Chapter 9

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The Wider View: Class, Communities of Interest and Union Activity outside the Workplace

The main function of unions was to obtain justice for their members as employees. They strove therefore to ensure their members received a fair day's wage for their labour and one that would allow them to maintain an adequate standard of living. Notwithstanding the primacy of terms and conditions of the workplace, the vision of early union leaders extended beyond these bounds to include the quality of workers' public and private lives as well. Through active participation in Australian Labor Party affairs, many union officials and rank and file members worked to bring positive change into working-class lives by political means. The Queensland Labor government, which they supported, introduced a bevy of reforms after its parliamentary victory in 1915. As well as major legislation relating to arbitration, trade unions, labour exchanges, factories and shops, wages, safety and workers' compensation and accommodation, the new Labor government of T.J. Ryan introduced assistance for workers to purchase houses through a workers' dwellings system and established a chain of state enterprises to combat monopoly capitalism and lower prices for workers through competition with private enterprise.[1] In early 1923, the subsequent Theodore Labor Government initiated an

1. Industrial Arbitration Act of 1916 (7 Geo. V, No. 16), *Queensland Statutes*, 1916, Vol. 9, pp. 7538-7597; Trade Union Act of 1915 (6 Geo. V, No. 31), *ibid.*, 1914–1916, Vol. 8, pp. 6909- 6925; Labour Exchanges Act of 1915 (6 Geo. V, No. 6), *ibid.*, 1914–1916, Vol. 8, pp. 6851-6858; Factories and Shops Act Amendment Act of 1916 (7 Geo. V, No. 14), *ibid.*, 1916, Vol. 9, pp. 7520-7538; Wages Act of 1918 (9 Geo. V, No. 19), *ibid.*, 1918, Vol. 10, pp. 8498-8516; Inspection of Machinery Act of 1915 (6 Geo. V, No. 24), *ibid*., 1914-1916, Vol. 8, pp. 6859-6888; Inspection of Scaffolding Act of 1915 (6 Geo. V, No. 25), *ibid*., 1914-1916, Vol. 8, pp. 6888-6898; Workers' Compensation Act of 1916 (6 Geo. V, No. 35), *ibid*., 1914-1916,Vol. 8, pp. 6926-6946; Workers' Accommodation Act of 1915 (6 Geo. V, No. 30), *ibid.*, 1914-1916,Vol. 8, pp. 6899-6908; Workers' Homes Act of 1919 (10 Geo. V, No. 7), *ibid*, 1919, Vol. 11,. pp.9164-9177 and State Enterprises Act of 1918 (9 Geo. V, No. 20), *ibid.*, 1917–1918, Vol. 10, pp. 8591-8606; T.J. Ryan, *Policy Speech: Labour Government's Fine Record*, Brisbane, 1918, pp. 9-10; James Larcombe, *Notes*

Unemployed Workers' Insurance scheme to alleviate financial hardship by providing statutory sustenance payments, relief work and free rail passes for those searching for employment.[2] Other Australian workers did not receive a similar benefit until introduced nationally by the new Curtin Labor government in 1943.[3]

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In addition to these political reforms which local Labor politician Jimmy Larcombe believed heralded 'the Golden Age of Queensland Workers',[4] the union movement played a direct role in attempting to improve life for workers in the world outside the factory gate. Unions introduced welfare benefits and services, created opportunities for cultural and social pursuits for members and organised aid for the wider public in times of need. These deeds were not simply altruistic of course; unions also benefited from such activities by the increased support and solidarity created within the ranks. Some of these services and activities proved successful and sustainable but many of the inter-union initiatives failed to prosper through financial difficulties and inter-union discord. At a deeper level, their failure can be attributed to misperceptions of class interests and needs, and to other identities of common interest which transected and thus diminished the working-class consciousness necessary for them to thrive.

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on the Political History of the Labour Movement in Queensland, Brisbane, 1934, pp. 55-57; Denis Murphy, 'The establishment of State Enterprises in Queensland, 1915–1918, *Labour History*, No. 14, May 1968, pp. 13-14. State enterprises included coalmines, cattle stations, cold stores, insurance and public curator's office, sawmills, produce agencies, butcheries, fish shops, a cannery, railway refreshment rooms and a hotel in North Queensland. As Ross Fitzgerald and Harold Thornton point out, some ventures were a great success; others were associated with 'scandal, loss and waste'. Most of the enterprises were sold by the conservativie Moore government from 1929 to 1932. Fitzgerald and Thornton, *Labor in Queensland: From the 18802 to 1988*, St Lucia, 1989, pp. 75, 77, 85 and 86.

2. Unemployed Workers' Insurance Act of 1922 (13 Geo. V, No. 28), *Queensland Statutes*, 1922-23, Vol. 22, pp. 10073-10093; Ross Fitzgerald, *"Red Ted': The Life of E.G. Theodore*, St Lucia, 1994, pp. 164-165; Ross Johnston, *A Documentary History of Queensland*, St Lucia, 19888, pp. 426-428; The original scheme was based on equal contributions of 3d per week each from the employee, employer and government. It was dubbed 'the Workers' Paradise Bill' by the contemporary conservative press. E.R. Walker,*Unemployment Policy*, Sydney, 1936, p. 240, cited in T.H. Kewley, *Social Security in Australia*, Sydney, 1973, p. 151. Other sources claim such legislation was regarded as 'loafer's paradise laws'. Ross Fitzgerald and Harold Thornton, *Labor in Queensland: From the 1880s to 1988*, St Lucia, 1989, p. 73.

3 Kewley, *Social Security in Australia*, p. 265.

4. James Larcombe, *Notes on the Political History of the Labour Movement in Queensland*, Brisbane, 1934, p. 49. RHDS

Union Benefit Schemes and Membership Assistance

One of the earliest forms of union help given to members was the benefit scheme. A state workers' compensation scheme, first introduced in 1905 but vastly improved by
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the *Workers' Compensation Act of 1916*, protected workers injured in the course of their employment, but not in cases of sickness, injury or death sustained in other circumstances.[5] Craft unions such as the AEU and Boilermakers' Society maintained nationally organised voluntary benefit plans for those members wishing to participate. In 1925, 43% of Rockhampton AEU members contributed to one of the various levels of sickness and superannuation benefits offered by the union.[6] In contrast to these nationally run schemes, the local AMIEU, WWF and FCDIU/ARTWU established and administered their own benefits to ease the financial burden on members and their families in these predicaments. The expense of a funeral could send a recently bereaved wife into poverty from which there was little likelihood of recovery; there was no widow's pension nationally until 1942, nor any child endowment scheme until about the same time.[7]

The AMIEU established a funeral fund for export workers in 1910, based on a levy of 1s for members and 6d for a wife.[8] The levy system proved difficult to administer and within a few years the union converted to voluntary subscription lists for the family of any deceased member.[9] Such was the case for Albert Bedsor who died while on seasonal transfer to Townsville and whose body required railing back home. Unfortunately, the local season had not yet opened and, with many members out of work, the collection totalled only about £4.[10] For tradesmen butchers, the AMIEU often raffled

5. Workers' Compensation Act of 1905 (5 Edw. VII, No. 26), *Queensland Statutes*, 1906, 2nd Session of 1905, Vol. 2, pp. 8943-8954; Workers' Compensation Act of 1916 (6 Geo. V, No. 35), *Queensland Statutes*, 1914–1916, Vol. 8, pp. 6926-6946.
6. *AEU Monthly Journal*, Jan. 1925, p. 37.
7. Widows' Pensions Act (No. 19 of 1942), *Acts of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 1942, Vol. 40, pp. 33-46; Child Endowment Act (No. 8 of 1941), *Acts of the Parliament of theCommonwealth of Australia*, Vol. 39, pp. 35-41. Kewley points out that even though 'a surprise announcement' when introduced by the Menzies government, a child endowment scheme was Labor policy in the 1940 federal election campaign. Kewley, *Social Security in Australia*, p. 190.
8. AFBEU Minutes, 3 May 1911. CCQC J19/940 1
9. AMIEU Minutes, 5 May 1914. CCQC J19/940 3
10. *ibid*., 28 Aug. 1923 and 19 Oct. 1923. CCQC J19/940 5

the 'working outfit' of a deceased member as it did for the late Tom Linnett in 1927. The union sold 6d tickets and gave the proceeds of £3 6's 6d to his widow, besides the subscription of £15 8s 6d.[11] Craft unions like the AEU, ASCJ and Boilermakers' Society also raised money for members' widows with the traditional tool raffle. When Eric Villiers of the AEU died in 1940, his equipment raised £7 10s 0d. The union supplemented the proceeds and forwarded £10 to his widow.[12]

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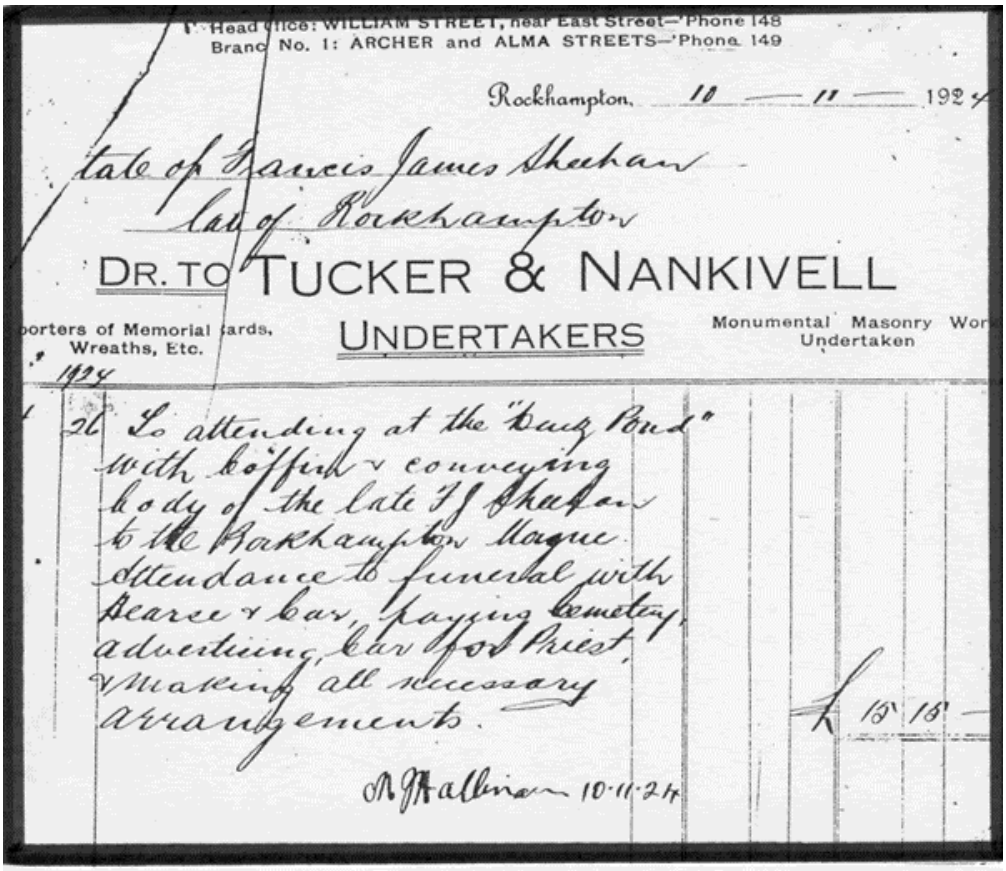
Like the AMIEU, the FCDIU established a funeral scheme in 1924 by striking a compulsory levy of 2s per head. Within weeks, young Frank Sheehan accidentally drowned while swimming in the Duck Pond, a lagoon a few miles out of town on the Mount Morgan road. As the statement of account from the undertakers shows, the union met all expenses associated with the retrieval and burial of his body. With the costs


Head Office: WILLIAM STREET, near East Street—'Phone 148
Branch No. 1: ARCHER and ALMA STREETS—'Phone 149

Rockhampton, 10 — 11 — 1924

late of Francis James Sheehan
late of Rockhampton

DR. TO TUCKER & NANKIVELL

UNDERTAKERS

Monumental Masonry Work Undertaken

orters of Memorial ards, Wreaths, Etc.

1924

26 To attending at the "Duck Pond" with coffin & conveying body of the late F J Sheehan to the Rockhampton Morgue. Attendance to funeral with Hearse & car, paying cemetery, advertising, car for Priest, & making all necessary arrangements. £ 15 15 —

N J Hallinan 10.11.24

Fig. 74: Account Payable by FCDIU Funeral Benefit Fund
CCQC

11. *ibid*., 5 Sept. 1927 and 31 Oct. 1927. CCQC J19/940 7
12. AEU Minutes, 23 Jan. 1941 and 20 Feb. 1941. NBAC E162/33/1

amounting to £15 15s, the union paid the £3 8s balance of the fund to his brother. Sheehan's fiancée had applied for the benefit but the union rejected her claim.[13] The union also provided for deceased wives such as Albert Underhill's, who passed away in 1930, and for mothers like that of Peter Stenhouse who had been fully dependent upon her son for the last two years of her life.[14] In the case of a wife or mother, though, the union levy of 1s per member paid only half the benefit for a man but, as the husband continued in income, his financial position was not so precarious.[15] In the WWF funeral scheme however, a wharfie and his wife or dependent mother received an equal benefit based on a contribution of 2s per member.[16]

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Workers suffering distress through lengthy sickness could often obtain help from the union. From about 1922, most awards provided for one week's paid sick leave but this was inadequate during prolonged illness. Moreover, until the federal Labor government introduced relevant legislation in 1944, there was no national sickness benefit scheme to alleviate the hardship that invariably resulted from extended incapacitation.[17] In 1927, the AMIEU considered it was time to establish a sick fund and the ARTWU instituted a distress fund in 1929.[18] Originally, the latter union had a voluntary subscription system with lists put up at the various warehouse yards but, as Frank Conlon pointed out, members who were relatively unknown received far fewer donations than did prominent members. This inequity, Conlon believed, would be removed with a compulsory levy system. Like the accident fund which had previously been introduced for out-of-hours calamities, a claimant needed to produce a medical certificate for at least two weeks incapacitation through sickness or injury before being

13. FCDIU Funeral Levy Book and Correspondence, Oct.–Nov. 1924, CCQC P16/1958 1; FCDIU Minutes, 10 Nov. 1924. CCQC P16/1952 5
14. FCDIU Funeral Levy Book and Correspondence, May–June 1930, CCQC P16/ 1958 2
15. *ibid.*
16. *Rules of the Waterside Workers' Federation of Australia*, *Rockhampton Branch* , 1935, p. 9.
17. Carters' Award—Central and Southern Divisions, *QGG*, 1924, Vol. 122, No. 84, 10 Apr., p. 1102; In 1922, the Commonwealth Arbitration Court awarded six days paid sick leave which would have flowed on to state awards. Anthony Barker, *When Was That: Chronology of Australia from 1788*, Sydney, 1988, p. 277; Unemployment and Sickness Benefits Act of 1944 cited in Kewley, *Social Security in Australia*, pp. 265-266.
18. AMIEU Minutes, 25 July 1927. CCQC J19/940 7; ARTWU Minutes, 13 May 1929. CCQC P16/1952 7

eligible for funds.[19] Unlike the funeral scheme which averaged only one or two claims per year, however, the ARTWU distress fund attracted frequent appeals for help. Within a short time, multiple claims drained finances and levies failed to replenish it, so the union increased the waiting period to five weeks.[20]

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A similar WWF benefit tided sick wharfies over long periods off work. Just as happened in other unions from time to time, some members abused the system by exaggerating or falsely extending their complaint to obtain payment. The union also sometimes came across bogus, and supposedly bogus, claims. When James Hamilton thanked members for their financial support while off sick in 1941, he complained that William Wooler had openly stated he had been 'bludging on the sick list'. Wooler refused to retract the statement because, he asserted, the claim was true. However the union accepted Hamilton's story and not Wooler's.[21]

Payment of any benefits depended on the current financial status of the member who had to have paid all dues and levies to date to remain eligible. Unfinancial members could not expect much sympathy in their distress. In early February 1935, the wife of Alfred Woodhouse—the ARTWU member who for several years had the magistrate's permission to work below the award because of his debilitated condition—applied to the union for distress benefits. Mrs Woodhouse stated her husband had been 'off work with "Nervous Breakdown"' from 11 December 1934 to 26 January 1935 and the family was in trouble financially. Unfortunately, Woodhouse had not paid the last distress fund levy struck on 10 December nor had he paid his union dues for the first half of 1935. He was therefore debarred from all benefits.[22] The day following this refusal, Woodhouse died, his death probably hastened by the union's decision although whether it was the result of natural causes or deliberate action is unknown.[23] His widow then applied for the funeral

19. *ibid*., 8 July 1929.
20. *ibid*., 8 Dec. 1930.
21. WWF Minutes, 26 Feb. 1941. NBAC Z387/33/1
22. ARTWU Minutes, 11 Feb. 1935. CCQC P16/1953
23. *MB*, 13 Feb. 1935.

benefit but the union dismissed that claim too. Moreover, unlike financial members' deaths, Woodhouse's burial was without the traditional union condolences.[24] The tragedy was that if he had been deemed a 'good' unionist—and especially one with an obvious physical complaint—the union might have kept him financial by granting a deferral or special exemption. It made such concessions for James Waldron while confined in Westwood Sanatorium with tuberculosis and for Frank Cunningham during his long hospitalisation with a leg injury.[25] However Woodhouse had been a thorn in the side of the union for years with his under-award work. He was probably also regarded as a malingerer with his claim of 'bad nerves', despite the doctor's certificate. So, unlike the dead worker who bore a current union card in Henry Lawson's tale, 'The Union Buries Its Dead',[26] Woodhouse was denied the traditional fraternal farewell and all other benefits of the union on his death.

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Besides financial assistance, some unions offered practical help in cases of death or hospitalisation. Rather than this being an official policy, the close-knit members of the WWF made it their business to help a deceased work-mate's wife if she had no other male support with tasks such as lawn mowing, fire-wood chopping and household maintenance.[27] Both the WWF and AEU maintained a 'sick committee' which, as well as checking the legitimacy of claims and raising funds, regularly visited hospitalised members to ensure their personal needs were being met. The AEU purchased a wireless for members confined in the General Hospital in 1947 and later bought an electric fan to ease the summer heat. The union also granted each official union visitor an allowance to buy 'any little amenities' and 'some Xmas cheer' for hospitalised members.[28]

24. ARTWU Minutes, 8 Apr. 1935. CCQC P16/1953
25. *ibid*., 13 Feb. 1928. CCQC P16/1952 7
26. Henry Lawson, 'The Union Buries Its Dead' (1893), in Leonard Cronin (ed.) *A Camp-Fire Yarn: Henry Lawson Complete Works*,*1885-1900*, Sydney, 1984.
27. Harry Boyd jnr. interviewed 6 Jan. 1999. Admittedly, there may also have been other motives here.
28. AEU Minutes, 23 Oct. 1947, 17 Dec. 1947, 17 Sept. 1953. NBAC E162/33/2 and 3; Austin Vaughan, interviewed 22 Nov. 1995.

The AEU's ample finances could also accommodate healthy members who needed small, short-term loans in times of crisis.[29] In 1947, the union willingly assisted Brother H. Richards with £10 for some unspecified need but his request for a further £5 in 1949 received an unfavourable response because the union had already assisted him.[30] For newly arrived British immigrants whose union membership had been transferred 'from home' to Australia, the AEU extended the hand of fraternal friendship with a welcoming committee. Members of the committee would visit *Yungaba*, the spartan migrant hostel in Ward Street, to greet the newcomers; to explain the union set-up, rules and regulations in Australia; to advise on the 'pros and cons' of the various employers in Rockhampton; and to help them settle in to their new life in the antipodes.[31] Of course, the union was also asserting its authority and control over these new members and over their subsequent working lives in Australia.

In contrast to those unions which offered some form of financial or practical help to members, the ARU and AWU were both 'no frills' unions. The most important service to members outside the workplace that the AWU provided was to maintain its strong links with the ALP.[32] In the ARU, on the other hand, most money went to building a strong 'fighting fund' to finance industrial campaigns—usually against the Labor government. Part of these funds was set aside to provide strike pay if needed. With so many members to provide for, ARU's strike funds did not go very far individually but members who were denied the dole while on strike appreciated every penny of union pay. During the 9-week dispute in 1948, members received only two payments of about 15s each but donations of fruit and vegetables from other workers and from local farmers supplemented what each worker took home to his family.[33] The AEU also distributed strike pay in 1948. Jack Treacy recalls:

29. AEU Minutes, 16 Oct. 1941. NBAC E162/33/1
30. *ibid.*, 4 Dec. 1947 and 2 Aug. 1949. NBAC E162/33/2 and 3
31. Jack Treacy, interviewed 28 June 1995.
32. Edgar Williams, interviewed 7 July 1995.
33. Frank Campbell, interviewed 1 July 1995.

> There'd be a notice put up saying 'Strike Pay will be paid Tuesday at 10 o'clock' and they'd line up right down the back steps of Trades Hall. The secretary would call out the bloke's name as he passed the table and how much he was to get. Each bloke would sign the book and then the treasurer would hand him over the pay. But it was only a couple of pounds in all...Many of them would make a donation back to the strike fund out of it.[34]

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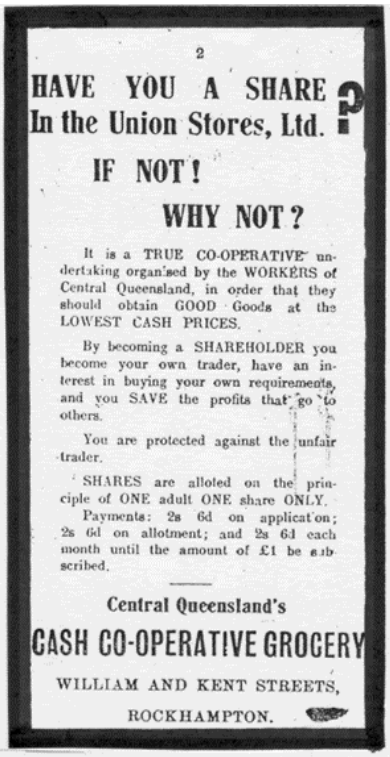
The AMIEU's usual practice was to give out food vouchers to any members with dependents. The union always handed these out to the wives of strikers and not the men themselves in case they traded them for cigarettes and beer.[35] For the WWF, the usual form of strike help was practical. During the 1954 national recruitment trouble, wharfies' wives formed a permanent women's auxiliary, the Waterside Workers' Ladies Committee, which distributed donated food and encouraged mutual self-help in wharfie families as did their counterparts in other WWF branches around Australia.[36] Under the direction of Gladys Mannion as president and Kath Liddell as secretary, the women again assisted during the 1956 margins strike by providing morale and sustenance for the striking men—a female contribution during strikes which, though informally undertaken since the great 1890 maritime strike, has been overlooked and under-valued by historians as a critical element in their conduct.[37]

Union Cooperative Ventures

While these forms of aid were forthcoming in cases of distress or emergency, some early unionists also saw a role for unionism in the day-to-day welfare of all workers. One idea current at the time was the cooperative store. This concept had originated in working-class Britain in the mid-1800s and had come to Australia in the

34. Treacy interview.
35. Ewart Maxwell, interviewed 20 Nov. 1995.
36. Margo Beasley, *Wharfies: The History of the Waterside Workers' Federation*, Sydney, 1996, pp. 159, 172-173.
37. Norm Draper, interviewed 17 Dec. 1998; WWF Minutes, 23 Jan. 1956. NBAC Z387/33/2; Bruce Scates, Class War—Sex War: The 1890 Maritime Strike in Australia and New Zealand, an unpublished paper presented at a conference of Sydney Branch of Society for the Study of Labour History entitled 'On the Waterfront: Union Gains and Struggles 1890—1998', held at Women's College, University of Sydney, 20 Feb. 1999.

cultural baggage of immigrant workers in subsequent decades.[38] In September 1911, Joseph O'Brien, who was then the assistant secretary of the AWA, solicited the support of local unions for a such a grocery store in Rockhampton.[39] The venture involved the purchase of 10,000 £1 shares, on the basis of one share per adult and was to be backed by leading unionists as directors. According to the promotional literature, shareholders could then purchase their household goods at wholesale prices and thereby protect themselves 'against the unfair trader'.[40] The only stipulation was that all purchases were made by cash. Representatives of the AFBEU, WWF, AWA and FCDIU accepted directorships, with Charles Hough of the AWA as secretary and O'Brien as manager.[41] Union Stores Ltd, as the store traded, opened in January 1912 in premises on the corner of William and Kent Streets.[42]



2

HAVE YOU A SHARE In the Union Stores, Ltd. ?

IF NOT!

WHY NOT?

It is a TRUE CO-OPERATIVE undertaking organised by the WORKERS of Central Queensland, in order that they should obtain GOOD Goods at the LOWEST CASH PRICES.

By becoming a SHAREHOLDER you become your own trader, have an interest in buying your own requirements, and you SAVE the profits that go to others.

You are protected against the unfair trader.

SHARES are alloted on the principle of ONE adult ONE share ONLY.

Payments: 2s 6d on application; 2s 6d on allotment; and 2s 6d each month until the amount of £1 be subscribed.

Central Queensland's

CASH CO-OPERATIVE GROCERY

WILLIAM AND KENT STREETS,

ROCKHAMPTON.

Fig. 75: Union Stores Advertisement in 1912 Eight-Hour Day Programme CCQC

38. G.D.H. Cole, *The British Co-Operative Movement in a Socialist Society*, London, 1951, pp. 155-156; Duncan Bythell, 'Class, Community and Culture: The Case of the Brass Band in Newcastle', *Labour History*, No. 67, Nov. 1994, pp. 152.
39. Carters & Storemen's Union Minutes, 4 Sept. 1911. CCQC P16/1952 1; AFBEU Minutes, 6 Sept. 1911. CCQC J19/940 1
40. Advertisement in *Seventh Rockhampton 8-Hour Day Celebration and Sports Programme*, Rockhampton, 1915, p. 38. CCQC D9/261 26
41. Advertisement inside front cover of *Official Programme of 4th 8-Hour Sports and Demonstration*, Rockhampton, 1912. CCQC D9/261 21
42. Carters and Storemen's Union Minutes, 8 Jan. 1912. CCQC P16/1952 1

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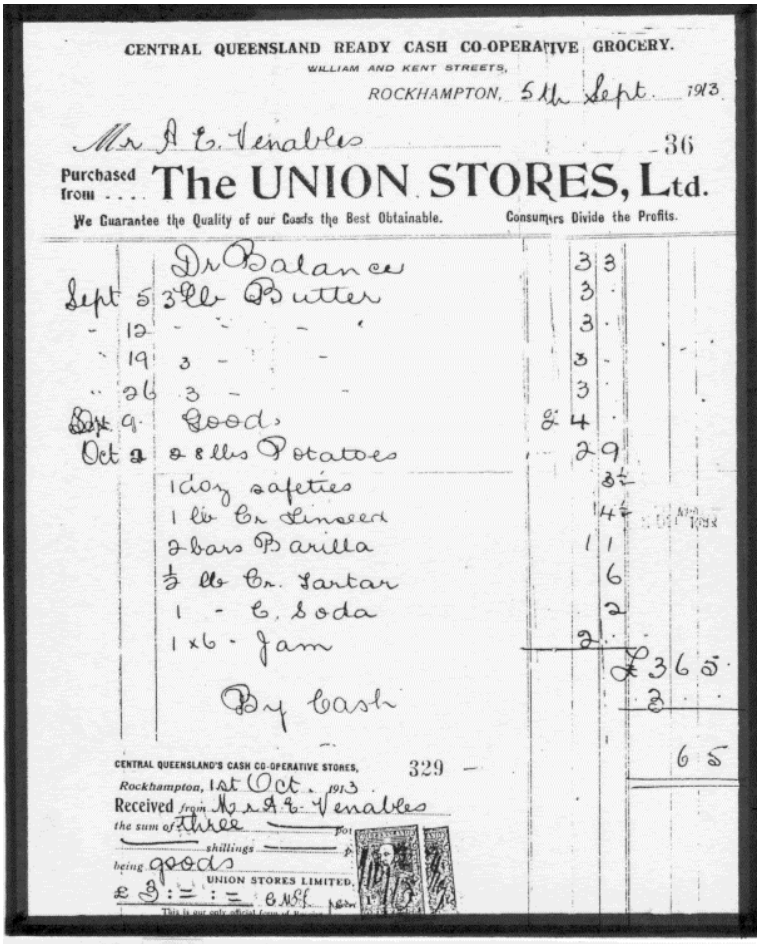
CENTRAL QUEENSLAND READY CASH CO-OPERATIVE GROCERY.
WILLIAM AND KENT STREETS,
ROCKHAMPTON, 5th Sept. 1913.
Mr A E. Venables 36
Purchased from .... The UNION STORES, Ltd.
We Guarantee the Quality of our Goods the Best Obtainable. Consumers Divide the Profits.
Dr Balance 3 3
Sept 5 3lb Butter 3
12 3
19 3 3
26 3 3
Sept 9. Goods, 4
Oct 2 8 lbs Potatoes 2 9
1 doz safeties 8½
1 lb Gr Linseed 1 4½
2 bars Parilla 1 1
½ lb Gr. Tartar 6
1 - G. Soda 2
1 x 6 - Jam 2
£3 6 5
By Cash 3
6 5
CENTRAL QUEENSLAND'S CASH CO-OPERATIVE STORES, 329
Rockhampton, 1st Oct. 1913.
Received from Mr A E. Venables
the sum of Three pounds shillings
being goods
£ 3 : : UNION STORES LIMITED.

Fig. 76: Union Stores Cash Sale Invoice
It appears the full amount was not always paid in cash.
RDHS

Within months of opening, the manager approached the Eight-Hour Day Celebration Committee for a loan of £200, supposedly to cope with what he claimed was 'largely increased' business.[43] Several committee members expressed concern at the request but after their trustees had examined the store's cash books and found everything 'in perfect order', the body acceded.[44] There was little doubt that this would be the case because the AWA dominated the committee by weight of numbers because of its sectional representation and, at the following meeting, it secured the presidency for Joseph O'Brien and the treasurer's position for fellow AWA-official, Harold Hartley.[45]

43. EHDCC Minutes, 15 June, 1912. CCQC D9/260 2
44. *ibid.*, 22 June, 1912.
45. *ibid.*, 3 July, 1912.

Despite this assurance of sound patronage, the cooperative store must surely have been short of both shareholders and customers. With a limit of one share per adult, 10,000 shareholders was an overly-ambitious target considering the total population of the city and surrounds was only about 18,300 at the time.[46] Moreover, there were already
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over 20 grocery shops in the main part of town and numerous others on suburban street corners to compete for customers. One of these, the People's Cash Store, already offered discounted prices for cash sales.[47] These established grocers also already had their own clientele, especially those with labour movement connections like William Goss, one of the founders of the FCDIU, and Ned Foreman, a leading socialist. There was also Hogan and Cranley's which often funded Eight-Hour Day programmes and art union tickets.[48] The additional attraction of these traditional businesses was that when money was tight, as it often was, purchases could be put 'on tick' and paid off later. With its cash-only basis, Union Stores could not accommodate the credit needs of those in seasonal and irregular jobs as meatworkers and wharfies.

The manager of Union Stores constantly asked unions to urge their members to take shares and to shop at the union-backed cooperative. Then in 1914, he appealed to the AMIEU for a loan of £50 to ease 'financial difficulties'.[49] Efforts to bail out the struggling business were apparently to no avail and, in late 1916, a partnership called O'Brien Bros—which seemingly had bought into the cooperative in an attempt to keep it solvent—filed for bankruptcy and took the union venture into liquidation with it.[50] As well as the union loans, the store had bank debts totalling £331 and another £179 still outstanding with local merchants after a forced sale of stock and fittings.[51]

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46. *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, *1911*, Melbourne, 1911, Vol. 3, p. 2039. The population of Rockhampton was 15,456 and that of the separate municipality of North Rockhampton was 2,833.
47. *Pugh's Almanac*, *1918*, p. 771U
48. Rockhampton 8-Hour Celebration Union Art union Tickets, 1910. CCQC D9/261 11
49. AMIEU Minutes, 12 Aug. 1914 and 31 Aug. 1914. CCQC J19/940 3
50. EHDCC Minutes, 2 Dec. 1916 and 6 Jan. 1917. The minutes are cryptic on the matter, referring only to 'the liquidation of O'Brien Bros (Union Stores Ltd). CCQC D9/260 2
51. *ibid.*, 3 Mar. 1917; EHDCC Cash Book, 1917. The debt of £200 disappears from the books without any obvious repayment. CCQC D9/262 ; AMIEU Minutes, 16 Oct. 1917. CCQC J19/940 4

The real tragedy of the union-backed venture was not so much its demise from want of worker support or the loss of monies loaned to it by unions as the fact that liability for the remaining debts fell jointly upon the trustees personally. Job Caldwell and founding Eight-Hour Day Celebration Committee member Alfred Poole had agreed
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to be guarantors in the firm belief that a workers' cooperative would succeed in Rockhampton. In the case of Poole, who died at only 54 years of age around the same time as the financial crisis, the burden passed to the his widow.[52] On behalf of the unfortunate trustees and their families, the AWU launched an appeal for financial assistance from other unions and peak bodies, including the Eight-Hour Day Celebration Committee itself. Not surprisingly, the committee declined to assist. [53] The AMIEU felt that its members could not afford to contribute during the slack while the FCDIU, after letting the letter lie on the table for several meetings, resolved to await the outcome of the efforts of the AWU.[54] The cooperative store venture proved to be but the first of two major financial disasters for the local union movement trying to transform their vision for workers' welfare into reality.

Cultural and Educational Activities

Union action made the eight hours of work more financially rewarding and the eight hours of rest somewhat easier with the comforting knowledge of help in times of need, even if the failed plan for a workers' cooperative brought the unfortunate guarantors little peace of mind. Some unions and inter-union bodies also endeavoured to make the remaining eight hours of leisure more culturally and socially rewarding for their members. Recreation was potentially a time for intellectual and moral development and

52. Index of Rockhampton Cemetery. Poole was buried on 21 Aug. 1917. Although there is a strong possibility that the crisis and his death were linked, this has not been established. He was also a founding member of the Eight-Hour Day Celebration Committee/Union and a relative of Industrial Inspector, A. Owen Poole.
53. LDCC Minutes, 1 May 1920 and 6 June 1920. CCQC D9/260 3
54. AMIEU Minutes, 16 Oct. 1917. CCQC J19/940 4; FCDIU Minutes, 7 Jan. 1918. CCQC P16/1952 3

certainly not to be wasted on 'drinking and riotous living' as the original opponents of the eight-hour working day had feared it might be.[55]

Besides the cooperative store, the brass band was another aspect of British working-class life which immigrants brought with them to Australia. Wherever unionists met in celebration outdoors, brass bands accompanied them. By the early twentieth century, most towns boasted at least one such band. Rockhampton had several brass bands belonging to friendly societies like the Oddfellows and Foresters; there was another at Lakes Creek composed largely of meatworkers; and the WWF had its very own band as well. Some cities also possessed a specific Labour or Trades Hall Band[56] and the Rockhampton union movement, in its usual desire to emulate larger cities, desired a brass band too. In 1915, the Trades Hall Board raised the idea but, as it was still carrying the debt of the newly acquired hall premises, delegates shelved the plans until funds were available to obtain instruments.[57]

After its eventual formation in 1919, the Labour Band took a prominent place in union processions although it never usurped the more popular Pipers' Band that traditionally led the parade with its skirling bagpipes and beating drums. At the band's first appearance on Labour Day in 1920, onlookers 'very warmly commented upon its inspiring musical selections' performed under the baton of Don Hammond, and admired the spotless red-and-white uniforms of its members.[58] The Labour Band also brought credit upon the city at southern competitions and, in 1925, won the D Grade Championship and Street March which was considered a commendable feat for a relatively new provincial band.[59] It conducted public recitals of 'sacred music' at the Strand Theatre on Sunday nights to help raise funds for the new Trades Hall Theatre and

55. Robin Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics: A Study of Eastern Australia,1850—1910*, Carlton, 1967, p. 73.
56. Bythell, 'Class, Community and Culture', p. 153.
57. AMIEU Minutes, 24 Mar. 1915. CCQC J19/940 3
58. *MB*, 4 May 1920, p. 7; A. Unwin, Some Musical Reminiscences of Rockhampton, unpublished manuscript, circa 1980, p. 9. RML
59. Phil Wright, *A Music History of Rockhampton*, Rockhampton, 1990, p. 140.

later held concerts in the new theatre itself, on a 50/50 basis to help alleviate the enormous debt incurred in its construction.[60] These musical occasions proved highly successful considering the difficult economic times of the Depression but probably because they consisted of far more popular light music than the sacred.[61] The Theatrical Employees' Union, to which the bandsmen belonged besides their regular unions, complained to the Trades Hall Board of the 'growing danger' that its members would become 'continuous workers for seven days and nights'.[62] However, while the Labour Band drew the crowds, neither the board which enjoyed its profits, nor the players who enjoyed the extra cash, seemed to care what the union thought.

Creation of a Labour Band was no doubt intended more for its celebratory and propaganda value than for providing a cultural experience for workers, but other activities undertaken or backed by the local union movement were expressly aimed at alleviating some of the perceived deprivations of working-class life. Two of these deficiencies were a widespread lack of education beyond the compulsory primary years and the absence of quality reading matter—sometimes of any books at all other than perhaps a family Bible—in many working-class homes. In England, the Mechanics' Institute movement successfully met these needs in many industrial towns by establishing classes, libraries and clubs for working men.[63] With this model in mind, the Trades Hall Board felt a library could assist in worker self-improvement as well as foster a greater understanding of the theoretical aspects of working class experience. With a nucleus of socialist books the AMIEU had bought the previous year at the urging of the militant Sam McCreadie, the Trades Hall Board began a collection.[64] The humble new workers' library resided in a press in the upstairs meeting room, the key to which each secretary could obtain from the hall secretary before the general meeting. After the meeting, the union secretary would hand out books to members, although only those who had paid their Trades Hall levy.[65]

60. *MB*, 1 May 1920; THBM Minutes, 15 May 1930. CCQC U14/2063 2. The Strand became the Tivoli.
61. Cole interview; Evan Schwarten, interviewed 10 May 1996.
62. Cole interview; THBM Minutes, 29 July 1933. CCQC U14/2063 2
63. Dorothy Marshall, *Industrial England, 1776–1851*, London, 1973, p. 157.
64. AMIEU Minutes, 24 Feb. 1915 and 30 June 1915. CCQC J19/940 3
65. FCDIU Minutes, 2 Oct. 1916. CCQC P16/1952 3

By 1922, the library had outgrown its home—at least on paper. At a check of the holdings by Frank Conlon after he took over the secretaryship in 1921, 561 volumes were either outstanding or missing. Those unionists whom Conlon contacted about the books
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complained to their unions about his accusations and officiousness in the matter.[66] Whether the books had been taken home and lost, or had actually been stolen, is a matter for speculation. Undaunted by this huge loss, union leaders stipulated that any interest due on their loans to the Trades Hall Board should be spent replacing the library. The board set up a special committee to oversee the new collection and, to give formal expression to their plans, the proposed theatre complex adjoining Trades Hall contained a special library and reading room. The new expanded collection would consist of the great English classics, technical manuals and works on politics, economics and all manner of intellectual matters to promote worker advancement through self-education.[67]

The physical symbol of inter-union aspirations for workers' cultural activities was the new theatre. This building, heralded in the press as an 'imposing monument to unionism', would place local workers on par with their metropolitan brethren. It was to be a venue where up to 1,000 'Labourites' of Rockhampton could hold public lectures, debates, concerts and social gatherings as well as access the library facilities.[68] In their enthusiasm to construct the new complex, the Trades Hall Board seemingly overlooked the fact that previous lecture series by both the defunct Industrial Council and the WPO had been less than successful.[69] Neither did the failure through poor support of those educational classes which had been conducted nor the parlous state of the library auger well for success of the new venture.

The new library did not enjoy its new home for long. With the increasing need for profits to pay off the bank loan, the committee soon moved the holdings into a small

66. THBM Minutes, 20 Apr. 1922. CCQC U14/2063 1
67. *ibid.*, 18 May 1922, 21 Sept. 1922 and 27 Sept. 1922.
68. *ibid.*, 27 Sept. 1922; *MB*, 8 Mar. 1924, p. 9.
69. FCDIU Minutes, 4 Sept. 1916. CCQC P16/1952 3; AMIEU Minutes, 28 May 1918. CCQC J19/940 4

room downstairs in Trades Hall and rented out the theatre space as a private studio.[70] The library committee planned to launch a series of lectures in 1929 and public speaking classes the following year but nothing eventuated.[71] At the same time, the dances and socials arranged by the board for both recreational and financial purposes fared poorly. Far from being an imposing monument, the theatre was more a mausoleum to the union movement's failed vision for workers' enlightenment and quality entertainment. As trustee Duncan McDonell commented critically, it was 'a white elephant' culturally and financially and most workers viewed it as 'a joke'.[72]

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Trades Hall also hosted classes held under the auspices of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). A government-funded scheme emanating from the University of Queensland, the WEA received strong support from the union movement throughout the state. Five local unions affiliated with the Rockhampton WEA on its opening in 1922.[73] A worker-student could enrol in 24-week courses in literature, psychology, education, logic, 'Industrial History [and] Marxian Economics' and thereby 'train his mind and expand his knowledge'.[74] However, at the first annual general meeting the president, E.B. Purnell, bemoaned the fact that unionists were 'not rushing to join the WEA'. Purnell claimed that local workers apparently considered they had 'sufficient education or sufficient knowledge' despite the 'intellectual stagnancy' which he believed characterised Rockhampton workers.[75] The domination of the WEA by ARU and ASCJ left-wing elements and the radical ideological flavour instilled by tutor Gordon Crane over the next few years would also have repelled many workers from these classes.

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70. THBM Minutes, 28 Nov. 1929 and 12 Dec. 1929. CCQC P16/1955 1
71. *ibid.*, 20 June 1929 and 28 Mar. 1930. CCQC P16/1955 1 and U14/2063 2
72. *ibid.*, 12 Dec. 1928. CCQC P16/1955 1; Schwarten interview.
73. As reported in *MB*, 23 July 1919, p. 5, there was an attempt to start WEA classes in Rockhampton at the Technical College in 1919. One 'sample class' was conducted as well as a public lecture given on 'Bolshevism' by Acting Local Secretary and well-known radical, John H. Wood. No more can be found about WEA classes until their 'commencement' in 1922 so it appears the original classes were unsuccessful.
74. *DR*, 4 May 1922, p. 3.
75. *MB*, 21 Mar. 1924, p. 10.

Lack of interest in intellectual self-improvement did not improve with time. Always the leader in worker education, first through the WEA and later through its own efforts, the ARU attempted to establish classes in the 1930s for all railwaymen—irrespective of their union membership—under former WEA tutor, Gordon Crane. The

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subjects offered included economics, politics, history and other aspects of the WEA model as well as the organisational and legal aspects of unionism.[76] The ARU's Brisbane-based Educational and Organisational Committee coordinated the scheme. Soon after the classes started in 1937, ARU district secretary George Kemp reported to his state counterpart, Tim Moroney, that 'owing to lack of interest among Railwaymen, we are unable to carry on the E & O classes'. Kemp said he had advertised and promoted the classes extensively throughout the railway but if the ARU opened the instruction to unionists outside the railway service, they might stimulate enough interest to proceed with a course. He was sure that, once in operation, the educational classes would 'break down the apathy of Railwaymen' and more would attend.[77] In declining the request, Moroney expressed his profound disappointment and amazement that, unlike Brisbane and Ipswich, 'in a large centre such as Rockhampton it is impossible to obtain a class of at least a dozen railwaymen for the purpose of studying working class economics'.[78]

The reluctance of other railway unionists to join these classes also stemmed from anti-ARU sentiments and the perception that this was yet another ploy to poach membership from other railway unions. Even for the hundreds of ARU members, the content of the classes simply did not appeal to them at all. There were more enjoyable things workers preferred to do in their spare time than study. This had been clearly demonstrated at the Lakes Creek School of Arts which aimed to provide a venue for local meatworkers to gainfully occupy their spare-time. The local committee regretted that

76. Trevor Campbell (ed.), *The ARU in Queensland: 100 Years of Service to Railway Workers*, *1886–1986*, Brisbane, 1986, p. 15.
77. G. Kemp to T. Moroney, 17 June 1937, ARU Correspondence. PTU
78. T. Moroney to G. Kemp, 23 June 1937, ARU Correspondence. PTU

Lakes Creek residents enjoyed the billiard table far more than they read the 1,500 classics and technical manuals in the lending library.[79]

The failure of educational ventures supported by the unions and of the Trades Hall library does not mean that workers in Rockhampton were any less enthusiastic about knowledge and learning than were their counterparts in other parts of Australia. Despite the success of the Mechanics' Institutes in England, similar bodies in Australia, including Schools of Arts, largely failed in trying to cater for the perceived intellectual needs of most workers.[80] In Adelaide, for instance, one such institution attracted clerks and tradesmen but very few labourers. Even among those keen on reading, popular light fiction far outstripped the classics in popularity.[81] In addition, thanks to free and compulsory primary education provided by the state, 96% of the Rockhampton population over the age of five considered themselves literate in 1921.[82] They probably did not perceive any need for further personal study, especially in subjects that were of little practical use.

Labour Newspapers

Even if Rockhampton workers were reluctant to tackle intellectually stimulating reading matter—or daunting and dreary depending on the particular viewpoint—most of them read a newspaper. Just as employers clearly understood the power of the press and literature in shaping political and industrial opinion and the role it played in subverting or purveying working-class culture, likewise did the union movement.[83] When the

79. *DR*, 28 Jan. 1911, p. 4.
80. J. Laurent, 'Bourgeois Expectations and Working Class Realities: Science and Politics in Sydney's Schools of Arts', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Association*, Vol. 75, No. 1, June 1989, p. 34.
81. Carl Bridge, *A Trunk Full of Books: History of the State Library of South Australia and Its Forerunners*, Netley, 1986, pp. 10 and 45.
82. *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, *1921*, Vol. 1, pp. 878 and 880.
83. Lucy Taksa, 'Spreading the Word: The Literature of Labour and Working Class Culture' in John Shields (ed.), *All Our Labours: Oral Histories of Working Life in Twentieth Century Sydney*, Kensington, 1992, p. 67.

Brisbane-based labour paper, the *Daily Standard*, commenced state-wide circulation in 1912, representatives from the FCDIU, AMIEU and WWF keenly attended the local promotion and the FCDIU, at least, obtained five fully-paid-up shares.[84] But by 1917—at the same time as the union-backed grocery cooperative was being wound up—local unions made plans to acquire their own newspaper rather than supporting a Brisbane paper.

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In 1910, Queensland Labor leader T.J. Ryan had acquired Rockhampton's hitherto conservative evening newspaper, the *Daily Record*, and had transformed it into a subdued but effective vehicle for Labor propaganda in opposition to the right-wing *Morning Bulletin*.[85] In 1917, the paper having served its political purpose in putting the Labor government in power, Premier Ryan placed the financially struggling newspaper on the market.[86] Perhaps fearing both the loss of a labour press and the possibility of two conservative papers in Rockhampton again, some labour activists saw a combined union purchase of the *Daily Record* as desirable. It would also mean that Rockhampton was on par with Brisbane in the matter of a union-owned daily paper.

The AWU led the campaign as it had done with the cooperative store and its organiser, Jim Nolan, took on the joint secretaryship of the Labour Daily Committee with Frank Conlon of the FCDIU.[87] In a promotional address to the AMIEU, Nolan pointed out the need for a 'thoroughly Labour paper in the District' and claimed there was 'no disputing the power of the Press' which they needed to combat. Nolan revealed that his committee already had an option on 5,100 £1 shares in the paper but, perhaps having learned from the previous experience with a workers' cooperative, he urged the unions

84. Carters and Storemen's Union Minutes, 30 Sept. 1912 and 18 Aug. 1913. CCQC P16/1952 1
85. As Denis Murphy points out from discussion with George Westacott, the paper was not 'brashly pro-labor' nor a 'mere propagandist journal'. However, perusal of its editorials and content reveals a distinct pro-Labor attitude and criticism of the conservative government. Denis Murphy, *T.J. Ryan: A Political Biography*, St Lucia, p. 43.
86. George Westacott, A History of Rockhampton Newspapers, a paper presented to RDHS, 1956, p. 44; Lorna McDonald, *Rockhampton: A History of City and District*, St Lucia, 1981, pp. 464 and 475.
87. FCDIU Minutes, 1 Oct. 1917. CCQC P16/1952 3

themselves to take up the shares in preference to individual unionists.[88] The AMIEU duly appointed two delegates to the committee to oversee the purchase but in the meantime Premier Ryan sold out to a wealthy grazier friend.[89] This outcome did not spell political disaster for local unions even though they were probably disappointed their bid did not succeed. Having divested himself of financial responsibility, Ryan retained full political control which editor Walter Buzacott and sub-editor George Westacott reflected in the paper's content and tone.[90] Rockhampton unionists and Labor supporters effectively still had a 'labour' newspaper to champion their cause.

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Local unions had a second opportunity to participate in purchasing a workers' paper in 1923 when George Rymer of the ARU toured the state campaigning for a chain of labour dailies throughout Queensland. Rymer spoke passionately to a special AMIEU gathering in Trades Hall, stressing 'the prostitution of the press during and since the war' and its misrepresentation of strikes and arbitration laws. He claimed the press had 'moulded public opinion in favour of the great wage reduction scheme of the capitalists of Australia'. After a 45 minute speech appealing for working-class solidarity in the matter of labour newspapers, Rymer left to address a street-corner meeting with his publicity officer, the Melbourne socialist author and publisher Bob Ross.[91] Like so many initiatives and ideas of the union movement, nothing more came of the plan locally. This was probably because the *Daily Record* and its successor from 1922, the *Evening News*, maintained a reasonably pro-Labor and pro-union stance even though the great T.J. Ryan was dead by then. The union movement would have regretted its failure to do anything concrete in this matter when the *Morning Bulletin* bought out the *Evening News* in the late 1920s.[92] Rockhampton then had two conservative papers again and no longer any public voice for the workers.

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88. AMIEU Minutes, 8 Aug. 1917. CCQC J19/940 4
89. *ibid.*, 22 Aug. 1917; Westacott, A History of Rockhampton Newspapers, p. 44.
90. McDonald, *Rockhampton*, p. 487.
91. AMIEU Minutes, 13 Mar. 1923. CCQC J19/940 5; Verity Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia*, Melbourne, 1995, p. 204; Pam Young, *Proud To Be Rebel: The Life and Times of Emma Miller*, St Lucia, p. 266, fn. 15.
92. McDonald, *Rockhampton* , p. 464.

One of the suggested uses for the new Trades Hall Theatre was the establishment of a workers' club. Like its original form in England, a workers' club in Rockhampton would provide a respectable venue where working-class men could meet in a fraternal atmosphere: they could converse, read newspapers and play chess, billiards or darts and, most importantly, without the distractions of a public bar.[93] Such a facility would place working men on par with the businessmen at the Rockhampton Club, although without the leather chairs, waiters and other trappings of the 'boss class'.[94] Yet nothing came of that idea either, probably because it was primarily another ARU and ASCJ idea. At that time, tension was mounting within the Trades Hall Board over the radical ideological outlook of those two unions. Perhaps the other delegates considered that a workers' club sponsored by the ARU would be a front for militant One-Big-Union-inspired activities—which may very well have been one of the motives.

The only successful union-based club was that of the WWF. When the local cricket association initiated a warehouse competition in the 1930s, the wharfies were quick to form their own team, the Waterside Workers' Cricket Club. Because waterside workers kept irregular hours, it was difficult for them to attend the regular training sessions necessary for the normal cricket competition, so the Sunday afternoon social fixtures suited them better. The competition also gave an opportunity to participate to those who were not first-grade players. Coached by long-time WWF member and vice president Bert Buxton, the team frequently ended the season as winners or runners-up.[95] The fraternal atmosphere culminated with the traditional end-of-season presentation night and convivial smoke social. The 1940 event, celebrated at the Palace Hotel in East

93. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, London, 1983, p. 9; D.W. Rawson, *Unions and Unionists in Australia*, Sydney, 1986, p. 326.
94. THBM Minutes, 24 Nov. 1928. CCQC P16/1955 1
95. *MW*, 13 Apr. 1940, p. 2 and 17 May 1941, p. 2.

Street, drew almost 100 members, officials and guests of the club for 'a lively evening' of food and drink, awarding of trophies, speeches, musical items and community singing.[96]

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As well as playing in local fixtures, the Waterside Workers' Cricket Team toured other Queensland ports to compete against other WWF teams. These sporting exchanges not only broadened the experiences of local wharfies but also fostered good relations with other Queensland ports while strengthening solidarity within the home branch. Team members enjoyed the social side of tours probably even more than the sporting side. Branch secretary Jack Curtin reported to the *Maritime Worker* of the sporting trip to Mackay, Bowen and Townsville in 1948:

> After having dined, the keg was tapped and an address of welcome was given by the chairman of the Social Committee and responded to by myself. Several musical items were given by both teams and then a challenge took place between the Mackay team and the Rocky team. The challenge was who could sing the best song...Rocky was successful.[97]

The social and sporting success of the cricket team, and of a rugby league football team as well, encouraged the union to follow the example of its counterpart in Mackay by forming a 'Pastime Club' in 1949.[98] After successful negotiations with the Rockhampton Harbour Board, the union obtained a site in Quay Street opposite the city wharves and erected its own amenities hall to accommodate the proposed club, union office and pick-up centre.[99] At the club, wharfies could relax between boats, smoke, play cards, read the *Maritime Worker* (and their regular cricket report therein) or just yarn to mates. It was a haven from the domestic atmosphere of the home from which most men preferred to escape during the day.[100] Over the weekend, wharfies could get away with mates in the Waterside Workers' Fishing Club, provided there was no shipping and the tides were right.[101]

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96. *ibid.*, 13 Apr. 1940, p. 2.
97. *ibid.*, 14 Feb. 1948, p. 6.
98. *ibid.*, 15 Jan. 1949, p. 6.
99. *ibid.*, 26 Mar. 1949; WWF Minutes, 16 July 1949. NBAC Z387/33/2
100. Jennifer Craik, 'Verandahs and Frangipani: Women in the Queensland House', in Gail Reekie (ed.), *On the Edge: Women's Experiences of Queensland*, St Lucia, 1994, pp. 147 and 167; Gillian Whitlock, 'Speaking from the Warm Zone' in *ibid.*, p. 175.
101. *MB*, 7 May 1952, p.2.

Not to be outdone by the smaller WWF, the AMIEU embarked on similar plans for a union hall, bowling green and tennis court at Lakes Creek in 1955. Unlike the WWF which received a land grant from the Harbour Board, the AMIEU faced the
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expense of buying private land as well as construction costs.[102] Shortly after this, the union became embroiled in the widely publicised 'Glass-in-the-Meat' proceedings in the Industrial Court and decided to shelve the matter until the industry 'settled down more satisfactorily'.[103] Work matters always took precedence over leisure matters and the union postponed the idea of a club indefinitely.

From time to time, other unions conducted smoke socials like the evening in Trades Hall enjoyed by members of the FCDIU in 1921.[104] The ASCJ also held periodic social evenings during the year.[105] For a grand inter-union 'Smoke Concert' such as the celebration of the official release of the Trades Hall deeds in 1918, the fare included Capstan cigarettes, cigars, ale, lager, claret, whiskey, 'aerated waters', cheese, soda crackers and Arnott's biscuits. [106] For a routine union social, drinks usually ran to beer and soft-drinks only. These functions rarely involved heavy imbibing: the convenors of a ASCJ social in 1937 ordered only two 10-gallon kegs of beer for the 80 members anticipated to attend.[107]

Like most union functions, these occasions aimed to promote camaraderie, especially in unions whose members—unlike the WWF, AMIEU export workers and railway men—were scattered around the city in numerous worksites and might not know each other. They also created a sense of egalitarianism to balance the hierarchical union

102. AMIEU Minutes, 3 Oct. 1955. CCQC J19/944 1
103. *ibid.*, 23 Oct. 1956 and 26 Oct. 1956. CCQC J19/944 2. The case resulted from the sacking of 11 workers after glass from a broken light blub was found in a carton of chilled beef. When no evidence of worker involvement could be found, the union took legal action against the Company for wrongful dismissal.
104. FCDIU Minutes, 19 Sept. 1921. CCQC P16/1952 4
105. ASCJ Minutes, 9 Sept. 1936, 7 July 1937 and 24 Feb. 1938. JOL OMEQ 25/8/4
106. Insert in THBM Rent Ledger, 1918. CCQC U14/2064 5;
107. ASCJ Minutes, 6 July 1937. The quantity provided slightly more than one litre per man. JOL OMEQ 25/8/4

organisation and smoothed relationships with representatives of select unions and peak bodies. In addition, socials were occasions for grooming political connections with invitations extended to, and readily accepted by, local Labor members. Accordingly, there was much toasting and many speeches. As the 1918 celebration programme

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indicates, the order of ceremony for such an occasion would include the obligatory loyal


TOAST LIST.

Mr. A. HESLIN, President (in the chair).

Time limit for Speakers: Five Minutes.

1. "The King" ... ...
Proposed by ... ... Mr. S. Mooka
(With Musical Honours)

2. "The Labour Movement" ...
(Industrial and Political)
Proposed by Mr. A. Heslin, President Trades Hall Board.
Reply by Members present and Union Representatives.
Song by Mr Bedford (Sailor's Home)

3. "Our Comrades at the Front" ...
Proposed by ... Mr. J. Nolan.
Reply by Returned Soldiers present.
Song by Mr Taylor

Time Limit for Speakers: Five Minutes.

4. "Trades Hall Board" ... ...
Proposed by F. Forde, Esq., M.L.A.
Reply by Mr. A. Smith, Hon. Sec., Trades Hall Board. & W.J. Curran
Song Mr Ward
Song Mr Derrington

5. "The Ladies" ... ...
Proposed by ... Mr. R. McCarthy.
Reply by ... F. M. Forde, Esq., M.L.A.
Song Mr Percy
Song Mr Ward

6. "The Press" ... ...
Proposed by ... ... Mr. J. Ryan.
Reply by Members of the Press present.

7 Victors, Chairman

Fig. 77: Programme for Grand Smoke Social to Celebrate the Official Release of the Trades Hall Deeds, 1918

CCQC

toast followed by toasts to the particular union; the wider labour movement; other causes as appropriate; the guests; the artists (usually talented union members); the press if invited; and, in acknowledgment of the services of the wives who set up the hall for the evening but had probably long since gone home to the children, a toast to the ladies. Following each time-limited speech and response, there would be a suitable musical

rendition.[108] Attendees could expect a night of measured refreshment but boundless and hearty male fellowship.

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Some unions combined the socialising with quarterly meetings or, as the AEU called them, 'star nights'. After the official proceedings, a keg of beer was usually spiked and members could meet each other in a convivial atmosphere.[109] The keg was also a 'carrot' to counteract the 'stick' of a fine for not attending a summon meeting but, as Chapter 4 has already pointed out for some union meetings, that was no guarantee of a good roll-up. On rare occasions, unions would hold a family night but these rarely catered for all the family in reality. Bonnie Schwarten remembers well:

> We used to get a bit bored with them. They called them family nights because they wanted the family to go but there was never a great lot of activity for children. They were mainly male activities and the men were up one end of the hall and the ladies down the other. I remember my mother and father used to get up and have a hop but we kids would be whingeing to go home...They'd have a cup of tea and great big sandwiches for supper.

Picnics and Celebrations

The only occasion on which families really participated in union festivities was the annual picnic. In the early decades of the movement, the union picnic provided an exciting experience for the youngsters. It was '*the* day of the year' which the children anticipated with great relish for the fun, food and, above all else, the trip to the seaside by train.[110] The coastal township of Emu Park, about 50 km by rail from Rockhampton, was the venue for most picnics. For the 1918 WWF event—the first after four years in abeyance during the war—two decorated trains carrying 1,500 excursionists and the Waterside Workers' Brass Band steamed to the seaside for the day's celebration just as

108. Rockhampton Trades Hall Board of Management Official Opening Programme, 1914. JOL; ASCJ Minutes, 5 July 1938. JOL OMEQ 25/8/4
109. Treacy interview.
110. Schwarten interview; Ewart Maxwell, interviewed 22 Mar. 1993; Claude Barnes, interviewed 26 Mar. 1993; Ursula Barry, interviewed 4 Nov. 1996.

they did for their inaugural celebration in 1903.[111] For the QRU picnic of the same year, three trains hauled 3,000 people and the obligatory brass band to Yeppoon, farther north along the coast.[112] Emu Park was by far the favourite place where the Bell Park public reserve afforded a spacious and grassy site, shady trees, a band rotunda and shelter-sheds, ready access to the beach over the dunes and, unlike Yeppoon, was only a short walk from the railway station. For many workers' families, the union picnic was the only opportunity to experience the delights of the ocean air and the sea, particularly at a time when very few workers owned a motor car and even train fares for a bevy of children were often beyond the weekly budget.

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The picnic was also a rare opportunity for family relaxation together and one of the few Saturdays in the year when wives did not have to prepare a cooked midday 'dinner' in a hot kitchen. One speaker at the 1921 WWF picnic declared:

> Such gatherings did a vast amount of good, particularly for the wives and families of members who were thus eased for one day of the strain and stress of life and enabled to have a respite in which to thoroughly enjoy themselves at the seaside.[113]

For the children, there were seemingly endless supplies of ice creams and cordial, bags of lollies, fruit and biscuits. Wharfies' children even received 'free' toys, bought with the penny-in-the-pound picnic levy the union set on their father's weekly pay packet and the proceeds of an art union. After lunch, foot races and novelty events offered the chance to win prizes of toys, sporting items or small amounts of money, all of which were treats indeed for children from families that often struggled to make ends meet on an irregular income. Older folk could enjoy events such as the 'married women's race' and one for the 'old buffers' as well as the ever-popular tug-o-war and dancing on a portable floor. After a return train trip with community singing for those with some energy left, the picnickers could look forward with pleasant memories of next year's union get-together at the seaside.

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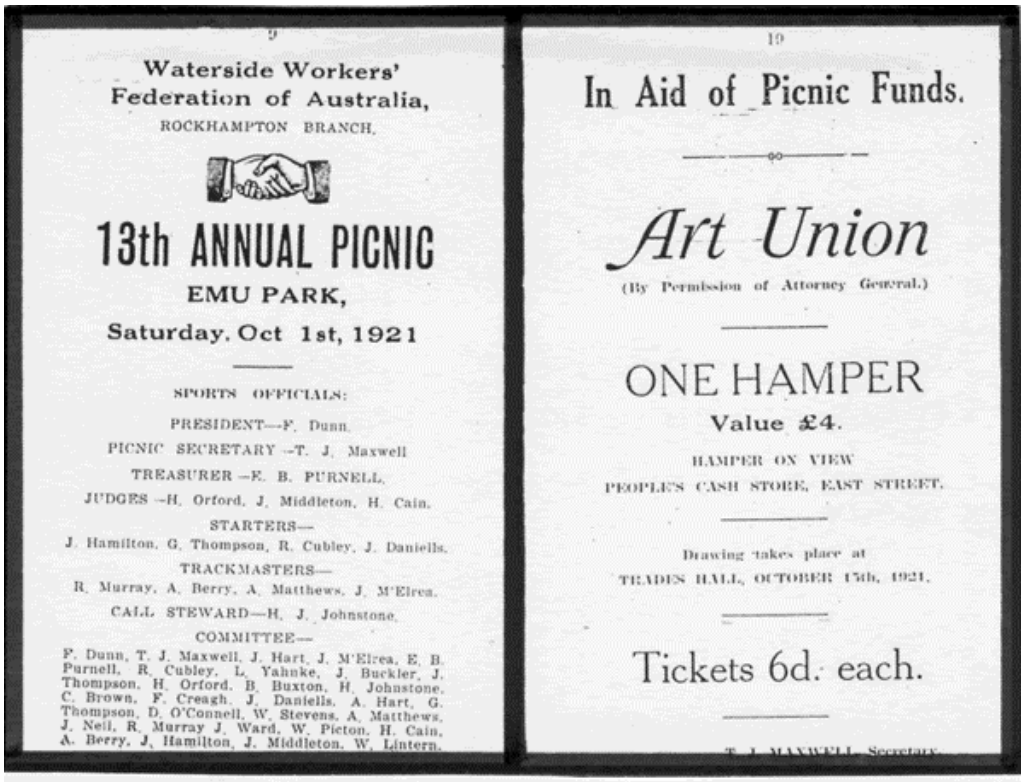
111. *DR*, 7 Oct. 1918, p. 6.
112. *ibid.*, 2 Dec. 1918, p. 6.
113. *ibid.*, 3 Oct. 1921, p. 5.



Waterside Workers' Federation of Australia,
ROCKHAMPTON BRANCH.

13th ANNUAL PICNIC
EMU PARK,
Saturday. Oct 1st, 1921

SPORTS OFFICIALS:
PRESIDENT—F. Dunn.
PICNIC SECRETARY —T. J. Maxwell
TREASURER —E. B. PURNELL.
JUDGES —H. Orford, J. Middleton, H. Cain.
STARTERS—
J. Hamilton, G. Thompson, R. Cubley, J. Daniells.
TRACKMASTERS—
R. Murray, A. Berry, A. Matthews, J. M'Elrea.
CALL STEWARD—H. J. Johnstone.
COMMITTEE—
F. Dunn, T. J. Maxwell, J. Hart, J. M'Elrea, E. B. Purnell, R. Cubley, L. Yahnke, J. Buckler, J. Thompson, H. Orford, B. Buxton, H. Johnstone, C. Brown, F. Creagh, J. Daniells, A. Hart, G. Thompson, D. O'Connell, W. Stevens, A. Matthews, J. Neil, R. Murray J. Ward, W. Picton, H. Cain, A. Berry, J. Hamilton, J. Middleton, W. Lintern.

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In Aid of Picnic Funds.

Art Union
(By Permission of Attorney General.)

ONE HAMPER
Value £4.
HAMPER ON VIEW
PEOPLE'S CASH STORE, EAST STREET.

Drawing takes place at
TRADES HALL, OCTOBER 15th, 1921.

Tickets 6d. each.

T. J. MAXWELL, Secretary.

Fig. 78: WWF Annual Picnic Programme, 1921
CCQC

For sheer size and organisation, none could compare with the AMIEU Export Section picnic which re-commenced its annual celebrations in 1938 after several years in suspension during the Depression. During the worst of these years, most unions cancelled their picnic, not because of lack of support so much as high unemployment and low finances making it both difficult to arrange and inappropriate. For the AMIEU, Emu Park again provided the venue and the committee under the long-time picnic secretary, Hugh ('Paddy') Bloomer, organised an exciting day of food delights together with the traditional sports and novelty events. The high point of the celebration was the 11-aside inter-departmental tug-o-war. Unemployed members did not miss out either, the sense of community being so strong among members of the AMIEU.[114] Only on one occasion did tragedy mar the meatworkers' day of fun. In 1941, 16-year-old Vera Schneider was killed while trying to board the returning train before it had stopped. She had hoped to

114. AMIEU Cutting book. CCQC J19/945 2

get a good seat for the trip home but accidentally tripped and the carriage wheels severed her leg.[115]

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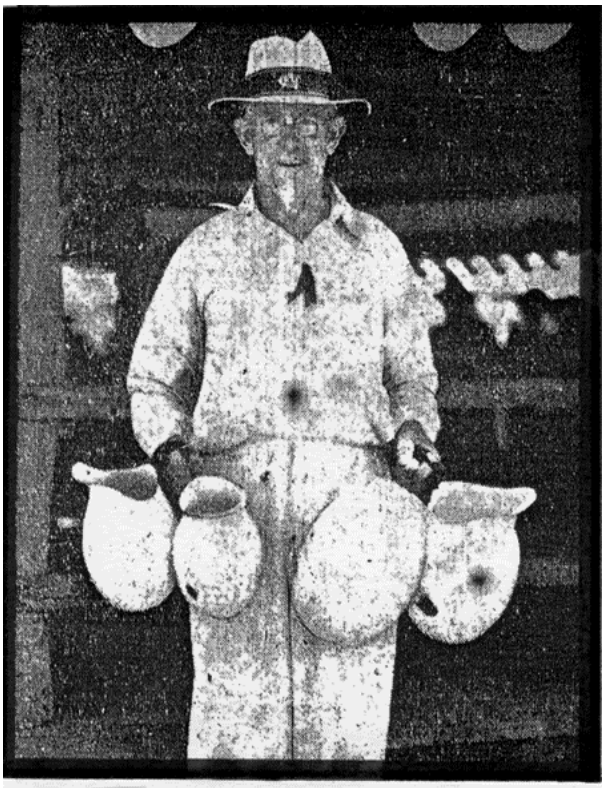
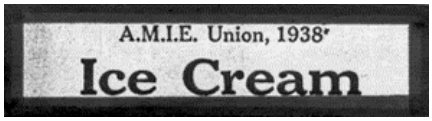


Fig. 79: AMIEU Secretary Len Haigh at Union Picnic, 1938
MB, 14 Mar. 1938



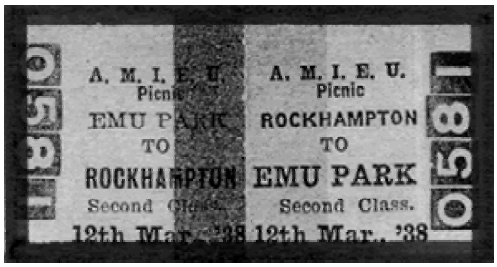


Fig. 80: Food Vouchers and Train Ticket for 1938 AMIEU Picnic
CCQC

115. AMIEU Minutes, 3 Nov. 1941. The separate picnic committee was to consider compensation for Vera Schneider's death but whether this ever transpired is not recorded. CCQC J19/941 3.

By the 1950s, the AMIEU picnic had grown into a major logistics exercise. The local paper reported of the 1951 event:

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> The Rockhampton Branch of the A.M.I.E.Union claims that its 1951 annual picnic, held yesterday at Emu Park, was the largest industrial picnic ever held in Australia. Five packed trains and many cars transported the large crowd to the seaside. It was variously estimated that between 4,000 and 5,000 people attended. The engine of the leading train was decorated with the union's emblem, bullock's horns, flags, streamers and drawings...25,000 ice creams were dispensed during the day.[116]

Whether it really was the largest event of its kind in Australia is debatable but the claim underscores the importance of the picnic in the perception of the local meatworkers.

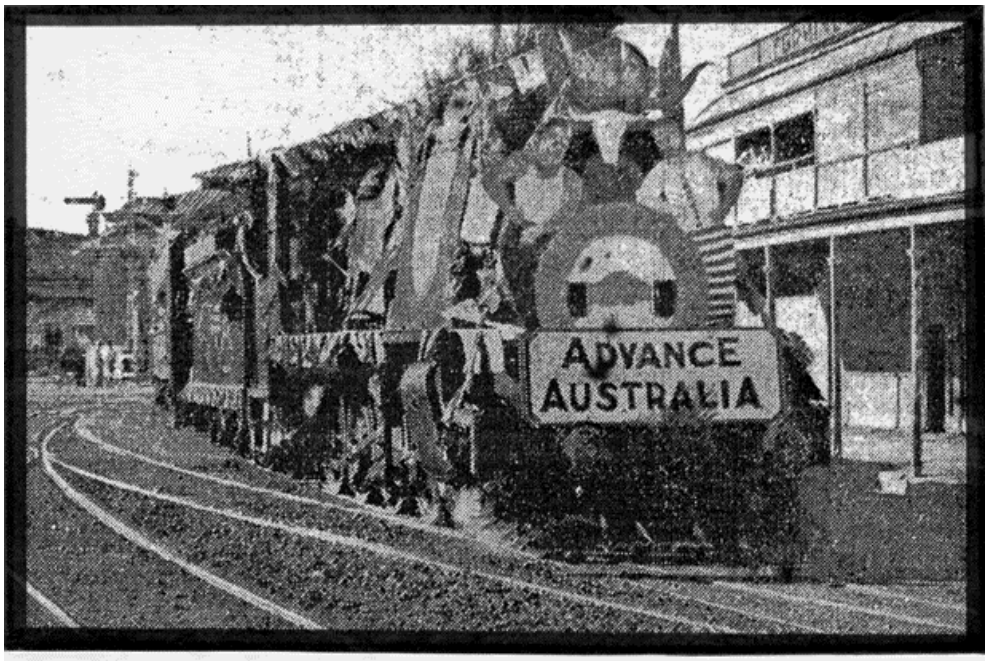

Fig. 81: Decorated Leading Train for AMIEU Picnic, 1947
MB, 22 Nov. 1947

While the union picnic provided a treat for members' families, many of the smaller unions did not indulge in this manner because of the expense and necessary organisation, compounded by rank-and-file apathy. In unions with dispersed membership like the AWU, many families did not know each other personally and there was often a lack of help with organisation and poor attendance at the picnic. In the larger unions not all members agreed with the idea either, even in years of high employment and a buoyant economy. Thus the annual vote to conduct a picnic was never unanimous. Before the

116. *MB*, 27 Oct. 1951, p. 7.

1923 FCDIU picnic, for instance, there was a long and heated debate about striking a picnic levy. Those against the idea claimed that for the previous year's event 'only a few stalwarts carried the responsibility' and the rest showed little interest at all. The motion narrowly succeeded and, thanks to the efforts of the organisers, the picnic proved a success.[117]

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The picnic committee usually devoted several months to planning the event, with last minute packing of children's food bags. For the AMIEU, that final task would see a dozen or more men under secretary Len Haigh's house in Murray Street working late into the night, sorting items and filling large paper bags whose contents even his own eager children had to await picnic day to discover.[118] The disappointment for the Haigh children and those of other meatworkers was that even in the AMIEU export section where support was normally strong the picnic sometimes turned out to be 'a blue duck'. One such year was 1925 when the killing season was particularly short and everyone was short of cash.[119] Of all the union children, those of the wharfies fared the best. Rarely

Fig. 82: WWF Children's Christmas Party
MB, 22 Dec. 1955

117. FCDIU Minutes, 26 Nov. 1923 and 9 June 1924. CCQC P16/1952 5
118. Barry interview.
119. AMIEU Minutes, 24 July 1925. CCQC J19/940 5

did the WWF cancel its picnic and, thanks to the hard work of the Waterside Workers' Ladies Committee by the mid-1950s, the children also enjoyed an annual Christmas party with Santa Claus bearing gifts for everybody.[120]

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The premier social event in Rockhampton's inter-union calendar, Eight-Hour Day—or Labour Day from 1919—was also originally intended as a day of fun for working-class families with sports and novelty events at the showgrounds. But as Chapter 3 has already shown, by the end of its first decade of existence the day had evolved into a commercial venture to finance building projects rather than being a day of cheap entertainment for workers. It was this gradual failure to cater for the interests of ordinary workers and their families that, together with inter-union discord in the organising committee, brought about the collapse of the Eight-Hour Day Celebration Committee in 1930. Only with the introduction of the children's picnic and sports day during the 1930s did the day again become one of fun and food which, during those Depression years, provided a much needed treat for many working-class children. Crowds of several thousand youngsters flocked to Victoria Park to enjoy the free picnic lunch, ice-creams, lollies, running and novelty events.[121]

For the early leaders of the union movement, it appears the prime social intent of Eight-Hour Day was more to foster a good relationship between union officials and to strengthen bonds with politicians than to provide enjoyment for ordinary workers. The official luncheon took place in a large marquee away from public view after some delegates complained of lack of privacy.[122] Together with invited Labor politicians and aldermen, delegates to the organising committee gathered to toast 'The Day We Celebrate'; to laud the benefits of unionism and Labor politics; to praise each other's efforts to further the cause of unionism in Rockhampton; and to partake of a splendid repast of roast meats, vegetables, desert and ample supplies of liquid refreshments. By

120. *MB*, 22 Dec. 1955, p. 6.
121. *MB*, 2 May 1933, p. 6 and 7 May 1935, p. 8.
122. EHDCC Minutes, 5 Feb. 1910. CCQC D9/260 2

1916, because of the cost of catering by private concerns, the hot meal gave way to a cold buffet luncheon supplied by the wives of union leaders or female members of the Workers' Political Organisation. The Ladies' Luncheon Committee, led by Mary-Jane Ashford and Emma Willis, received one guinea each for their efforts.[123] Wives of officials took no part in the dignitaries' luncheon other than serving the food, the men on the 1914 committee having denied them any such privilege.[124] As a ritual of the original organising committee, however, the traditional luncheon disappeared after the 1920s.

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When the Labour Day procession and sports carnivals resumed in 1938 after years of both a depressed economy and union movement, the atmosphere was more reminiscent of the original celebration. Unions again proudly displayed their banners and occupational skills on floats; thousands of applauding on-lookers lined the march route; and an enormous crowd of up to 6,000 children gathered at Victoria Park for the free celebratory picnic.[125] Unlike those original marches however, political slogans again indicated the change of emphasis that had begun to appear during the late 1920s with Labour Day being as much, if not more so, to promote the political wing of the labour

Fig. 83: Politicians at Labour Day Celebration, 1946
L to R: J. Clark, MLA (Fitzroy); Ald. J. Kerrigan; J.Lawrence (Pres. Rockhampton Agricultural Society); W. Ingram, MAL (Keppel); F. Forde, MHR (Capricornia); J. Larcombe, MAL (Rockhampton); Ald. J. Dowling.
MB, 6 May 1946

123. *ibid.*, 1 Apr. 1916 and 27 May 1916.
124. *ibid.*, 6 June 1914.
125. *MB*, 3 May 1938, p. 5.

movement rather than to celebrate the purpose and power of the industrial wing. Old union luminaries, especially those who were long-term Labor activists, still attended the function, however, as the 1953 Labour Day photograph of George Kemp, E.B. Purnell, Isaac Cant and Frank Conlon (Fig. 55, p.254) indicates.

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The ascendancy of politics in Labour Day grew with each year and, with the escalation of tension over the issue of communism in the labour movement, the celebration was abandoned altogether in 1949 and 1950. Although always biased against the union movement in its opinions, the *Morning Bulletin* accurately commented that 'the old spirit seems to have reached its nadir' as it had at the turn of the century and again in the late 1920s.[126] When the celebrations recommenced after this brief hiatus, they were organised by the ALP with only three or four unions at the most participating. Those unionists without firm connections to the political arm had little incentive or interest in participating. The march became a vehicle for political protest against the Gair Labor government and a parade for marching girls, youth organisations, sporting clubs, any other community group that wanted to promote itself or publicly complain together with the now regular clowns and decorated cars.[127]

Irrespective of the nature of the Labour Day procession, the ensuing picnic was still a great treat with thousands of children flocking to Victoria Park for the free celebrations and rides. Among those invited in 1955, as in other post-war years, were about 100 youngsters from St George's and St Joseph's Homes, several children from the new 'Spastic Centre' and 40 pensioners from Eventide Home for the Aged.[128] Catering for the aged and underprivileged reflected the long-standing concern some of the main unions had with providing for the social needs of the wider working-class community, even if they did not extend the same concern for the industrial interests of outsiders.

126. *ibid.*, 3 May 1949, p. 4.
127. *ibid.*, 7 May 1957, p. 2. Three hundredweight (cwt) equals approximately 153 kg.
128. *ibid.*, 3 May 1955, p. 7.

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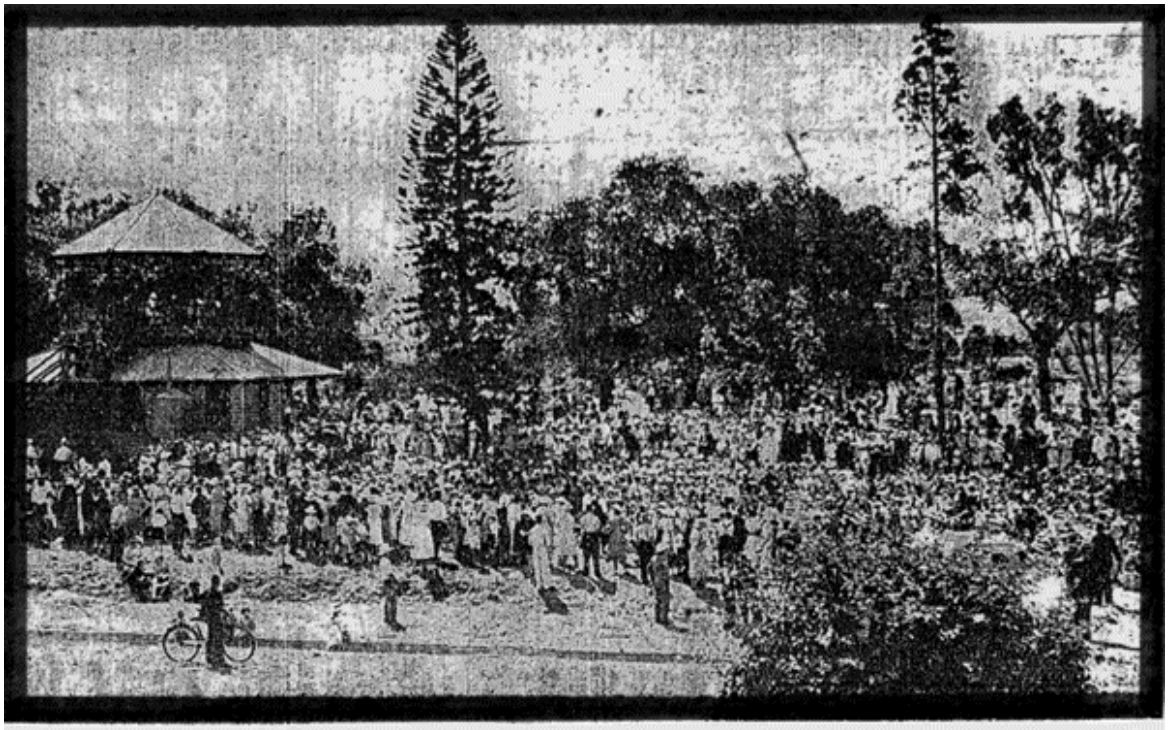

Fig. 84: Crowds at Victoria Park for the Labour Day Picnic, 1938
MB, 3 May 1938

Unions and the Wider Community

In the early decades when the poor and aged often depended on charity in the absence of social security, unions often undertook activities to assist them. Delegates from most major unions, the Trades Hall Board and Eight Hour Day Celebration Committee participated in an organisation called Charities Aid, a community group also comprised of church and civic dignitaries. This body raised money through social activities and an annual art union to alleviate the plight of the poor in Rockhampton. In keeping with prevailing views on poverty, however, only the 'deserving' poor who had fallen on misfortune could expect to be recipients. Through donations from unions and other community groups, needy people like pensioners at the Benevolent Home—some of them former unionists—could have an annual day at the seaside in the spirit of the union picnic.[129] By the early 1920s though, the FCDIU voiced the opinion shared by other

129. AMIEU Minutes, 19 Oct. 1923. CCQC J19/940 5

unions that Charities Aid had 'outlived its usefulness' as well as being a growing financial burden. They therefore discontinued their affiliation and it appears other unions soon after also dropped it as a concern.[130]

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The AMIEU remained firm in its commitment to the smaller Lakes Creek Widows and Orphans' Fund (later Lakes Creek Benevolent Fund) largely because that organisation provided more specifically for the needs of its members, most of whom worked at 'the Creek' and many of whom lived near. Widows such as Sarah Jane Bedsor, whose meatworker husband had died while on transfer to Townsville, could appeal for assistance to the fund as well as to the union funeral benefit. Like Charities Aid, church leaders and prominent local residents comprised the Lakes Creek fund as well as unionists. The AMIEU actively canvassed for nominations for the fund's annual elections and, in 1923, nine of the committee were union members.[131] The CQME Company also contributed several delegates as an extension of its welfare scheme for present and retired employees. Not surprisingly, the works' manager was the patron of the charity, as he was for almost every social and sporting body in Lakes Creek.[132]

In times of civil emergency, it was unionists who often took remedial action first. During the 1918 flood—the greatest inundation in white memory—Trades Hall men began to evacuate people from low-lying areas of town well before those in Town Hall stirred.[133] Similarly in the violent cyclone of 1949, ARU men quickly set about helping householders with roof repairs. The *Morning Bulletin*, opposed as ever to unionism and unionists, reported their actions as 'looting'. Perhaps this was a genuine misinterpretation but ARU secretary Frank Campbell felt it was a deliberate and malicious effort to discredit the ARU.[134] The TWU also opened a subscription list and donated from its own funds to the cyclone relief fund as did several other unions.[135] During and immediately

130. FCDIU Minutes, 23 Oct. 1923. CCQC P16/1952 5
131. AMIEU Minutes, 1 Aug. 1922 and 11 Aug. 1923. CCQC J19/940 5
132. CQME, *Souvenir of Lake's Creek*, Rockhampton, 1914, unpaginated.
133. *DR*, 6 Feb. 1918, p. 4.
134. Frank Campbell, interviewed 1 July 1995.
135. TWU Minutes, 11 Apr. 1949. CCQC P16/1954 2

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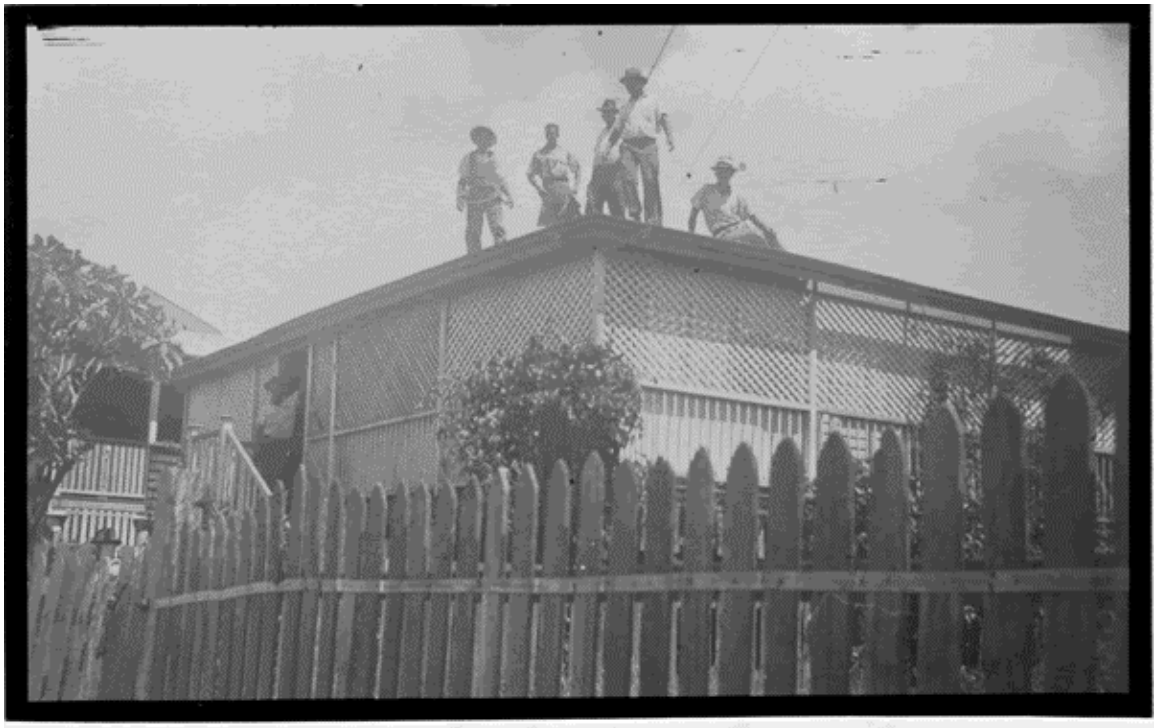

Fig. 85: ARU Members Repairing a Roof after the 1949 Cyclone
Frank Campbell

after World War II, several unions contributed delegates to a local anti-profiteering committee in an attempt to protect workers from exploitation by 'greedy' merchants.[136]

In later years, the disadvantaged still ranked high in union interests, particularly for the WWF. Some of its assistance included regularly inviting children from the orphanages and from the Bush Children's Home to their union picnics and donating generous amounts to worthy causes like 'the Blind' and to 'the Deaf and Dumb'.[137] The WWF Ladies' Committee also arranged free socials and suppers for the aged on a regular basis. According to the auxiliary, many of the people they entertained were former unionists who had helped win present working conditions and so they deserved some thanks in their old age.[138] To raise funds for these occasions, the WWF women ran street stalls and 'wog' afternoons.[139] The wharfies and other unions also extended their

136. AEU Minutes, 12 Apr. 1945. NBAC E162/33/1
137. WWF Minutes, 30 Aug. 1945. NBAC Z387/33/2
138. *MB*, 2 June 1956, p. 1 13 July 1957, p. 7.
139. *MW*, 9 Oct. 1956, p. 5. 'Wog' (also known as 'Hoy') was a form of Bingo which, at the time, was illegal in Queensland. It offered non-monetary prizes.

community interest to newer causes in later years. One of these was the Blood Transfusion Club which attracted generous donations of both cash and blood from the WWF, AMIEU, ARU and AEU.[140] These deeds also had potential benefit for members in the event of a serious accident at work. The WWF set itself the additional task of helping raise funds for an ambulance car for Emu Park while the AMIEU similarly donated towards the stationing of a vehicle at Lakes Creek.[141]

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Help for the unemployed, whose numbers rose dramatically during the Depression of the 1930s, was no so readily forthcoming. The Woodhouse case well illustrates the plight of unfinancial members in distress but a similar situation presented with those who were unfinancial due to loss of job and income. Rather than simply give a clearance that then left unemployed members ineligible for any benefits, some members of the FCDIU considered the union should set up a formal scheme to keep members financial whilst out of work. In 1927, Frank Cole presented a motion to this effect which generated 'long discussion' at a special general meeting but it was eventually defeated 42 to 21.[142] No doubt members thought this would be too big a burden on working carters but it also meant that when Cole himself was unemployed for two years in the Depression—and doing what little relief work was available—he lost all his union benefits.[143]

The Unemployed Workers' Union (UWU) approached other unions for financial and practical support on several occasions. The then ARTWU donated a small amount to the UWU in 1930 but only because the union had recently repudiated the 'communists' in the ARU who, as seen in Chapter 5, were trying to take control of unemployed affairs through their local Council of Action. This action by the UWU still did not guarantee that none of recipients of the money was a communist, of course, so the ARTWU requested that the UWU secretary, M. Treacy, forward a list of names and amounts paid

140. WWF Minutes, 19 June 1940. NBAC Z387/33/1; AEU Minutes, 2 May 1940. NBAC E162/33/1
141. WWF Minutes, 10 May 1938. NBAC Z387/33/1
142. ARTWU Minutes, 10 Oct. 1927. CCQC P16/1952 7
143. Bob Cole, interviewed 28 Apr. 1995.

to all unemployed men.[144] That way, the ARTWU committee could check for itself. The Trades Hall Board also gave guarded support to the UWU by providing free use of a room in the daytime but only on the condition that there was neither promotion of the communist message nor criticism of the Labor government. However, further requests
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for free use of the theatre on a Sunday and a room at night received prompt refusals because it would prevent the board from hiring out the space to other interests.[145] Other than these examples of assistance and protesting about the closure of the unemployed men's hostel that was set up in the old Asylum for the Insane in North Street, the unions did little in the way of helping the unemployed.[146] But then they were not a charity: their prime function was to assist their own members and, especially during the Depression, that was a challenge in itself.

Class, Community and Union Identities of Interest

Of the activities undertaken by the union movement as part of their wider agenda to better the lot of workers, only some initiatives succeeded. Among those which prospered—albeit with ups and downs and much hard-work by executives—were the benefit schemes which were integral to the system of financial welfare of members and were indirectly related to their working lives. Successful also were many of the social activities initiated by unions like the WWF and AMIEU. In the latter half of the period especially, the major unions generally eschewed joint activities, preferring to undertake any community or charity work of their own accord. On the other hand, those ventures that did not survive in the long-term, or were still-born, were more likely to have been inter-union initiatives or required the combined backing of unions. To explain this pattern of success and failure, it is necessary to look not only at the economic and

144. ARTWU Minutes, 8 Dec. 1930. CCQC P16/1952 7
145. THBM Minutes, 20 Apr. 1933, 19 July 1933 and 15 Mar. 1934. CCQC U14/2063 2 and 3
146. ARTWU Minutes, 15 Dec. 1935. CCQC P16/1953; Colin Maxwell, There Is a Life To Live: Autobiography of Colin A. Maxwell, unpublished manuscript, 1994, p. 17.

organisational aspects of the local union movement but also at the nature of broader social relations in Rockhampton itself.

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First, from a financial viewpoint, the vision of the instigators of major projects like the cooperative store and theatre was too idealistic and ambitious from the outset. In reality, these projects could not be sustained financially with the limited population of Rockhampton and, in the case of the theatre, especially during the Depression when unemployment was particularly severe in the city. The plan to purchase the *Daily Record*, had it succeeded, would likely have proved a financial disaster for the unions too. When the proprietors re-financed the paper's successor, the *Evening News*, in 1923, it had a nominal capital of £30,000.[147] Even with this high level of capital and the installation of modern printers, the paper failed to thrive in competition with the *Morning Bulletin*[148] and would have left unions, had they been successful in their original bid to buy it, in dire circumstances indeed. Most people it seems—workers included—preferred to read the *Morning Bulletin* regardless of its tory views. Moreover, as the second city in Queensland, Rockhampton was always keen to emulate Brisbane, with local unions sometimes rashly taking up schemes that had proved successful there so that they too would be seen as a progressive movement. A good example of this emulation, apart from the labour paper, was the formation on several occasions of a short-lived industrial or trades and labour council.

Second, as Chapter 3 explored more fully, lack of inter-union cooperation and even animosity stemming from workplace and ideological conflict underlay the failure of the Trades Hall Theatre and Labour Day celebrations in the late 1920s. Of more than 40 unions in the city, no more than 15 participated in Labour Day activities and only seven had a vested interest in Trades Hall. Two of the largest unions, the ARU and AWU, did not have any financial or philosophical commitment to inter-union pursuits at all; the rest seemingly had no interest in matters outside the workplace or they did not have the funds

147. McDonald, *Rockhampton*, p. 464.
148. Westacott, A History of Rockhampton Newspapers, p. 45.

available to participate. Rank-and-file apathy also played a role in the downfall of these plans. Many members thought that unions should limit their activities to workplace concerns and not waste time and members' money on outside interests.[149] Consequently, they were not prepared to accept the levies necessary to fund many class-based projects and, where unions did adopt such levies, members did not pay up. So, while there certainly was a strong 'trade union consciousness' among workers in recognising the need for organisation in the workplace and setting up union structures to redress injustice there,[150] the same perception did not extend to workers' interests and needs outside the factory gates. Third, over the decades, the original idealism waned. It was tempered as much by their own failures as by improvements in the lot of workers through Labor government reforms like pensions, unemployment and sickness benefits. Those unions which did extend their activities to the broader issues often relied on forceful secretaries like Frank Conlon and a dedicated committee to maintain the action.

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At a deeper level of analysis, Rockhampton's underlying social structure and dynamics gave rise to the contrasting pattern of success of certain individual union ventures and failure of many of the inter-union endeavours. The city was certainly not a classless society in terms of occupations or incomes but working-class consciousness required an identity of common interests with other manual workers and not with people of other occupations; it necessitated the recognition of class as the defining principle of public and private life; and an acceptance that working-class institutions and schemes were the most effective instruments available to cater for the needs of workers.[151] Yet many workers identified with other communities of common interest, both associational and geographical, which stretched across class categories and which muted the distinctive working-class consciousness[152] needed for both unions and individuals to wholeheartedly embrace union undertakings. At the same time, the perception of intra-class difference

149. Jack Egerton, interviewed 21 June 1996; Campbell interview.
150. Eric Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour: Further Studies in the History of Labour*, London, 1983, p. 59.
151. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 9; Rawson, *Unions and Unionists in Australia*, p. 14.
152. Greg Patmore, 'Community and Australian Labour History', in Terry Irving (ed.), *Challenges to Labour History*, Kensington, 1994, pp. 174 and 184.

also worked against the notion of working-class homogeneity. In place of union identification and working-class consciousness, a specific 'workplace identity' and a generalised 'town identity' prevailed.

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The Eight-Hour/Labour Day procession provided workers with a potent vehicle for celebrating working class industrial organisation and institutions. With banners and bands, floats depicting skills of individual unions and hundreds of unionists marching, the parade could have both demonstrated and fostered class consciousness through 'messages sent and received'[153] on the parts of the participants, onlookers and employers alike. But this was not the case. From the outset, employers also joined in this celebration with company floats, paternalistic gestures like donations of vehicles and prizes, and funding of programmes. The aura of cooperation and common purpose generated by their presence and participation therefore weakened the celebration as a manifestation of specific working-class consciousness.[154] In later years, although primarily a vehicle for political protest against governments—Labor included—the procession attracted many community organisations seeking to publicise themselves.

As well as supporting early Labour Day celebrations, management adopted other strategies to foster a sense of common purpose centred on the workplace at the expense of both union and broader class purpose. Many of these activities duplicated those the unions organised. For example, president of the TWU for many years Frank Cole took his children not only to the union picnic in the 1920s and 1930s but also to the annual work's outing of his merchant employer, Thomas Brown and Sons. In the 1940s and 1950s, his grandchildren attended the firm's annual Christmas Tree party.[155] Mixed work socials where everyone knew each other vied with male-only union smoke socials and

153. June Philipp, 'Traditional Historical Narrative and Action-Oriented (or Ethnographic) History, *Historical Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 80, Apr. 1983, p. 350.
154. EHDCC/LDCC Minutes. Company sponsorship and participation continued until the mid-1920s. When the parade was revived in the late-1930s, local businesses still entered floats.
155. Cole interview. One grandchild (the author) still has a photograph of herself at Thomas Brown's children's Christmas party in the 1950s.

usually proved more appealing to young adults.[156] There were also football teams like 'Imperials' from Lakes Creek Meatworks and cricket teams from the various warehouses. Even the WWF cricket team rated amongst its 'staunchest supporters' the brewer Thomas McLaughlin and William Rudd, Walter Reid and Company's chairman.[157] Moreover, many businesses were owned and managed by successive generations of local families and strong bonds of employee loyalty developed.[158] This sense of loyalty to the boss and mateship with fellow workers, combined with a dispersed union membership, meant that workers more readily identified with the workplace than they did with their union.

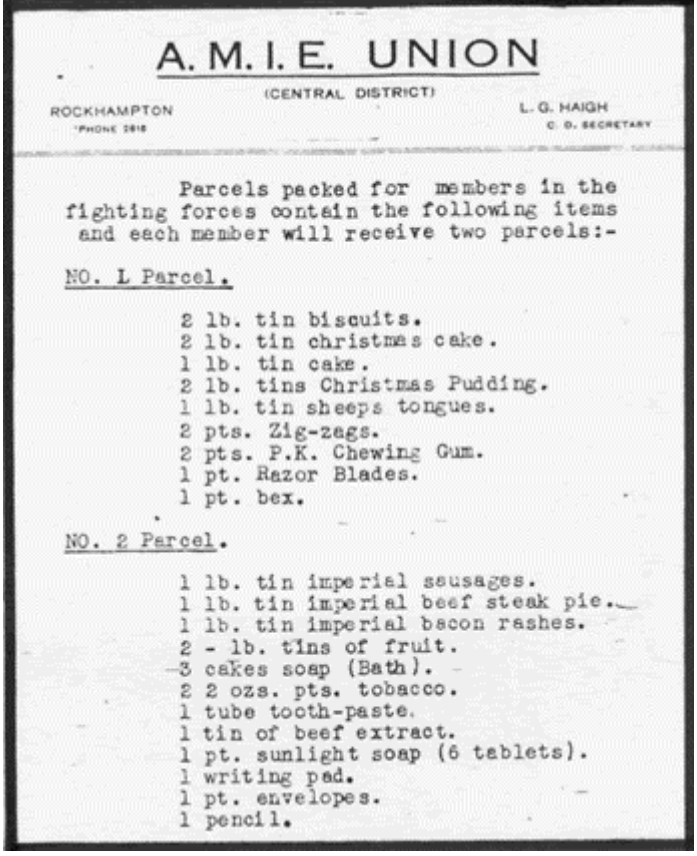
Fig. 86: Management and Staff of Denham Bros, Wholesale Merchants
The staff photograph encouraged identification with, and loyalty to, the firm even though the master and his men were carefully ranked for the camera.
CCQC

156. *MB*, 5 Nov. 1934, p. 4.
157. *MW*, 17 May 1941, p. 2; McDonald, *Rockhampton*, p. 505.
158. For example, Walter Reid & Co.; Denham Bros; Headrick & Co.; James Millroy & Sons; James Stewart & Co.; E.S. Lucas & Co.; Kirby's Pty. Ltd.; Tucker & Tucker; Burns & Twigg; Sidney Williams Ltd and City Printing Works.

Fig. 87: Staff of James Stewart and Co. at the Firm's Guy Fawkes Night Social at the Palais Royal, 1937
MB, 9 Nov. 1937

However, in the case of the WWF, AMIEU and to a lesser extent the ARU, where workplace and union membership were synonymous, a strong sense of union identity did exist. On the wharves and at the meatworks, unionists were work mates whose friendships often extended beyond work hours and included extensive family networks. These personal bonds gave added strength to union bonds and thus guaranteed that pursuits undertaken by the WWF and AMIEU generally proved successful where those of unions with dispersed membership flagged. It was this union solidarity that moved the AMIEU to send to each member away in the armed forces during the Second World War two 'Christmas Cheer' parcels of personal requisites and food including, of course, several tins of the meatworks' own Imperial Brand products.[159] The WWF also voted unanimously to send its servicemen similar parcels, though probably with tinned food of other brands.[160]

159. AMIEU Cutting Book. CCQC J19/945 2
160. WWF Minutes, 28 Oct. 1942. NBAC Z387/33/1



A. M. I. E. UNION

(CENTRAL DISTRICT)

ROCKHAMPTON
'PHONE 1818

L. G. HAIGH
C. D. SECRETARY

Parcels packed for members in the fighting forces contain the following items and each member will receive two parcels:-

NO. L Parcel.

2 lb. tin biscuits.
2 lb. tin christmas cake.
1 lb. tin cake.
2 lb. tins Christmas Pudding.
1 lb. tin sheeps tongues.
2 pts. Zig-zags.
2 pts. P.K. Chewing Gum.
1 pt. Razor Blades.
1 pt. bex.

NO. 2 Parcel.

1 lb. tin imperial sausages.
1 lb. tin imperial beef steak pie.
1 lb. tin imperial bacon rashes.
2 - lb. tins of fruit.
3 cakes soap (Bath).
2 2 ozs. pts. tobacco.
1 tube tooth-paste.
1 tin of beef extract.
1 pt. sunlight soap (6 tablets).
1 writing pad.
1 pt. envelopes.
1 pencil.

Fig. 88: AMIEU Christmas 'Cheer' Parcels to Members in the Armed Forces, 1942
CCQC

Besides management's efforts to supplant class consciousness with company loyalty, workers' own perceptions contributed to a lessening of class consciousness. Many of those who were working class by way of their manual labour did not see themselves as a homogeneous group socially, morally or even occupationally. Perceptions of respectability divided workers into two sub-groups: employment and habits such as thrift, sobriety and often church attendance separated the 'respectable' working class from 'their inferiors, the dirty, drunken, casual poor'.[161] Some workers' families, particularly the wives, actually considered themselves as middle class by dint of their 'higher' morals and 'better' behaviour in comparison with 'common' or working class people.[162]

More important as divisors within the 'respectable' working class were skill and permanency of employment These distinctions created an upper stratum or 'labour aristocracy' of skilled and semi-skilled permanent workers and a lower stratum of

161. Janet McCalman, *Struggletown: Public and Private Life in Richmond, 1900–1965*, Melbourne, 1985, pp. 20-22.
162. Clara Cole, interviewed 10 Feb. 1996.

labourers who worked on a regular but seasonal or casual basis.[163] In Rockhampton, as in other places, young men who secured 'a good job in the railway'—particularly in a trade—had superior social status to those who did day labour for the municipal council, seasonal employment at the meatworks or irregular shifts on the wharves.[164] Reflecting this attitude, most railway unions other than the ARU always considered themselves 'a cut above' other unions in the city, especially in the case of the elitist AEU.[165]

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Even within industrial unions like the AMIEU, tradesmen tended to be more ambitious to advance their careers than their lesser skilled counterparts. In the case of a butcher, for example, his aim was often to open his own retail shop and to earn enough to provide the more comfortable lifestyle of a small businessman. The union practice of rejecting his continued membership, though for sound industrial reasons, further weakened his attachment to the working-class and its industrial and political institutions. Sid Robinson's expulsion from the Moulders' Union when he took on an off-sider in his backyard foundry and his subsequent decision never to vote Labor again serve as clear testimony of such changes in perceived class interests.

At the same time as perceptions of difference and divergent aspirations fragmented working-class consciousness, a geographical 'community consciousness' gave rise to a 'locality identity'.[166] The comparatively small but urban population of Rockhampton brought individual workers into social proximity with people from different occupational backgrounds more so than happened in the large working-class suburbs such as Richmond in Melbourne, Surry Hills in Sydney or Woolloongabba in Brisbane.[167] Rockhampton had a large middle-class population that blurred some of the geographical and social distinctions between rich and poor. Many professionals and the

163. F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian England*, *1830–1900*, London, 1988, pp. 181-182.
164. C. Cole interview.
165. Treacy interview; Campbell interview.
166. Patmore, 'Community and Australian Labour History', p. 174; Bob Connell and Terry Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History: Poverty and Progress*, Melbourne, 1992, p. 130-131.
167. McCalman, *Struggletown*, p. 19; Peter Spearritt, *Sydney Since the Twenties*, Sydney, 1978, p. 193; Ronald Lawson, *Brisbane in the 1890s: A Study of an Australian Urban Society*, St Lucia, 1973, p. 109.

wealthy lived on 'the Range' and labourers predominated in areas near the railway, wharves and meatworks, but throughout most of the town, small retailers, clerks, shop assistants and teachers dwelt side-by-side with tradesmen and labourers.[168] Furthermore, unlike itinerant workers' camps in North Queensland where isolation and exclusive male company bred a strong and militant working-class consciousness,[169] or even Townsville which was overwhelmingly 'a man's town' with a surplus of males in almost all adult age categories, Rockhampton was more a family town.[170] Comparatively few men moved outside the urban area for work purposes other than some wharfies and meatworkers on transfer and reluctant relieving rail workers; most men lived in the comparative comfort of the home where time and commitment to family and to other outside interests competed with commitment to the union and exclusively worker-based interests.

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The main street played a pivotal role in social interaction and created a town identity rather than class identity.[171] People uniformly regarded themselves as 'Rockhamptonites'. Everybody shopped in East Street for anything other than basic foodstuffs and this was where people promenaded, gossiped and discussed community matters. For those who did not work on a Saturday morning, East Street was the place to be.[172] Other sites of social interaction promoted cross-class relations as well. People worshipped in the same churches; they caught the same buses to town; they went to the same cinemas, the only distinction there being the price of seats. Youths also played in the same sporting fixtures. With no rugby union after 1918, even the boys at the Grammar School played rugby league against those at the High School and Christian Brothers' College.[173] Bright working-class students attended local Grammar and Catholic secondary schools on the government scholarship system while for many years student

168. *Commonwealth Electoral Roll*, *Capricornia Division*, 1922.
169. Connell and Irving, *Class Structure in Australian Society*, 1992, pp. 130-131.
170. *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, *1921,* Vol. I, pp. 818-819 and 822-223; and *Census, 1947*, Vol. I, pp. 213-214 and 218-219. The data show not only comparatively fewer men in Rockhampton but also a lower percentage of single men than in Townsville.
171. Erik Eklund, 'We Are of Age: Class, Locality and Region at Port Kembla, 1900 to 1940', *Labour History*, No. 66, May 1994, pp. 82-84.
172. Noel Furzeman, interviewed 15 Mar. 1993. This was still the case until the opening of suburban shopping complexes in the 1970s.
173. Minutes of Central Queensland Rugby Football Union, 24 Apr. 1918. CCQC N4/1900 3

from all backgrounds who wished to undertake a vocational education with commercial, trade or home economics subjects had to attend the High School and the adjoining Technical College.[174] People from all socio-economic backgrounds mingled in the plethora of friendly societies, and freemasonry served as 'an agency of social integration' where tradesmen fraternised with clerks, businessmen and professionals.[175]

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In public life, too, the interests of urban labour and business merged at times, finding a common goal in regional and local progress which simultaneously brought profits for bosses and jobs for workers. To this end, in the Rockhampton Harbour Board elections during the 1920s, names such as Purnell and Conlon appeared on a joint ticket with three leading merchants to push for increased trade through Rockhampton.[176] Similarly in 1941, the local ARU and several other unions affiliated with the Central Queensland Advancement League (CQAL) which, as the ARU was at pains to explain to the perturbed union hierarchy in Brisbane, 'comprised all sections of the community' even if 'sponsored' by middle-class interests. As the CQAL's goal was promotion of regional industry, the ARU believed the organisation would benefit Rockhampton in general and railway workers in particular.[177]

Union leaders and employers found further common interest in associations such as Charities Aid, the wartime Manpower Committee and the Flood Relief Committee in 1918 and 1954. Prominent unionists like Haigh, Conlon, Purnell and others also served long terms on numerous local authorities along with business men. Rather than seeing workers' interests as necessarily '*diametrically* opposed' to those of other classes, Rockhampton union leaders often achieved a successful working relationship in aspects of their extra-workplace activities by accommodating wider community needs. Through participation in these bodies, they fraternised with men with whom they negotiated

174. Admission Register, Rockhampton Grammar School, 1914, RGS; *DR*, 21 Feb. 1920, p. 4; Admission Registers, Rockhampton High School, 1919–1920. RHS
175. Margaret Chapman, Freemasonry and Community in Nineteenth-Century Victoria, PhD Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1987, p. 11.
176. *DR*, 18 July 1921, p. 4.
177. ARU State Council Minutes, 3-9 Nov. 1941, p. 22. PTU

industrial deals. In some cases, they even joined their bourgeois social circle. Len Haigh, for example, regularly associated with Lakes Creek management and other employers at the prestigious Athelstane Bowls Club of which he became president in 1945. Haigh also served on the committee of the Rockhampton Jockey Club at Callaghan Park.[178]

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Although these prominent unionists certainly did not abandon their working-class principles, this '*embourgeoisement*' was also reflected in the contrast between the cultural and social needs of rank-and-file unionists as identified by early union leaders and the reality of members' own interests. Many of the leaders were self-educated men who read intellectual works whereas many of their members had no enthusiasm whatsoever for similar pursuits. Most workers wanted their eight hours' recreation and relaxation to be just that and not wasted pursuing 'useless' knowledge. To that end, had the Trades Hall Board allowed the theatre to be used for skating, boxing, wrestling and other popular activities which drew large crowds of workers, it may have been a financial success even if not a cultural one. Unfortunately, the board rejected these forms of popular culture in the belief that they would bring Trades Hall into disrepute by attracting an 'unsavoury' crowd.[179]

Other communities of interest not only fragmented class identity but also fulfilled some of the functions unions sought to serve. Friendly societies, for example, provided sickness benefits as their primary goal rather than as an ancillary service. They also engaged in their own 'elaborately orchestrated rituals'[180] including bannered processions accompanied by their own brass bands such as those of the Oddfellows and Foresters. For the 1922 hospital fete procession, the Trades Hall Board turned down an invitation for members of affiliated unions to march with their banners because, it claimed, they would all be marching with their respective friendly societies.[181]

178. Barry interview.
179. THBM Minutes, 20 Dec. 1934 and 21 Feb. 1935. CCQC U14/2063 3
180. Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, *1740-1790*, Chapel Hill, 1982, p. 328.
181. THBM Minutes, 30 Sept. 1922. CCQC U14/2063 1

These societies and other organisations like sporting clubs conducted their own dances and socials as well. Sunday Schools held picnics too, with the Congregational Sunday School holding its annual picnic on Labour Day in competition with the union function.[182] And for that minority of workers who did thirst for knowledge, the Technical College offered night classes in both job-related and general-interest subjects while, for a small fee, the School of Arts library could cater for those who desired intellectual stimulation and advancement. Moreover, that library offered most genres of reading from the classics and technical works to the immensely popular light novels, westerns and detective yarns which many workers preferred to ideological or political works.

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Unions in Rockhampton, as elsewhere, undertook other activities than simply that of industrial defence and promotion of workers' interests in the workplace. Celebrations and social activities provided opportunities to display and foster pride in working-class organisation and strength. In a more practical role, and as idealistically envisaged by early union leaders who saw themselves as part of a working-class movement rather than simply a collection of union organisations, they attempted to remedy the disadvantages and relieve the perceived hardships of working-class life. While the activities organised by unions like the WWF and AMIEU proved a success because of a coalescing of several different common identities of interest, the transection of class-consciousness by competing cross-class interest underlay the failure of most inter-union endeavours.

182. *MB*, 5 May 1936.