid.*, 19 May 1939.

32. State electoral figures have been computed from election results published in *Queensland Parliamentary Papers* for the years 1936, 1937, 1939 and 1940.

delegates from the Producers' Association, Douglas Credit, the Farmers' Unity League and the Communist Party drew up an electoral programme, and selected a candidate. The groups also campaigned for one of the Labor candidates, who was said to have pledged his unofficial support for the programme.³³

In 1939 the Communist Party nominated candidates in Townsville, Cairns, Mackay, the Johnstone Shire (Innisfail), Douglas (Mossman area), and the Wangaratta Shire (Collinsville Division). In Innisfail, however, the candidate J. Wells had his nomination rejected on the grounds that he was a council employee. The Party claimed that it had been cheated, as on the day that his nomination was announced Wells had been offered, and had accepted, the job of foreman on the Shire Public Works.³⁴ In the other Shires electoral platforms were announced during February. Each of these shared two planks: that the government should be pressed to return half of the main roads tax paid in the shire to the council for the improvement of local roads and footpaths; and that the hospital tax be removed and be replaced by a tax on large incomes. Otherwise the platform for each local authority district was devoted to local issues. Typical of these were the pledges to throw open Heatley's Parade for building sites in Townsville, and to build a concrete drain in Lilley Creek in Cairns.³⁵

The candidates, Fred Paterson in Townsville, Allan Tucker in Cairns, J. Burnett in Mackay, Bill Edmondson in Mossman and Jim Henderson in Collinsville ran energetic campaigns. Party hopes, however, focussed on Paterson, and the Townsville election monopolised the communist press. From the outset large crowds were attracted to election rallies. Four hundred and fifty people

33. *Workers Weekly*, 27 March 1936, 17 April 1936.

34. *North Queensland Guardian*, 3 March 1939.

35. *Ibid.*, 3 February 1939 and 17 February 1939.

attended Paterson's first meeting near the Tree of Knowledge which was later described by the *North Queensland Guardian* as one of the largest audiences ever seen at a municipal election meeting.³⁶ Eleven more were held during the next two weeks, at which Paterson was strongly supported by other members. Whenever possible they were introduced with a direct reference to their trade union positions: Fred Matzkows for example being described as the President of the Boilermakers. Given the nature of the platform and the style of northern working class politics in this period,³⁷ a striking feature of the campaign was Paterson's ability to retain an ideological perspective. One tactic used to achieve this was to allow supporting speakers such as Albert Robinson, Bill Horne or Danny McCarthy, to elaborate on local issues, after which Paterson would explain the significance of the election in relation to world affairs.³⁸ When the votes were counted North Queensland discovered it had not one, but two communist aldermen. In the Collinsville Division of the Wangaratta Shire more than sixty per cent of the electors had voted for Jim Henderson to be one of the Division's three representatives.³⁹ In Townsville Paterson polled the fifth highest of the eleven men elected, and a strong swing to the left had replaced a council which had long been dominated by Independents with one in which Labor held a small majority.

36. *Ibid.*, 10 March 1939.

37. See Ian Moles, *A Majority of One*.

38. *North Queensland Guardian*, 31 March 1939.

39. *Ibid.*, 21 April 1939.



Conference Portrait 1937. (F. Matzkows).



A. R. ROBINSON,
candidate for
Townsville



J. C. HENRY, candidate for Herbert.



L. SULLIVAN,
candidate for
Tablelands.

PUT

NEW

LIFE INTO THE



F. W. PATERSON, candidate for
Bowen.

LABOR



GEORGE BURNS, candidate for
Bremner.

GOVERNMENT



J. SLATER, can-
didate for West
Moreton.



A. McDONALD, candidate for Kurupa.



D. OLIVE, candi-
date for Munding-
burra.

Vote for the 8 Communists

(Workers Weekly, 25 March 1938).

CHAPTER IX

THE POPULAR FRONT AND THE PRESS

"A branch of Beak House Jewellers will shortly be opening in Tully - the manager will be glad to see any Guardian readers, and discuss their jewellery requirements with them."¹

1. Advertisement published in the *North Queensland Guardian*, 24 February 1939.

From its foundation the Communist Party of Australia always laid great emphasis on its press. Concentration of ownership of the Australian media and communication problems caused by distance lent urgency to the need for the publication and wide distribution of an attractive national newspaper. During the popular front period the drive for mass support encouraged members to give even greater attention to this aspect of their work.

During the early years of the Party, Queensland had taken the lead by publishing the first Australian Communist newspaper. Although W.J. Thomas' *The Communist* (1920) only ran for three editions before being replaced by *Knowledge and Unity* (1918-1921) as the official organ, it holds an honoured place in the history of the Party.² The financial problems involved in producing a paper were, however, overwhelming for the small group which comprised the Queensland Communist Party of the nineteen-twenties. *New Order* (1924) published only five editions, and *The Toiler* (1924-1925) ran to six before it was overcome by such difficulties. After its collapse, although the branches issued bulletins, no newspaper appeared in the state until the popular front period.

The attention of the northern members was, therefore, directed to the circulation of the national paper, *The Workers Weekly*. During the late nineteen-twenties the sale of six copies of each edition was a condition of membership. This was not easy for the Townsville Russian members, many of whom spoke little or no English. The job was therefore passed on to their children who sold the papers for a penny a copy outside Lowth's Hotel.³ Nevertheless as the Party grew sales in North Queensland gradually increased until, at the beginning of the popular front period, they had reached over a thousand copies of each edition.

2. For more detailed treatment of the early press see chapter 1. Newspapers are listed as Appendix G.

3. George Bordujenko, interview, 30 April 1979.

In May 1936 an intensive sales campaign was conducted as part of the drive for mass support implicit in the popular front policy. Each of the bi-weekly editions of the *Workers Weekly* published circulation figures for every district, and the competition to increase sales became a matter of regional pride, since these figures reflected the activity and enthusiasm of the group concerned. At the beginning of the campaign District Nine was selling about 1,700 copies of every edition. By comparison, District Three (Southern Queensland) recorded 1,700 of the weekend paper and about 500 fewer in midweek. The largest sales were registered in District 1, centred on Sydney, where the numbers were 7,000 and 4,500 respectively. From this time until the end of the popular front period North Queensland always had Australia's second highest circulation.

During the latter half of 1936, as the campaign proceeded, sales rose dramatically in District Nine until at the end of the year 3,000 copies of each issue were being sold in the area. The increases were distributed throughout the District. Comrade Nicholson in Mount Isa raised his sales from thirty-six dozen a week in May to sixty dozen in November when he claimed, in a letter to the *Workers Weekly*, that circulation was higher than that of the local "capitalist press". In Mackay, between July and November, sales increased from fourteen dozen to thirty-six dozen. Cairns members set themselves a quota of fifty dozen papers in June. In all of these towns the sole means of distribution was through individual members, who often sold from door to door; even in Townsville, where the Party had a bookshop, most sales were thus effected. This town pledged itself, in June 1936, to raise its figures to eighty-six dozen by November. Although it did not achieve this, members were consoled by the fact that the closure of the meatworks at the end of the 1936 season did not result in a sudden drop in sales as it had in previous years. Between June and September *Workers Weekly* circulation in District Nine rose by forty per cent. Indeed, the increased sales in Northern Queensland

accounted for half the national increase of 1,800 copies.⁴

The enthusiasm of the Queensland members warranted editorial encouragement, and so at the beginning of 1937 the *Weekly* began to publish a special Queensland edition, which contained a full page of news from that state. In addition numerous bulletins and job sheets were published by branches and units. Unfortunately few of these have survived. Among them, however, were the Townsville Section Committee's bulletin, *The Van*, which the *Workers Weekly* editorial staff described as "...technically the best they have seen";⁵ *Vanguard* was published in Collinsville,⁶ *Spark* in Charters Towers,⁷ and *Flod* in Mount Isa.⁸ Devanny reported that *Flod*, which contained political and industrial news and comments on local scandals, was accepted as the town's newspaper.⁹ Three job bulletins were also published regularly in Townsville,¹⁰ and an Italian language bulletin, *Rompiscatole*, was edited by Jack Henry, with the assistance of a translator.¹¹

Encouraged by the success of the sales campaign, by the beginning of 1937 both District Three and District Nine had determined to publish their own newspapers. The burden of funding was to be born by the Districts involved, but the Central Committee agreed that the state press funds might be incorporated into the District Electoral

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4. *Workers Weekly* sales figures were drawn from sales charts and correspondence published by the *Workers Weekly* of 8 May 1936 to 4 December 1936.
 5. *Workers Weekly*, 18 August 1936.
 6. One copy of this is held by the Mitchell Library.
 7. Photocopies held by James Cook University Library.
 8. One copy held by the Mitchell Library.
 9. Devanny. Private papers held by P. Hurd.
 10. *Workers Weekly*, 15 August 1936.
 11. Giacomina Guerra, interview, 10 June 1979, and Mario Cazzolino, interview, 5 August 1979.

quotas. During the previous year the Party had decided to raise £10,000 throughout Australia for the election campaigns of 1937, and this sum had been apportioned between the Districts according to membership and past fund raising achievement. The quota allotted to North Queensland was £2,000: equal to that of Victoria and more than double that of District Three (£900). Because both elections and newspapers were considered by the Party to be primarily propaganda exercises,¹² the Central Committee entered into an agreement with the two Districts whereby money raised to pay for the publication of a paper might be considered a part of the Electoral Fund quota.¹³

Within the Districts the quota was reapportioned between the Sections which competed for a banner to be awarded the group which was first to raise its share of the cost. A report sent from Innisfail to the *Workers Weekly* in January 1937 suggests the methods used to raise the funds. The major portion of the two hundred pounds which had been collected in this Section during the preceding three months was raised by private subscription; the balance came from competitions, house parties and other social functions, among them a Workers' Press Dance, held at the Regent Theatre, and described as a "social hit", and a New Year's picnic at Etty Bay.¹⁴

Within District Nine the Press Fund aroused considerable enthusiasm, and although twenty-two weeks were allowed by the Central Committee for the filling of the quotas, Tully won the banner in less than half that time. Within eleven weeks Tully, Bowen and Home Hill had fulfilled their obligations.¹⁵ Fervour for the new project was

12. Eileen Quinn, interview, 2 April 1979.

13. *Workers Weekly*, 1 January 1937.

14. *Ibid.*, 8 January 1937.

15. *Ibid.*, 12 January 1937.

so intense that a Townsville member, Danny McCarthy, evolved a plan whereby power for the printing press was to be generated by a belt attached to the wheels of his bicycle, which he undertook to pedal throughout the printing process.¹⁶ Fortunately for McCarthy this was never necessary. The District raised £1,700 of its quota, and the remaining £300 was provided as an interest free loan by member Lindsay Stewart. Contract printing was investigated and discovered to be too expensive, and so Andy Cook arranged the purchase of printing machinery. Premises were organised by Robinson, Matzkows and McCarthy, and on May Day 1937 the *North Queensland Guardian* published its first issue. District Three's paper never materialised.¹⁷

The *Guardian* was unique in the history of Australian communist journalism: a mirror of the popular front in North Queensland. The printing machinery was registered as a private company, in the name of Andrew Cook of the Causeway Printery, Hermit Park. Initially 5,000 copies were circulated, rising to 5,200 by 1939.¹⁸ Distribution was timed for 3.00 p.m. on Fridays, although a special Tablelands Edition was issued at 4.00 p.m. on Thursdays.¹⁹ The size of the district it was intended to service was reflected in the breadth of its news coverage. From the outset local columns contributed from Innisfail, Cairns, Mossman, the Tablelands, Millaa Millaa, Home Hill, Collinsville, Mount Mulligan, Carbine, Mareeba, Bowen, Babinda and Charters Towers²⁰ indicated its widespread circulation.

16. Jim Hogan, informal communication, 4 February 1979.

17. Jim Henderson, written communication, 15 October 1979.

18. George Bordujenko, interview, 7 May 1979.

19. *North Queensland Guardian*, 1 May 1937.

20. *Ibid.*, 1 May 1937, 8 May 1937, 14 July 1937, 31 July 1937.

Editorial policy, under both the first editor, Fred Paterson and his successors E. Campbell and Danny McCarthy,²¹ reflected the popular front and its aim to reach the widest possible audience. Paterson set out the goals of the paper in his first editorial. He wrote that it was to wage "A crusade against poverty; a crusade against war; a crusade against governmental tyranny and despotism."²² Particularly noticeable was the absence from the *North Queensland Guardian's* banner of the hammer and sickle. The omission of the symbol of the Communist Party demonstrates the stress Paterson laid on wide circulation and mass appeal. Another unexpected feature of the editorial line was its insistence on the compatibility of Christianity and communism.²³

This theme is also reflected in the regular columns of the paper, which included one headed "Churches"; it was of particular importance to the Party during the Spanish Civil War, when the Nationalists proclaimed themselves the sole protectors of religion, and the Australian Catholic newspapers were publishing regular accounts of alleged atrocities against the clergy perpetrated by the Republican Army. The wide range of interests represented by such columns contributed to the *Guardian's* broad working class family appeal. There were reviews of the publications of the Left Book Club, which had members in North Queensland.²⁴ Film reviews were also featured, usually of productions currently appearing at Townsville cinemas. This column spread no political message, unlike the syndicated filmstar gossip column which particularly favoured information about the activities of Charlie Chaplin and Paul Robeson.

21. Jim Henderson, written communication, 15 October 1979. Other staff were: business manager, J. Johnson, later G. Bordujenko; also A. Robinson and Pat Clancy.

22. *North Queensland Guardian*, 1 May 1937.

23. Paterson, a Rhodes scholar, had studied theology at Oxford University.

24. Pat Hurd, interview, 17 June 1979.

One such story appeared under the headline: "Left incline in Hollywood",²⁵ and another under: "Movie Stars for Peace and Progress".²⁶ Regular "Turf News" and "First Aid" columns were also printed.

Two of the features were written by Fred Paterson; one on the law, and the other about political economy. Even these columns were politically circumspect: never compromising the Party line, but always presenting it in its most easily digested and generally useful form. The legal column concentrated on matters of importance to working class families such as social security, and readers' legal queries were answered. In the political economy column Paterson provided Marxist education in the form of answers to readers' questions. Here too much of the information was of an immediately practical nature such as the way the hire purchase system functioned.

An extensive women's column featured women's letters, news of women's organisations, medical advice, household hints, recipes and dress patterns. Its editor, C.P.A. women's organiser Florence Milburn, also printed feminist articles and advice on peculiarly working class problems such as how to cope with unemployed husbands and children.²⁷ Another unusual feature of the *North Queensland Guardian* was its children's column, headed "Happy Companions". In January 1937 the *Workers Weekly* had begun to publish a column for children, but it consisted of reports on orphanages and teachers' conferences. "Happy Companions" was far more appealing, and featured children's contributions, games and puzzles. During the life of the paper it grew to three full columns and acquired a separate post office box.

25. *North Queensland Guardian*, 27 January 1939.

26. *Ibid.*, 17 March 1939.

27. For further discussion of this column see chapter 6.

Local news and feature articles were contributed from every part of the District. Much of the news was industrial, though trade union business was less important in the *Guardian* than in the *Workers Weekly*. In Townsville, meetings of the radical trade unions and of the Trades and Labor Council were reported in detail. However much of the industrial news was very parochial: for example a report headlined "Favouritism at the Tully Pickup".²⁸ Although the paper followed the wars in China, Abyssinia and Spain, events in Russia and the progress of Hitler, local news was given preference except on rare occasions. In line with the policy decisions on the popular front conferences of 1935 and 1936, issues such as the establishment of a public swimming pool and a free library were allotted many column inches, and the drains of Innisfail, which were blamed for a serious outbreak of typhoid fever in the town in 1938,²⁹ featured throughout that year. Perhaps the best indicator of the *Guardian's* acceptance of its role as a provincial working class newspaper may be seen in its intense preoccupation with events such as the Jubilee celebrations of the West End State School, which were reported at length in every edition published during June and July of 1937.

Feature articles often combined politics with local interests. Typical were two of these written by A. Northage, a Townsville resident, who had recently returned from a Communist Party sponsored trip to Russia. Published late in 1937, the articles were travellers' tales in which guide book history mingled with descriptions of exotic meals and the wonders of Tzarist architecture. Politics were eclipsed by the excitement of the tourist.

One feature in particular separated the *Guardian* from other communist newspapers: it carried, and was to some extent financially

28. *North Queensland Guardian*, 20 January 1939.

29. The paper reported forty cases of typhoid fever diagnosed in Innisfail during October 1938.

"THE COMMUNIST"

A JOURNAL OF THE WORLD REVOLUTION.

Official Organ of the Queensland Communist Group.

PUBLISHED MONTHLY.

::

NINEPENCE A COPY.

Editor: W. J. Thomas.

Box 46, Trades Hall, Brisbane.

VOL. I.

OCTOBER, 1920.

No. 2.

Explanatory!

The demand for the extension of communist propaganda has again been demonstrated by the success attending the publication of the "Communist." It was the intention of the Brisbane Branch of the Australian Socialist Party to publish the magazine as the official organ of the Branch, this decision was dependent upon the endorsement of the Central Executive of the party. The Executive, after giving the matter due consideration, decided that at the present time there is not sufficient scope for such a magazine, and that its publication would possibly embarrass the party: therefore, the endorsement was withheld.

While respecting the decision of the Central Executive in this matter, we are of the opinion that the decision was not warranted by a full consideration of the position of the Labour movement in Australia at the present time. We consider the continued publication of the "Communist" a necessity, and its success or failure will be partly dependent upon the propaganda value of the magazine. While dissenting from the decision of the Central

Executive in this matter it becomes necessary in the interest of party discipline to dissolve the Brisbane Branch of the party, and to reorganise it as the nucleus of the Queensland Communist Group, of which the "Communist" will be the official journal.

The current issue of the journal is an enlargement upon our initial effort. We hope to continue this improvement, but success depends entirely upon the support given to us by the working class. An increased circulation assures the production of a larger magazine. The November issue will be a special "Russian Revolution" number, illustrated.

Finally, in appealing for your support, we would again remind you that the "Communist" is published for the purpose of propaganda, not profit. The members of our staff are not troubled with income tax returns, all work connected with the production of the magazine, with the exception of printing, is performed in an honorary capacity in the interests of Communism.—Editor.

Japan and the World Revolution.

(By BUYEI NAKANO.)

An impenetrable veil of mystery surrounds the Orient in the minds of the western nations. The economic and social life of the Japanese proletariat is practically unknown to the European Labour movement, and yet it affords an example of intense capitalistic development, which, if interpreted from a Marxian basis constitutes a most remarkable study of the sociological process of modern industry. The old and the new blend strangely together in the land of the Rising Sun. Commerce has broken down the feudal barriers of caste only

to build those of class. Religion is being superseded by modern science, and the screech of the factory whistle has sounded the "twilight of the gods." In order that we may thoroughly understand the significance of the most virile of all movements—the Labour movement of the Japanese proletariat—it is necessary to understand a little of the development of Japanese political movements and their place in history.

The modernist movement of Japan dates from the time of intimate intercourse with Euro-
an



ODS

RIGIN

NORTH QUEENSLAND GUARDIAN

DEFEND
WORLD
DEMOCRACY
SUBSCRIBE TO THE
SPANISH
RELIEF FUND

1937.

(Registered at the General Post Office, Brisbane, for transmission by Post as a Newspaper)

PRICE 2d.

FRIDAY, MAY 12, 1937.

VILLE BY-ELECTION

COMMUNIST BALL

INTEREST ON STATE LOANS

Urban Meeting Popularity Grows

It was considered a good attendance at a meeting of the National Union, Railway Union, and 1500 listened to Fred Paterson outline Queensland.

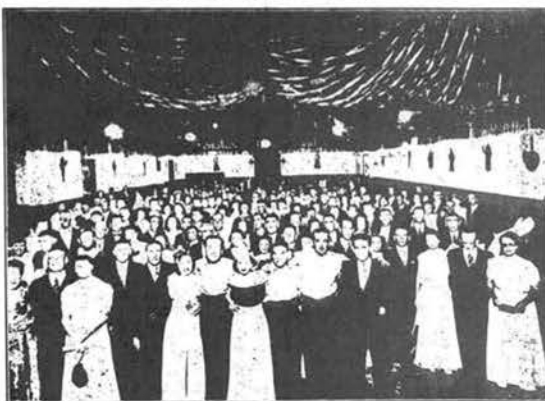
It was wealth to carry out the programme put forward by the Communist Party. All that it needs is that the Government, with the backing of the people, should dip into the pockets of the rich. He declared there was not one in his audience who would not be prepared to swap incomes with the rich and willingly pay their taxes too. There should be no excessive incomes while there was one person badly housed, fed or clothed.

UNITE LABOR MOVEMENT.

He closed with a ringing appeal to the workers to unite the ranks of the labor movement. To rally to their unions, and clean out the weaknesses from the Labor Party which were at present holding it back. He mentioned an article in the "Townsville Clarion" which declared that if Labor could not win without Communist preferences, it preferred not to win at all. "What did this mean?" It meant that the writer would prefer a "Tory" to win, rather than Paterson.

The speaker said such a line was not personally supported by George Keyatta or the rank and file of the Labor Party. It is time those who prefer Tories to working class representatives were banded out of the Labor Party.

Paterson appealed to all who were voting for him to use the preference in favor of George Keyatta, and for Keyatta's supporters to vote Paterson 2, and to announce the victory of a repre-



AT THE FIRST ANNUAL COMMUNIST BALL, SCHOOL OF ARTS, TOWNSVILLE, APRIL 17, 1935.

CIVIL DEFENCE

**Demands Proper Measures
To Protect Human Lives**

CASH NEEDED

FOR TOWNSVILLE CAMPAIGN

We appeal to all desirous of seeing Fred Paterson elected for Townsville, to subscribe to the campaign funds as liberally as possible.

£5,129,994 Exempt from Taxation

10 per cent Tax On This Would Pay For Restoration Of Unemployed Relief Scales

The State Programme of the Communist Party demands that there be no exemptions from taxation for the wealthy. Queensland Year Book, 1935, reports the total interest payable by the Queensland Government on the public debt for the latest year reported (1934-35) was £5,129,994.

This interest is exempted from State taxation, incidentally it is all unearned income, which should be subject to higher taxation than income from personal exertion.

There is no semblance of justice in this exemption. What service have the bondholders rendered that they should be given this preferential treatment? Incidentally, this figure does not include interest payable by the Commonwealth Government, which is also exempt from State taxation.

Elected Fred Paterson for Townsville as the first step to carry out the Communist programme for Queensland, and ensure that there are no exemptions of big incomes from taxation.

ELECT PATERSON

CONTINUE FORWARD MARCH

Do Not Stop Half Way

Support for the Communist policy and for its candidate in the Townsville by-election, Fred Paterson, is growing daily. Wherever Fred speaks he gets big crowds and receives a good hearing.

Great interest is being evinced in the election and indications point to Queensland having the first Communist Member of Parliament. Townsville electors made history on April 1 when they elected the first Communist member to a municipal council.

Will Townsville electors continue the forward march and send the first Communist Member of Parliament from Townsville.

An ever increasing number say yes.

For Queensland's million at the expense of Queensland's millions — Build the Labor Movement.

OBITUARY

C. B. BAILEY, GARDNER, BOWEN, passed away at the Kennedy Hospital, Bowen, on April 15, 1937.

dependent upon commercial advertisements. It would appear that its promoters had hoped to make the paper self-supporting through sales of advertising space. Although it did once run a column on Mount Isa's veteran super paper seller, Archie Nicholson, who by this time was selling three hundred *Guardians*, two hundred *Workers Weeklys* and dozens of *Moscow News*, as well as delivering the *Plod* each week,³⁰ the paper never imitated the *Workers Weekly's* circulation campaigns. Instead it stressed the importance of selling advertising space. On the front page of the edition of 19 May 1939, for example, the following exhortation appeared:

Will you please spare five minutes to glance through our advertisements, and see if any of our advertisers can supply your requirements. By supporting our advertisers you are supporting us and making the publication of the *Guardian* possible. When buying mention the *Guardian*.³¹

Advertising rates were three shillings a column inch, which compares very favourably with the *North Queensland Register's* rate of 3/6 a column half inch.³²

Though none of the larger firms ever advertised through the paper, space sold quite well to smaller businesses. The varied nature of the advertisers is demonstrated by the contents of a paper chosen at random. Townsville firms advertising in this edition were the Aitkenvale Butchery; Kuriand Cafe and Selkig's Cake Shop; Thomas and Gray, Grocers; Beak House Jewellers; Burrows Farm Machinery; Connolly the Electrician; Foley's Clothes; the Mia Mia Cake Shop and

30. *North Queensland Guardian*, 28 April 1939.

31. *Ibid.*, 19 May 1939. The encouragement of readers to patronize small businessmen was ideologically acceptable during the popular front period when the base of the Party was extended to embrace the middle class and small farmers.

32. The two papers had a similar format, and were designed to serve the same region.

the C.P.A. which advertised a lecture and an election night gathering. The same edition carried advertisements for non-Townsville firms: the Black and White Café in Cairns; Weiland the Butcher at Herberton; Maxwell and Sullivan, Tailors; McGee's Hotel and Mrs Bell's Sporting Goods, all of Collinsville; Dan the Tailor and Mrs Bradford's Guest House at Babinda; Acme Radio, Home Hill; Naughton the Pastrycook of Ayr; Wilson's Cars, Mount Isa; Efstathis Cafe, Tully; and the Brisbane Anvil Bookshop.³³ The Townsville City Council was a frequent advertiser, and bought space in the final issue before proscription. During the life of the paper the number of advertisements in each edition rose from four in the first to a peak of seventy-six in October 1939. After the outbreak of war, sales diminished commensurate to the popularity of the Party; there were only thirty-three in the final edition.

Despite this strategy the paper consistently absorbed half of the entire income of the sub-state committee. The weekly deficit averaged ten pounds, and in June 1939 £270 of the original loan was still outstanding. In that month sub-state secretary Albert Robinson launched a press fund, which was to be combined with a drive for increased advertising and circulation. The campaign was to run from July to December. Two months after it began the Nazi-Soviet Pact was signed and the end of the popular front was in sight.

33. *North Queensland Guardian*, 23 October 1937.

CHAPTER X

THE END OF THE POPULAR FRONT

"We knew that Stalin could be trusted
to do the right thing."¹

1. Eileen Quinn, interview,
2 April 1979.

On 21 August 1939 Australian communists were stunned by the news that the U.S.S.R. had signed a ten year treaty of nonaggression and neutrality with Nazi Germany. After Hitler's annexation of Czechoslovakia the previous March it had appeared that the popular front had been vindicated. Despite the assurances of federal Attorney-General Robert Menzies, the threat of international fascism was growing, and Menzies' pro-German speeches,² and the "pig iron" campaign,³ made the linking of members of the federal government and fascist ideology more credible. Party campaigns of this period received wide support from other sections of the labour movement. This was particularly noticeable in Townsville where, on certain issues, the C.P.A., the Trades and Labor Council and the City Council found themselves in agreement.

Early in May the Townsville City Council unanimously passed a resolution to petition the Prime Minister to impose an embargo on the export of "war materials to aggressor nations". The "city fathers" then gave serious consideration to a motion submitted by communist alderman Fred Paterson: that if the Townsville Waterside Workers' Federation should refuse to load materials suitable for war purposes, and an attempt be made to load using "scab" labour, the Council should cut off the electricity supply to the Harbour Board to prevent the use of electric cranes. Three other aldermen (Corcoran, Aikens and Mindham) spoke to the motion, but it was allowed to lapse after it had been pointed out that since the W.W.F. had agreed to load under protest, the resolution amounted to an

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2. J.R. Robertson, "1930-39", in Frank Crowley, *A New History of Australia* (Melbourne 1974), p.457.
 3. This centred on Menzies' threat to invoke the *Crimes Act* against maritime unions attempting by direct action to prevent the export of scrap and pig iron from the eastern ports to Japan, on the ground that it would be used for war purposes. For details see Geoffrey Sawyer, *Australian Federal Politics and Law* (Melbourne 1963), Vol.2, pp.116-117.

attempt to coerce the union. An alternative motion, that the Council should assist the W.W.F. and cooperate with the union in any public protest it might decide to hold, was carried unanimously.⁴

The National Register issue⁵ provoked widespread interest both industrially and politically. The Trades and Labor Council voted at its June meeting to boycott the Register, and later the same month the City Council carried a motion proposed by Paterson and seconded by Aikens: that the Council "have nothing to do" with a suggestion that it cooperate with the Red Cross in its National Register work. The issue also attracted support in other parts of the District, and good attendances were reported at meetings held by J. Jessup in Innisfail, A. Robinson at Ayr and L.G. Stewart at Atherton.⁶

During July Miles embarked on another North Queensland tour. He was warmly welcomed at Townsville and Collinsville, and had arrived at Home Hill when news of the Nazi-Soviet Pact broke. Its impact was immediate. Miles was refused permits for his Ayr and Home Hill meetings, and that night the Party notice board was "hacked to pieces" with an axe.⁷ The emotional reaction to the news is only understandable in terms of a left wing perception of Russia as a symbol of hope for the future. In particular, for a section of the North Queensland labour movement the U.S.S.R. was the country which had not suffered a depression in the early part of the decade. During a meeting of the Townsville Trades and Labor Council that week the confusion, alienation and stubborn faith the Pact had evoked were demonstrated.

Shortly after the meeting opened the secretary moved that the

4. *North Queensland Guardian*, 5 May 1939.

5. See chapter 6.

6. *North Queensland Guardian*, 2 June 1939, 23 June 1939, 7 July 1939.

7. *Ibid.*, 25 August 1939 and 1 September 1939.

T.L.C. condemn the U.S.S.R. for signing the Pact. He asked the Council to "...view with intense disgust the action of the alleged champions of democracy in signing a pact with the spearhead of fascism and betraying democracy". B. Douglas, representing the Carpenters' Union announced that he "had much pleasure" in seconding the motion. Speaking to it he said:

Twelve months ago we praised Russia, but now
it is weak and dare not arm its people.
Russia is showing the yellow streak and
Stalin is licking the boots of Hitler.

The debate was noisy and divisive; its tone was bitter. Boiler-makers' delegate Hughie Grant challenged critics of the Soviet Union to a public debate at the Tree of Knowledge, while Bill Ford of the Waterside Workers was of the opinion that "anyone who expressed horror or surprise had obviously not followed international politics. The pact will improve chances of peace...." At this point he had to appeal to the chair for order. M. Knight (A.E.U.) grumbled that the U.S.S.R. would never be able to please some people, while Bill Hodson (A.M.I.E.U.) moved that the matter be deferred until members were better acquainted with the facts, at which time he believed that "...the critics would be forced to swallow their words." The motion was carried twenty-one to twelve, and W. Kogler of the Public Service Union closed the debate, ironically "...expressing his satisfaction at the intense loyalty of the champions of the U.S.S.R."⁸

Assisted by the presence of Miles in the District, the Party rallied quickly. On 25 September, four days after news of the pact had been released in Moscow, the *North Queensland Guardian* published a leading article headed "Peace Front Still Only Hope: German Soviet Pact no Obstacle." The pact was imputed to delays created by Britain in the concluding of a British-Soviet alliance. The article insisted that the pact was not an alliance but a peace treaty, and

8. *Ibid.*, 1 September 1939.

the editorial suggested that Chamberlain had hoped to force Russia to engage Germany without Britain's support. The subsequent edition of the paper carried an official statement issued by the Soviet Defence Chief Klim Voroshilov, and an article written by the Central Committee's theoretician, R. Dixon. While these confirmed the local interpretation, Dixon added another dimension when he wrote: "If war comes we Communists will strike at the cause of war: capitalism."⁹ The paper also carried an article which assured readers that the pact did not entail Soviet endorsement of Hitler's persecution of the Jews.

Party members embarked on a heavy programme of public meetings designed to convince as many people as possible of this interpretation. To their advantage, the local dearth of news on the more recent developments in the international situation contributed to increasingly large audiences. An Ingham correspondent reported during the last week of August that:

The very large crowd indicated the widespread interest aroused by the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact. The results of the weekend visit showed that the people are more and more learning that the Soviet diplomats can be trusted to do the right thing, and that they didn't betray the democracies.

On the night war broke out Albert Robinson was addressing three hundred people at McCallum's allotment in Tully. He reported that the news was received peacefully, "with some scenes of quiet mirth at some of the statements from the radio."¹⁰

The *North Queensland Guardian* condemned "...the savage German fascists [who] have launched a new aggression against Poland....," and reiterated its belief that Germany and Russia would never form a military alliance. The Party's busy schedule of public meetings was maintained. Miles dedicated the remainder of his tour to analyses of

9. *Ibid.*, 25 August 1939 and 1 September 1939.

10. *Ibid.*, 1 September 1939 and 8 September 1939.

the war and the pact, drawing large crowds at Mossman, Herberton, Millaa Millaa, Innisfail, Mareeba, El Arish, Ingham and Mackay. On his return to Sydney he reported that: "I was very pleased with the way the workers refused to be caught up by the press distortions over the present international crisis and the Soviet-German Pact." During September George Bordujenko addressed "Ingham's largest ever street meeting,"¹¹ but despite good attendances, communist speakers began to encounter difficulties. Jim Slater addressed an audience outside Dunlop's Hotel at Mareeba on 6 September, but was refused a permit for Chillagoe the following night. On 8 September federal Attorney-General W.M. Hughes¹² secured the passage through the House of Representatives of his National Security Bill. This had immediate repercussions in the north.¹³ The next night Slater's Dimbula audience was dispersed by the police, and a permit was refused for Mareeba. Evidently this town was a potential trouble spot, for when Slater went ahead and held his meeting illegally, violence broke out and he was assaulted. Later the R.S.L. publicly dissociated itself from the affair. Newell, the Mareeba grocer, promptly closed the accounts of known communists, and a rumour was circulated that Fred Paterson had resigned from the Party in protest against the Pact. Paterson countered this by travelling to Mareeba where he managed to contain a public meeting. A few days later Comrades McCormack and Crampton were bashed in Tully.¹⁴

During the last week of September, on the direction of the

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11. *Ibid.*, 8 September 1939, 15 September 1939.
 12. After Lyons' death Menzies became Prime Minister and Hughes Attorney-General.
 13. On 5 September the Queensland Legislative Assembly had approved a motion authorising the Government to cooperate with the federal government "...in matters affecting the safety of the Commonwealth...." See Lack, *Three Decades of Queensland Political History*, p.172.
 14. *North Queensland Guardian*, September editions.

Comintern,¹⁵ the Party adopted a new war policy which effectively ended the popular front. The C.P.A. suddenly withdrew its support from the allied cause, declaring the war had become a capitalist plot to crush Soviet Russia. The North Queensland District Committee met to endorse the new policy, and on 11 October the *North Queensland Guardian's* editorial called for an end to the war; it continued:

The Communist Party declares that further bloodshed and destruction can be avoided.... Carry resolutions in your organisations in favour of an international conference of the Powers to negotiate peace, disarmament and security.¹⁶

J.B. Miles, in an interview with *Smiths Weekly*, when asked what the attitude of the Party would be in the event of a war between Britain and the U.S.S.R., unequivocally announced that the Party would support Russia.¹⁷

During the remainder of the year conditions deteriorated rapidly. Not only were open air permits increasingly difficult to obtain, but the Party also encountered problems in hiring halls for indoor meetings. The Oddfellows, whose hall had been used by the Townsville C.P.A. for the previous four years, were instructed by their Brisbane branch to withhold it on the grounds that the Party was a "disloyal organisation".¹⁸ The most shattering event of these months however was the invasion of Finland by Russia at the end of November. Sympathy for Finland was widespread, and Russia was expelled from the League of Nations. In Townsville "Aid Finland" committees were set up, and their members heckled communist meetings and occasionally provoked violence.¹⁹

15. Andrews, *Isolationism and Appeasement*, p.185.

16. *North Queensland Guardian*, 11 October 1939.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*, 5 January 1940.

19. Jim Henderson, informal communication, 20 July 1979.

On 4 January the Central Committee issued a warning that the C.I.B. held dossiers on every known communist.²⁰ In Townsville the Party was unofficially notified that the *North Queensland Guardian* would be suppressed if it continued to support Russia over the Finnish invasion.²¹ Throughout Australia the Party began to prepare for proscription. Members were warned to burn or hide all documents, and arrangements were made for key members to move to other Districts. Printing equipment was set up in a cave some miles beyond Mount Spec and on a cane farm in the Ingham area.²² The Townsville bookshop advertised a clearance sale, and plans to operate a circulating library in Cairns were quietly shelved.²³

Even local authorities devoted time to considering communist activities. Balonne Shire Council had circulated its counterparts throughout Queensland seeking support for an approach to the Government on the proscription of the Communist Party. The petition was rejected by most Queensland Councils, including Innisfail, Douglas, Atherton, Herberton, Eacham and Woothakata, though it was endorsed in Cairns. In Townsville the council members opposed the move unanimously, but the debate provided the occasion for savage attacks on the Party led by Aikens who told the meeting that he favoured the deportation of communists. Paterson, for his part, used the debate to "speak at length on the international situation."²⁴

Despite pressures and widespread disfavour, Party members continued to hold public meetings to explain their view of the war, some of which were turbulent affairs. It was at this time that a rudimentary Defence Force was formed, although this branch of Party

20. Ralph Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, pp.84-85.

21. *North Queensland Guardian*, 5 January 1940.

22. George Bordujenko, interview, 30 April 1979.

23. *North Queensland Guardian*, 23 February 1940.

24. *Ibid.*, 9 February 1940 and 1 March 1940.

activity was never formally organised in North Queensland.²⁵ Attendance at these meetings remained high. Four hundred people, for example, were attracted to one held by Paterson at Mareeba on 1 February, at which he informed hecklers: "We will meet force with force." In March the Police Department announced that no more permits would be issued for street meetings at which international politics were discussed, and "Hear the speech the police will not allow to be given on the streets" proved to be effective advertising during April. However by May neither permits nor halls were available to the Communist Party; clearly the end was in sight. The Party was excluded from the May Day marches, although in Townsville "prominent union officials" Hughie Grant, Fred Matzkows and Bill Hodson were among the official speakers.²⁶ The *North Queensland Guardian* was being published in reduced format, and after 26 April every edition was mutilated by the censor. As advertisers abandoned the paper financial problems became acute, and fund raiser Bordujenko issued appeals for donations. "Time," he wrote, "marches on our side - the side of the Working Class."²⁷ One final victory, however, remained to be won.

With neither street permit nor hall at his disposal, Fred Paterson advertised that he would conduct a meeting at 7.30 p.m. on 10 May. His subject was to be "Australia's Fight for Liberty". At the appointed time three hundred people assembled below high water mark on the beach at the Strand. The "fight for liberty" was waged, and won, with files and hat pins. R.S.L. members were driven from the beach, and a memorable meeting was held.²⁸

25. George Bordujenko, interview, 30 April 1979.

26. *North Queensland Guardian*, 9 February 1940, 15 March 1940, 10 May 1940.

27. *Ibid.*, 24 May 1940. (Final edition).

28. George Bordujenko, interview, 30 April 1979, and Fred Matzkows, interview, 27 August 1979.

During May the Federal Minister for Information announced a total ban on a group of newspapers and journals. The papers were the *Tribune*, *Soviet Today*, the journal of the Friends of the Soviet Union, *The Communist Review*, *Wharfies*, the W.W.F. paper, the *Militant*, which was published by the Trotskyites, *World Peace*, the I.P.C. journal, and three regional Communist Party newspapers: the *Guardian* (Victoria), the *Red Star* (West Australia), and the *North Queensland Guardian*. On 15 June, a few days after the fall of Paris, the C.P.A. was declared illegal under the National Security (Subversive Associations) regulations.

EPILOGUE

Proscription had been expected and the Party was well prepared. Paterson and Robinson left for Brisbane immediately and George Burns, chairman of the state committee, arrived in the north. He was accommodated in the Mount Spec "office" from which he was supervising the publication of an illegal newspaper, *Spark*, by the end of June.¹

Although communist homes and offices throughout Australia were raided, party members in North Queensland generally suffered less persecution than elsewhere. Homes were searched and books and papers confiscated,² but no British-Australian members were arrested in this district. This has been ascribed to the extent of the support which had been built up in the community during the preceding years.³ Unlike other areas North Queensland did not lose its printing equipment during the police raids since it had been registered in the name of a private company, The Causeway Printery, in 1937. After the war, while other Districts were still negotiating for the return of their property, the Townsville printing press was transported to Brisbane and used to set up the Coronation Printery under the management of George Bordujenko.⁴

One North Queensland group did, however, undergo considerable victimisation. In June 1940 Mussolini had entered the war. Italian communists became doubly suspect: as members of a subversive party, and as enemy aliens. When the internments began the police arrived during the night. Some experienced as many as three raids, during which their papers and books were burned, before being arrested.⁵ They were transported by trains with barred windows to Stewart Creek

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1. George Bordujenko, interview, 30 April 1979.
 2. Fred Matzkows, interview, 27 August 1979.
 3. Jim Henderson, informal communication, 20 July 1979.
 4. George Bordujenko, interview, 30 April 1979.
 5. Mario Cazzolino, interview, 5 August 1979.

(later Stuart Gaol) in Townsville, from which they were sent to internment camps throughout the country.⁶ The story of the internees and the political violence they faced in the camps,⁷ and of the hostility of local communities towards their wives and children who struggled to maintain the family farms, has yet to be told. Ironically the fall of Paris marked a turning point in the public image of the Party. There was general recognition that loyalties in France were divided to some extent on class lines, and the French Communist Party was the most vocal critic of the surrender. When Hitler invaded Russia on 22 June 1941 Party policy moved into line with public opinion and support increased rapidly. In December 1942 the ban was lifted after a number of leading communists gave an undertaking on behalf of the Party that communists would work for increased production and observe National Security regulations.⁸

The anti-fascists remained in the internment camps, despite the formation of a Civil Rights League aimed at securing their release. The League, though based in Brisbane, consisted largely of ex-North Queenslanders, and included amongst its members Allan Tucker, Jack Wells, Max Jessup, Bill Quinn and Mick Healy.⁹ Although the League achieved little, an Australian-Italian Anti-Fascist Committee was active in Brisbane by the beginning of 1944,¹⁰ and the movement claimed its highest membership during 1946.¹¹

The women's groups continued their work throughout the illegal period, and as the Trades and Labor Council Women's Auxiliary, they

6. Guiseppi Ponti, interview, 28 August 1978.

7. At least one anti-fascist, Francesco Fantin, was murdered at Loveday Internment Camp in South Australia.

8. *Tribune*, 23 December 1942.

9. *North Queensland Guardian*, 29 January 1943.

10. *Queensland Guardian*, 7 January 1944.

11. Mario Cazzolino, interview, 5 August 1979.

played an important part in activities centred on the welfare of troops stationed in North Queensland. Townsville women were among the foundation members of the Union of Australian Women, and female membership reached its highest point in the District during 1943.¹²

The *Spark* was in circulation for twenty-six months. It was a state-wide publication, information for which was transmitted from district to district, each branch producing its own roneoed copies. In August 1942 the Brisbane branch began to print a small paper called the *Standard*, and this continued to appear until the proscription of the Party was lifted in December.¹³ At the beginning of 1943 the *North Queensland Guardian* again appeared on the news stands. This was not, however, a northern paper; though still listed under the proprietorship of Roly Hills, it was published in Brisbane. Registration was transferred to Jim Slater in Brisbane on 23 April 1943, and from that date the paper was known as the *Queensland Guardian*. The North Queensland branch of the Party never again produced its own newspaper.

Electoral support increased remarkably during the war. Candidates standing as Independents or as Independent Socialists polled quite well during the 1941 state elections,¹⁴ Paterson receiving 47.34% of the vote in a two candidate contest for the seat of Bowen. Despite his conviction under the National Security Act, which resulted from a speech given at a Townsville City Council meeting in 1941,¹⁵ he was a popular alderman. At the Local Authority elections of 1943, campaigning on a joint ticket with the Hermit Park Labor Party led by Tom Aikens, Paterson was returned for a second term.

12. Eileen Quinn, interview, 16 April 1979.

13. *Queensland Guardian*, 12 November 1943.

14. See Appendix A.

15. *Tribune*, 8 August 1941. This was an illegal newspaper.

Two other communists, Fred Matzkows and Roly Hills, served on this council during its period in office. In Collinsville also two communists were successful at these elections. The Party vote again increased at the 1944 state elections, at which Paterson became Australia's first communist M.L.A.

When his victory was announced Paterson resigned from the Townsville Council so as to give his full attention to his new electorate. The Mayor, Alderman Gill, headed a committee which raised funds to build a "Paterson Playground" (now the John Herbert Memorial National Fitness Centre) in his honour. After a Civic Farewell held at the Town Hall Paterson ended his Townsville career with a final meeting at the Tree of Knowledge where he had been one of the most regular speakers over the preceding years. A very large audience heard Aikens give an emotional speech under the Australian and Soviet flags which were flying side by side next to the Townsville Post Office. As he travelled to Brisbane to take up his seat, Paterson was given civic receptions in Ipswich and Toowoomba.¹⁶

Membership increased rapidly during and after proscription and was greater in 1943 than at any other period in the history of the Communist Party of Australia. The success of the recruiting drive which was conducted during 1942, while the Party was a banned organisation, can be attributed to two factors: firstly to the enrolment of "fellow travellers" who found themselves cut off from Party information and activities due to proscription, and secondly to a reaction to the ban itself. During the popular front period the C.P.A. had come to be regarded by some North Queenslanders as their party. It had espoused local causes when other political groups ignored or rejected them; had fought against Weil's Disease in the face of the A.L.P. as represented by the A.W.U.; had supported friends and relatives in Spain while both government and opposition parties

16. *Queensland Guardian*, 22 July 1944, 28 July 1944, 25 August 1944.



JAMES B. HENDERSON
Communist Councillor, Wangarata
Shire, Queensland.

(Workers Weekly, 2 May 1939).



FRANCESCO FANTIN.

Operaio Anti-Fascista Internato in un Campo in South Australia ove il 16 Novembre 1942 incontro' la sua morte dopo un selvaggio attacco da un' altro internato di opposte idee.

Fantin: murdered at Loveday (M. Cazzolino).

advocated "non-intervention"; had assisted in the harassment of fascist consuls apparently backed by the Australian government; and later had fought for the release of husbands and neighbours interned by the government. Many community gains were perceived to have resulted wholly or in part from communist campaigns: in Townsville alone these included the provision of the women's retiring rooms in Flinders Street, a public swimming pool, a free library, shelters at bus stops, a system of Council operated retailing of electrical equipment, and, during the war, a municipal ice works and a fruit market. It was understandable then that proscription should be viewed with indignation by many members of the community.

This indignation was reinforced by the absence of any perception of the Communist Party as a threat to the established northern lifestyle. Public expressions of radicalism comprised an entertainment rather than a threat, as one Railway Estate publican tacitly acknowledged when he regularly "set up" drinks for a local Party member whose political arguments attracted custom.¹⁷ One would have needed to be suspicious to the point of paranoia to perceive that a sinister foreign plot was being hatched by the compulsive organisers of street stalls, dances and bazaars who contributed so substantially to the relief of distress in the community. They were, to use the terminology of the popular front, "the useful people".

Popular acceptance was, in part, due to the northern district's successful application of the policy instituted by the Seventh Comintern Congress, which advocated the use of local issues to unite the working class against fascism.¹⁸ In the process of this application, however, the North Queensland branch of the Party had itself undergone subtle changes. These should not be overestimated, as the

17. Eileen Quinn, informal communication, 15 October 1979.

18. J.B. Miles, Report to the Central Committee meeting held 24 July 1936.

policy switch of September 1939 demonstrated that loyalty to Russia and to internationalism was strong, and that the district membership included some intelligent and informed theoreticians. Nevertheless, for many communists, day to day Party activities contained a strong element of social and political reformism. As the centre of Party support moved down the North Queensland coast the C.P.A. acquired what can only be described as a degree of "naturalisation".

In retrospect it is likely that the temporary alliances which produced the "Red North" resulted in more substantial long term gains for the community than for the Party. As Jack Henry frequently reminded his colleagues: "It was not lost; no - nothing is ever lost."¹⁹

19. Jack Henry, interview conducted by D. Hunt, 1 February 1976. Tape held by the interviewer, Townsville College of Advanced Education.

APPENDICES

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PERCENTAGE OF THE FORMAL VOTE POLLED BY COMMUNIST CANDIDATES IN NORTH QUEENSLAND AT STATE ELECTIONS HELD BETWEEN 1935 - 1944

Bowen

	1935	1936	1938	1941	1944
Andromache	30	38.89	15.38	-	-
Banana Pocket	14.29	17.72	19.18	48.27	57.53
Bells Gully	5.18	5.22	18.67	-	-
Bootooloo	1.23	14.63	17.11	64.91	45.16
Bowen A to Y	10.52	12.03	23.38	41.1	39.68
Bowen Hospital	-	-	-	25	20.4
Brisbane	9.76	7.69	23.08	38.46	33.68
Cannon Valley	2.11	22.53	33.33	-	-
Cannon Valley Beach	-	-	48.33	67.21	64.4
Collingvale	7.55	2.17	16.67	33.33	42.42
Collinsville	31.58	45.61	48.24	41.8	47.53
Collinsville Hospital	26	20.83	46.15	36.36	51.61
Conway	10.34	8.33	16.36	68.29	33.33
Crystal Brook	32.65	17.24	17.95	-	-
Dittmer	-	-	-	67.32	57.14
Euri Creek	-	10.82	33.33	39.28	80
Foxdale	22.64	23.33	36.36	41.37	35.71
Gumlu	5.55	16.13	36	53.73	31.88
Guthalungra	7.69	5.88	43.1	63.63	42

Bowen (contd)

	1935	1936	1938	1941	1944
Home Hill	20.33	28.5	34.18	54.66	59.42
Home Hill					
Hospital	-	-	-	28	55.55
Inkerman	9.09	16.46	34.41	50	31.5
Inverroona	-	-	-	54.45	25.92
Iyah	16.88	29.49	42.35	68.96	57.89
Jaraga	3.03	15.63	16.67	-	-
Kelsey Creek	20.94	32.8	33.01	75.24	52.94
Kelsey Creek					
(Duffer Mine)	-	-	31.82	-	-
Kennedy Hospital	4.65	9.52	17.31	-	-
Longford Creek	2.7	6.67	26.32	-	-
Merinda	10.11	14.67	30.96	44.16	33.8
Middle Camp	0	-	-	-	-
Mookara	0	13.79	16	-	-
Mount Coolon	14.29	19.05	28.37	22.22	22
Mount Hector	11.54	-	-	-	-
Mount Marlow	-	24.49	34.48	69.38	77.77
Osborne	5.22	5.22	17.91	69.44	44.82
Preston	8.33	22	19.61	21.05	42.42
Proserpine	13.74	34.23	33.22	50.04	48.03
Proserpine					
Hospital	-	-	-	56.45	65.62
Queens Beach	-	-	-	54.12	35.59
Scottville	68.79	81.1	74.7	75.37	75.53
Strathdickie	2.04	6.67	28.81	50	34.14
Windermere	-	10.98	25.26	58.09	53.57
Bowen Z	3.25	6.61	20.69	27.87	36.44
Total	15.63	24.25	29.33	47.34	44.41
Number of					
candidates	3	5	4	2	3

Cairns

	1935	1938	1941	1942	1944
Brisbane	-		5.4		
Bungalow	-		12.79		
Cairns Central					
School	5.29		10.13		
Cairns Hospital	2.46		4.41		
Cairns					
Showground	-		6.95		
Edgehill	5.87		9.13		
Edgehill West	-		7.61		
Edmonton	7.91		8.09		
Parramatta					
School	4.71		9.61		
Woree	11.7		13.88		
Wrights Creek	7.14				
Yarrabah	14.29		8.33		
Total	5.63		9.24		
Number of					
candidates	3	3	3	4	2
	(Independ.)		(Independ.)		

Townsville

	1935	1938	1939	1941	1944
Brisbane		1.22	9.67		
Cameron Park		7.87	17.39		
North Ward					
Central		4.52	13.96		
Railway Estate		7.28	17.40		
South Townsville		5.5	17.79		
Townsville		7.55	19.47		

Townsville (contd)

	1935	1938	1939	1941	1944
Townsville					
Hospital		8.47	16.66		
West Townsville					
School		3.47	6.87		
Total		6.26	16.98		
Number of					
candidates	2	4	4	1	3

Herbert

	1935	1938	1941	1944
Bingil Bay				
Turnoff	0	-	-	-
Boogan	11.69	6.25	12.82	36.76
Brisbane	15.19	19.49	12.12	22.64
Cairns	-	-	13.92	48.19
Cardwell	24.75	22.8	15.13	43.37
Carruchan	-	10.13	10.52	54.09
Coorumba	-	11.32	10.41	43.24
Cowley	24.71	20.93	18.75	30
Daradgee	5.68	6.45	7.5	27.69
East Innisfail	10.78	13.64	15.84	44.36
East Palmerston	-	-	5.66	45
El Arish	14.7	28.75	28.29	48.48
Eubenangee	2.78	6.25	17.24	32.14
Euramo	15.38	6.73	18.34	38.09
Feluga	16.47	10.83	16	43.39
Fishers Creek	7.69	-	-	-
Floriana	-	10.81	11.36	73.07
Flying Fish				
Point	-	29.41	14.49	13.63

Herbert (contd)

	1935	1938	1941	1944
Garradunga	10.26	7.59	7.14	50.87
Goondi	9.3	6.41	6.55	37.31
Goondi Hill	12.08	13.31	25.32	53.67
Granadilla	-	-	12.5	28.57
Innisfail A to Y	17.81	19.66	21.52	43.06
Innisfail				
Hospital	1.02	5.56	14.28	34.42
Japoon	16.67	17.07	12.14	56.73
Kennedy Railway				
Station	-	-	6.79	62.5
Kirrama Road	-	5.93		37.5
Lever Estate	-	-	4.16	38.46
Lower Cowley	-	0	0	29.78
Lower Tully	28.46	18.56	11.38	25.33
Macknade	6.23	4.66	4.32	30.87
Mena Creek	14.86	25.56	4.19	45.31
Midgeenoo	16.67	17.02	19.35	30.3
Moresby	3.48	11.18	5.23	43.41
Mourilyan	14.87	15.44	17.2	49.82
Mundoo	28.13	15.28	16.12	58.57
Murray River				
Upper	-	2.94	18.42	80
Nerada	8.69	-	-	-
North-east				
Harbour Line	-	-	2.77	26.66
Silkwood	23.14	21.03	20	42.42
Silkwood East	-	-	29.06	61.38
Silkwood				
Railway Station	38.29	28.3	-	-
South Johnstone	-	-	21.38	42.94
South Johnstone				
Mill	19	20.32	-	-

Herbert (contd)

	1935	1938	1941	1944
South Johnstone				
School	17.56	21.74	11.36	26.66
Tully	22.73	16.55	22.38	45.42
Tully Hospital	-	-	15	43.05
Utchee Creek	-	13.51		50
West Palmerston	-	5.88	3.7	
Wopen Creek	-		9.61	47.22
Innisfail Z	17.83	16.59	17.32	52.77
Total	17.33	17.02	17.54	42.95
Number of candidates	3	4	3	2

Mundingburra

	1935	1938	1941	1944
Airdmillan	13.33	5.83	21.68	
Airville	5.8	9.29	22.31	
Anabranh	15.56	21.95	16.66	
Antil Plains	-	-	-	
Ayr	9.22	12.8	20.56	
Ayr District				
Hospital	-	-	8.33	
Brandon	5.33	5.7	21.35	
Brisbane	3.57	8.69	17.74	
Cluden	-	-	-	
Cromarty	4	0	8.33	
Giru	9.54	17.76	25.19	
Hermit Park	6.69	4.66	12.47	
Hodel	2.7	5.26	23.8	
Jalaga (Ayr line)	-	-	-	
Jarvisfield	14.74	22.17	40.83	

Mundingburra (contd)

	1935	1938	1941	1944
Kalamia Mill	13.48	12.75	16.5	
Macdesne	7.31	8.04	26.92	
Maidavale State				
School	-	-	27.14	
Mundingburra 1	9.74	8.6	12.29	
Mundingburra 2				
Oolbun	25.53	6.84	28.12	
Ooonoonba 1	14.05	8.69	16.72	
Ooonoonba 2				
Pioneer Mill	4.35	8.85	11.47	
Rita Island	6.45	3.8	22.58	
Roseneath	-	-	-	
Ross River				
Meatworks	-	-	-	
Shirbourne	20	24.53	41.66	
Stewarts Creek	2.38		9	
Stuart Road	-	-	-	
Townsville 1	3.85	6.78	12.84	
Townsville 2				
Townsville				
Showground	-	-	12.5	
West Townsville	3.36	3.88	8.09	
Total	8.01	9.02	16.26	
Number of				
candidates	3	4	3	5

The Tableland

	1935	1938	1941	1944
Almaden	9.09	7.14	4.54	24.32
Aloomba	2.03	3.11	3.75	31.65
Atherton	-	-	-	10.71
Atherton East	3.28	14.54	5.26	-
Babinda	9.91	17.2	10.46	26.72
Babinda Hospital	3.33	6.45	4.54	11.76
Barrine	0	9.3	2.94	5.12
Bartle Frere	6.56	8.26	2.5	25.97
Beachview	-	-	-	3.12
Beatrice River	15.84	14.04	17.14	30.95
Bellenden Ker	-	-	5.74	31.18
Brisbane	4.54	4.55	3.19	4.76
Butcher Creek	10.34	11.59	6.94	26.86
Cairns	-	-	11.11	32.28
Chillagoe	9.97	10	7.8	39.6
Chilverton	6.56	20	6.89	11.62
Dimbulah	8.8	13.95	6.98	35.25
Evelyn Scrub	0	4.17	16.66	0
Fossilbrook	3	0	0	-
Geraldton Road	0	0	2.12	13.51
Glen Allyn	-	-	2.22	6.66
Gol Gol South	0	0	-	-
Gordonvale	8.03	11.69	9.91	27.86
Harvey's Creek	2.74	23.23	-	-
Herberton A to Y	7.53	12.95	10.26	17.4
Herberton				
Hospital	0	1.75	2.98	8.69
Innisfail Road	-	26.79	16.66	14.28
Innot Hot				
Springs	27.69	24.39	31.94	42.62
Irvinebank	10.9	17.2	5.1	26.66

The Tableland (contd)

	1935	1938	1941	1944
Jaggan	0	3.51	0	2.5
Kaban	0	-	-	-
Kirrama	-	-	-	26.58
Kjellberg's	-	6.82	1.38	-
Koorboora	0	-	-	-
Kulara	2.32	16.85	8.64	26.58
Kureen	5.26	2.7	4.54	0
Lake Barrine	-	-	-	9.09
Little Mulgrave	8.06	3.08	3.27	32.14
Lower Tate	17.54	-	-	-
Maalen Area	9.09	-	-	-
Malanda	3.85	4.74	5.72	10.47
McDonnell's				
Creek	3.51	20.72	24.56	57.44
Meerawa	2.78	5.56	15.06	35.18
Middlebrook Road	-	-	-	42.3
Middlebrook				
State School	-	23.26	3.7	-
Millaa Millaa	9.2	14.47	8.71	23.84
Minbun	4.29	1.69	0	10.81
Mirriwinni	9.96	10.39	8.16	36.69
Mount Garnet	0.64	15.42	7.82	35.83
Mungana	20.69	8.33	0	-
Nigger Creek	12.86	22.86	28.2	-
North Johnstone	7.14	3.85	3.03	12.24
Peeramon	2.08	6.9	5.17	11.62
Ravenshoe	4.89	7.42	10.17	20.32
Stannary Hills	6.06	-	-	-
Tarzali	0	6.42	0	13.33
Topaz	-	74	38.63	80.64
Tumoulin	1.23	6.35	5.26	11.32

The Tableland (contd)

	1935	1938	1941	1944
Watsonville	0	10.91	10.25	11.76
Wondecla	-	-	-	19.17
Wooley's Road	-	-	-	4.76
Yungaburra	5.98	1.24	3.66	15.9
Herberton Z	8.51	10.64	12.24	30.24
Total	7.32	11.59	8.99	23.27
Number of candidates	3	3	3	4

Source: Queensland Legislative Assembly, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1935-1944.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX B

CONSTITUTION AND RULES OF THE C.P.A. 1935 AND 1938

*Constitution and Rules of the Communist Party of Australia
(Section of the Communist International). Adopted by the 11th
Congress of the Communist Party of Australia.*

The Communist Party of Australia, being a section of the Communist International, is the organised vanguard of the proletariat of Australia, the highest form of its class organisation.

The Party fights for the leadership of the proletariat, the toiling farmers and all the toiling masses in the struggle for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, for the victory of Socialism.

1. *Party Members and Their Duties*

(1) Any person accepting the Programme and Statutes of the Communist International, and of the Communist Party of Australia, who is attached to a basic Party organisation, who is actively working in it, and who submits to all the decisions of the Communist International and the Party, and who regularly pays Party dues, is accounted a member of the C.P. of A.

(2) New members are accepted through the basic Party organisation; and their acceptance must be ratified by the Section Committee.

(3) In cases of entrance of groups from other political organisations into the Communist Party, the Central Committee must decide

whether or not to accept them into the Party. (Note: In cases of transfer of leading persons from other political parties, their acceptance by the district leadership or section leadership must be endorsed by the Central Committee.)

(4) No member may issue any publication without the authority of the appropriate Party Committee.

(5) (a) Members may transfer from one district organisation of the Party to another only upon permission from their Section and District Committees.

(b) The district granting the transfer shall notify the district to which members transfer through the regular Party channels.

(c) Members leaving the country must first obtain the permission of the Central Committee. No subordinate committee can issue a clearance or transfer.

II. *Organisational Structure of the Party*

(6) The guiding principle of the organisational structure of the Party is democratic centralism, which signifies:

(a) The application of the elective principle to all leading organs of the Party, from the highest to the lowest.

(b) The periodic accountability of the Party organs to their respective Party organisations.

(c) Strict Party discipline and subordination of the minority to the majority.

(d) The absolutely binding character of the decisions of the higher organs upon the lower organs and upon all Party members.

(7) All Party organisations are autonomous in deciding local questions in so far as these decisions do not conflict with any decisions of the Party.

(8) The highest leading body of each organisation is the general meeting, conference or congress.

(9) The general meeting, conference or congress elects a committee which acts as its executive organ and guides all the current work of the respective organisations. Under conditions of illegality it is admissible for leading Party organs to set up subordinate ones or to co-opt on the endorsement of the higher Party organs.

(10) The scheme of Party structure is as follows:

- (a) For individual factories, workshops, mines, offices, stores, estates, streets, etc.:— Unit; Unit committee.
- (b) For the Section:— Section Conference; Section Committee.
- (c) For the District:— District Conference; District Committee.
- (d) For the Commonwealth:— The Party Congress; the Central Committee.

III. *The Party Unit*

(11) The basis of Party organisation is the unit in factories, mines, workshops, offices, stores, agricultural enterprises, etc. The Party members working in these places with any members that may be attached by the Section Committee or District Committee shall constitute the unit.

(12) The unit is the organisation which links the masses with the Party. The tasks of the units include the conduct of Party work among the non-Party masses by means of systematic agitation and propaganda, to recruit new members, to distribute Party literature, to issue a factory newspaper, to conduct cultural work and activity for the enlightenment of the Party members and the Party workers, to strive tenaciously and constantly for all union and factory committee positions in the enterprise, to participate in all economic conflicts and demands of the employees, to interpret them from the standpoint of the revolutionary class struggle, to win the leadership of all the struggles of the employees by obstinate and unwearied unit work.

(13) The unit elects a committee or organising secretary to lead its

current work between full meetings.

IV. *The Section Organisation*

(14) The highest Party authority in a section is the Section Conference, which elects the Section Committee. The rules for representation at the Section Conference are determined by the District Committee.

(15) The Section Committee carries out the decisions of the higher authorities and conducts all the Party work in the Section. It calls a Section Conference, as a rule, half yearly. The Section Committee elects the Section Secretary in agreement with the District Committee.

V. *The District Organisation*

(16) The highest authority in a district is the District Conference. The regular District Conference meets at least once every year. Extraordinary District Conferences may be called by the District Committee at the request of half the Party organisations in the District, or by the Central Committee. The District Conference hears the reports of the District Committee and elects the District Committee.

(17) The District Committee is elected at the District Conference, and is the highest Party authority in the interim between two District Conferences. The District Committee itself decides how often the plenary meetings are to be held. These must be convened, however, at least once a month, or at less frequent intervals if agreed to by the Central Committee. The District Committee elects a bureau for conducting current work. The District Committee also elects the District Secretary, whose membership should not be less than one year. Exceptions may be made only with the endorsement of the Central Committee. The District Committee is obliged to consider the candidature of the secretary together with the Central Committee before the election of such.

(18) The District Committee carries out the decisions of the Central Committee and is entrusted with organising special organs for various work (organisation, agitation and propaganda, trade union, small farmers, women, etc.). As a rule members of the District Committee are placed at the head of these bodies, who arrange their work under the guidance of the District Committee. The District Committee appoints the editors of the District Party paper in agreement with the Central Committee. The District Committee conducts all the Party work within the limits of the district in question. The District Committee is responsible for its work to the District Conference and the Central Committee to which it is obliged to tender a written report of its activities every month.

VI. *State Conference*

(19) Where necessary, the Central Committee and the district organisations within a State may arrange a State Conference with representatives from the District Committees concerned and the Central Committee.

VII. *The Party Conference*

(20) The Party Conference meets twice a year as a rule. The rules for representation and composition of the Party Conference are determined by the Central Committee. The representatives of the Districts are elected by the District Committees. The Central Committee may co-opt individual Party workers to the discussion of the Party Conference in an advisory capacity without voting rights.

(21) The decisions of the Party Conference come into force after endorsement by the Central Committee.

(22) The Party Conference elects the delegates to the World Congress of the Comintern in case it meets immediately before the World Congress.

VIII. *Party Congress*

(23) The Party Congress is the highest authority of the Party and is called not less than once every three years by the Central Committee in agreement with the Executive Committee of the Communist International. Extraordinary Party Congresses are called by the Central Committee, or should a number of districts which represented half the previous Party Congress demand the convening of a Party Congress, and to which demand the E.C.C.I. gives endorsement.

(24) The rules for representation at the Party Congress are determined either by the Central Committee or by the Party Conference meeting before the Party Congress.

(25) The Party Congress is composed of delegates elected at the District Conferences. In the case of illegality an exception, if agreed to by the E.C.C.I. can be made, and the delegates sent by the District Committees instead of being elected. The Party Congress can also be replaced by a Party Conference in agreement with the E.C.C.I.

(26) The duties of Party Congress consist of:-

- (a) Hearing reports of the Central Committee.
- (b) Deciding the questions of the Party Programme.
- (c) Determining the tactical line of the Party on the principal questions of current policy.
- (d) Electing the Central Committee.

IX. *Central Committee*

(27) The Central Committee is the highest authority of the Party between Party Congresses. It represents the Party as a whole over other Party Institutions, organises the various organs of the Party, appoints the editorial boards of its central press organs, who work under its leadership and control, organises and guides all undertakings of importance for the entire Party, distributes all the Party

forces, controls the central treasury, and conducts the work of fractions within bodies of a central nature.

(28) The number of members of the Central Committee is determined by the Party Congress.

(29) The Central Committee elects from its midst a Political Bureau for conducting the political work, and a Secretariat, including a General Secretary, for conducting the permanent current work. The Central Committee also appoints the leaders of the various organs, at the head of which members of the Central Committee must be appointed whenever possible.

(30) Plenary sessions of the Central Committee shall be held quarterly.

(31) A member must have at least four years Party membership before being eligible for election to the Central Committee.

(32) The Central Committee organises bodies for definite branches of its work, as well as for organisation, industrial, agrarian, women, etc., whose task it is to conduct the work under the complete control of the Central Committee in their respective spheres, along the general policies laid down by the Central Committee. These bodies are to carry out the decisions through the Central Committee.

(33) The Central Committee divides the country into districts and alters their boundaries in case of necessity. The Central Committee has the right to combine and divide existing organisations either according to territory or otherwise in conformity with their political and economic characteristics, or in accordance with the administrative division of the country.

X. *Internal Party Democracy and Party Discipline*

(34) The free and positive discussion of questions of Party policy in individual organisations or in the Party as a whole is the inalienable right of every Party member, derived from internal Party democracy. Only on the basis of internal Party democracy is it possible to develop Bolshevik self-criticism and to strengthen Party discipline, which must be conscious and not mechanical.

But extensive discussion, especially discussion on a national scale, of questions of Party policy, must be so organised that it cannot lead to attempts by an insignificant minority to impose its will upon the vast majority of the Party or to attempt to form factional groupings which break the unity of the Party.

Therefore, a wide discussion of a national scale can be regarded as necessary only if:

(a) This necessity is recognised by several district organisations;

(b) If there is not a sufficiently solid majority on the Central Committee itself on very important questions of Party policy;

(c) If in spite of the existence of a solid majority on the Central Committee which advocates a definite standpoint, the Central Committee still deems it necessary to test the correctness of a policy by means of a discussion in the Party.

Only compliance with the conditions can safeguard the Party against an abuse of internal Party democracy by anti-Party elements. Only under these conditions can internal Party democracy be expected to be of profit to the cause and not to be used to the detriment of the Party and the working class.

(35) The maintenance of Party unity, the relentless struggle against the slightest attempt at a factional fight or a split and the strictest Party discipline are the foremost duties of all Party members and

and of all Party organisations. For the purpose of bringing about strict discipline within the Party and of attaining the greatest possible unity with the elimination of all factionalism, the Central Committee has the right, in the case of a violation of discipline or engaging in factionalism, to inflict any Party penalty, including expulsion from the Party.

The convocation of the plenum of the Central Committee, to which all alternate members of the Central Committee are invited, must be a condition precedent for the application of the extreme measure of expulsion in the case of a member of the Central Committee. If such a meeting of the most responsible leaders of the Party by a two-thirds vote recognises the necessity of demoting a member of the Central Committee or of expelling him from the Party, such measure must be carried out immediately.

(36) The decisions of the Party must be executed rapidly and precisely. Failure to carry out any decision of a superior organisation, or any other offence regarded as criminal by the public opinion of the Party, entails: For organisations - Censure and a general re-registration (dissolution of the organisation): For individual Party members - Censure in one form or another (admonition, reprimand, etc.), public censure, temporary removal from responsible Party work, expulsion from the Party.

(37) Party members refusing to give truthful answers to questions put by the Central Committee or any commission appointed by the C.C. are liable to immediate expulsion from the Party.

(38) Any member, nucleus, district organisation, or committee expelled from the Party shall have the right of appeal to the next higher organ of the Party and ultimately to the Party Congress.

XI. *Party Finance*

(39) Finance of the Party organisations shall be obtained from Party dues, special collections, Party undertakings, etc.

(40) The amount of Party dues and its allocation to the various treasuries shall be determined by the decision of the Party Congress or by the C.C.

(41) Membership of the Party is to be regarded as lapsed of those who without sufficient reason fail to pay their dues in the course of three months. This should be announced at the meeting of the Party members in question.

XII. *Fractions*

(42) In all non-Party workers' and poor farmers' organisations and branches (trade unions, co-operatives, cultural societies, educational societies, sport and other clubs, war participants, factory committees, unemployed, at conferences and congresses, local administrative bodies, parliaments etc.), where there are at least two Communists, Communist fractions must be organised for the purpose of increasing the influence of the Party and applying its policy in the non-Party sphere.

(43) The fractions are organs of Party within non-Party organisations. They are not independent, fully authorised organisations, but are subordinate to the competent Party committees. In questions of internal life and also current work, the fractions are autonomous. In case of differences arising between a Party committee and a fraction, the Party committee must investigate the question anew, and, together with the representatives of the fraction, come to a decision which must be carried out unconditionally by the fraction. In case the decision is appealed against by the fraction, question is finally settled by the higher Party authority. But in spite of the appeal, the fraction must carry out the decision of the Party committee,

pending final action by a higher authority.

(44) If questions are discussed by the Party committee which concern a fraction, the representative of the fraction concerned attends the meeting in an advisory capacity.

(45) The Communist fractions elect their own leaders, who require the endorsement of the competent Party committee. The fraction leaders are responsible for the activity of the fractions to the competent Party committee. The Party committee in question has the right to send members into the fraction leadership or recall any member from that body after the reason for such measure has been explained to the fraction.

(46) Candidates for all the important posts in the organisation in which the fractions are working are put forward by the fraction in agreement with the Party committee in question. In the same way, individual comrades can be transferred from one fraction to another.

(47) Every question up for discussion in the body in which the fraction is working must be discussed beforehand in the general meeting of the fraction or by its committee. On every question on which a decision is reached in the fraction, the fraction members must act and vote solidly. All those who break this rule are subject to disciplinary measures by the Party authorities.

XIII. Relations with the Communist Youth

(48) Between all executives of the Party organisation and the Communist youth, mutual representation is established. Further, the Communist youth receives the right to representation at all Party conferences and congresses in accordance with its strength.

Source: Rule book held by the Mitchell Library.

Constitution and By-Laws of the Communist Party of Australia.
Adopted by the 12th National Congress, Communist Party of Australia,
held in Sydney, N.S.W., November 18-19-20, 1938.

Preamble

The Communist Party of Australia is a working-class political party carrying forward today the best traditions of Australian democracy, the struggle against convictism, for self-government, at Eureka, the fight for social reforms, against military conscription and for peace. Upholding the achievements of democracy and standing for the right of the majority to direct the destinies of our country, the Communist Party fights with all its strength to unite the masses to resist any and every effort, whether it comes from abroad or within, to impose upon the Australian people the arbitrary will of any selfish minority group, or party or clique. It is devoted to the defence of the immediate interests of the workers, farmers, and middle class against capitalist exploitation. The Communist Party works tirelessly in the cause of world peace and for the defence of Australia against fascist invasion. It works for the preparation of the working class for its historic mission to unite and lead the Australian people to extend these democratic principles to their necessary and logical conclusion: by establishing common ownership of the national economy through a government of the toiling people; the abolition of class divisions in society by the ending of exploitation of man by man and nation by nation: i.e., by the establishment of Socialism, according to the scientific principles given us by the great teachers of mankind, Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, expressed in the policy of the Communist International.

The Communist Party works toward the free co-operation of the Australian people with those of other lands - striving toward a world without oppression and war - a world brotherhood of man.

To this end the Communist Party of Australia lays down its basic rules in the following Constitution:

RULE 1. *Name.*

The name of the organisation shall be the Communist Party of Australia.

RULE 2. *Emblem.*

The emblem of the Party shall be crossed hammer and sickle, representing the unity of the worker and farmer.

RULE 3. *Membership.*

Clause A: Any person, regardless of race, sex, colour, religion or nationality, residing within Australia and who is loyal to the working-class movement, shall be eligible for membership.

Clause B: A Party member is one who accepts the Party programme, attends the regular meetings of the Party branch of which he or she is a member, who pays dues regularly and engages in some form of Party activity.

Clause C: An applicant for membership shall sign an application form and shall be nominated by a member of the Communist Party, each application shall be dealt with without undue delay by the basic organisation of the Party (workshop or local branch) to which it is presented. The applicant shall be enrolled in the Party at the following branch meeting at which he should be in attendance. A majority vote of the membership of the branch present at a regular meeting shall admit an applicant to membership. Within two weeks after admission, the new member must be supplied with a dues card and obtain a copy of the Party Constitution.

Clause D: Party members two months in arrears in payment of dues cease to be members of the Party in good standing and must be informed thereof.

Clause E: Members who are four months in arrears shall have their

names removed from the Party rolls. Every member three months in arrears shall be officially informed of this provision, and a personal effort shall be made to bring such member into good standing. However, if a member who for these reasons has had his or her name removed from the rolls applies for readmission within six months, he or she may, on the approval of the next higher Party committee, be permitted to pay up arrears of dues and be granted continuity of membership.

RULE 4. Initiation, Dues and Levies.

Clause A: The initiation fee and dues payments shall be as follows:

Those in receipt of an income of over
£2/10/- per week, initiation fee 2/-,
dues 6d. per week.

All other, initiation fee 6d., dues
3d. per week.

Clause B: All members shall pay an international levy of 6d. per quarter.

Clause C: No levy shall be struck by any Party organisation except by special permission of the Central Committee: Special levies may be struck by the Central Committee or National Congress.

RULE 5. Rights and Duties of Members.

Clause A: The Communist Party of Australia, upholding the democratic achievements and traditions of the Australian people, operates the broadest democracy within the Party. It is the fundamental right and duty of the Party membership to fully participate in determining the policies of the Party and in the election of its leading committees as provided for in the Constitution. Such democracy goes hand in hand with a unified, firm discipline which requires that once a decision has been democratically arrived at by the majority it becomes binding on the whole membership and every member is duty bound to

loyally carry it out.

Clause B: Party members disagreeing with any decision of a Party organisation or committee have the right to appeal against that decision to the next highest body, and may carry the appeal to the highest bodies of the Communist Party of Australia, the Central Committee and National Congress. Whilst the appeal is pending the decision must nevertheless be carried out by every member.

Clause C: In matters of a State or local character, the respective Party organisations have the right to exercise full initiative and to make decisions within the limits of the general policies and decisions of the Party.

Clause D: The decisions of the National Congress shall be final and every Party member and Party organisation shall be duty-bound to recognise the authority of the Congress decisions and the leadership elected by it.

Clause E: It shall be the duty of members to participate in Party activities, and through study of Party theory to equip themselves to explain the policy of the Party on all questions and the principles of socialism.

Clause F: All Party members who are eligible shall belong to their respective trades unions.

Clause G: All Party members in mass organisations (trade unions, farmers' organisations, cultural and fraternal bodies, etc.) shall co-operate to promote and strengthen the given organisation and shall abide by the democratic decision of those organisations.

Clause H: All officials and leading committees of the Party from the branch committee, up to the highest committees,

are elected either directly by the membership or through their elected representatives. Every committee must report regularly on its activities to its Party organisation.

Clause I: Any Party official may be removed at any time from his position by a majority vote of the body which elected him, or the body to which he is responsible, providing in this latter case the approval of the next higher Party committee is obtained.

Clause J: Requests for the release of Party members from responsible posts may be granted only by the Party organisation which elected them, or, providing the next higher committee agrees, by the organisation to which they are responsible.

RULE 6. *Structure of the Party.*

Clause A: The basic organisations of the Communist Party of Australia are the workshop and local branches. Branches that do not come within these categories can be established only with the agreement of the Central Committee.

The branch is the organisation which links the Party with the people. The tasks of the branch include the carrying out of National, State and local campaigns in the workshop or locality, the organisation of systematic mass agitation and propaganda, selling the Party press and literature, the raising of finance, the recruitment of new members, the organisation of social, cultural and educational work both within the Party and amongst the people generally.

Clause B: The District organisation comprises all Party branches in a given locality as determined by the State committees.

The highest body in the district is the District Conference which meets at least annually. It elects the District Committee and, when

necessary, delegates to the State Conference.

The basis of representation to the District Conference is decided upon by the District Committee in consultation with the State Committee.

The District Committee, which is the highest authority in the district between conferences, organises the application of the decisions of the higher Party committees, takes up economic and political questions arising in the district and gives leadership and assistance to the Party organisations within the district.

Clause C: The State organisation comprises all Party organisations within a given State.

The highest body in the State is the State Conference which meets annually with the exception of Queensland and Western Australia which shall meet at least every two years. It shall elect the State Committee. The State Conference consists of delegates elected by District Conferences, and branches not attached to a district, according to membership, and of members of the outgoing State Committee. The basis of representation to the State Conference is determined by the State Committee with the Central Committee.

The State Committee, which is the highest authority in the State between conferences, shall meet at regular intervals as decided by the State Committee in consultation with the Central Committee. The State Committee shall elect an executive to carry out the work of the Committee between meetings.

The State Committee is responsible for the conduct of all Party work in the State between conferences and shall maintain the closest possible connections with the Central Committee.

RULE 7. *National Authority.*

Clause A: The supreme authority in the Communist Party of Australia is the National Congress, which shall be held at least every three years. Special National Congresses shall be called by a majority vote of the Central Committee or by a request from Party organisations representing 50 per cent. of the entire Party membership.

Clause B: The National Congress shall be composed of delegates elected by State Conferences according to numerical strength and members of the outgoing Central Committee. The basis of representation shall be determined by the Central Committee.

Clause C: For at least two months prior to the Congress, discussion shall take place in all Party organisations on the main resolutions and problems coming before the Congress. During this discussion all Party organisations have the right to propose resolutions or amendments to the draft resolutions of the Central Committee for consideration at the Congress. Proposals may also be submitted for alterations to the Party Constitution.

Clause D: The National Congress reviews the work of the Party and the outgoing Central Committee since the preceding Congress. It determines the direction of the policy to be pursued by the Party in the ensuing period and considers all major tactical organisational questions and proposed amendments to the Party Constitution. It elects the Central Committee and Central Control Commission. The Central Committee shall consist of full members and of alternates having at least five years' active membership. The number of members and alternates to be elected to the Central Committee and the method of election shall be determined by the Congress. When attending Central Committee meetings as substitutes for full members, alternate members will have the right to speak and vote on any question, otherwise such members will have the right to speak but not vote.

Clause E: The Central Committee, which shall hold full meetings at least quarterly, is the highest authority of the Party between National Congresses and is responsible for enforcing the Constitution and securing the execution of the general policies adopted by the democratically elected delegates at the National Congress. The Central Committee represents the Party as a whole. The Central Committee organises and supervises its various departments and committees, leads the political and organisational work of the Party; appoints the editors of its press, who work under its leadership and control; organises and guides all undertakings of importance for the entire Party; distributes the Party forces and controls the Central Treasury. The Central Committee, by majority vote of its members, may call special State Conferences. An audited financial statement will be submitted to the first Central Committee meeting in each year and by the Central Committee to the National Congress.

Clause F: The Central Committee elects from its members a Central Executive and such committees or departments as may be necessary. The Central Executive is charged with the responsibility of carrying out the decisions and the work of the Central Committee between its full sessions. It is responsible to the Central Committee for all decisions. The size of the Central Executive shall be decided upon by a majority vote of the Central Committee.

Clause G: The Central Committee may, when it deems necessary, call national Party conferences. The Central Committee shall determine the basis of attendance at such conferences which shall be consultative bodies auxiliary to the Central Committee.

RULE 8. Central Control Commission.

Clause A: For the purpose of maintaining and strengthening Party unity and discipline, and of supervising the audits of the financial books and records of the Central Committee and its enterprises, the National Congress elects a Central Control Commission consisting of

exemplary Party members with at least five years Party standing. The size of the Central Control Commission will be determined by the National Congress.

Clause B: On various disciplinary cases such as those concerning violations of Party unity, discipline, honesty or ethics, or concerning lack of class vigilance or Communist firmness in facing the class enemy - the Central Control Commission shall be charged with making investigations and decisions, either on appeals against the decisions of lower Party bodies, or on cases which are referred to it by the Central Committee, or on cases which the Central Control Commission itself considers necessary to take up directly.

Clause C: The decisions of the Central Control Commission shall be endorsed by the Central Executive before being put into effect.

Clause D: Members of the Central Control Commission who are not members of the Central Committee shall have the right to participate in the sessions of the Central Committee with voice but no vote.

RULE 9. *Disciplinary Procedure.*

Clause A: Breaches of Party discipline by individual members, financial irregularities, as well as any conduct or action detrimental to the Party's prestige and influence among the working masses and harmful to the best interests of the Party, may be punished by censure, public censure, removal from responsible posts, and by expulsion. Serious breaches of discipline by Party Committees may be punished by the removal of the Committee by the next higher Party committee which shall then organise new elections by the membership.

Clause B: Charges against individual members may be made by any person - Party or non-Party - in writing, to a branch of the Party or to any leading committee. The Party branch has the right to recommend the expulsion of a member to the District Committee but before a

decision for expulsion can become operative it must meet with the approval of the State Committee. In the meantime, the branch may suspend such member from attendance at branch meetings.

Clause C: All parties concerned in breaches of discipline shall have the fullest right to appear, to bring witnesses and to testify before the Party organisation. Any member against whom disciplinary action has been taken has the right of appeal against the decision to the higher committees, up to the National Congress of the Party.

Clause D: Any members found to be strike-breakers, degenerates, habitual drunkards, betrayers of Party confidence, provocateurs, voluntary associates of Trotskyists, advocates of terrorism as a method of Party procedure, or members whose actions are detrimental to the Party and the working class shall be expelled from the Party and, if considered necessary, exposed before the general public.

RULE 10. *Affiliation.*

The Communist Party of Australia is affiliated to the Communist International and participates in international congresses, together with the Communist Parties of other lands. Resolutions and decisions of international congresses shall be considered and acted upon by the supreme authority of the Communist Party of Australia, the National Congress, or between congresses, by the Central Committee.

RULE 11. *Amending the Constitution.*

This constitution may be amended by decision of a majority of the voting delegates present at the National Congress provided the proposed amendment had been published in the central Party press or congress discussion material at least 14 days prior to the Congress.

RULE 12. *Right to Make By-Laws.*

Clause A: By-laws shall be adopted, based on this Constitution, for the purpose of establishing uniform procedure for the proper

functioning of the Party organisations. By-laws may be adopted or changed by majority vote at the National Congress or between congresses by majority vote of the Central Committee.

Clause B: State by-laws, not in conflict with the National Constitution and by-laws, may be adopted or changed by majority vote of the State Conference or by the State Committee between Conferences.

BY-LAWS

The following are the by-laws adopted by the Communist Party of Australia, in accordance with its Constitution, for the purpose of carrying out the principles, rights and duties as established in the Constitution in a uniform manner in all Party organisations.

BASIC ORGANISATIONS.

The basic organisations of the Communist Party of Australia are the workshop and local branches. A workshop branch consists of those Party members who are employed in the particular workshop. Workshop branches shall be organised in every factory, shop, mine, ship, dock, office, etc., where sufficient Party members are employed.

A local branch consists of members of the Party living in the same locality. Local branches shall be organised on the basis of one or more suburbs in the cities and in country towns, taking into account municipal and electorate boundaries.

In all branches having seven or more members a branch committee may be elected consisting of Secretary, Chairman, Treasurer and other such officers as the branch may decide. The branch committee has the task of preparing the agenda and proposals for the branch meeting, dealing with correspondence and preparing recommendations on that which it is necessary to place before the branch, attending to the administrative tasks, organising control over the execution of branch decisions, and between branch meetings, of making decisions on

matters that require immediate attention. The branch committee shall report regularly on its work which shall be subject to review by the membership. Branch officers shall be elected in June of each year. All officers shall be elected by majority vote of membership at a specially designated meeting of which the branch membership shall be advised at least 14 days beforehand.

The Treasurer shall submit an audited financial statement to the branch at least quarterly.

The order of business at the branch meeting shall be based on the following principles but can be amended to suit the requirements of each branch:-

- (i) Confirmation of previous minutes.
- (ii) Admittance of new members.
- (iii) Correspondence.
- (iv) Reports.
- (v) General business.
- (vi) Educational discussion.

DISTRICT ORGANISATION.

A District consists of an unlimited number of branches in an area as decided upon by the State Committee.

The District Conference will determine the size of the District Committee which as a rule, should not exceed nine members. The District Committee will elect from amongst its members a Secretary, Chairman, Treasurer, Literature and Press Manager and such other officers as deemed necessary. It may select a Secretariat composed of a Secretary, Chairman and one other member which is responsible for carrying out the routine work of the District Committee and preparing the agenda for District Committee meetings. The District Committee shall receive a monthly audited financial statement, a copy of which must be forwarded to the State Committee. The full

District Committee shall meet at least fortnightly.

STATE ORGANISATION.

The number of full members and alternates of the State Committee shall be determined by the State Conference. Except with special permission of the Central Committee members of the State Committee must have a minimum of two years Party membership.

For two months prior to the State Conference discussion shall take place in all party organisations within the State on the main resolutions and problems coming before the Conference. During this discussion, all Party organisations have the right to propose resolutions or amendments to the draft resolutions of the State Committee for consideration at the State Conference.

The State Committee shall elect from amongst its members a State Executive consisting of not more than seven members, including the Secretary, Chairman and Treasurer. The State Committee shall also elect such other office-bearers as deemed necessary, including the editors of the State press, establish responsibility for the supervision of various phases of activity and create such temporary or permanent sub-committees as may be deemed necessary for the efficient conduct of its activities.

Where a State Committee by a majority of its members and in agreement with the Central Committee, removes any member from the committee, or replaces any member who is unable to serve because of sickness or other assignment, the new full member of the State Committee shall be chosen from among the alternate members.

An Accounting Committee established by the State Committee shall audit the accounts of the State Treasurer at least once per month and shall also organise and supervise the system of auditing throughout the State.

Special State Conferences shall be called:-

- (a) By the State Committee following a written request from branches representing one-third of the membership of the State organisation.
- (b) By a majority vote of the State Committee.
- (c) By request of the Central Committee.

A decision for the holding of a special conference must have the endorsement of the Central Committee.

The State Committee shall have the power to issue an official organ, publish pamphlets and other literature with the approval of the Central Committee.

TRANSFERS AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

Members who move from one workshop or locality to another and desire a transfer must receive it through their branch. Where a branch to which the transfer is granted is in the same district, it shall be finalised by the District Committee. Where it is in another district, a duplicate transfer shall be forwarded by the branch through the District Committee to the State Committee which shall arrange for the attachment of the member to his new branch. Where the transfer is to another State or abroad, it must be effected through the Central Committee.

No member transferring shall be accepted into a new branch without his transfer and the endorsement of the appropriate Committee. Before receiving transfers, members shall be fully financial and have finalised all other financial obligations to the branch.

No member has the right to take leave of absence without the permission of his branch. Leave of absence not exceeding one month may be granted by the branch. An extended leave of absence upon the recommendation of the branch, shall be acted upon by the next higher

committee of the Party. Before leave of absence is granted the member shall arrange for payment of dues and settlement of other financial obligations.

RE-ADMITTANCE.

Expelled members applying for re-admittance must submit a written statement and their applications may not be finally acted upon except with the approval of the Central Control Commission.

Former members whose membership has lapsed must submit a written statement on application for re-admission, to be finally acted upon by the State Committee.

Comrade! You have read our Constitution and Rules. You are clear as to our objectives; how the Communist Party is based on the broadest democracy; how the Party is organised; just what are the rights and responsibilities of membership, etc.

If you are not already a member of the Communist Party why not join right away?

Apply for an application form and further particulars to the Communist Party organisation in your State, or to:-

Central Committee, Communist Party of Australia, Room 2,
193 Hay Street, Sydney, N.S.W.

Source: Rule book held by the Mitchell Library.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX C

COMMUNIST PARTY POLICY STATEMENT FOR THE BY ELECTION FOR THE STATE SEAT OF TOWNSVILLE, 1939

Economic: Forty hour week; £4/8/- basic wage plus marginal allowances; two weeks paid annual holiday; extension of public works to provide full employment; increased relief scales.

Farmers: No rates or loan interest repayment until income reaches £200 per year; readjustment of farm mortgages by revaluation of the land on a productivity basis.

Political: Repeal of all laws restricting liberties and democracies; parliament to have two sessions a year; electors to be given the right of recall; no M.P. to have any financial interest in any company which has business with the government.

Education: Free technical and university education; school leaving age to rise to sixteen, and a weekly allowance to be paid to parents of all school children; free dental and medical examinations twice a year in all schools.

Housing: Abolish slums and improvised houses; start a comprehensive scheme to provide cottages and flats at low rental for low income families to be financed from state development funds.

Taxation: No tax to be paid on incomes below £300 per year; more steeply graduated tax on big incomes; publication every year of names and incomes of those who earned more than £1,000; hospital subsidies to be paid by the government; half the Main Roads tax to go to local authorities.

Civil Defence: Adequate to ensure safety.

Source: *North Queensland Guardian*, 28 April 1939.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX D

THE PROVISIONAL CONSTITUTION OF THE AUSTRALIAN
ASSOCIATION OF ITALIAN DEMOCRATS

1. *Name:* Australian Association of Italian Democrats.

Objects:

- (a) To foster co-operation between Italian immigrants and the Australian people and their institutions.
- (b) To educate Italians in Australian democracy and social ideals.
- (c) To help victims of Italian fascism.
- (d) To develop the cultural and social life of Italians.

2. *Membership:* Open to all Italians who support the above.

3. *Finance:* Dues 10/- per year in advance. Women and youths under 18, 5/- per year. 50% to stay in the branch and the rest to go to the national committee.

4. *Local Organisations:*

- (a) All members to be organised into local branches or clubs.
- (b) These to organise social and cultural activities.
- (c) Local branch to elect Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. The committee to consist of 5-9 members.
- (d) Audit every three months.

5. *National Conferences:*

- (a) To meet annually, and to consist of representatives of the branches.
- (b) Two auditors for the National Conference.
- (c) The State Committee to consist of 5-7 members.
- (d) The National Committee to keep contact with the branches and to co-ordinate activities.

Source: *North Queensland Guardian*, 7 July 1939.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX E

RULES AND CONSTITUTION OF THE WOMEN'S PROGRESS CLUB OF TOWNSVILLE 1938

Name

1. That this club be called the Women's Progress Club of Townsville.

The club shall be non-sectarian, non-party, and neither religion or politics shall be discussed at its meetings.

Objects

2. (a) To promote the general welfare of all useful people, particularly women and children.

(b) To stand for peace, freedom, progress and the advancement of women's rights.

(c) To foster friendship between women of all nations.

(d) To encourage all women to assist in the development of any movement that will ensure happier lives for women and children.

(e) To bring closer unity between all progressive women's organisations.

(f) To strive for equal pay for the sexes.

(g) To improve education facilities generally.

(h) To endeavour to have members of the club take an active part on Committees of Schools, Hospitals, Ambulances, Peace Councils, and Progressive Associations.

(i) To demand better provision be made for public health, especially for women and children.

(j) To co-operate with any organisation to maintain democracy.

(k) To raise the cultural level, and discuss every day problems.

Membership

3. Any woman over the age of 16 nominated by another member of the Women's Progress Club shall be eligible for membership. The membership fee shall be 2/- per year.

Funds

4. The funds of the club shall be used for the purposes of organisation, and meeting all expenses incurred by the Women's Progress Club.

Officers

5. These shall consist of president, vice-president, hon. secretary and treasurer.

Duties of Officers

6. *President:* the president shall preside at all meetings of the club and preserve order so that the business shall be conducted in form and with propriety, and upon the minutes being read and confirmed shall sign the book in the presence of the meeting.

Vice-president: the vice-president shall preside in the absence of the president.

Secretary: the secretary shall keep a record of all minutes of meetings of the club and conduct the correspondence. She shall prepare a report of the whole of the work done and the progress made during the previous year and read out same at the Annual Meeting. She shall make out all receipts and hand same over to the treasurer.

Treasurer:

(a) The treasurer shall keep a cash book and produce it at all meetings or when called upon to do so by the Executive Committee.

(b) All accounts exceeding 10/- to be paid by cheque.

(c) All cheques to be signed by two of the following officers, president, secretary, treasurer.

(d) All accounts to be passed for payment at the General Meeting.

(e) The books and accounts shall be balanced and audited annually, and the treasurer shall hand over all books, documents, and any other property belonging to the club when required by the General Meeting.

(f) The treasurer shall bank all moneys exceeding the sum of 10/- within seven days in the name of the club.

Auditors

7. Two auditors shall be appointed at the Annual Meeting of club,

and shall present a signed balance sheet to the club.

8. Five members constitute the Executive Committee, officers of the club to be included.

Three members constitute a quorum of the Executive Committee.
Seven members of the club to constitute a quorum of a General Meeting.

Election of Officers

9. *Committees:*

(a) Officers shall hold office until the next Annual General Meeting.

(b) Officers of the club shall be elected by secret ballot at the Annual General Meeting.

(c) Provided any office becoming vacant, the same shall be filled at the next General Meeting, and shall hold office till the next Annual General Meeting.

10. (a) Notwithstanding anything contained in these rules, the General Meeting shall have the power to immediately suspend any officer or member of the committee until the next General Meeting, provided two-thirds of the members are present.

(b) Any officer or member of the Committee may be removed from office by a two-thirds vote of any General Meeting, provided that four weeks' notice of motion has been given.

(c) The secretary must notify anyone concerned in any notice of motion immediately upon receiving same.

11. The club may appoint a delegate for the purpose of being represented at any Conferences composed of kindred societies and for representing the club before any public body.

Rules of Debate

12. (a) At all meetings, the members speaking shall address the Chair, by whom all priority of speech shall be determined.

(b) Any matter may be discussed which affects the interests of the club.

(c) No member shall be allowed to interrupt another while in possession of the floor.

(d) No question that has already been decided shall be reopened at the same meeting.

(e) No member shall be allowed to speak on any one question for more than ten minutes, unless by permission of the meeting.

(f) Any member wilfully disobeying the Chair shall be liable to expulsion from the meeting.

(g) No member or delegate shall be allowed to speak twice on the same subject except the mover in reply without the permission of the meeting.

(h) Only the business of the club to be discussed and on no account will personalities be allowed.

(i) All members at all times should assist the President to conduct the meeting in an orderly and businesslike manner.

Order of Business

13. Minutes of previous meeting, correspondence, reports, business of which notice has been given previously, general business.

All correspondence must be read.

All business of the club shall be kept strictly within the membership of the club.

These Rules and Constitution may be amended or added to at any General Meeting, provided that four week's notice has been given. Notwithstanding anything contained herein to the contrary, the General Meeting shall be the supreme authority.

Source: Membership book in private papers held by ex-president of the club, Eileen Quinn.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX F

Household budget kept by the wife of a skilled meatworker (boner)
1941.

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenditure</u>	
Housekeeping	£3	Hospital	10/-
		wood	8/-
		milk	3/6
		bread	2/6
		light	8/8
		rent	15/-
		fruit and vegetables	3/6
		fish	6d
		bus	10d
		child's expenses	1/7
		matches	6½d
		eggs	1/6
		tea, pollard, butter,	
		seeds	4/11
		Bulletin	10d
<hr/>		<hr/>	
Total	£3		£3/1/10½
<hr/>		<hr/>	

APPENDICES

APPENDIX G

COMMUNIST NEWSPAPERS IN QUEENSLAND TO 1940

- The Communist*
(ed. W.J. Thomas) Australia's first communist newspaper.
Published three issues:
1. August 1920, for the Brisbane
Branch of the Australian Socialist
Party.
2. October 1920, for the Queensland
Communist Group.
3. November 1920.
- Knowledge and Unity*
(ed. unknown) 31 December 1918(?) to August 1921.
Originally the journal of the Brisbane
Russian Association.
March 1919(?) became the joint
publication of the Russian Association
and the Queensland Socialist League
(Combined Propaganda Committee of the
Queensland Socialist League).
March 1921 became the journal of the
Queensland Communist Party.
- New Order*
(ed. unknown Russian) 5 May 1924 to August 1924.
- The Toiler*
(ed. W.J. Thomas 1924,
J.B. Miles 1925.) 25 October 1924 to 9 February 1925(?)
- North Queensland Guardian*
(ed. Fred Paterson,
E. Campbell, Danny
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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million (1990–1999) (Table 1).

There is a growing emphasis on the need to improve the efficiency of public services, and to ensure that the public sector is able to deliver the services that are required in a cost-effective manner. This has led to a number of initiatives, including the introduction of competition, the restructuring of public services, and the introduction of performance targets.

The aim of this paper is to review the evidence on the impact of these initiatives on the efficiency of public services. The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses the evidence on the impact of competition. Section 3 discusses the evidence on the impact of restructuring. Section 4 discusses the evidence on the impact of performance targets. Section 5 discusses the implications of the evidence for policy.

2. Competition

The introduction of competition into public services has been a major feature of public sector reform in the UK. This has been done in a number of ways, including the privatization of public services, the introduction of competition for the provision of public services, and the introduction of competition for the funding of public services.

The evidence on the impact of competition on the efficiency of public services is mixed. On the one hand, there is evidence that competition has led to improvements in efficiency in some cases. On the other hand, there is evidence that competition has led to a reduction in efficiency in other cases.

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