

## Chapter Seven

### Mining town politics and the power of the press

Establishment of a press had the potential to influence physical development of a town and the attitudes of its residents.<sup>1</sup> The power of press journalism varied in cities and regional towns. However, mining settlements provided fertile ground for the growth of discontent with the mining experience in terms of land, law, miners, capitalists and mining politics. Historiography of the Queensland press that embraces the relationship between colonial press and politics includes the mining experience and profiles personalities and ethics of the Fourth Estate.<sup>2</sup>

The operation of a newspaper in a mining town as elsewhere was a phenomenon that demonstrated freedom of opinion and political attitudes that ranged from conservative to liberal, democratic and anti-conservative. At Mount Morgan, a town that existed in a perpetual state of flux, local news, press editorials, political discussion and even social commentaries were directed to a male readership. The press ethic of reporting current news to the public at large included journalism of government and local affairs. However, some press, for example, the *Mount Morgan Argus* and more particularly, the later tabloid, *Critic*, walked a fine line between pragmatism that might be interpreted as covert bias and, on occasion, scurrilous reporting that aroused the angst of a reading public as much as those targeted. For the purposes of this thesis, therefore, it was essential to separate factual news from sensationalist journalism. Such analysis sustained

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<sup>1</sup> Rod Kirkpatrick, *Sworn to no master: a history of the provincial press in Queensland to 1930*, Toowoomba, 1984, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Denis Cryle, *Disreputable profession: journalists and journalism in colonial Australia*, Rockhampton, 1997, pp. 131, 139.

research for this chapter that deals with the tension between Mount Morgan press and politics at local and government level, and Rockhampton press attitudes toward Mount Morgan.

The perpetual and most widely distributed press in Central Queensland was the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin*. Despite changes of ownership and management that published pragmatic or profound journalism, the newspaper tended always towards 'a sedate conservative organ'.<sup>3</sup> The *Central Queensland Times* published in Rockhampton in 1889 folded after circulation for fifteen months. Political support for the Rockhampton press was changing at this time also, but reversal of loyalties did little to appease press conflict. The *Daily Northern Argus* was purchased in 1895 by Stewart Hartley, in partnership with his father-in-law, Charles Hardie Buzacott, of Rockhampton's founding press family. The *Argus* became the *Daily Record* in 1897 and was a radical if Liberal press, acquired later by T.J. Ryan as a medium for Labor political propaganda to challenge the conservative *Morning Bulletin*. By 1922, the *Daily Record* changed again to become the *Evening News*, its Labor press continuing until purchased by capitalist interests in 1929 for the *Morning Bulletin*.<sup>4</sup>

By 1884, news of the Mount Morgan mining syndicate appeared in the daily *Morning Bulletin* at Rockhampton, the *Daily Northern Argus* and the weekly *Capricornian*. Their reportage preceded the operation of four newspapers at Mount Morgan between 1887-1900, where the original and longest surviving press was the conservative *Mount Morgan Chronicle and Mining Gazette* founded by E.H.L. Eastwood. This was joined by the *Mount Morgan Truth* and the *Mount Morgan Herald*, both newspapers that rose and fell in the 1890s.<sup>5</sup> By 1900, a second Eastwood venture was the more liberal organ, the *Mount Morgan Argus*.

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<sup>3</sup> Lorna McDonald, *Rockhampton: a history of city and district*, St Lucia, 1981, p. 463.

<sup>4</sup> McDonald, *Rockhampton*, p. 464.

<sup>5</sup> The hard copies of *Mount Morgan Truth* held at John Oxley Library and the Mitchell Library were not on microfilm. Holdings on the Mitchell Library index were declared missing and similar copy at John Oxley Library was withdrawn from use.



Fig. 33. *Mount Morgan Chronicle*, c. 1900. Left: James G. Hay, printer and later, newspaper owner, see Fig. 31.

The local press did not equate with newspapers in other mining towns, for example, the *Northern Miner* at Charters Towers or the *Gympie Truth*. Moreover, Rod Kirkpatrick declares that the *Gympie Truth*, established in 1896 on a proposal by Andrew Fisher as an organ of 'the common herd', was a politically motivated newspaper for which the election to government of erstwhile mine engine driver Fisher was a triumph.<sup>6</sup> That press at Mount Morgan had no similar driving force suggests the significance of time in town and mine development. Gympie and Charters Towers, founded in earlier years, were centres where the press was a medium of support for individual or group diggings on miner's claims and later miners' rights. At Charters Towers, two decades of mining passed before mining companies dominated.<sup>7</sup> Thus, neither place offered a development paradigm for the emergent Mount Morgan, where the conservative hierarchy of the Company that retained powerful influence over the existence of the single company town also preferred no contact with the press.

<sup>6</sup> Kirkpatrick, *Sworn to no master*, p. 141.

<sup>7</sup> Diane Menghetti, 'Property and power on the mining frontier', *Journal of Australian studies*, no. 49, 1996, pp. 49, 66. Cryle, *Disreputable profession*, p. 109. In the 1870s, the 'eccentric' liberal Thadeus O'Kane of the *Northern Miner* trenchantly espoused racist attitudes to Chinese and, when mining companies developed at Charters Towers in the 1880s, advocated opposition to 'the big mill and company owners'.

The *Mount Morgan Truth* commenced publication by the 1890s but in 1900, although not closed, much of the equipment was purchased by Eastwood for the espoused democratic *Mount Morgan Argus*. Local photographer, newsagent, journalist and aspiring politician Jens Lundager managed and edited the *Argus* until that time.<sup>8</sup> He worked with James Geddes Hay, a printer of wide experience who served his apprenticeship in Scotland. As Graeme Griffin points out, Lundager's shop and residence in Morgan Street was the clandestine meeting place for Labor sympathisers to organise local support for the Queensland shearers' strike.<sup>9</sup>

James Benedict Cleary came to the *Mount Morgan Argus* in 1900, and exposition of his new management appeared in an *Argus* column under a traditional take-over header, 'Ourselves'.<sup>10</sup> Cleary reassured readers that the newspaper would pursue a long and useful career in its self-appointed role as guardian of the public voice. To this end, the *Argus* would direct special attention to the mining industry to which, Cleary asserted, Mount Morgan press 'had not done full duty'.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, he declared, the *Argus* had no intention of 'prostituting' the freedom of the press by descending to the '*Dead Bird* level' of the *Mount Morgan Truth*.<sup>12</sup> The *Argus* was adamant it had not replaced the *Truth*, merely purchased the premises and some items of plant. Moreover, the *Argus* was not connected with *Truth*, which was 'pro-Boer, pro-British, pro-anything in fact that will pay'.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Graeme Griffin, *Photographs of old Mount Morgan and its mine: a study of the historical and cultural context of a photographic archive*, vol. 1, MA thesis (Literature and Communications), Murdoch University, 1987, p. 64.

<sup>9</sup> Griffin, *Photographs of old Mount Morgan*, p. 65.

<sup>10</sup> *MMA*, 12 April 1900.

<sup>11</sup> *Capricornian*, 12 December 1896.

<sup>12</sup> *MMA*, 2 February 1900. In 1889, the New South Wales postmaster general prohibited passage through the mail of the weekly sporting paper *The Dead Bird*. Criticism of the new press in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly led to notification of police that the character of the newspaper was suspect. *Central Queensland Times*, 14 September 1889.

<sup>13</sup> *MMA*, 2 April 1900.

Within two months, Cleary faced Rockhampton court on charges that brought his conviction for false pretences.<sup>14</sup> The *Mount Morgan Argus* reverted to Eastwood, but over time, the newspaper experienced further and spasmodic changes of ownership and management. Hay was a partner in the *Argus* with local agent Charles Briggs from 1900; but after their conviction in a 1908 libel suit discussed in chapter four, Hay conducted his own printery until he took over and retained the *Mount Morgan Chronicle*.<sup>15</sup>

Whilst conservative or anti-conservative press dominated in several of the permanent newspapers, local and regional journalism at times reflected a certain ambivalence. However, this suggests that a change in political and social attitudes of a press reflected a change in ownership or management. The common influence of the mine in financial, economic, and social interests linked Rockhampton and Mount Morgan inexorably, but the local press might present a strong voice in its town of publication. Mount Morgan editorials and leaders carped regularly at the Rockhampton press, but Central Queensland journalism of the late nineteenth century was not a benchmark for vitriolic journalism. Denis Cryle points out that for journalist George Lang in the 1860s, 'politics, like journalism, was akin to a blood sport',<sup>16</sup> the metaphor suggesting that protagonists in press or politics destroy the reputation of opponents by ruthless use of language, innuendo and accusation. It will be seen in this chapter that by the 1890s, the politics and press of the Mount Morgan experience revealed that such 'sport' during open discussion in the House included personal denigration. Moreover, some press 'drew

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<sup>14</sup> The Cleary case is discussed in chapter four.

<sup>15</sup> *MB*, 25 September 1934. The Hempenstall versus Briggs and Hay case is discussed in chapter four.

<sup>16</sup> D. Cryle, *Disreputable profession*, p. 86.



Fig. 34. Staff of *Mount Morgan Argus*, c. 1908 during ownership by Charles Briggs and James G. Hay (far right).

blood' in denunciation of politicians perceived as recalcitrant and others who aspired to politics.

The 1890s have been associated historically with severe economic depression, but unemployment throughout much of Central Queensland was endemic by 1888. Moreover, primary production in the region and further west was decimated by drought, causing depletion of the Lakes Creek Meat Works labour force at Rockhampton and decline of work on the river wharves. In the local sphere, the topic of unemployment was the most emotive topic for politicians and newspapers alike. A response to a local press call for unemployment relief on behalf of male workers was a public meeting staged at the Rockhampton School of Arts in August 1889.<sup>17</sup> The event had the trappings of dramatic performance: James Stewart, owner-editor of the shortlived, Labor driven *People's Newspaper* at Rockhampton declared to the 400 strong meeting that the local level of unemployment was extremely high. To dispel a non-Labor (unidentified) press comment that the number of unemployed was less than claimed, a show of hands at the

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<sup>17</sup> *CQT*, 10 August 1889.

meeting confirmed that one hundred and fifty in the audience were out of work. Stewart referred also to a statement in the *Daily Northern Argus* that those who attended a previous, similar meeting were 'nothing more or less than a lot of drunken loafers'. For his part, Stewart asserted that drunken men 'should have been relegated to the back seats', but he stopped short of declaring they should have been ejected from the meeting. Applauded for representing the 'working man...including those with wives and families', Stewart declared that to provide employment in the district, the government must proceed with public works. However, he received no response to his admonishment that the colonial practice of applying to the government for work was 'not a healthy thing'.<sup>18</sup>

Given the magnitude of the Central Queensland meeting at Rockhampton, the unemployment situation was in marked comparison to a seemingly consolidated labour force at the Mount Morgan mine, located well within the 'boundaries' of the region. Moreover, mine management was aware public works neared completion in other areas of the Colony. In the event, more labourers would come to the Central District in the hope that, as discussed in chapter one, construction of the railway extension to the new mining town would finally proceed.

Stewart was convinced that construction must proceed on the Mount Morgan railway, dredging work on the Fitzroy River, and the railway to the deep water port at Port Alma. He demanded that Rockhampton members, William Pattison MLA, and Archibald Archer MLA, must fulfil their election promises to obtain £100 000 for the work. Pattison conducted the Rockhampton Boiling Down Works among other enterprises and was a major shareholder in the mine. Archer, a squatter of Gracemere station near Rockhampton employed a substantial pastoral and dairying workforce.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *CQT*, 10 August 1889. Stewart, a Scottish labourer, came to Rockhampton in 1888. He was secretary of the Lakes Creek Labourers' Union and Butchers' Union, member of the Rockhampton Council of Australian Labor Federation and ultimately MLA, North Rockhampton.

<sup>19</sup> D.B. Waterson, *A biographical register of the Queensland Parliament 1860-1929*, Canberra, 1972, p. 118; June Stoodley, *The Queensland gold-miner in the late nineteenth century*, MA thesis, University of Queensland, 1964, Chapter II, pp. 82-102. Stoodley presents a case study of Pattison's membership of the Queensland Legislative Assembly, 1888-1890 with discussion of the financial influence that

Pattison's bullish approach to government had been evident already in his determination to push through a portion of the 1888 Loan Estimates for the proposed Mount Morgan Railway. He moved to benefit the Company in a demand for £40 000 for the construction<sup>20</sup> but the Railways Commissioner's *Report* stated that the Mount Morgan line would cost closer to £140 000 excluding land and rolling stock.<sup>21</sup> Further, profit from the railway would depend on the continued support of Mount Morgan gold.

During the meeting at Rockhampton, Stewart asserted also that the unemployment problem cease with the termination of large-scale immigration to the Colony, especially to Rockhampton as a port of entry. Other speakers supported the view and indeed would have been aware that the R.M.S. *Quetta* arrived at Keppel Bay in May 1889 with 74 immigrants, including 33 single men, 17 single women, and nine married couples with children.<sup>22</sup> Coincidentally, a dismal article in the Rockhampton press informed readers that the Court of Petty Sessions at Muttaborra in Western Queensland stated that already, hundreds of men were unemployed in that region, so to seek work there would be futile.<sup>23</sup>

In his democratic and gratis *Central Queensland Times*, Edgar Gostelow reported in verse on the meeting, lampooning those present from mayor and political members to the unemployed in the working-class audience. Whilst 'freedom of the press' reflected the contribution of journalists and outside writers to reader knowledge and understanding of events and issues, news that might be accurate, if derogatory, was presented at times as journalism in the genre of verse and parody that would otherwise constitute libel:

A meeting of the *great unwashed*,  
Mayor Williams did convene;  
The *great unwashed* attended,

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brought him to the Assembly and his political influence that led resigning premier McIlwraith to coin the term 'Mount Morganism'.

<sup>20</sup> *QPD*, LXI, 1890, 18 November 1889, 16 September 1890, pp. 545, 549, 518, 520, 546, also see Stoodley, *The Queensland gold-miner*, pp. 95.

<sup>21</sup> Stoodley, *The Queensland gold miner*, p. 99.

<sup>22</sup> *CQT*, 4 May 1889.

<sup>23</sup> *CQT*, 11 May 1889.



But they looked uncommon *clean*.

On Monday night the School of Arts  
Was crammed from floor to ceiling,  
With working men, who wished to test  
The state of public feeling.

The object of the meeting was  
To pass some resolutions;  
To ask the Legislature for  
Relief work institutions.

A workman named James Stewart, then  
Proposed a resolution  
To forward to the members of  
The Central Constitution.

The proposal which he made  
He hoped they'd not decline.  
It was the immediate starting of  
The Mount Morgan railway line.

Another move alas, he  
Moved without trepidation;  
To put a temporary stop  
To all free immigration.<sup>24</sup>

Influential Rockhampton merchant and member of the Stock Exchange, George Barnsley Shaw declared at the meeting that considerable delay would occur between seeking benefit from the government and action by the government. He followed this with the old standard that the unemployed should go out into the bush and dig for gold, to which was heard the typical response, 'How can a man go out prospecting without money to buy rations?' Curtis referred to 'the habit of the working classes' to frequent hotels and the chairman also observed drily that 'for an assemblage of men out of work, they all looked extremely well'.<sup>25</sup>

Pattison and Archer replied by telegraph to the requests made at the meeting of unemployed. The Central railway proposal would proceed, but the delay in a railway to Mount Morgan would be ongoing until the passing of appropriate legislation.<sup>26</sup> Despite Pattison's conviction that the line would be viable, the case for Mount Morgan failed

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<sup>24</sup> *CQT*, 10 August 1889.

<sup>25</sup> *CQT*, 10 August 1889.

<sup>26</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates (QPD)*, vol. LXI, 1889, p. 550.

when the House quashed the railway Bill, replacing it with an Enabling Bill providing for private enterprise to construct the line.<sup>27</sup> Significantly, perhaps, Pattison's term as government minister was closing; he cited demands of personal business as reasons for resigning the Treasury portfolio in December 1889.<sup>28</sup> Denying the charge of 'Mount Morganism' made against him by premier McIlwraith in absentia, Pattison declared that he could no longer serve in the Cabinet. However, he was careful not to resign his seat.<sup>29</sup> At a Rockhampton 'banquet' honouring local members of the Legislative Assembly, *The Central Queensland Times* presented in rhyme what was unacceptable in prose. Titled 'Monday's Banquet', the verse read, in part:

Mr. Kelly said the next toast  
Was the Ministry which he  
Had much pleasure in proposing,  
And which he desired to be  
Coupled with Mr. Pattison's name  
In whom he had great faith  
Though he much deplored the absence  
Of Sir Thomas McIlwraith.

Musical honours followed;  
The Hon. Pattison replied  
That too much work had been his lot  
Could scarcely be denied.  
Of his colleagues he'd say one thing,  
Whence he never could depart,  
Every worker had the interests  
Of the Colony at heart.<sup>30</sup>

The Liberals deplored Company mining monopoly and inferred that Pattison entered parliament to represent Mount Morgan interests.<sup>31</sup> Further, suspicions were not confined to opponents; conservatives outside the sphere of mining pointed to the financial

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<sup>27</sup> *CQT*, 5 October 1889. Chapter one suggests that, as a result of this political non-event, Mount Morgan townspeople, mine, Company, and southern hinterland waited a further decade for the extension that brought rail transport and traffic to the doorsteps of mine and town.

<sup>28</sup> *QPD*, LXI, 16 October 1889, p. 222.

<sup>29</sup> Stoodley, *The Queensland gold-miner*, p. 84.

<sup>30</sup> *CQT*, 9 November 1889; James Manion, 'History of newspapers in North Queensland', The Clem Lack Memorial Oration delivered on 24 March 1983, *Royal Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, vol. 11, no. 4, 1983, p. 144.

<sup>31</sup> Stoodley, *The Queensland gold-miner*, p. 92. Pattison declared his reluctance to take office, but offered to counsel the Ministry. He was not required to attend Cabinet or Executive Council meetings unless convenient, but agreed to stand in temporarily for Ministers who were absent.

influence of Pattison in his bid for the Rockhampton seat.<sup>32</sup> He was aware that commercial enterprise and gold speculation strengthened his representative status, and that to cultivate the vote of squatters and the goodwill of scattered shareholders of a wealthy mining Company was politically advantageous. Notwithstanding his diverse connections, the fact that the bumptious Pattison did not engender respect or trust in the Central District fuelled perception of his financial power.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, he was chairman of the Company and held one of the largest share holdings in the mine, but did not publicise his commitment and financial investment during his parliamentary terms.<sup>34</sup>

Pithy criticism in local press greeted Pattison's appointment as Treasurer during Premier McIlwraith's absence in 1889.<sup>35</sup> For his part, McIlwraith neither declared to the House that he purchased shares at a good price from Pattison prior to the 1888 election,<sup>36</sup> nor did he sell the shares after denouncing what he termed the 'Mount Morganism' in government.<sup>37</sup> Thus, his own leader vilified Pattison. Before the 1888 election, Pattison attempted to manipulate the price of Mount Morgan shares by purchasing continuously, although the other major shareholders were selling. While he bought and sold, Pattison encouraged outsiders, including politicians, to buy in. Finally, when the fantastic price of Mount Morgan shares fell, he held more scrip than he had at the outset of his market speculation. He lost heavily and the suspect trading destroyed his remaining credibility. Such consequences were the 'demands of his personal business' for which he relinquished the Queensland Treasury portfolio in the Legislative Assembly. It is suggested here that to investigate the financial failure and collapse of an individual engaged in sharp practice is not to inflict idle comment on the past but to consider the effect on society of the

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<sup>32</sup> *Brisbane Telegraph (BT)*, 13, 14 June 1888, cited in Stoodley, *The Queensland gold miner*, p 90.

<sup>33</sup> *Brisbane Courier (BC)*, 18 September 1890.

<sup>34</sup> *BC*, 14 June 1885; *MB*, 18 December 1888. The same was not said of Pattison's predecessor in the House, John Ferguson, MLA, (Rockhampton), who made no secret of his investment in the mine and sold his one tenth share in the original Mount Morgan syndicate to Albert James Callan (later MLA), for a rumoured £26 000.

<sup>35</sup> *DNA*, 29 July 1890.

<sup>36</sup> *QPD*, LXI, 6 August 1890, pp. 521-2.

<sup>37</sup> *QPD*, LXI, 6 August 1890, p. 541. Pattison's election influence was reflected in his appointment to Treasury. This hints at a peculiar hold over McIlwraith and thus, the Colony.

universal and timeless character of greed. Pattison's activities were his own, uniquely locked into his era, yet loss of a financial base and the ultimate downfall of any individual suggests that, in concert with personal intent, causality predicates a sequence of events that bring tragic consequences.<sup>38</sup>

Other shareholders in the mine entered politics, their efforts seemingly in the interests of Mount Morgan town at times, but the local press derided their conservatism and affinity with the Company hierarchy. Shareholder and director Albert James Callan (see footnote no. 34 above), won the seat of Fitzroy in the place of Robert Lyons, resigned. A conservative to perpetuate a Company voice in government on behalf of the Company,<sup>39</sup> Callan won the seat by a 100 per cent majority vote, in which 287 votes polled included Rockhampton 20, and Mount Morgan 222. By comparison, the opposition totalled 141 votes including Rockhampton at 34 and Mount Morgan 84. The Company's coercion of voters ensured a result that showed Mount Morgan provided 80 per cent of the votes that brought the conservative victory.<sup>40</sup> However, support for conservatives proved inadequate when Labor was on the march in the late 1890s. Bookseller William Kidston became the member for Rockhampton<sup>41</sup> and James Charles Stewart, the stalwart Labor voice at the 1889 meeting for the unemployed, was elected to North Rockhampton.<sup>42</sup>

At Mount Morgan, the psychological fear of unemployment ensured worker loyalty to the Company in a period of decline in industrial and economic progress from widespread strikes, depression and drought. Voter numbers at Mount Morgan were

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<sup>38</sup> Member of the 'ephemeral' nationalists, the youthful Robert Lyons MLA, (Fitzroy), solicitor and successful criminal lawyer, resigned his seat before the 1889 elections. He had bought Mount Morgan shares from Pattison at a high price but the share crash meant failed investment and indebtedness to Pattison that resulted in insolvency for Lyons, who suffered declining health for three years and died at forty-three in 1892. *MB*, 9 April, 1892.

<sup>39</sup> *Queensland parliamentary handbook*, Brisbane, 1983, p. 347.

<sup>40</sup> *CQT*, 17 August 1889.

<sup>41</sup> Ross Fitzgerald, *Seven Days to Remember, the world's first Labor government, Queensland, 1-7 December 1899*, UQP, St. Lucia, 1999, p. 39ff.

<sup>42</sup> *Queensland parliamentary handbook*, p. 363.

limited and employee miners, while not threatened with dismissal on political grounds, had no doubt of the Company's political conservatism and were aware that management expected support for the conservative vote. However, gradual industrial disharmony spawned organisations that moved towards determined union development<sup>43</sup> and thus, the political mobilisation of labour at Mount Morgan was significant to government in the wider sphere. Yet, as will be discussed later in this chapter, central leadership and emergent militancy in unionism that spearheaded control of local working-class politics at the mine was not secure until 1915.

Emergent democratic leanings of politicians and public by the end of the nineteenth century did not impinge on an imperialist spirit and empathy in much of Australian culture. British militaristic fervour was evident by the 1850s in the increasing membership of citizen military forces, local rifle clubs and cadet corps. In the euphoria that followed the 1897 Jubilee of Queen Victoria, Empire Day in Queensland celebrated imperial loyalty and heroic wartime achievement.<sup>44</sup> By 1900, as the conflict in the Transvaal deepened, militarism escalated and press reports from South Africa were increasingly graphic.<sup>45</sup> The public indentified with victory or defeat as reported in large tracts of press in the Rockhampton *Daily Record* and *Mount Morgan Argus*. The waste of war came close to home with reports of the first Australian troopers killed in action. One was Private Victor Stanley Jones, native of Mount Morgan and an employee at the pay office at the mine. Jones left Australia in October 1899 to the accolades of local press as 'one of the few patriotic young men of Rockhampton who responded promptly to the call of duty'. Jones' death, reported in the *Daily Record* on 4 January 1900, preceded 'the contingent of thousands rather than a few' raised in a force of mounted bushmen suggested to be 'the best antidote to the Boer raiders'.<sup>46</sup> Earlier, the press had

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<sup>43</sup> R.W. Connell and T.H. Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History: poverty and progress*, Melbourne, 1992, pp. 130, 131.

<sup>44</sup> Raymond Evans, *Loyalty and disloyalty: social conflict on the Queensland homefront 1914-1918*, Sydney, 1987, p.18.

<sup>45</sup> Craig Wilcox, *Australia's Citizen Army 1889-1914*, PhD thesis, Australian National University, November 1993.

<sup>46</sup> *DR*, 4 January 1900.

democratically published letters of criticism regarding the war, but with Jones' death, an unidentified letter published through the correspondence columns of the *Daily Record* and advocating 'toasting the Boers' shocked readers. The writer remained unidentified, at least by the press. However, confronting journalism in the *Record* warned those who 'talked pro-Boer' and used terms of reproach to the Australian Contingent that such 'so-called freedom of speech' was unacceptable.<sup>47</sup>

Until 1900, the raising of patriotic funds was the extent of Mount Morgan involvement in the South African conflict. To this end, Mount Morgan Brass Band supported the Patriotic Fund in 1900, drawing large crowds to street concerts held at the Leichhardt Hotel corner in Morgan Street.<sup>48</sup> More significantly, the women of the Mount Morgan Work Guild, their secretary Alice Richard, wife of the chief metallurgist at the mine, played a different role in fundraising. The *Mount Morgan Argus* praised the labours of the Guild who, 'without ostentation or public meetings', collected more than £42 for the Fund, plus books, magazines and woollen scarves for the sick and wounded. The loyalty of the Mount Morgan people to Empire seemed a matter of pride, as described in press hyperbole when patriotic funds exceeded £400, with £300 'cabled home' to the Lord Mayor of London.<sup>49</sup>

The turning point for local patriotism was at a public recruiting meeting when the reading of telegrams from the first Bushmen's Contingent to the Queensland Premier prompted a response to the call for volunteers. A Mount Morgan committee was convinced that men from the mining town were more likely to have a bush background than city dwellers. The committee raised the funds rapidly to recruit and equip a detachment of thirteen volunteers to be included in the next Bushmen's Contingent.<sup>50</sup> The local recruits were equipped by 1 June 1900, the cost in excess of £280, or more than

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<sup>47</sup> *DR*, 5 January 1900.

<sup>48</sup> *MMA*, 4 May 1900.

<sup>49</sup> *MMA*, 16 February 1900.

<sup>50</sup> *Critic*, 16 February 1900.

£21 per man. However, the contributed amount exceeded this total and the local committee spent so much time in discussion of 'what to do' with the excess balance of some £25 that frequent local press relating to the unresolved issue seemed to diminish the significance of the town's true offering - the volunteers.<sup>51</sup>

W.C. Chamberlain suggests that during the South Africa War a general profile of the Australian in the Contingent was a volunteer in his twenties, single, Protestant and more urban than bushman. Given that in a Contingent raised by public subscription, 42 per cent of recruits were in rural occupations, the Contingent was seen as having men who could ride – a distinct advantage in the veldt. Accorded the status of 'adventurers' eager to enrol, they were:

of this class for whom the rigours of the veldt are no greater than their own outback jobs as boundary riders, stockmen and drovers.<sup>52</sup>

The skills of Australian bushmen meshed with those of immigrants and native-born of urban or mining background. The several Bushmen's Contingents raised, each identified by number, perpetuated the myth of the name. During tests of health, weaponry and riding during training before embarkation, many failed the riding component. The *Daily Record* published a letter to a town resident from a member of the second Queensland Contingent.

There are some rough and ready fellows...out of the first 26 we brought down four have been rejected. Although there are many members of mounted infantry companies, still they have to learn the mounted work. The examination is of the strictest character. You have first of all to pass the doctor, then there is the shooting test and finally the riding test. Many men have been rejected after passing the two former, and been the cause of infinite amusement to the spectators. Many of the rifles have been condemned as faulty, I am myself now shooting with my third one. The horses also are inferior although there are some good beasts. Several of our men have sent to Rockhampton and even Clermont for mounts.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Critic*, 1 June 1900.

<sup>52</sup> W.M. Chamberlain, 'The characteristics of Australia's Boer War Volunteers', *Historical Studies*, vol. 20, no. 78, April 1982, pp. 48-50.

<sup>53</sup> *DR*, 8 January 1900.

The public demanded contact with troops, news of the conflict and geographical information of South Africa. To this end, working class patriots paid substantial prices - at 2s. per word - to send cable messages from Mount Morgan to South Africa. The content required an address with the military number and regiment of the addressee, the sender's name and state of origin, text, and a signature of at least two words. At the same time, at Lundager's newsagency next door to the Mount Morgan post office, up to date maps of the Transvaal issued by the *London Daily Mail* were available at 1s. 4d. each.<sup>54</sup>

Rockhampton telegraphed news of the Relief of Mafeking to Mount Morgan on 25 May 1900. Within minutes, the mine whistles sounded, not in the prolonged blast of disaster or the sharp blasts for fire, but in a series of blasts. At 8 p.m., an impromptu torchlight procession brought dense crowds to the main intersection of East and Morgan streets where the town band rendered patriotic airs and local orators delivered stirring speeches from the balcony of the Calliungal Hotel.<sup>55</sup> Fervour for the imperialist cause was evident in a patriotic demonstration arranged the following week by the 'lower furnace men' of the mine. An enthusiastic crowd followed the march of mineworkers and the town Brass Band from the Town Hall through town streets to the Company paddock. At a huge bonfire, effigies of Boer leaders Kruger and Steyn were burnt to drum beat, chanting crowd and roar of artillery – this last on loan from 'the private arsenal' of aspiring Labor politician, Henri Cowap.<sup>56</sup> In collapsing time to comprehend the significance of the press in the call to arms for the South African conflict, is to find malevolent journalism that incited hatred for the Boer in the same manner as the press fuelled racism against non-Europeans.<sup>57</sup> However, the press also served to ignite latent nationalist fervour and youthful enthusiasm in contingents that served under the British flag and deferred always to British command.

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<sup>54</sup> *MMA*, 11 May 1900, 8 June 1900.

<sup>55</sup> *MMA*, 25 May 1900.

<sup>56</sup> *MMA*, 15 June 1900.

<sup>57</sup> *Critic*, 30 October, 1903.



As the war in South Africa dragged on towards an ignominious end, meetings and lectures held at Mount Morgan presented a different option of allegiance. The establishment of the Mount Morgan Wage Earners' Society was espoused as unique in Queensland, albeit formed on similar lines to the slate clubs of England and shop clubs of Victoria and New south Wales. Adamant that it was neither a political association nor a trade union, the society claimed at Mount Morgan to be purely an accident and general benefit society. The society targeted miners for membership and numbers grew rapidly to more than one hundred. Weekly meetings held at Sam Lee's Caxton Chambers were open to the public. Lectures and debates supposedly excluded topics of politics and religion, but almost immediately, the new society included political, racist driven rhetoric. A lecture titled 'The war and the wage earner' derided the South African conflict, caused by 'commercial rivalry' on the part of the British. At the same time the audience heard that colonisation was essential 'where there are inferior races who cannot properly use the soil in their possession'. Moreover, the lecturer continued, the wage earner suffered from war and must have 'the right to vote to exclude other races' to maintain equal opportunity in his society. At the same time, 'arbitration and justice' must prevail.<sup>58</sup> The society neither acknowledged women as wage earners nor eligible for membership of the new association. As discussed in chapter two, members of the mine hierarchy and town bourgeoisie chaired and conducted early Councils. However, the local rise of Labor and unionism saw mine or town employees, skilled workers and artisans elected as local

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<sup>58</sup> *MMA*, 20 July 1900.



Fig. 35. Caxton Chambers accommodated the Associated Friendly Societies' Dispensary, Sam Lee, (owner) stationer and musical emporium, and Rockhampton solicitor W. Swanwick. By 1903, the chambers were also the meeting place for association and political gatherings.

aldermen and by the 1900s, locals aspired to seats of state government. In 1902, Henri Cowap, the first Labor candidate to be elected, served until 1909. He was a miner who later became a freemason and shops and factories inspector.<sup>59</sup> His pragmatic politics

<sup>59</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary handbook*, 1983, p. 347.

seemed more Liberal than Labor, and in the House, his silences that were attributed to poor articulation and lack of education prompted a perception that he was a weak politician.

For some press, biting criticism of competitors was a tradition, with verbal conflict between editors as aggressive in terms of political journalism as comment on social issues within or between towns. For example, the tone of the *Critic*, a latecomer in Central Queensland press, was strident, racist and non-conservative. The newspaper was launched in 1903 by J.S. Kerr and William 'Lofty' Anderson who had been with the *Patriot*, a Bundaberg weekly.<sup>60</sup> They were at pains to contradict a rumour that it was a branch or office of another 'unnamed' newspaper. The *Critic* was independent, a leader declared, to stand or fall, win or lose by its press, its credo was to 'bear the brunt', and creditable press in the *Critic* would be its own. Ostensibly an organ for both Rockhampton and Mount Morgan, the *Critic* avowed an apolitical stance in its devotion 'to sport and critical comment'.<sup>61</sup> From the outset however, radical journalism and verse written presumably by Anderson under the pseudonym 'Biff' were *Critic* characteristics. The new press castigated the *Daily Record* and *Morning Bulletin* for 'their neglect of duty to the public', asserting that their journalism was too cowardly to state the truth 'in all its hideousness' for fear of offending a 'few conservative advertisers'. Moreover, *The Critic*, in its first year of publication, denounced the journalism and staunch conservatism of John Blair, editor of the *Morning Bulletin*, exploding:

Blair is anything by turns and nothing for long. At the last general election he supported labour candidates in Rockhampton...[but] opposed them in Fitzroy...and yet all were fighting on the same platform and for the same principles. Now he supports Murray, the most inept of an effete Ministry for Capricornia. The name of 'Mr. Bulletin Blair' in Rockhampton is synonymous with political twisting and treachery.<sup>62</sup>

The change in ownership or management of a newspaper reflected change in political and social journalism, a circumstance that prevailed in the *Critic*, its aggressive

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<sup>60</sup> McDonald, *Rockhampton*, pp. 488, 489.

<sup>61</sup> *Critic*, 2 May 1903, 15 May 1903.

<sup>62</sup> *Critic*, 29 May 1903.

journalism tempered somewhat when a member of the Rockhampton family who bought and operated the tabloid became editor.

Gail Reekie asserts that Queensland's tropical climate, rural orientation and isolation from centres of national power produce a distinctively insular, conservative and politically authoritarian culture.<sup>63</sup> This confirms a suggestion herein that men who aspired to Queensland politics were initially resentful of the move for female suffrage. However, at a meeting of the Democratic League of Central Queensland in December 1903, males were eager to gain female support at the ballot box, with voting rights for women claimed as the stuff of political success for male candidates.<sup>64</sup> The regional press ensured that women were informed of conditions and wages in other centres and other states; Mount Morgan women were privy to a local press article that the Women's Political and Social League in Sydney declared that wages for female Europeans were lower than for male Chinese. Urging women to become 'socialistic', the Mount Morgan press featured propaganda journalism that proclaimed the benefits of socialism to women in the workforce. A racist postscript to one article read 'It is better to be born a Chinaman than a working woman'.<sup>65</sup>

By arrangement with the various branches of the Workers Political Organisation in Queensland, socialistic organiser Miss H.F. Powell toured the central and western districts of Queensland from July until mid-September 1903, delivering numerous addresses to widespread communities.

The WPO meeting on Tuesday had good attendance, including Miss Powell, the lady Socialist Organiser, who was warmly welcomed. a fair and fluent democrat, Miss Powell paid a visit to the town and made a good impression with townspeople. Her western tour has started a wave of enthusiasm for the Socialist cause.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Gail Reekie, 'Women, region and the "Queensland difference"', Gail Reekie (ed.), *On the edge: women's experiences in Queensland*, St. Lucia, 1994, pp. 9-12.

<sup>64</sup> *MMA*, 20 January 1903.

<sup>65</sup> *Critic*, 5 June 1903.

<sup>66</sup> *Critic*, 9 October 1903.

Powell's visit to the region was well timed; politics had slowed and the Ministry was in the hands of James Blair, Liberal MLA (Brisbane). With the interest of workers depending on the strength of their elected parliamentarians, September 1903 saw the 'falling away from grace' of Labor members, with a large percentage of workers questioning the strength of the party. It seemed that Powell stirred flagged interest in the Labor cause more than the alleged efforts of sitting members.<sup>67</sup> The main thrust of her lectures in at least six towns in Central Queensland concerned 'Socialism - What, Why and How', these sandwiched between social gatherings with music and dancing. Female members received unusual inclusion in press reports during her tour: in a single day, for example, the women of the Mount Perry community apparently conveyed a keen sense of cordial good-fellowship and comradeship. In fact, every Queensland centre visited exhibited welcome and hospitality to Powell, who promised longer return visits to a number of centres. More important perhaps were the standard of responses to her meetings, intelligent hearings and searching questions. Women who attended, declared Powell, became more aware of their own welfare and of the necessity to 'extend true democracy by using a living, breathing, thinking intelligent vote'. She applauded the Australian Workers' Institute and the Workers' Political Organisation at Blackall, particularly the open support from Queensland Catholic clergy and others, who:

applied their Christianity in a true and practical manner. The number of clergy of different denominations advocating Socialism in Queensland struck a chord of pleasure to my solian harp of life.<sup>68</sup>

The press asserted that when women realised that 'the flag of democracy was planted on a rock impregnable to the wiles and flattery of the liberals', the 'artful' James Blair would not receive the vote of Mount Morgan women.<sup>69</sup> Women were called on to 'agitate, organise, educate and vote Labor'. They were urged to acknowledge that their

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<sup>67</sup> *Critic*, 4 September 1903.

<sup>68</sup> *BC*, 23 September 1903.

<sup>69</sup> *Critic*, 6 November 1903.

female suffrage was the result of Labor's consistent fight for justice for twelve years - doubtless a reminder of the 1891 shearers' strike.<sup>70</sup>

Despite current Labor rhetoric, scant interest surrounded a plebiscite to select a candidate to contest the federal seat of Capricornia that included Mount Morgan.<sup>71</sup> Rockhampton press denigrated as untrustworthy candidates G.S. Curtis and 'a briefless barrister-schoolmaster' T.J. Ryan, pragmatic friend of conservatives and Labor sympathiser.<sup>72</sup> They were ostracised as 'going through the motions' of politicking during the lead up to the election.<sup>73</sup> The irascible *Critic* declared an interpretation of political philosophies:

Communism	every man according to his needs
Socialism	every man according to his deeds
Individualism	every man according to his greeds. <sup>74</sup>

Lobbying accelerated at Mount Morgan, with a National Liberal Union address and a meeting of the Democratic League in November 1903.<sup>75</sup> At the same time, Labor candidates in Central Queensland held meetings at railway villages from Gladstone to Rockhampton. The meeting at Mount Morgan drew a strong public response, spurred by the presence of Labor leader Peter Airey, past teacher at the Mount Morgan Central School, and town resident. Airey spoke as to old friends and acquaintances, claiming that local associations crossed workplace interests and social boundaries. Central Queensland local member Henri Cowap MLA was buoyed by Airey's presence, despite the *Critic* calling vociferously for 'more Aireys in Labor politics...this Cowap represented constituency is as dead as Pharaoh'.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> *Critic*, 20 November 1903.

<sup>71</sup> *Critic*, 25 September 1903.

<sup>72</sup> *MMC*, 30 November 1903.

<sup>73</sup> *Critic*, 20 November 1903.

<sup>74</sup> *Critic*, 4 December 1903.

<sup>75</sup> *Critic*, 13, 16 November 1903.

<sup>76</sup> *Critic*, 11 December 1903. Peter Airey, MLA, retained his forthright attitude in politics, refusing in 1909 to greet host William Kidston at a dinner on the government launch *Lucinda* to honour Prime Minister Andrew Fisher. Kidston ordered Airey off the launch, to 'a great deal of talk and not a little regret' by other guests. *MB*, 12 January 1909.

Jens Lundager campaigned for election to the Senate in 1906, but he was voted sixth of seven candidates.<sup>77</sup> Not one to be silenced by defeat at the polls, he perpetuated the public voice through the columns of the *Chronicle* and as Council alderman. Local authority politics were soon at odds with state government when an appeal for an extended loan period was unexpectedly rebuffed by astute premier William Kidston, MLA, Rockhampton. The bookseller and later 'autocratic democrat' of Central Queensland politics, Kidston was a 'careful' Scot who did not distribute public funds freely through government - unless for 'government' purposes.<sup>78</sup> The Council deputation suffered not only the refusal of the Premier, but the press reduced the efforts of the over confident committee to parody:

The deputation doffed its Sunday idle  
And waded in to show the premier how  
They run the business in Mt. Morgan now  
At which the Premier smiled a knowing smile.  
They pointed out that they were just about  
To liquidate the hoary ancient debt,  
But asked for time, they hadn't had time yet-  
The Premier interrupted with a shout.  
He lectured them in awful angry tone  
And said the Council were a set of louts,  
Who ought to be in ---- or thereabouts,  
And the deputation sadly wandered home.<sup>79</sup>

Organs of the regional press permitted degrees of verbal abuse to appear in their columns. A probable Labor sympathiser writing to the *Critic* under the pseudonym 'Southern Cross' declared that to gain its ends, the *Morning Bulletin* excelled in 'wire-pulling, intriguing and hitting below the belt' and that it lacked respect for institutions or political organisations, whether in parliamentary contests or manipulation of school committees. In reply, without declaring facts or names, but with innuendo and inference, the *Morning Bulletin* condemned anti-conservative journalism.<sup>80</sup> Such haranguing appeared in the press as Mount Morgan was reeling from the shock of the tragic mine accident on 7 September 1908. This begs the question whether press conflict was more

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<sup>77</sup> *Worker*, 22 December 1906.

<sup>78</sup> K.J. Wanka, 'William Kidston a tenacious reformer', D. J. Murphy, R. B. Joyce, Colin A Hughes, *Prelude to power: the rise of the Labor Party in Queensland*, Brisbane, 1970, pp. 202, 203; D. J. Murphy, R. B. Boyce (eds.), *Queensland Political Portraits*, St. Lucia, 1978, p. 223.

<sup>79</sup> *Critic*, 18 August 1907.

<sup>80</sup> *Critic*, 11 September 1908.

newsworthy at any time than catastrophe in local society that was seemingly workday press material rather than a moment of human devastation.

Coincidentally, a political upset in the election of representatives to the Rockhampton Harbour Board dominated Central Queensland news. Robert Stubbs Archer, shareholder, director and doyen of political manipulation for the Company in enterprise and local authority was also the long serving chairman of the Harbour Board. He was concerned that unloading cargo for the mine by using their own Company employees at the remote, tidal wharf at Broadmount near the mouth of the Fitzroy River would lead to action by the Wharf Labourers' Union. He wrote to general manager G.A. Richard at Mount Morgan:

I would not trouble you, but Blair [John Blair, *Morning Bulletin*] is making a personal issue of it and if the ships can be brought up the river without extra expense to the Company I think it would be politic[sic] to bring them up. Blair is an excellent man to have on your side in dealing with government and local affairs. He always reciprocates in these matters.<sup>81</sup>

Collusion between the Company and local and state politics continued. In 1911, Walter Russell Hall, major shareholder, sent a cheque for £100 to Archer for the conservative electioneering fund. On forwarding the secret political contribution to James Blair, who toured Queensland on the hustings, Archer repeated Hall's private instruction: 'It must be distinctly understood that my name shall not be made public in connection with this'.<sup>82</sup> Working class electors at Baree raised the issue with 'slippery James Blair' that workers on the northern railway were paid 9s. per day compared to 8s. 6d. paid to Mount Morgan men working on the new Dawson Valley line south of Mount Morgan. This predicated of the decision of the Railways Commissioner to set a low rate to railway workers, in turn providing the private employer an opportunity to cut wages. The Labor oriented Mount Morgan press trumpeted aims to increase wages but to achieve power through reform, promising, in a direct challenge to mine management and other enterprise, to 'clear out

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<sup>81</sup> R.S. Archer to G.A. Richard, 18 October 1908, Letter book, 1904-1912, Archer Papers, K1014, Mitchell Library (ML).

<sup>82</sup> Archer to John Blair, Rockhampton, 15 January 1908, Letter book, K1014, ML.



the fraudulent practices' in conservative trade that cared nothing about 'defrauding' the worker.<sup>83</sup>

The confidence of working class Mount Morgan was destroyed when Labor 'battlers' were defeated in an unequal contest in which true politics seemed scarcely apparent. James Stopford - born at Rockhampton and educated at Mount Morgan - was a miner who worked his way up to engine driver. He became a union organiser and Mount Morgan Labor candidate for the Legislative Assembly in the 1912 elections.<sup>84</sup> During the campaign, letters through the local press disapproved of Stopford's work as a doorman at the local Olympia Theatre to supplement his income.<sup>85</sup> Critics were not opposed to his political leanings, but argued that he had not 'earned' three years as a member of government. He was vilified publicly to derisive jibes of 'He's merely after the money....Fancy him in Parliament'.<sup>86</sup> This belittling campaign against 'the local man who always suffers', was neither a personal vendetta nor indicative of local political apathy,<sup>87</sup> rather, a covert working-class snobbery that envied increased status, whatever the source.

In supporting Stopford, the *Critic* declared pithily 'He would never rat on his party'. This press was an obvious slur directed at Clermont candidate for Fitzroy, James Crawford, who defected from Labor to the Nationals before the election. Labor declared as fallacious the press report that Crawford was expelled from the Party because he voted for introduction of the Bible in State Schools.<sup>88</sup> Crawford studied law and entered a practice at Clermont as barrister and solicitor before winning the Fitzroy seat for Labor in 1909 and contesting Mount Morgan as a Liberal in the 1912 election. Crawford's credibility with Mount Morgan was lost after the one term when he resigned the Mount Morgan seat to contest Fitzroy. Oddly, the only other individual Mount Morgan knew to

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<sup>83</sup> *Critic*, 11 December 1911.

<sup>84</sup> *MB*, 11 February 1936.

<sup>85</sup> *Critic*, 2 December 1911.

<sup>86</sup> *Critic*, 11 August 1911.

<sup>87</sup> *Critic*, 11 December 1911.

<sup>88</sup> *Critic*, 11 December 1911. As discussed in chapter five, a 1911 referendum saw the voting public refute the sectarian issue of 'Use of the Bible in state schools'.

be a possible candidate for Fitzroy was agent Charles Briggs, who was in New Zealand at the time applications for candidature closed. Perhaps Briggs was concerned that his dented reputation at Mount Morgan after court conviction for libel in 1908 would deem him unacceptable as a member of government.

The non-Catholic Crawford was a formidable political opponent in campaign method, which reflected Company support, sectarianism and manipulation of class hatred. Labor 'lost' the election before the polls. Elements were in play against which Stopford, his Labor and union supporters were quite powerless. They were completely outdone by the juggernaut of Company politics that coerced mine workers fearful of their jobs, to vote for Crawford. Moreover, the Company that dominated the mine workforce had no real interest in the town that was 'a flat, stale business proposition'.<sup>89</sup> After the poll, press at Mount Morgan dubbed Crawford a 'champion somersaulter' in turncoat politics. Expounding the details of a sorry campaign, the *Critic* lamented that:

Jimmy Stopford is not a very devout Catholic, but the fact that he was a fifth-rate Papist served to bring all the forces of the Opposition against him.<sup>90</sup>

Unequivocal in its criticism, the press not only deplored the method that brought the anti-Labor party to victory; but also blamed the miners who were intimidated into foregoing allegiance to Stopford and voting for Crawford. Ironically, the tenor of public opinion that reflected the power of sectarianism and the defection of Labor voters was so vicious that after the polls, and in an attitude of medieval reaction to the incomprehensible, Mount Morgan residents burnt Stopford's effigy. The event suggests that Stopford was the scapegoat for town angst at realisation of their guilt at Labor's loss. Moreover, the press was adamant that even conservatives did not support the 'vile' act.<sup>91</sup> Accusing the voters of stupidity in silencing the Labor voice at Mount Morgan, the press urged the faithful to retrieve lost voters and regroup over the next three years. On this

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<sup>89</sup> *Critic*, 3 May 1912.

<sup>90</sup> *Critic*, 3 May 1912.

<sup>91</sup> *Critic*, 3 May 1912.

occasion, even the *Critic* tempered its words when the resident poet devoted solemn and lengthy verse to defeated Labor candidates:

Here's to the men who lose!  
 If triumph's easy smile our struggles greet,  
 Courage is easy, then;  
 The kind is he who after fierce defeat  
 Can up, and fight again.  
 Here's to the men who lose!  
 The ready plaudits of a fawning world  
 Ring sweet in victors' ears;  
 The vanquished's banners never are unfurled;  
 For them there sound no cheers.

Here's to the men who lose!  
 The touchstone of true worth is not success;  
 There is a greater test-  
 Though fate may darkly frown, onward to press,  
 And bravely do one's best.<sup>92</sup>

Crawford's election triumph prompted town contrariness against political outsiders whose support was the Company middle-class hierarchy. This was fuelled by the press mistakenly suggesting that Crawford was a stranger to Mount Morgan and that his election heralded a bad experience for the town.<sup>93</sup> In fact, Crawford was not a stranger, he arrived in Queensland from Otago in 1906 and became secretary of the Fitzroy Miners Union at Rockhampton. He canvassed for membership in the surrounding region and declared in March 1908:

a strong and hearty union was formed at Mount Morgan where great interest in the movement exists also outside the ranks of the mineworkers.<sup>94</sup>

As pointed out in chapter four, Richard applauded union representative Crawford's 'straightforward and manly' handling of the daunting days that followed the underground accidents in 1908. Local newspapers at that time were in rare accord in their praise of Crawford,<sup>95</sup> who also took the opportunity in the dark days after the accidents to call union meetings with full attendance of members to discuss safety issues at the mine.

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<sup>92</sup> *Critic*, 3 May 1912.

<sup>93</sup> *Critic*, 11 December 1911.

<sup>94</sup> *Worker*, 28 March 1908.

<sup>95</sup> *Critic*, 18 November 1908.

Company support for Crawford's election to Fitzroy was primarily in the name of immediate completion of the Dawson Valley line from Mount Morgan. For years, completion of the Dawson Valley railway was expected to overcome declining prosperity at Mount Morgan and its hinterland. Completion of the first and most costly section of the line confirmed that the purpose of the extension was defeated until all sections were laid.<sup>96</sup> However, work on the line ceased *despite* Company backing of Crawford. His weak support and later silence in the House regarding the issue suggests the reason for his refusal to visit the Mount Morgan electorate after his re-election. His absence confirmed constituents' perception that he had no voice in government.<sup>97</sup>

Redistribution of federal electoral seats brought outright change to the voting face of Mount Morgan. Until 1911, the vast Normanby electorate extended from St. Lawrence in the north to Westwood, southwest of Mount Morgan. The eastern boundary extended across the Razorback Range to the outskirts of the town where the electorate included the suburbs of Baree and Walterhall. By 1912, the radical change in the mine labour force with the dismissals when Benjamin Magnus became the general manager affected voting changes at Baree and Walterhall. Alterations to the *Electoral Act* also resulted in difficulties when workers applied for inclusion on the electoral roll. For example, if a married couple from New South Wales came to Mount Morgan, they must complete residency of one year before applying for voting rights. With delays that included the intermittent sittings of electoral courts to deal with voting rights, inclusion on the electoral roll might wait 16 months. Moreover, residents who moved from Mount Morgan proper to the suburbs of Baree or Walterhall were not permitted to vote for one month. Failure to comply with the new conditions of the *Act*, ignorance of the law or the inaction of 'putting it off' did not alleviate forfeiture of voting rights in a pending election.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> *MMC*, 23 January 1914.

<sup>97</sup> *MMC*, 23 January 1914.

<sup>98</sup> *MMC*, 27 February 1914.

George Fox held the seat of Normanby from 1901 until his death in 1914.<sup>99</sup> He was an early pioneer of Central Queensland, a stock and abattoir owner, carrier and political rationalist. Always unbeaten at the polls, and with the rural vote firmly in his grasp, Fox gained the Mount Morgan vote through the Company's influence. He had wealthy, conservative support at a time when male suffrage was not universal, and such was the long-standing representation of Fox that he was returned to office despite the efforts of radical Mount Morgan press to dent his political reputation. During his later years as an elected member, Fox did not attempt to tour the electorate or contact distant voters, especially the increasing but ever-changing Mount Morgan population in his constituency. Perhaps he realised that his opposing candidate for Normanby in 1912, one Martens, was not local or a known candidate, canvassed the rural electorate rarely, and never visited Mount Morgan.

Labor saw Mount Morgan as 'one of the blackest spots in Central Queensland' for the Normanby vote. The result for Baree and nearby Walterhall gave a conservative majority of 82 in contiguous communities of mostly Labor wage earners. Yet, only 590 votes of a possible 1 314 were cast in Baree and Walterhall, with 336 of these against Labor and, cavilled the press, if voters there had done their duty, Fox would not have been returned.<sup>100</sup>

	<u>Baree</u>	<u>Walterhall</u>
Fox (conservative)	159	177
Martens (Labor)	114	140 <sup>101</sup>

Table 7. Voting results, Normanby electorate, Queensland Legislative Assembly, 1912.

<sup>99</sup> *MMC*, 27 February 1914.

<sup>100</sup> *Critic*, 24 May 1912.

<sup>101</sup> *Critic*, 24 May 1912.

James Stopford won the seat of Mount Morgan seat in 1915 and joined the new Labor Ministry perceived to harass the Upper House and 'legislate as ordered by the AWU'. By 1917, Lundager expressed concern in the *Chronicle* that elected members Stopford, (Mount Morgan), James Larcombe (Keppel) and Harold Hartley (Fitzroy) ignored the Labor platform conveniently. His letter read, in part:

Those who frame the platforms nowadays by no means possess the mental abilities of the men of 1890s. This is to be expected when the majority consists of union organisers, union secretaries and other union officials, whose minds are trained in one groove, without deviation. Narrow minds, narrow actions, and a one-sided platform is the result.<sup>102</sup>

As pointed out in chapter six, Stopford championed the miners during the Mount Morgan strike in 1917 for preference against returned soldiers and non-unionists. When the industrial ferment at Mount Morgan erupted, Stopford and the union executive were conferring at Cairns and Brisbane on the current sugar dispute. Stopford also missed the conference Mr. Justice McCawley called for attendance by general manager of the mine, Adam Boyd, the industrial advocate, and representatives of the Australian Workers' Union. However, when Stopford did address the Mount Morgan conflict, he observed that it seemed more than coincidence that the moment he was absent, the men at Mount Morgan 'went out by the time he reached Gladstone'.<sup>103</sup>

During the strike, management applied for exemption of tax on their mining leases. They also arranged with government to waive demurrage on 32 railway trucks loaded on rail but unable under strike conditions to proceed to Mount Morgan. Stopford supported the government, he said, but there should be no favouritism on either side. In 'speaking straight' he demanded that management must be charged for the delay in availability of government rail trucks for outside transport. He also declared that the union would fight with the gloves off and that by demanding rail charges, he 'got his first punch in' before he left Brisbane. Stopford was adamant that every constitutional method was employed to

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<sup>102</sup> MMC, 1 June 1917.

<sup>103</sup> MB, 3 May 1917.

settle the strike and that the union executive in Brisbane did not criticise the local branch for holding open ballot on the vote to strike. Conversely, he stated his own opinion that the method was open to corruption.<sup>104</sup>

As Minister for Mines, Stopford supported the men in 1921 when the mine closed for a year, a devastating time of industrial turmoil between unions and recalcitrant management in lost markets, stoppage, lockout, demands and refusals. Robert Archer, always in a position to report on any Mount Morgan dispute, advised directors in the south that strikers brandished the Red Flag at gatherings, but showed little interest in the Workers' Education Association.<sup>105</sup> Moreover Mount Morgan was:

a depressing place to visit at present, when one thinks of the great industry being held up by the machinations of a few extremists and the serious effect of the hold up on the prosperity of Australia.<sup>106</sup>

Archer's concern for the Company was dramatically opposed to the plea for social justice for residents by the Rev. William B. Charles, rector at St. Mary's Anglican Church, Mount Morgan. In the monthly *Church Gazette*, and without fear or favour in his comments, Charles described in high moral tone the consequences to the town of the continuing loss of residents who must move on in the search for work, and the hopelessness of those who remained.<sup>107</sup> As the mine closure extended, Charles' sense of outrage deepened at the stalemate situation between management and men.<sup>108</sup> The rector implored both sides to reach a common sense solution to the debacle, compassion tempering his bleak description of family suffering for those trapped in a town that was unable to mark time financially.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> *MB*, 30 April 1917.

<sup>105</sup> Archer to King, 16 August 1921, Letter book, K1015, ML.

<sup>106</sup> Archer to King, 28 September 1921, Letter book, K1015, ML.

<sup>107</sup> *The Church Gazette*, Rockhampton, May 1921, p. 160.

<sup>108</sup> *The Church Gazette*, June 1921, pp. 186, 187; July 1921, p. 221.

<sup>109</sup> *The Church Gazette*, December 1921, p. 396.

Union politics continually gained momentum as organisers urged Mount Morgan labourers and others into the AWU arena. By 1925, a strike in 1925 for wages, the underground fire, subsequent flooding to save the mine, and impending permanent closure of the Works exacerbated the directors' disquiet at:

not knowing to what lengths some of these ruffians would go - worked up as they were by those paid agitators and self-confessed communists, Fred Patterson [Rhodes Scholar,] and Gordon Crane [Rockhampton Trades Hall].<sup>110</sup>

The reversal of local progress became a topic too difficult for the press. In their creed of presenting news of the day, journalists had meagre space for repetitious press of a town in despair. The habitually conservative *Morning Bulletin* presented news of the Mount Morgan closure until it was news no more. By September 1926, Home Secretary Stopford, MLA, defended to the last the miners he declared to be 'the worst paid men in Australia' and who awaited management's advice of intentions so the men knew what to do.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, Stopford sent a telegram to the AWU that the government would pay 'all locked out men' a sustenance allowance.<sup>112</sup> Coincidentally, in Brisbane, and as mentioned in chapter six, the press reported alleged 'terrorism' at Mount Morgan when strikers blockaded the mine and threatened those at the site, including female office workers, the industrial advocate for management and the general manager.

The statement of mine closure in 1927 provided the southern press with more headlines. The town press went into decline, its raison d'être lost in a crippled town that was a place suffering economic stagnation. Local advertisers cancelled contracts, the press was reduced to one organ only and ultimately, as the Mount Morgan mine closed and town progress ceased, the heartbeat of a town slowed and news of a lost lifestyle became public eulogy. Now the regional press blamed the men who, by perpetually demanding higher wages despite the international decline in copper markets, ensured the

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<sup>110</sup> Archer to King, 14 October 1925, Letter Book, K1015, ML.

<sup>111</sup> *BC*, 14 April 1927.

<sup>112</sup> *BC*, 14 April 1927. Chairman Robert Archer died on 29 December 1926 after thirty years as a director and shareholder of the Company. From that time, the Board did not include any Rockhampton members.



mine was no longer viable. The Brisbane press also deplored the plight of a poverty-stricken constituency in which disenchanted voters had lost faith in the means of livelihood, in government, and the future. Yet still the press addressed male 'voters' and were silent about the distress of women and families caught in the spiral of decline.

The prolonged debacle of Mount Morgan that was a microcosm of international industrial turmoil seemed to foretell general national collapse. Ironically, perhaps, at Mount Morgan, where conservative influence over voting had long since ceased, staunch local member James Stopford, MLA, retained his seat when the long serving Queensland Labor government was cast out in 1929, at a time already greyed by the cloud of general economic depression.