

CHAPTER 4: THE MOVEMENT IN 1931

THE END OF 1930 AND THE NEW YEAR: UNEMPLOYED
WORKERS' PROSPECTS

Schedvin points to the latter half of 1930 as the time when the full impact of the fall in export prices and the cessation of external borrowing was felt, the time when "the full range of deflationary factors was let loose in quick succession".¹ Also "the end of 1930 and the first weeks of 1931 was not only the period of maximum rate of decline in all economic indicators but also the community's psychological low point At the end of 1930 the economy appeared to be drifting helplessly with the Government divided and powerless to prevent imminent collapse".²

While it is difficult in any case to pinpoint the "psychological low point" of a community at large, it is even harder to point to any specific time in the chronology of the Depression as the spiritual and psychological nadir for the unemployed. Schedvin may well be right regarding the feeling of the general Australian public (though the statement does seem somewhat sweeping and not fully substantiated.)³

Schedvin argues that events of 1931, notably the Premiers' Plan, stopped

1. C.B. Schedvin, *op.cit.* p.210.

2. *ibid.*, p.212.

3. Schedvin makes it clear throughout that he is concerned with the economic rather than the social changes of the period; it is somewhat odd therefore to find him suddenly offering this definitively stated short characterisation of the social climate.

the 'drift' and gave a positive policy to recovery plans; he adds that "during most of 1931-2 there were frequent signs that recovery was imminent".⁴ We are again back to the problem discussed in Chapter 1 that the use of different indicators of recovery results in different conclusions about the date and extent of recovery.

It could justifiably be argued that for the unemployed the whole period was one of "psychological low point". As I also pointed out in Chapter 1, they did not feel the recovery - their very unemployment was for them a refutation of recovery - and any awareness of general recovery probably only increased their demoralisation.

However, while the very fact of unemployment made the whole period demoralising for the unemployed, the situation of the New South Wales unemployed was particularly unoptimistic at the beginning of 1931. (Indeed, events in the New Year augured badly for the labor movement in general.)

Lang's election had been seen as a symbol of hope, and a promise of immediate relief. Yet by the end of 1930 more men were out of work, the dole had not been increased, nor was there any real prospect of sweeping improvement in the near future.

The militant and politically organised unemployed could point to a few notable acts of defiance in 1930, but casualties had been heavy and the U.W.M. had not really fulfilled the directives the C.P.A. had laid down in early 1930, nor the aims of the July Conference.⁵

4. C.B. Schedvin, *op.cit.*, p.287.

5. The casualties included the large number of imprisoned demonstrators. Apart from the Clovelly Boys, there had been 35 workers arrested in the three November demonstrations (*W.W.*, 12/12/30, p.2). The continual court appearances sapped the time, energy and money of the movement.

In the C.P.A.'s analysis of the U.W.M.'s history during 1930, criticism of its organisational and ideological shortcomings was tempered with a certain pride in its growth and its militancy - especially the militancy of the imprisoned class fighters.

Certainly, a considerable number of branches had been formed - notably the main city branch, the Balmain ^{and} Glebe branches, the branches at Lithgow, Broken Hill, Newcastle and the South Coast - and some attempt had been made to set up 'special interest' sub committees (against evictions for women etc.). The International Class War Prisoners' Aid had been formed as a legal defence group, and the Workers' International Relief was soon formed to distribute relief and boost the morale of the unemployed with social activities.

There is no record at all, however, of how many branches there were, or how many members they had; I would estimate that there would probably have been about three dozen active branches in New South Wales,⁶ though there were probably more on paper. One problem is that even the Communist press is rather scanty in its reporting of unemployed activity in 1930.⁷

In December 1930, W.H. Mackenzie, Assistant State Secretary of the U.W.M., claimed the organisation's membership "now exceeds thirty thousand and is rapidly increasing".⁸ It is hard to know quite what to make of this

6. (There were 25 branches at the July 1930 Conference).

7. It gets much more coverage in 1931, especially when the Red Leader was begun. Indeed, though the U.W.M. undoubtedly grew greatly in the first part of 1931, this growth is perhaps over-emphasised to the detriment of accounts of the movement in 1930 simply by the sudden increase in press coverage.

8. W.W., 19/12/30, p.4.

figure. In February 1931, Jack Sylvester, then National Secretary, referred to the recent rapid growth of the U.W.M. and again gave its membership as 30,000.⁹ However, it would seem likely that Sylvester and Mackenzie were both referring to national membership. In July 1931, after the massive membership drive of early 1931, Sylvester stated that there were, in New South Wales, seventy active and six "temporarily inactive" branches with an average membership of two hundred per branch - thus putting the New South Wales membership at about 14,000.¹⁰

The figure of 200 members per branch was probably right for 1930 too,¹¹ so this would put the probable membership at the end of 1930 at about 7000-8000. But, as Sylvester himself says "the numerical strength is hard to estimate".¹²

The size of the membership throws an interesting light on the problem of the extent of Party domination of the U.W.M. At the beginning of 1931 the whole membership of the C.P.A. numbered 1,000.¹³ Number 1 District (Sydney and the Country areas of N.S.W., but not Broken Hill, Newcastle and the area north of Newcastle) had only 215 members in November 1930, 675 in June 1931, and 858 active members in November 1931.¹⁴

9. ibid., 20/2/31, p.2.

10. W.W., 31/7/31, p.4. Some branches had many more than 200 members so this may be understated.

11. cf. numbers in local demonstrations.

12. W.W., 31/7/31, p.4.

13. W.W., 16/1/31, p.2.; cf. also A. Davidson, op.cit., p.53

14. W.W., 27/11/31, p.2. There was a book membership of 1,550. >

It could be argued that the number of Communists was so disproportionate to the number of U.W.M. members that the Communists would simply not have been able effectively to dominate the organisation. Also, Party members were involved in so many other fronts and activities that their abilities and time would be even further limited. (The impression one receives from Kavanagh's diary is of a man breathlessly rushing from meeting to meeting, unable to devote his full energies to any of them ^{and} despondent at the lack of Party members' activity in the fronts.) And it seems that when the movement was flourishing, Party members and the U.W.M. hierarchy were unable to keep up with it: Sylvester complained in February 1931, that "the demand for speakers from Headquarters is taxing all the resources of the movement, and were it not for the scarcity of these, we have no doubt that still greater results would have been achieved".¹⁵ In mid '31, the Workers' Weekly in discussing the need for an increased membership of the C.P.A., asked: "Have we sufficient forces to be able to give guidance to each branch of the U.W.M. ?" The implication was that they did not.¹⁶

Although Party fraction strategy was aimed at overcoming the limitations of the smallness of Party membership by using the available members at the organisational keypoints of fronts and demonstrations, this strategy had not worked very well in 1930. The Party complained that in ^{the} Sydney demonstrations of 1930 there were glaring defects, notably "the failure of responsible Party members in carrying out the various demonstrations; their lack of organisational preparations to make the

15. ibid., 20/2/31, p.6.

16. ibid., 8/5/31, p.2.

demonstrations successful; and the apathy of the Party as a whole".¹⁷

A general article (written ⁱⁿ late 1930) analysing the 'Roots of Errors' of the U.W.M. shows a further swing in the Party's strategy for this organisation away from the wide-ranging revolutionary role of the organisation, as outlined by the R.I.L.U., to a more specific, immediate task of organising the unemployed around their particular grievances. This is not to say that the Party's belief in the growing radicalisation of the masses had grown less fervent¹⁸ nor that it did not still see the U.W.M. as ultimately a revolutionary tool; the Party rightly recognised however that the unemployed were politically uneducated and that the programme of the U.W.M. had to be modified to suit their grievances and their level of consciousness. Unfortunately, though the Party did see these dangers of isolation, it still often pitched the struggle at an intellectual and militant level that was unacceptable to many of the unemployed; it was not until late 1931 that the C.P.A. leaders were to make a determined effort to structure the U.W.M. around the feelings and wishes of the ordinary unemployed.

The 'Roots of Errors' article stated that "the U.W.M. is one of the most important/promising fields of Party activity", but ^{and} had not ^{that it} yet developed into a powerful mass movement because of lack of coordination and "the question of the demands around which the workers are to be rallied to the movement": "The revolutionary demands of the Party

17. ibid., 28/11/30, p.3.

18. e.g. cf: C.P.A. The Communist Way Out of the Crisis, statement of the Aims of the Communist Party of Australia, Wright and Baker (printers), Sydney, 1931, especially pp.5-9.

in relation to unemployment are insufficient for this purpose and a programme of immediate demands to rally larger masses of the workers must be formulated on the basis of increased unemployment benefits, improvement in methods of distribution etc."¹⁹

In 1931, U.W.M. policy did become in many ways more realistic and more issue-oriented; yet the modification did not go far enough to suit the parliamentary and arbitration-oriented labor movement. 1931 was to prove a strange year for the U.W.M.: it had a marvellously successful membership and branch drive in the first half of the year, its success seeming to culminate in the large ferocious eviction battles of June. By the end of the year, however, the C.P.A. leaders were maintaining that there had been a great drift away from the U.W.M. in the latter months and that where the U.W.M. "was not stagnant it was decaying".²⁰ The leaders exaggerated the drift, for many branches continued and there was still some protest, but it is true that the rapid growth of the movement in the first six months was undermined in the last six. The reasons for both its ephemeral success and its desuetude are not fully explicable. They include the inappropriateness of Communist policy, the retaliation of the A.L.P. and the Labor Council, Australian anti-communism, and, once again, the sheer difficulty seemingly inherent in organising the unemployed.

At the beginning of 1931, of course, the U.W.M. leaders could not envisage the decline awaiting them, and the organisation began the year

19. W.W., 28/11/30, p.5.

20. ibid., 20/11/31, p.3; cf. end of this chapter for discussion of this.

determined to increase its activity, and fairly confident of success. Communist belief in the radicalisation of the masses and the imminent class revolution tended to induce optimism; indeed the fervency of this belief sometimes resulted in over-confidence and slackness - if the Revolution was both inevitable and imminent it surely could not matter if you missed a meeting or two.

The prospects of the Labor Council's U.W.U. at the turn of the year were not very bright. It had suffered several reverses in 1930 at the hands of the U.W.M. (though it had in turn had some small success in opposing U.W.M. demonstrations and undermining U.W.M. support). There are no indications at all of its membership, but it is probable that the membership was largely only on paper anyway. It had only organised a couple of small, passive demonstrations in 1930, and, now that Lang was in power, it did not want to organise demonstrations anyway.

So, though its prospects of building mass support to fight for its programme were not very hopeful, its position probably suited its leaders and their Labor Council colleagues, as inaction had become its de facto policy. All in all, the U.W.U. was a bit of a dodo.

It is harder to know how the small, independent unemployed organisations had fared in 1930. Groups had been set up in a number of suburbs, and, again, in the coalfields areas. Some of their deputations have been noted. These groups probably had among their supporters a number of A.L.P. members, though the A.L.P. did not actively start working in unemployed groups until mid 1931.

These groups had probably fared reasonably, given the limited nature of their objectives. Their demands tended to concentrate on small, specific improvements: a 25 per cent dole increase, more relief work money to be granted to their locality, the institution of a local labour bureau. Their general moderation, both in their policy and their methods, is shown by the fact that clergymen, local businessmen and aldermen often supported their deputations. These small locals often functioned mainly as relief organisations: drives for clothes or food or money were held, and the fruits distributed among the most needy members.

In this way they no doubt provided a necessary social bandaid, though they could do no more than cover part of the surface of the wound. They would also have provided an active outlet for the frustration of the unemployed; for the most part this outlet was social, rather than political. The number of these separate local, self-help, semi-political organisations was also to grow in 1931.

THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN EARLY 1931: THE WAGE
CUT AND A.C.T.U. CONFERENCE; THE A.L.P. SPLIT.

The New Year editorial in the Labor Daily was very optimistic about the prospects of the coming year. It stated that the election of a Labor Government at state as well as Federal level had shown "an increased faith in Labor's policy for the people". There was a slight attack on the Federal Labor Government for giving "additional financial burdens" to the workers, but no real hint of the split to come. 21

However, in early 1931 two events seriously impaired this rosy prospect.

On January 22nd, 1931, the Commonwealth Arbitration Court announced a 10 per cent reduction in the federal basic wage for twelve months "and thereafter until further order". Also, the extra 'Powers 3/-' was to be eliminated. The 'Harvester Standard' (of 1907) which established the award on the basis of the needs of the wage-earner was replaced by a 'capacity' standard: wages were to be geared to industry's capacity to pay. In its report the court asked: 'Can the wage standards built up during the past years of prosperity be maintained?' It decided that "whatever the ascertained cost of living may be, the court in fixing a wage must of necessity consider the productive capacity of the Commonwealth".²²

Naturally, the union movement was irate. However, its failure to prevent the cut or even to mount a very vigorous protest shows both the real weakness of the union movement in the Depression and its lack of confidence, its belief that it was powerless. One of the most powerful arguments against union protest was the fear that the unemployed would act as strikebreakers. However, in a number of small strikes or threatened strikes in the Depression years unemployed workers declared their solidarity with the protest and helped man picket lines or gave out pamphlets.²³ The union leaders by their failure to organise the

22. For these references and the Court's report cf. Shann and Copland, The Crisis in Australian Finance, 1929-1931, Sydney, 1931, pp.102-136; cf. C.B. Schedvin, op.cit., pp.215-225 for a discussion of the judgement and the Economists' influence on it.

23. e.g. W.W., 20/2/31, p.2. Sylvester states that in many areas the U.W.M. had elected delegates to strike committees. Later in 1931 the U.W.M. was to offer to help the proposed Seamen's strike.

unemployed had laid the way open for the very competition from the unemployed that they feared.

It was the New South Wales Labor Council and especially its Communist delegates that expressed the most defiance to the cut, but the Garden group was quickly to exchange compromise for defiance.

On the night of the 22nd the Sydney Labor Council declared in favour of a general strike.²⁴ The C.P.A. agitated for workers to organise along R.I.L.U. lines for a general strike which would cause either the capitulation of capitalism in a few days or the raising of the class struggle to a higher level.²⁵

A special conference of the A.C.T.U. was held over the issue from February 16th to 22nd.²⁶ Louis rightly describes this conference as "little short of a fiasco".²⁷

The A.C.T.U. Executive recommended that "the Federal Government be directed to declare a state of emergency at once, taking full control of all agencies in Australia". It threatened that if the cut or further onslaughts were not stopped, the A.C.T.U. would be empowered to call upon any section of workers "to stop and/or impede production until such time as the living standards of the workers are restored".

24. L.J. Louis, op.cit., p.84 . (I was unable to find this in the T.L.C.M. It would seem that this had been in the air for a while. On December 11th, the Council resolved to "set up Rank and File Committees to vigorously resist by strike action any reduction in the Federal Basic Wage." T.L.C.M., 11/12/30, p.693.)

25. W.W. , 30/1/31.

26. For the subsequent references to this: cf A.C.T.U. Minutes of Special Conference Held Trades Hall, Sydney, ... from Monday February 16 to Sunday February 22nd, 1931. quoted (in shortened form) in L.J. Louis and I. Turner, op.cit., pp.90-96. (I could not find the original document.)

27. L.J. Louis, op.cit., p.86.

Chapman, of the New South Wales A.R.U., in a much more militant amendment, demanded a general strike on Wednesday, February 25th, and attacked the futility of appeals to Scullin and the Arbitration Court.

In what would seem to have been a face-saving compromise, perhaps intended also to reduce the heat of the debate,²⁸ the conference was adjourned and Garden, Crofts (Secretary of the A.C.T.U.) and others journeyed to Canberra to put their demands to Scullin. The higher echelons of the New South Wales Labor Council were by this time much less in favour of a general strike, and it was Garden who suggested the journey to Canberra. Not surprisingly, Scullin refused the demands, and the resumed conference devoted itself to stormy debate and finally a vacillating compromise.

The Executive's recommendation was finally rejected by 88 votes to 62, and Chapman's general strike motion was lost 104 to 41. It would seem that the A.C.T.U. leaders were from the outset not really serious about the strike threat. The Herald, usually among the first to exaggerate and denounce any militant radicalism, was unconcerned: "There is a feeling in union circles that the congress is simply playing with a useless proposal. Even should the motion be carried, it is stated, the decision will have only a lukewarm reception and will probably be quietly shelved."

Though Chapman's proposal was clearly defeated the surprising fact is that it received as much support as it did.

28. cf. L.J. Louis, op.cit., pp.86-87. The evidence Louis presents shows that the A.C.T.U. leaders must have known before they left that the journey and the appeal to Scullin would be fruitless.

29. S.M.H., 17/2/31, p.9.

The A.C.T.U. finally decided to call upon each State Labor Council "to make preparations for holding mass meetings of all workers on the question of taking action to combat the onslaught of the employing class" - thus, as Louis points out, "merely throwing back on the unions the onus of finding a method of combating the cut".³⁰

Although in both preliminary discussions of the Conference and its motion to Conference the Executive of the A.C.T.U. had stressed the enormity of unemployment,³¹ the A.C.T.U. was still much more preoccupied with the cut in employed workers' wages than with the much worse economic position of the unemployed. The only solution to unemployment put in the executive's motion was the introduction of a shorter working week to absorb more workers into industry. Garden proposed a moderate motion that included a demand for "adequate sustenance" for the unemployed, trade union rates on relief work and a thirty-five hour week. It also declared that "no workers through unemployment shall be deemed unfinancial in his union and shall have the same rights as financial members while unemployed." "This last recommendation can be seen as a belated attempt by the union leaders to keep the unemployed within the union movement and so lessen the appeal of the U.W.M. This recommendation was not carried out by most unions. Garden also recommended a moratorium "for rented and t.p.³² houses".

As at the 1930 A.C.T.U. Conference in Melbourne, the militant unemployed protested against the inaction and unconcern of the A.C.T.U.

30. L.J. Louis, op.cit., p.87.

31. cf. S.M.H., 31/1/31, p.17 and the Conference Minutes.

32. presumably time payment.

In early February the New South Wales Labor Council had agreed to a motion put by Ryan "that the Council delegates to the A.C.T.U. Conference urge that two delegates from the U.W.U. and the U.W.M. be allowed representation on Conference, and that other states be requested to do likewise".³³ The conference agreed to admit four delegates, though continued the A.C.T.U.'s policy of exclusion of the unemployed by not allowing them to vote.³⁴ It seems that the four delegates admitted were the U.W.U. and U.W.M. delegates agreed to by the New South Wales Labor Council.

W. Thomas of the U.W.M.³⁵ moved a militant amendment to Garden's motion. This was the only forthright policy for overcoming the unemployed workers' impoverishment presented to conference. The preamble to the demands was a vitriolic repudiation of the A.C.T.U. bureaucracy, Labor Governments, the arbitration system and capitalism. It appealed "to all honest workers in this Congress to declare the leadership of the A.C.T.U. bankrupt and to join with the M.M. in the policy of preparing definite organisational machinery elected by and completely responsible to the rank and file of the workers in all enterprises to resist the capitalist offensive". It urged a system of rank and file strike

33. T.L.C.M., 5/2/31, p.703.

34. S.M.H., 17/2/31, p.9.

35. L.J. Louis and I. Turner op.cit., p.93, in presenting Thomas's amendment describe him as a member of the U.W.U. (but ^{also} describe him as presenting the Communist view). Thomas was actually a member of the U.W.M. (cf. e.g. W.W., 27/2/31).

committees to be set up "to work conjointly with similar Rank and File Committees of Action elected by the unemployed".

The 'mobilisation demands' Thomas presented included the restoration of the 10 per cent cut; opposition to Lang's wage tax; unemployed relief at the rate of £3 per week for man and wife and 10/- additional for each child, single men and women to receive £2 and payment to be made in cash; the relief fund to be financed by a special tax on "big capitalists" and to be administered by workers' committees; full trade union rights to the unemployed; abolition of the Arbitration Court.

Not surprisingly, Thomas's amendment was defeated on the voices and Garden's motion easily carried.

The unemployed expressed their contempt outside the conference.

On Tuesday 17th - the second day of the Conference - there were "riotous scenes" outside the Trades Hall when about one hundred unemployed tried to enter the meeting; verbal fights with the doorkeeper developed into a scrimmage when the doorkeeper hit one of the leaders who was trying to open the door. "We'll put a bullet through you", one of the demonstrators yelled. Men came out from the conference to resist the unemployed, and in the ensuing fight faces were cut and clothing ripped.

Later a mass meeting of unemployed "attended by several well-known Communists" attacked Lang, Scullin and the A.C.T.U. as enemies of the working class.³⁶ It would seem that this demonstration was organised by the U.W.M.

36. S.M.H., 18/2/31, p.13.

The next day the same thing happened again - the unemployed again tried "to force their way in to address delegates on the unemployment question, or at least to draw attention to their desperate position". Again they were locked out and union officials came out to fight them in the passageway.

Later the unemployed tried to put their position to a meeting of the Bakers' Union, and there, too, they were repulsed.³⁷

Whether the intentions of the demonstrators were simply to put their case, or whether they wanted (as the A.C.T.U. leaders obviously feared) to break up the Conference, the A.C.T.U. leaders cannot be absolved from the extreme lack of tact, let alone true concern and determination to help, that they showed towards the unemployed.

They could speak interminably of "the desperate position of the thousands of unemployed workers of this country through the inadequate relief which is condemning them to a process of slow starvation"³⁸ but they were unwilling to meet these desperate men face to face. Perhaps the rhetoric of misery that they proclaimed day after day had immuned them to its reality. Perhaps they genuinely believed that all they could do was to try to help their employed members, that the unemployment problem was one for governments to solve.

Whatever their reasons, their apparent unconcern caused many unemployed workers to become disillusioned with them, to turn instead to the U.W.M. and other non-union groups that did seem interested in their problems.

37. ibid., 19/2/31, p.9.

38. Garden's speech to Conference.

It is no coincidence that it was on February 19th that unemployed workers at the Trades Hall declared the formation of the 'Red Army'. Some hundreds of unemployed flocked immediately to its banner.³⁹

The other event of significance to the labor movement in early 1931 was of course the Labor Party split. Dormant hostility between the New South Wales and Federal Labor leaders came into the open when Lang produced the Lang Plan in opposition to the Theodore Plan at the February Premiers' Conference.⁴⁰ The rift was gashed wide open in early March when Eddie Ward fought - and won - the East Sydney by-election on the basis of the Lang Plan. When the Federal Labor Party Caucus refused to accept Ward, Lang's seven supporters in Federal Parliament seceded from the government. At the end of March the A.L.P. Federal Conference expelled the New South Wales A.L.P. Executive; there were thus two Labor Parties in New South Wales.

39. S.M.H., 20/2/31, p.11 (References to the Red Army sometimes appear in the press, but it was never really a viable organisation.)

40. The three main points of the Lang Plan were: that no further interest should be paid to British bondholders "until Britain has dealt with the Australian overseas debt as Britain has settled her own foreign debt with Australia"; that in Australia interest on Government borrowing be reduced to 3 per cent; that immediate steps be taken to set up a 'goods standard' - a currency based on the wealth of Australia - in place of the gold standard. (cf. C.B. Schedvin, op.cit., p.228.)

There are so many detailed (and often conflicting) accounts of this crisis⁴¹ but only one issue is of relevance here - the question of why the Lang Plan was produced, and was produced at this time.

The problem of from where or from whom the ideas actually came must first be considered. Lang gives no indication of this, but he infers that the Plan was devised by him.

What is immediately noticeable in the proposals is that the repudiation proposal, and, to a lesser extent, the proposal to mobilise credit are similar to the recommendations made by the New South Wales Labor Council to the meeting of the Political and Industrial Committee in August 1930 - the recommendations that Lang had so strongly pressured the A.L.P.'s Central Executive to reject⁴² and that Lang had officially denounced in his election propoganda when he declared his 'repudiation of repudiation'.

All the accounts of the Premiers' Conference note the surprise of the other delegates when, after the weekend adjournment, Lang suddenly produced his Plan.

41. e.g. E. Spratt, Eddie Ward, Firebrand of East Sydney, Adelaide, 1965, pp.32-42.
J.T. Lang, The Turbulent Years, Chapter 10, and The Great Bust, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1962, pp.368-375; W. Denning, Caucus Crisis: The Rise and Fall of the Scullin Government, Parramatta, 1937; C.B. Schedvin, op.cit., pp.225-236; Allan G.B. Fisher, 'Crisis and Readjustment in Australia, Journal of Political Economy, Dec. 1934, p.653 ff; Lloyd Ross, 'Australian Labor and the Crisis' Economic Record, vol. viii, Dec. 1932.

42. cf. discussion in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Schedvin writes that "the origin of the Lang Plan will perhaps never be satisfactorily explained. It was not brought before State Caucus and Cabinet before the Premiers' Conference, and the majority of the party heard it for the first time from the press ..." "Lang's decision to go ahead with the plan was probably made at the last minute, but he seems to have been turning something of the sort over in his mind during the first part of the Conference".⁴³

Young states that Lang "embraced the repudiation policy of the Trades Hall and had A.C. Paddison⁴⁴ produce the 'Lang Plan' ". Young states that Garden and Schrieber told him this and that they said that "Lang informed them that 'he had no knowledge of many of the references cited by Paddison in his Lang Plan'".⁴⁵ Unfortunately, Young's chronology is muddled at this stage; however, his point about Lang's production of the Plan under pressure from, or to retain or regain favour with, the Trades Hall cannot be ignored.

One of Lang's motives in producing the Plan was undoubtedly to oppose the Theodore Plan, and as such was part of the continuing personal and political battle between the Federal Treasurer and the

43. C.B. Schedvin, op.cit., pp.227-228. (Schedvin notes the suggestion that the Plan was formed during the Sunday recess and refers to the Herald report that Anstey may have been responsible for it, for Lang and Anstey conferred at length on the Sunday.)

44. Paddison was a former schoolteacher who joined Lang's publicity staff (working under H. Macauley) and became chief lead writer on the Labor Daily (working under N. Macauley).

45. I.E. Young, op.cit., p.61; "J.T. Lang and the Depression", Labor History, Nov 1963, p.8. (slightly differing accounts).

New South Wales Premiers.⁴⁶

An equally important motive for the production of the Plan - and for Lang's subsequent repudiation of payments and the flouting of the Federal Government's and the Banks' authority when he tried to carry out the Plan - was to regain favour not just with the union leaders, but with Lang's working class electors and especially the unemployed.

We have seen how the workless were becoming disillusioned with Lang; the Lang Plan must be seen in part as a dramatic and militant gesture aimed to distract the unemployed and other workers who had suffered during Lang's Premiership from their sufferings and grievances, to convince them that Lang was doing something (despite his failure to increase relief or stop unemployment), to reassert his militant radicalism and his cherished image as the politician who fought for the workers (and thus to strengthen his position in the state A.L.P. against the growing threat from the left)⁴⁷, and to re-employ the old fat-capitalist bogey to show that it was the Federal Government, the Loan Council and the Banks who were crippling Lang's attempts to fulfil his promises.

Chifley later stated: "Mr. Lang spent his time tickling the ears of the unfortunate sections of the people who were themselves so distracted

46. cf. C.B. Schedvin, op.cit., p.229 "Lang's purpose was to destroy the Theodore Plan". cf. also I.E. Young op.cit., for this view in its extremity.

47. The Socialisation Units were increasingly becoming a force to be reckoned with. At the N.S.W. A.L.P.'s Metropolitan Conference in March, Lang and the Inner Group had to fight hard to keep control of the Party and prevent the Units' from forcing through their policy, cf. R. Cooksey, op.cit., pp.38-49. Cooksey points out how Lang exploited his reputation as a militant radical in order to take the wind out of the sails of the Unit supporters.

by their position that they were prepared to chase any economic rainbow - and Mr. Lang produced a number of those rainbows".⁴⁸ Just as Lang's election promises had provided a ready source of optimism, so was the Lang Plan to divert the minds of many, and Lang's defiance of the Federal Government, the Banks and finally the Governor, were to win him a popularity that obscured his failures for many.

THE RAPID GROWTH OF THE U.W.M. IN THE FIRST
HALF OF THE YEAR.

The rapid growth of the U.W.M. in the first half of 1931, during which a large number of local branches were formed, shows, however, that not all the unemployed were easily divertable.

It is difficult to show this growth, both in the number of supporters and the spread of the organisation geographically, without resolving into a sort of catalogue - list and nothing more. Yet, as the size of the U.W.M. has been so underestimated and as one aim of this thesis is to provide a fairly comprehensive narrative of the movement, this section will be partly concerned with providing a list of the branches, and will also try to show in more detail how some branches were formed, and how hostility between the C.P.A. and the A.L.P. and union leaders caused splits in the movement.

It must be stressed that the branches mentioned here are not a complete coverage of all the branches referred to in the press, and are by no means all the branches that existed.

48. L.F. Crisp, op.cit., p.66.

In January-February there was a growth and consolidation of the U.W.M.'s strength in the Newcastle district. Although there had been active unemployed groups in this district in the Twenties, and though the U.W.M. had had one of its major strongholds there in 1930, the U.W.M. had not managed completely to dominate the unemployed organisation of the area. Though Communist support in the area was strong, the A.L.P. and union leaders could also rally support against the Communists, perhaps more so than in many other areas for a number of the non-Communist union leaders - 'Bondy' Hoare, for example - had a reputation of leftist militancy; because of geographical and work homogeneity the union leaders were more directly in touch with their members than usual.

The continuing battle over the leadership of the unemployed in the Newcastle district shows the rivalry between the C.P.A. and the A.L.P. - union bureaucracy, and the bitter factional tactics adopted by both.

In late October 1930, the Workers' Weekly had described the situation in regard to the unemployed movement in Newcastle as a "political inferno". A conference was at that time held in West Maitland to establish a Northern District Council of the U.W.M.; about seven delegates, representing the Newcastle, Maitland, Belmont, Speers Point, Homeville and Jellarah U.W.M.s attended. Walter O. Hearn, a local Labor M.L.A. made a brief visit, attacked the organisation on the grounds of its Communist affiliation, and persuaded one Maitland delegate (who was also an A.L.P. member) to leave. This delegate subsequently told the Maitland unemployed "that the conference was called for the purpose of forming an

election committee for the Communist candidate (in the State elections), J. Harvey", and that the formation of the U.W.M. would jeopardise O'Hearn's election chances. The first charge was probably unjustified: the C.P.A. at this time was not really interested in securing election and was much more interested in building mass fronts like the U.W.M. Electioneering was seen as only another way - and a relatively minor one at that - of propagandising the revolutionary cause. It is the second charge that shows the real grounds of the A.L.P.'s opposition to the U.W.M.

The C.P.A.'s reply was somewhat inconsistent: it stated that "only one Communist was in attendance" at the Conference and reiterated that "only one delegate, Comrade Jeffery, was a communist holding an official position". But, by their own account, Comrade Harvey seems to have been running the conference, and Comrade Kendall "made a flying visit to give him a helping hand".⁴⁹

Though A.L.P. members were determined to break up the U.W.M., they had to face a certain amount of opposition from U.W.M. members loyal to the incumbent leadership. (The number of A.L.P. charges against Communist leadership does suggest that the leadership in this area was weighted towards the C.P.A.)

Also in October, A.L.P. supporters ruined a crowded U.W.M. meeting at the Newcastle Trades Hall by yelling abuse and throwing eggs.⁵⁰

A week later the A.L.P. made another attempt to disrupt the Newcastle U.W.M.: a motion was put to revert back to the name of O.B.U.U.,

49. W.W., 24/10/30, p.6.

50. ibid.

because then they could be able to get free groceries. The speaker said he objected to Communism.⁵¹ On another occasion an A.L.P. member told a U.W.M. meeting that the Communists were impractical as well as wrong, and spoke in favour of asking Lang for a 25 per cent dole rise instead of the U.W.M.'s demand for adequate support. He seems to have won over the meeting for a delegation to wait on Lang was elected.⁵²

Though support for the U.W.M. in the Northern District was equivocal at the end of 1930, there were still good branches at Cessnock and Kurri Kurri and a new branch was formed at West Maitland.⁵³

The conflict between the A.L.P. and the C.P.A. in the Northern District continued into January and February 1931. It should be noted that although the A.L.P. charged the Communists with manipulation and undemocratic politicking, the A.L.P. was just as ready to adopt dirty tactics to secure its domination. In early January a move was made in West Maitland. It seems that the West Maitland unemployed group was not completely affiliated to the U.W.M.: though the President and Assistant Secretary belonged to the U.W.M., the Treasurer supported the A.L.P. A meeting of the West Maitland unemployed resolved to send delegates to the forthcoming conference of the Northern District of the U.W.M. The Workers Weekly writes:

51. ibid., 31/10/30, p.6.

52. ibid., 7/11/30, p.6.

53. ibid., 21/11/30, p.4; 28/11/30, p.6; 12/12/30.

"At this militancy, the A.L.P. resorted to 'hole and corner' tactics". The Secretary called another meeting at short notice, "without the knowledge of the President and Assistant Secretary", and "informed one of the most militant members an hour before the meeting that there was no meeting on". Only fifty attended the A.L.P.-stacked meeting, and Communists were "subjected to much adverse criticism" in their absence. A resolution that the unemployed should have nothing to do with the U.W.M. was carried.⁵⁴ The A.L.P. members were to continue their attack by claiming that Harvey (one of the U.W.M. leaders) had been organising scabs. At a meeting held to refute these claims the unemployed criticised the A.L.P. and trade union bureaucracy so strongly that the Treasurer admitted the charges against the A.L.P. and the unions "but in order to belittle the Communist Party before the workers, claimed that the C.P. was just as bureaucratic".⁵⁵

Despite all this, the U.W.M. seems to have been winning out among the unemployed. The delegate conference of the Northern District U.W.M.s, held at Newcastle Trades Hall on January 17th, was proclaimed a success. Eight branches were represented, with two delegates from each branch; three unaffiliated groups attended, again with two delegates each. The Conference pledged to have twenty-four branches set up in the district by February 28th, when another conference would be held to elect a district committee. A strong provisional committee was elected to prepare for the next conference. The conference was strongly oriented towards the Communist viewpoint: resentment was expressed against the trade union

54. ibid., 23/1/31, p.6.

55. ibid., 6/2/31.

leaders and against "the swindling deceptive role of the Labor Governments". The conference rejected (by sixteen votes to one) a recently-constituted advisory committee on unemployment consisting of five Trades Hall representatives.⁵⁶

The Newcastle Trades Hall, as well as the A.L.P. feared and opposed the U.W.M.

In mid February, the Trades Hall Council met to discuss the advisability of admitting the U.W.M. to membership of the Council, and to discuss the Newcastle unemployed workers' criticism of Baddeley. "The unemployed had their advocates, but a section of the meeting endorsed the view of another delegate that the unemployed organisations were white-anting the industrial movement and no motion was adopted".⁵⁷

The Communists' arguments against the Labor Party were no doubt given more credence in the Northern mining district because of Theodore's failure to keep his election promises to miners in 1929.

The U.W.M. was very active in the small mining town of Kurri Kurri. In February, Baddeley consented (reluctantly, it would seem) to address a meeting of four or five hundred of the local unemployed, though he informed them that he would not recognise any unemployed movements. The audience was not satisfied with his insistence that the Government was doing all it could, and Baddeley hurriedly left, causing pandemonium in the meeting. A unanimous censure motion was carried against the Labor Government and the meeting resolved to intensify

56. ibid., 30/1/30, p.6.

57. S.M.H., 11/2/31.

its U.W.M. activity. The Kurri Kurri U.W.M. made a determined and successful effort to bolster its ranks with women.⁵⁸

(A particular characteristic of the movement in the mining areas, both north and south, was the greater readiness of the women to join in the movement. This, too, must be attributed to the sense of community and relative homogeneity of the mining areas, as well as the more general militancy of these districts.)

On International Unemployed Day (March 6th) there was a large and militant march in this town, about two thousand workers taking part, including fifty women members of the U.W.M. At the I.U.D. mass meeting a Council of Action with forty members (fourteen of whom were women) was established. This was intended to fight against attacks on employed workers as well as those on the unemployed - showing again the solidarity between employed and unemployed in the mining towns. Weston and Abermain unemployed asked the Council of Action to help them form their own Councils.⁵⁹

Apart from the consolidation of the Newcastle Area, the U.W.M. had widespread success in February, and March, for not only were new branches formed, but other unaffiliated groups changed their allegiance to the U.W.M. Most of the evidence of this growth comes from Communist sources, so must of course be carefully scrutinised. However, as the Party was so quick to admit its organisational defects, (for Bolshevik self-criticism required that Party members should continually search out their errors), I think its account of organisational success must be

58. W.W., 27/2/31, p.6.

59. ibid., 13/3/30, p.1.

largely accepted. The branches are specifically referred to in terms of their activity, or numbers, or organisation, and for some addresses are given. While the Party may have exaggerated in general terms the growing radicalisation of the masses, there are no grounds for belief that it would lie in small, specific details about the existence of groups.

In February, a progress report on the U.W.M. claimed that "Garden's bogus U.W.U., which was formed as part of the machinery intended to keep the unemployed separate from and antagonistic to the employed workers, that was used primarily as a stepping stone to office by various Labor parliamentarians, is rapidly becoming liquidated in every district. Almost daily, news is received of the formation of branches of the U.W.M., and many other organisations of unemployed workers are seeking affiliation".

In the last fortnight branches had been formed in Hurstville, Parramatta, Brookvale, St. Peters, Camperdown, Kogarah Bay, Canberra and Waratah; the Granville, Glebe and Surry Hills branches of the U.W.U. had joined the U.W.M., and formerly unaffiliated organisations at Bankstown, Weston, Balmain and Broken Hill had merged with the U.W.M. (The Broken Hill Branch had over twelve hundred members.) The new Granville branch was particularly enthusiastic: in a week, five hundred members had been enrolled and a permanent meeting place with a library had been established. In the South Coast area, there were active branches at Coledale, Bulli, Scarborough and Wollongong.⁶⁰

60. ibid., 20/2/31, p.6.

A month later an even more enthusiastic report was published. The U.W.M. had by this time divided the locals for organisational purposes into districts - namely: "No. 1 district - City, Surry Hills, Paddington etc.

- No. 2 District - Balmain, Rozelle, Glebe, Annandale, etc. ? Btown ?
No. 3 " ^{Kao} Newtown, Camperdown, St. Peters, Marrickville, etc.
No. 5 " Ryde, Gladesville, Drummoyne.
No. 7 " Strathfield, Concord, Mortlake and Homebush
No. 8 " Lidcombe, Auburn, Granville, Parramatta, Liverpool
No. 9 " Belmore, Punchbowl, Campsie etc.
No. 10." Hurstville, Rockdale, Kogarah Bay, Bexley.
No. 11 " Lane Cove, Crows Nest, Chatswood etc." 61

New branches had now been formed at Kahibah, Dudley, Cabramatta, La Perouse, Mortdale, Mascot and Waverley - Bondi.

The Number 1 North District Council now had sixteen branches and in the South Coast section only one district did not have a U.W.M. local. The U.W.M. had not yet made much progress in country areas.

A number of the branches were engaged in small struggles in their local area. For example, Newtown branch held a demonstration at the Council Chambers and forced the Council to grant them a larger meeting hall. Canberra branch marched to Parliament House on I.U.D.

Good mass meetings were held regularly in a number of centres; Camperdown, Punchbowl, North Ryde, Belmore, Campsie and other centres

were specifically mentioned. Most of the locals had a regular weekly meeting place and time.⁶²

Despite the success, some of the branches were still having trouble with opposition from the A.L.P. and the Labor Council.

Garden himself spoke against a meeting in No. 8 district, though ^{Lang's district} it seems he had little support.

The Labor Leagues in the Manly-Brookvale district became very active after Sylvester began to organise in that area. The Leagues' spokesmen told the unemployed "that on no account must they join up with the U.W.M.s", and made "the usual vicious attacks on the C.P.". The A.L.P. League members were successful in securing the disbanding of a General Committee of the unemployed (linked with the U.W.M.)⁶³

By March, the Workers' Defence Corps (W.D.C) had been formed. It "played a prominent part" in the I.U.D. demonstration,⁶⁴ and in the succeeding months was to achieve publicity, notably over its attacks on the Labor Council. Theoretically, U.W.M. branches were to have their own sub-committees of the W.D.C. to protect the unemployed from attacks by New Guardsmen or Police in demonstrations. Though a number of U.W.M. locals reported to the Workers Weekly that they had W.D.C. units, as a mass or widespread organisation the W.D.C. was a failure. It seems that in fact there were only about 200 active W.D.C. members at most (stationed allegedly in Glebe) who attended various meetings in a pack. M. Ryan's name is often associated with them. They appear to have been a foolhardy young band, eager for a fray, carried

62. W.W., 20/3/31/ p.6.

63. Ibid.

64. ibid., 31/7/31, p.4.

Mick
Ryan

away by the sound of their own rhetoric and the desire to vent their energies on any opposition. They no doubt did more to discredit the U.W.M. than to win it. support, especially as their attacks were often centred on the 'social fascists'.

The growing strength of the U.W.M. was shown in the mass demonstration on International Unemployed Day.

The C.P.A. and U.W.M. had canvassed for mass support for this demonstration, to the consternation of the A.L.P. leaders who feared that a show of militancy might harm the New South Wales Labor Party's chances in the crucial East Sydney by-election, to be held the next day.

The A.L.P. appealed to the U.W.M. not to embarrass Lang by a riot, and to delay the demonstration; the U.W.M. replied that the march would be orderly.⁶⁵ On the day before the march there were "unruly scenes" at a U.W.M. meeting at the Trades Hall, when a speaker opposing the march was challenged to a fight.

" 'You men cannot think for yourselves', he cried, pounding his fists defiantly. 'Jack Lang will get work for you if you will only have patience.' "

'We have lost our patience,' yelled a tall brawny man

'We want work.'

'Well , you had better not march through the streets and cause trouble if you want work', retorted the speaker. "

65. S.M.H., 5/3/31, p.10.

The angry onlookers jeered the speaker and a group of men mobbed him and tore the coat from his back.⁶⁶

The fact that the Government granted permission for the march shows its determination to avoid a confrontation. It also provided a large body of police.

The demonstration and subsequent meeting were orderly. The Herald saw this as a defeat for the U.W.M., but as the U.W.M. proclaimed the day a great success it would seem that the U.W.M. was concerned more with massing a sizeable protest than with disrupting Parliament.

The march progressed from Eddy Avenue to the Domain. Though the Herald gives the number of participants as 1,000, the Workers' Weekly figure of 2,500 is probably more accurate, as, by the Herald's own account "traffic along Elizabeth Street, Wentworth Avenue and College Street was temporarily disrupted by the long-slow-moving demonstration."⁶⁷ The photograph opposite certainly shows the march was large.

Hall claims led by Sylvia G.

66. ibid., 6/3/31/, p.9.

67. ibid., 7/3/31, p.15; W.W., 13/3/31, p.1. L.J. Louis (op.cit., p.169) points out: "It is extremely difficult to arrive at a confident estimate of the size of the demonstrations held in these years. The daily press was inclined to minimise as far as possible the support for what it regarded as lawlessness, while the sponsors of the demonstrations tended to the other extreme. Probably 2 to 3000 would have constituted a large demonstration".

The Workers' Weekly states that the marchers were joined by thousands more at the meeting at the Shakespeare Memorial. A double line of police guarded Parliament House. (The Workers' Weekly puts the number of police at 600). It seems that speakers did not try to incite the crowd to break through the police lines.

A deputation representing about a dozen U.W.M. branches interviewed Baddeley. The list of demands and Baddeley's answers is given below:

Demands

1. Work or full maintenance.
2. Medicine, doctor's care, dispensary consultations, sanatoria homes, all free of charge.
3. Increase in scale of rations to include meat, fruit, vegetables, groceries, boots and clothing.
4. No evictions of workless. Shelter for unemployed.
- ← 5. Free rent, light and fuel.
6. Free milk for children and women in pregnancy.
7. Travelling facilities to and from Labor Bureaux.
8. All funds necessary for supplying unemployed with work to be a direct charge upon industry.
9. Abolition of Labor Bureaux and substitution of Unemployed Workers' Committees.
10. Abolition of private labor agencies.
11. Abolition of all systems of wage taxes.

*I think this just
time demand for
free rent*

Baddeley's Reply

1. Cannot promise work.
2. Can promise nothing.
4. Government considering further amendment to Landlord and Tenants Act.
5. Government will consider.
6. Minister for Education has this in hand.
7. No need for unemployed to come into town now.
8. No answer.
9. No foundation for complaints.
10. Met within the new Arbitration Act.
11. No answer. (68)

The Workers' Weekly summed up Baddeley's reply with this parody of the Rubaiyyat:

Myself when broke did eagerly frequent
the Government House and therein held great argument
whether or no some extra rations I should have.
But evermore came out as in I went.

At the meeting, resolutions were passed condemning the Government and demanding the release of the 'class war prisoners'. Then "the whole assembly joined vigorously in singing the Red Flag and after three rousing cheers for the Revolution, departed for their homes":

The tameness of the demonstration, despite its good size, does not really seem to justify the fulsomeness of the C.P.A.'s praise for the day:

68. W.W., 13/3/31, p.1.

Workers of Sydney! This is only the beginning! This is only a rehearsal - 2,500 militant workers in a full-dress parade! The time is coming, and very shortly, when we will treble our numbers, aye, and quadruple them, and then we will go out onto the streets and keep our own law and order

This demonstration has made history for the U.W.M! From now on we are going to make history at frequent intervals" ⁶⁹

As well as the demonstrations in Sydney and at Kurri Kurri, there were demonstrations on the South Coast and in Canberra.

Although historical hindsight prevents us from understanding the fervency of the militants' belief that the masses were becoming extremely radicalised, their analysis was not simply based on dogmatism and wishful thinking. There were signs that could be interpreted as proof of growing militancy. The defect in the Communist analysis of the situation was that it neglected the many other auguries of apathy or conservatism.

Three weeks after I.U.D. there was a most promising avowal of rank and file radicalism.

The Labor Council, in what was probably an attempt to counteract the support for the U.W.M., built up on I.U.D., decided to hold an unemployed demonstration "to demand that the Government carry out the promises it made on the hustings". ⁷⁰

69. ibid.

70. T.L.C.M., 19/3/31.

On March 26th, 2000 unemployed assembled outside the Trades Hall to march to Macquarie Street, Before Garden could address them, Sylvester seized the initiative and appealed to them not to take part in the demonstration. Garden was hooted and counted out by a section of the crowd, and when he finally asked them to form fours and march with him, only 300 joined him, the rest remaining to listen to the Communist speakers who attacked the demonstration and the Lang Government.

Garden subsequently denounced his opponents as "men who did not want work, men who wanted the Government to starve the workers for their own ends".

The Communists' claim that the demonstration was merely a 'put-up job' proved justified. Once at the Domain, Garden, instead of protesting the unemployed workers' grievances and demanding their solution, turned the protest into a vote of confidence in Lang's repudiation policy. The meeting unanimously voted against the payment of loan interest; a deputation was assured by Lang that the Government would default. There was no mention of the original aim of the protest. Though the organisers decided to hold weekly demonstrations "to force the views of the unemployed upon the Cabinet" there is no record of these occurring.⁷¹

At the meeting of the Labor Council that night, Garden's report on the demonstration (clearly favourable) was adopted despite opposition from Communist delegates.⁷²

71. S.M.H., 27/3/31, p.11.

72. T.L.C.M., 26/3/31.

Though Garden's power in his particular sphere of interest remained supreme, there was obviously a growing body of workers outside the control of the Labor Council who were at times willing to turn to other more militant leaders.

The U.W.M., naturally, proclaimed this event "a great victory", adding (once again!) that "this sounded the death-knell of the U.W.U."⁷³

Though the U.W.M. was wont to proclaim the death of its rival every few months, it does seem that this time it was right. The U.W.U. appears to have recently lost its few branches to the U.W.M. and his embarrassing defeat on March 26th may have decided Garden to shelve the organisation.

The U.W.U. does not seem to be represented on Council after this; indeed, there is only one more reference to it in the Labor Council Minutes.

Instead, the U.W.M. was for a while granted affiliation. When, in late April, the U.W.M. approached the Labor Council on the subject of delegates, Garden moved that the U.W.M. call a Conference to elect two delegates;⁷⁴ Stan Moran, a young Communist later to lead the unemployed movement was one; the other delegate varied.⁷⁵ Eatock

73. W.W., 31/7/31, p.4.

74. T.L.C.M. 30/4/31, p.725.

75. Mrs. Eatock was sometimes the other delegate; sometimes it was Bella Weiner.

When, two weeks later, the U.W.U. wrote to Council, Council decided "not to entertain the request". (The actual subject is not mentioned.) This is the last heard of the U.W.U. ⁷⁶

Why did Garden suddenly reverse his policy towards these two groups? The answer is elusive, but there are certain indications.

Garden was a skilful politician, well able both to read signs of change and to adopt or re-manoeuvre his policy to suit new situations, new power challenges. It seems likely that he accepted the death of the U.W.U. as a fait accompli. Garden was not one to align himself with failure, and, despite the Labor Council's help, the U.W.U. had failed. It is in keeping with Garden's character that he would prefer to strike the final death blow himself - that of ousting it from Council - rather than allow it to linger on indeterminately and uselessly.

Garden also, at this time, had a more important and immediate battle to fight, a battle that was to tax all the resources of the Inner Group strategists. At the Metropolitan Conference of the New South Wales A.L.P. in March, the power of the Inner Group was seriously threatened by the left wing members of the Socialisation Units. The conflict came into the open when the Unemployment Committee's report given by Schrieber was challenged by the Socialisation Committee delegates, who claimed the report was an inadequate palliative and that immediate socialisation of industry was the only solution. Though the

76. F.L.C.M., 14/5/31.

Socialisation Committee's amendment was lost, the Inner Group suffered its first major defeat since it captured the Party, when its report was also rejected.⁷⁷

The Inner Group may have decided to waive the struggle against the U.W.M. in order to concentrate on ousting the Socialisation Units. It may also have decided to make a limited acceptance of the U.W.M. in order to proclaim its own radicalism: Cooksey points out that the Inner Group's tactic against the Socialisation Units was to maintain Lang's reputation for militancy, in order to prevent the rank and file in the unions and branches from turning to the more radical Socialisation Units.⁷⁸

The Inner Group may also already have decided upon its new strategy of opposition to the U.W.M., a strategy that began to be enacted by mid year. From this time moves against the U.W.M. were directed from A.L.P. branches and the Labor Daily, rather than from the Union movement.

Finally, the Labor Council's acceptance of the U.W.M. was strictly limited, the U.W.M's power in Council meetings was not allowed to go beyond short boundaries, and the Council may well have decided to admit it with the hope of thus containing it.

For example, whilst Council was willing to support some small, specific protests of the U.W.M. (such as condemning police attacks on eviction fighters or meetings⁷⁹), it rejected militant proposals

77. cf. R. Cooksey, op.cit., pp.37-38; S.M.H., 17/3/31, p.10; 18/3/31, p.18.

78. R. Cooksey, op.cit., pp.39-49.

79. e.g. T.L.C.M., 25/6/31; 29/7/31.

based on the U.W.M.'s programme. For example: Moran moved "that this Council condemns the Lang Government for refusing to keep its promise to the Unemployed for 25 per cent increased rations and demand that it be granted immediately. Should the Government fail to grant this demand, this Council will cooperate with the U.W.M. in a mass demonstration of protest". An amendment "that we approach the Premier and inform him that his promise to increase the rations by 25 per cent has not been carried out" completely negated the militancy of Moran's proposal. The amendment was passed instead of the motion.⁸⁰

*See ev't fight
as this immediate
background of
militancy.*

THE SOUTH COAST DOLE RIOTS

In May 1931, one of the most militant struggles yet undertaken by the unemployed erupted on the south coast - the so-called "South Coast Dole Riots".

Unemployed workers' demands for increased rations intensified at this time, because Lang's promise of a 25 per cent dole increase in May had not been fulfilled.⁸¹ We have already noted Moran's unsuccessful attempt to press a fighting policy for the increase through the Labor Council.

80. ibid., 7/5/31; e.g. also 21/5/31 motion for a U.W.M. demonstration and policy of declaring ration depots black lost by 54 votes to 29; 28/5/31 motion of support for U.W.M. and demand for full basic wage maintenance lost, and Lang's 25 per cent dole increase endorsed instead.

81. e.g. S.M.H., 14/5/31, p.13. Lithgow mass meeting of unemployed expressed loss of faith in the Government because of this; W.W., 22/5/31, p.4. Ryde U.W.M. protests the failure to increase rations.

This general background of dissatisfaction was increased on the South Coast when the Government instructed the police to supervise the dole distribution at the ration depots. Formerly, local committees of citizens and unemployed, heavily weighted it would seem with U.W.M. members, had been in attendance at the bureaux to supervise the unemployed workers' applications. Police did not supervise the bureaux in any other centre.⁸²

The intention was for the police to undertake a strict scrutiny of dole applications, in order to prevent fraud which was allegedly prevalent in the area. The Herald claimed: "There are professional men going up and down the coast drawing rations on different days under different names. Already several men have been sentenced at Wollongong.... One of the men who was prosecuted informed the magistrate that he could not live on 6/- a week. He, therefore, pursued the policy of obtaining rations under two different names".⁸³ It seems a reasonable enough excuse.

(Incidentally, the alleged prevalence of fraud, which was the stated reason for the new Questionnaire form in 1932 as well as for the police supervision on the South Coast at this time, raises an interesting sidelight on the outlook and way of life of the unemployed - their attitude to 'double-doling' and other illegal tricks done to circumvent the restrictions and inadequacies of the relief system.

82. The dole was distributed by police in country towns, but nowhere else did they supervise where there were regular ration depots.

83. S.M.H., 18/5/31, p .9.

Huelin tells of a common practice among bagman. The narrator and his mate Jocka were in Albury and planned to go to Victoria.

"We swapped our dole cards with a couple of hoboes who had come across from Victoria, thus eliminating a lot of difficulties for all of us, as dole cards were not issued to itinerants near State borders

The names of the previous owners were on the cards so we assumed their identities as well ... The assumption of false names was fairly widespread among hoboes".⁸⁴

The practice of such tricks was fairly common - though not as widespread as it was sometimes described as being, for the practice was often given as an excuse to tighten up relief regulations in order to reduce the number of dolors, including many who had not been dishonest.

The interesting point about the practice is that many law-abiding citizens, people who would not ordinarily dream of cheating or stealing, regarded it as acceptable.

A large number of unemployed, even those who did not use tricks themselves, regarded the practice with a blind eye, and many with actual approval. This acquiescence was not just the response that might

84. F. Huelin, *op.cit.*, pp.114-115. (The N.S.W. Police News, 1/6/33, noted it was "a common enough thing for hoboes from Victoria and elsewhere to go to Wagga to collect relief on tickets obtained no one knew how.")

now be given to a friend who had 'worked a swiftie' with his tax returns - the attitude that it ~~was~~^{is} 'only the government' that ~~was~~^{is} losing, and 'good luck to anyone who can get away with it'. Then the attitude was more positively acquiescent. Double-doling, the declaration of extra dependents, under-declaration of private sources of income, and other tricks were seen by some as acts of resistance,⁸⁵ by others as the only way, under an unjust system, to get your due. This is another example of the way the new conditions of the Depression changed moral attitudes. Ironically, it was often declared that the dole should be kept low in order to prevent the moral deterioration that would supposedly result from reliance upon charity; yet it was the inadequacy of the dole that forced the waiving of the old strictures of morality.)

Police checks on the honesty of unemployed workers heightened the demoralisation caused anyway by reliance on the dole, and the unemployed further resented the rigid regulation and alienating bureaucratisation of their lives. It was not only the presence of the police that the unemployed objected to. A Wollongong unemployed worker wrote: "police and spies haunt the depots; there are frequent arrests for 'impositions' and the demeanour of the officials is arrogant". In this letter (written evidently before the riots) he added that there was "growing discontent".⁸⁶ Many unemployed also feared that they would lose the dole, that even if they were not wilfully 'double-doling'

85. ibid., A report that Communists urged the practice; certainly, the W.W. maintained that this was justified, given the inadequacy of the dole.

86. W.W., 15/5/31, p.4.

the police would find some inconsistency in their application that would debar them.

The South Coast Dole Riots provide an interesting example of unemployed protest, an example which points up the diversity within the movement; they contradict the idea of the U.W.M. as a uniform, block-like body dominated by the small Sydney-based central hierarchy with little opportunity for rank and file decision making or independent action by local branches.

Though some press reports tried to show that the protest was instigated by Sydney agitators, it seems that the initiative behind the protest came from local U.W.M. branches and local activists. The South Coast Dole Riots were a specific, localised protest to overcome a particular local grievance. The fact that there is no mention in the Workers' Weekly until after the events strongly suggests that the protest was begun not only without orders from the U.W.M. Executive, but without even its knowledge.

Not only did the South Coast unemployed decide independently on action, but they developed a protest tactic which was later to be taken up by the unemployed, especially in the largest New South Wales dole protest in October 1932.

The protest again shows the comparative militancy and solidarity of the unemployed in the mining areas, and the support given in these areas by employed workers and their organisations.⁸⁷ Ross writes that

87. E. Ross, op.cit., p.350, rightly notes that "mine-workers were prominent in the various movements seeking a better deal for the unemployed".

the two main South Coast miners' leaders of the period, Lowden and Ernie Browne, "were prominent in the struggles of the unemployed".⁸⁸

The unemployed movement on the South Coast was also boosted by the existence of a number of unemployed camps in the area which provided a focal point for organisation. There were usually a number of militants in the camps, for camp conditions were bad. The solidarity instigated by common experience in the camps also increased potential radicalism among the campers. The following adaptation of a popular song shows that it was generally accepted that the camps were radical hotbeds:

When your hair has turned to silver

I'll still be on the dole;

I will live in Happy Valley

Where the Reds have got control".⁸⁹

The campers on the South Coast had a particular grievance at this time, for campers at Fairy Meadow, and Wollongong had recently been ordered to move and were determined to resist. The U.W.M. and W.D.C. had a number of members in these camps⁹⁰ and a number of men from the camps were involved in the riots.⁹¹

88. ibid., p.352.

89. W. Fearn-Warran, Australian Folklore, Melbourne, 1970, p.180. cf. also a short story in Workers' Art Magazine, (produced by the Workers' Art Movement of the C.P.A.) April 1933 for description of how U.W.M. organisers would win the support of the campers.

90. W.W., 10/4/31, p.4.; 17/4/31/ p.6.

91. The Sup 12/5/31, p.1; 15/5/31, p.10.

So, when the local committees at the dole depots were ousted in favour of the police, there was already a level of organisation and militancy that could be drawn upon .

A campaign was begun for unemployed workers' control of the ration depots and the expulsion of the police. The new tactic - or rather, the new application of one of the oldest tactics of industrial militancy - was for the unemployed to declare the ration depots (and hence the dole) 'black', to refuse to attend ^{the depots} ~~them~~ or collect the dole until the demands were met.

The unemployed demonstrations outlined in this thesis have continually pointed up the great difficulty that unemployed would-be protesters faced: that of finding a weapon with any fighting or bargaining strength. With nothing to sell, the unemployed had nothing to withhold; hence protest had been largely limited to mass marches. Now the unemployed hit upon the idea of withholding the most basic, and indeed perhaps the only thing they still possessed: their lives.

My phraseology may sound overly dramatic.

But I cannot help but find the decision itself dramatic - dramatic, drastic, courageous, a sign of strength and a succinct statement of the very helplessness and impotence to which the unemployed had been reduced.

By refusing the dole, you were committing not just yourself but your family to hunger, if not starvation. You were jeopardising your chances of getting relief work or the dole again. You were getting yourself known as an activist, an undesirable, and hence risking your chances of private employment through the labour bureau.

An episode in Huelin's Keep Moving shows how the responsibility of a family was a powerful force against militancy: It is suggested to a destitute and demoralised man that he could fight back -

" 'You can see this system's no bloody good. We've got to change it for something that'll give us a decent living'.

'Fight back!' the man echoed, 'Christ mate! I've got a wife an' kids to think about. What happens to 'em if I start fighting back and get slung inside? Who'll look after 'em then, eh? - No, mate, we're managin' now an' stirrin' wouldn't help me missus and kids.' "92

That there is no record of anyone ^{actually} dying because they refused the dole, either in this or subsequent protests, does not detract from the bravery of the decision. Those who declared the dole black were not to know what the repercussions would be. As things turned out, 'dole black' protests were short-lived; nevertheless the decision contained an element of finality. If one visualises the unemployed as individuals, rather than as an impoverished lump of society, the importance of the act becomes apparent.

Because of the difficulty of encouraging numbers of impoverished people to reject their only source of livelihood, the tactic would appear to be an impractical one. As, indeed, it proved to be on many occasions. At this time, and at this place, however, it not only evoked support, but it won some success.

92. F. Huelin, op.cit., p.137.

The propaganda campaign, in which meetings were held and support canvassed, appears to have been carried on for only a few days. The Workers Weekly notes that "the campaign spread like wildfire. At Fairy meadow, Balgownie, Clifton, Wombarra, Coledale and Scarborough, the ration depots were declared black by the unemployed workers". ~~It~~^{They} was also declared black at Corrimal and Port Kembla.⁹³

On the morning of Monday, May 11th, a mass meeting was held outside the Bulli dole office, where the dole was to be distributed. There was possibly as many as 600 present.⁹⁴ Speakers berated the inadequacy of the dole and the imposition of police. When the crowd was asked to declare the dole black "many voices were raised in protest. Men who had hungry wives and children waiting for them at home wanted food as soon as they could get it. The motion declaring the rations black was, however, carried by a large majority amid cheers".⁹⁵ The meeting also carried a resolution (with only one dissident, according to the Workers' Weekly) demanding "the recognition of the U.W.M. Committee by ration officers and their right to make the final decision on all matters pertaining to relief. Further, we demand the withdrawal of police and spies from inside and outside the ration depots".⁹⁶

Pickets were set up outside the dole office to prevent entry.

93. W.W., 15/5/31, p.1.

94. The Sun, 11/5/31, p.1 says 600; S.M.H., 13/5/31, p.11 gives the impression the crowd was large.

95. The Sun, 11/5/31, p.1.

96. W.W., 15/5/31, p.1.

When ^{he} a police sergeant (there was one sergeant and two constables present) went to arrest one of the pickets, a major brawl broke out. The Sergeant was seriously wounded by a violent blow to the head, and one constable received three head cuts. "The sergeant and the constable drew their batons, but the riot quickly assumed serious proportions. All those in the front rank were endeavouring to belabour the policemen. Some of them were raving and brandishing the weapons which they had had secreted about them. During the melee a horse and cart were overturned. Some of the rioters scrambled over the kicking animal".

The police finally took the man to the lockup, where the fight began again. The Sergeant was felled by a hammer, and then "with blood streaming down their faces the policemen finally were forced to draw their revolvers. Their attackers who up to this time because of their overwhelming numbers were having things mostly their own way stampeded when they saw the revolvers. Rushing blindly for cover, they flung away the sticks, 'life-preservers' and bludgeons which they had carried".⁹⁷

The Sun notes that the brawl lasted nearly half an hour and that the police "drew their revolvers to save their lives."

Reinforcements of police were rushed from Wollongong. It seems that about ten men were arrested on the spot, and by the next day, after a police raid on the camps, sixteen men had been arrested in connection with the Bulli affray.⁹⁸

97. S.M.H., 12/5/31, p.9.

98. ibid; ibid., 13/5/31, p.11 (court appearance of 10 men); The Sun 12/5/31, p.1.

want to know Sydney?
at Clavelly?

It was not only the police who suffered injury, for a number of protesters were hurt in the police baton charge. One of the arrested men, Hitchen, was severely injured and the police allegedly refused him medical treatment.⁹⁹

Despite arrests and injuries the movement was not quelled.

On the next day, Tuesday, May 12th, a crowd of "some 800 excited people" met outside the Port Kembla ration bureau.¹⁰⁰ Speakers (reported as Communists by the Herald) "were loud in their denunciation of the dole system and finally they announced that it was the unanimous decision that the dole should be declared black." A Constable "attempted to arrest one of the ringleaders and was immediately set upon."¹⁰¹

The police were more prepared than at Bulli - there were about twenty present.¹⁰² There was immediately a police baton charge and "the crowd was driven back after a short but fierce skirmish, during which six men were arrested".¹⁰³ The Sun's report shows that the crowd as a whole was "very hostile" to the police.¹⁰⁴

Police forestalled any protest at Wollongong on the Tuesday by arresting certain members of a protest meeting as soon as they appeared. 105

99. The Sun, 11/5/31, p.1; W.W., 15/5/31, p.1.

100. The Sun, 12/5/31, p.1.

101. S.M.H., 13/5/31, p.11.

102. The Sun, 12/5/31, p.1.

103. S.M.H., 13/5/31, p.11.

104. The Sun, 12/5/31, p.1.

105. S.M.H., 13/5/31, p.11.

Scarborough unemployed, who had themselves declared the dole black on Monday, unsuccessfully tried to persuade a Thirroul meeting to follow their lead.¹⁰⁶

This marked the end of the active struggle, though it is unlikely that the protest stopped because the unemployed were cowed. That week's dole distribution was over, and by ~~the~~ next week their requests were substantially granted.

The response of the Sydney Labor Council shows again that body's refusal to embarrass Lang over forthright or major matters. At a meeting on the 14th, on receipt of a letter from the U.W.M. regarding the police attacks and the dole inspection, the Council decided to take up the matter with the Government.¹⁰⁷ A motion from the Clerk's Union that the Government be censured was defeated and Council politely "reaffirmed its decision to remind Lang of his failure to increase the dole by 25 per cent as promised".¹⁰⁸ A week later a motion calling for support for the U.W.M. and I.C.W.P.A. protest against the police batonings and declaring the ration bureaux black was lost by 54 votes to 29; U.W.M. proposals that Labour Bureau Inspectors be dismissed were rejected.¹⁰⁹

106. The Sun, 12/5/31, p.1.

107. T.L.C.M., 14/5/31.

108. S.M.H., 15/5/31, p.11.

109. T.L.C.M., 21/5/31.

The South Coast Union Movement was much more helpful. On Sunday 17th, representatives of the Miners' Union and the Illawarra Labor Council joined the unemployed in a deputation to the Minister for Education, Davies, and two top officials from the Department of Labour and Industry. The deputation demanded that local unemployed committees should be allowed to function at the ration depots without the police, and also demanded that an enquiry be held into "the callous action of the police in dealing with the unemployed" in the clashes.¹¹⁰

The Miners' Delegate Board called for another inquiry into the way the police had been dealing with dole applicants; it asked for the bail of the arrested men to be reduced, and appointed a deputation to ask the Government "to place the issue of food relief on a definite individual basis instead of a family basis".¹¹¹

The deputation was successful: the police were withdrawn and the local committees began to refunction in the depots.¹¹² (In a face-saving move, Davies denied that he had yielded to the unemployed, claiming that the Department of Labour and Industry had merely decided to institute the relief distribution system that applies in the metropolitan and Newcastle areas, and that the trouble had arisen mainly because of delays.¹¹³)

110. S.M.H., 18/5/31, p.9.

111. ibid., 19/5/31, p.9.

112. ibid., 18/5/31, p.9; W.W. 22/5/31, p.1. (The S.M.H. calls these committees 'local committees' and the W.W. calls them U.W.M. committees. Probably not all the committee members were U.W.M. members, but the U.W.M. was clearly strongly represented on these committees.)

113. S.M.H., 19/5/31, p.9.

Despite the arrests, despite the fact that no inquiry into police action had been instituted, the result definitely was a victory, for not only had the immediate demands been acceded to, but an important principle had been accepted - that the unemployed had at least some right to manage their own affairs. Though this right was only given limited application - the dole system was still by and large as rigidly institutionalised and paternalistic as ever - a small but significant moral battle had been won.

of our battles
On a larger and ^{also} more immediate level, I would argue that the South Coast Dole Riots won more than the protestors had demanded. In June, Lang fulfilled his promise to increase the rations by 25 per cent. It seems probable that this sudden concession after seven months of vacillation was partly the result of the Government's embarrassment over these widely-publicised dole protests, and the Government's fear that the determination and militancy of the South Coast unemployed would spark off further and more generalised protest.

In the light of the success of the agitation it is worthwhile reconsidering some of the issues it raises.

Firstly, how strong was the local support for the protest; how representative was it of the feelings of the unemployed?

Both the Sun and the Herald were at pains to deny local support, to prove that the protest was instigated and fought by a small group of Communists - and especially, by Communists sent down from Sydney. Yet these reports contradict themselves, and the main impression given is that most of the alleged Communists lived on the South Coast. Certainly,

the names of men arrested do not include those of Communists prominent in Sydney U.W.M. or Communist activities.

The Herald stated of the Bulli riot that "no local residents were involved in the trouble. Prominent union and unemployed officials deplore the occurrence."¹¹⁴ As the most important union officials of the South Coast supported the protest, the Herald's credibility is questionable. Also, as we have seen, the crowd at Bulli was very large; it would have been impossible for the tiny Communist Party to have brought hundreds of members to the town. The crowd at Bulli was clearly composed mainly of Bulli unemployed who had come to receive their rations, the great majority of whom supported the black ban on the depot.

The Herald added that "Communists from Thirroul, Port Kembla and other places were present" at Bulli.¹¹⁵ The Sun reported that the Bulli police stated that Communists had come from Port Kembla and Sydney.¹¹⁶ The reports stress that the militants were "strangers". The Port Kembla demonstration was reportedly not composed of Port Kembla people.¹¹⁷ Again the crowd was so large that it must have been mainly local residents. Another Sun report was devoted to the "Communist strangers in the south coast towns". "No sooner had the alleged leader of the local Communists gone 'into smoke' than another emissary from Soviet H.Q. in Sydney arrived in Wollongong".¹¹⁸ This appears to be yet another

114. S.M.H., 12/5/31, p.9.

115. ibid.

116. Sun, 12/5/31, p.1.

117. ibid.

118. ibid., 15/5/31, p.10.

example of the use of the 'outside agitator' conspiracy theory to show that the unemployed were really content with their lot.

(The Workers' Weekly complained that the press had described the protest as a Communist stunt; "but in every centre of the South Coast the majority of unemployed are determined to resist the degrading methods of issuing the starvation dole".¹¹⁹)

While it is quite likely that a couple of U.W.M. officials were sent down from Sydney to help supervise, it is most probable that this occurred after the protests had already started. While the speakers who pressed the crowds to protest were U.W.M. militants and probably Communists, it seems they came from the area, especially from the unemployed camps.¹²⁰ In any case, their political affiliations do not show that the protest was unwarranted and unrepresentative, for clearly the crowds at Bulli and Port Kembla supported the agitation.

The Herald in another attempt to show how unpopular the protests were reported a resolution of the Bulli-Woonoona Relief Committee "expressing indignation at the riotous behaviour shown by an organised body of unemployed workers who do not reside in the district". This Committee congratulated the police "on their magnificent courage in facing and fighting off a band of ruffians estimated at more than

119. W.W., 15/5/31, p.1.

120. cf. the arrests made in the camps; also Sun, 15/5/31, p.10 reports that Communists in the Port Kembla camp^{were} to meet to discuss the agitation.

one hundred" (at Bulli) and declared its support for "the preservation of law and order".¹²¹ This relief committee was affiliated with the A.L.P. The Woonoona A.L.P. branch later repeated the congratulations to the police;¹²² it obviously felt that the unemployed had no right to protest against a Labor Government.

A report that "a meeting of Wollongong unemployed" upheld the police action¹²³ could well be more significant, but as the name and size of the group is not mentioned we cannot tell how representative this group was, or how true was the report.

Apart from the size of the crowds hostile to the police, there are two indicators that the protest was popular.

Firstly, the presence and probable dominance of the U.W.M. on the local committees shows that on the South Coast the U.W.M. was widely accepted by the unemployed .

Secondly, the Government's capitulation shows that there was something to fear; previous protests outlined in this thesis show that the Lang Government was not one lightly to give in to the demands of a small fringe group of Communists.

The actions of the police on the Tuesday endorse the view that the government was determined to prevent any possible upsurge: men were arrested at Wollongong before they had even spoken to the crowd. If it was believed that the crowd would ignore them, there would have been no need for this extreme caution.

121. S.M.H., 13/5/31, p.11.

122. ibid., 19/5/31, p .9.

123. ibid., 21/5/31, p.10.

check Police News + SWAST papers

It seems, then, that the protest was, by and large, both popular and representative. But why did the unemployed respond to this particular issue?

To answer this, I think we must go back to the actual threat that the police at the depots posed, rather than to what could be described as the symbolic significance of their presence.

The unemployed feared that the police would discount many of their applications, that many of them would be thrown off the dole.

In this sense, the protest was essentially a defensive action, a demand for a return to the not very pleasant status quo, rather than a positive and offensive struggle for new improved conditions.

We have already seen that it was often easier to organise the unemployed to wage a defensive protest over some newly-lost relief privilege or because of fear that a new imposition would be implemented, than to stir them to a new target of improvement.¹²⁴ This pattern was to be repeated in October 1932 when the dole was declared black because a new application - questionnaire, which would cut many off the dole, was introduced.

This view - that the action was strongly tied to this specific, new, local imposition - is supported by the subsequent failure of the U.W.M. to spread the protest to other areas which had not suddenly experienced the new threat.

124. e.g. the anti-Bavin demonstrations of late 1927 actuated by the 25 per cent dole cut, the fear of further cuts and the refusal of the dole to single men who had previously received it.

def
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defensive

The U.W.M. Executive quickly saw the implications of the South Coast unemployed workers' demands for workers' control of the dole depots - and their success.

Within a week the U.W.M. was requesting that the U.W.M. should be put in charge of the distribution of Government relief.¹²⁵ It renewed its efforts to rally the unemployed around the demand for the 25 per cent increase (and ultimately full maintenance); it also began a campaign demanding the unconditional release of the South Coast prisoners, the removal of all police supervision of the dole and U.W.M. control of the ration depots.¹²⁶

On Monday, May 25th, every ration depot in the metropolitan area was attended by a U.W.M. speaker. The U.W.M. directed that meetings should be arranged in every suburb on Saturday, May 30th, when the full agitation for these demands was to start. It was announced that the unemployed would declare the dole 'black' on Monday June 1st, and would refuse to withdraw the embargo until the Government met the demands.¹²⁷

However, the U.W.M.'s failure to win the Labor Council's support of the black ban on the dole presaged its general failure, for the U.W.M. was unable to spread the agitation to the metropolitan area.¹²⁸

125. S.M.H., 25/5/31, p.9.

126. ibid., 26/5/31, p.9., W.W., 22/5/31, p.1.

127. S.M.H., 26/5/31, p.9.

128. I have found no record of dole protests on June 1st.

This lack of solidarity was to undermine the South Coast victory, for the establishment of local unemployed committees at the ration depots was later "more or less sabotaged" because of the failure to spread the black ban.¹²⁹

The lack of response to the ban on the part of the metropolitan unemployed may also have been partly the result of the sudden flare-up of a new issue, for on Saturday, May 30th, the first really violent eviction clash occurred.

THE EVICTION BATTLES - JUNE 1931

At Bankstown and at Newtown
We made the cops feel sore
We fought well
And they got hell
As we met them at the door. 130

Thus runs one of the more specific of the Depression songs. It refers to the two great eviction battles of 1931.

It was not only at Bankstown and Newtown that the clashes occurred; and - unfortunately for the protestors - it was not only the cops who "felt sore" at the end, though "sore" is a tame description of the bloody injuries sustained by both sides. The anti-evictionists

129. W.W., 31/7/31, p.4.

130. Quoted by J. Mackinolty, op.cit., p.292. *W.L.*

did, however, fight well - so well that the eviction struggles were
the bloodiest demonstrations ^{in NSW} of the Depression, the most violent
conflict between police and workers since Rothbury,¹³¹ and, indeed ,
one of the bloodiest episodes in the history of the Australian Labor
movement.

(That the adjective 'bloody' has already occurred three times
in this section, that it will recur again and again, is not an
accident of phraseology, not the product of the paucity of my
vocabulary nor of my desire to dramatise - or melodramatise - the events.
There is simply no synonym which adequately suggests the physical
image, as apart from the political implication, of these struggles.
To describe them as militant would be accurate - for they were
also arguably the most militant struggles of the era - but somehow
inadequate. The primary image of these protests, an image which
so dominates contemporary accounts that the political emphasis of the
protest seems sometimes to be relegated to second place, is of blood -
of battered heads, and bloodstained weapons, of bloody hands and walls.
The image also suggests the highly emotional feeling of the outburst,
the feeling of the participants and also of many onlookers that this
was the 'class struggle' that they had heard of, that this was the
beginning of a revolution.)

Apart from an isolated eviction fight at Newcastle in June 1932,
the main anti eviction struggle in N.S.W. was waged over a period of

131. Though no one died in the eviction fights, injuries on both
sides were in all higher than at Rothbury. M. Dixon, op.cit.,
p.19, puts the Rothbury injuries at 6 police and at least 10 miners.
In the Bankstown and Newtown cases alone , at least 27 men were
badly injured, two having bullet wounds.

you mean the
squalling went
on for so long
the mob had
been going for a
long time.

about four weeks in June 1931. In those four weeks new developments occurred almost daily: contemporary accounts suggest a sense of increasing momentum, a quickening of pulses.

The day after ^{or the same day?? The struggle was on 17th so must be same day.} the Bankstown eviction struggle a Communist speaker proclaimed that "what had happened was only the beginning of a revolution - and that further developments would take place on Saturday".¹³² This statement, read in isolation and also in the knowledge of the subsequent history of the Australian labor movement, seems not only unduly optimistic but also pathetically naive. This claim differs from the general run of Communist avowals of the imminence of class warfare in Australia in its specificity; it is this very definiteness that makes the claim seem so ludicrous. If, however, the events of June are studied chronologically and in detail, if some sense of the growing excitement is grasped, this speaker does not seem so stupid.

(It was not only the Communists and those who wished for revolution who felt a sense of a large impending struggle at this time. The Sun featured a frontpage article on growing unemployed organisation and militance entitled "Trouble is Brewing".¹³³)

The Communist speaker was ^{disproven} wrong on both counts, but the error of his second claim merely serves to underline the reason for his excitement: it was on Friday, not Saturday, that the 'development' of the great Newtown battle occurred.

132. S.M.H., 18/6/31, p.9.

133. Sun, 12/6/31, p.1.

* plus of p. 468 1st Austⁿ charge of Common Law Riot (?)
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Mention has already been made of the neglect of the eviction struggles in Depression studies. There are at least four good reasons why this neglect should be corrected.

In the eviction battles many men suffered terrible bashings by the police, and afterwards suffered long periods of incarceration for their participation. They were shot at by the police - at least one being struck by a bullet - and police also held crowds of unarmed onlookers at bay with revolvers. Simply as a token of respect for the sufferings of these now-forgotten fighters the record should be set straight.

Secondly, on only a few occasions in Australian history have police fired on workers' demonstrations; yet while Eureka and Rothbury are remembered, Bankstown and Newtown are not. The eviction fights are, I think, of significance not only to Depression studies, but to Australian History in general.

Thirdly, the determination of the resistance offered by the pickets, and also the support given by large crowds of onlookers, is a striking rebuttal of the view that the unemployed sat out the Depression years in apathy and despair. Also shows not puppet of CPA.

Fourthly, the publicity of the problem of evictions and unemployed housing won by the militancy of the clashes was instrumental in forcing Lang to speed up, if not completely, to initiate, legislation that brought a significant improvement in the position of the unemployed in relation to rent and eviction problems. In other words, they were successful.

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page 391

In order to correct the neglect of these struggles they will be studied here in detail; it is also hard to understand the feelings they evoked without seeing how the sense of militancy and excitement quickly escalated in a period of a few weeks.

Historians' neglect of the battles may well be the result of the ephemeracy of the protest; also, as with many struggles of that time, the size and importance of the subsequent conflict of the war may well have detracted from the small local conflicts of the Depression.

Because this struggle has been largely forgotten it should not be inferred that it had little impact at the time. For a month or so the press was full of the subject; there was much debate over the matter in Parliament. Moreover, the battles and the attention they drew to the whole subject of evictions, seem really to have struck what could be called 'the public mind'.

The fact that children changed their customary 'cops and robbers' games into 'evictions' shows just how deep this impact went: A little more than a week after the two main fights a seven year old boy was taken to hospital suffering from a crushed toe.

"'We was playin' evictions', he fearfully told a doctor, 'and I was a pleeceman an' 'e' - pointing to another small and grimy boy, 'was a Communist. 'E threw a brick and it hit me on th' toe.' Yelling at the top of their voices a dozen small boys in Simons Street, Newtown, had staged a "mock" battle between police and anti-evictionists.

Swinging sticks and firing imaginary revolvers the 'police' routed the 'anti-evictionists' who, in desperation began throwing stones. ¹¹ 134

Also note: the "Communists" only began throwing stones after the "police" had fired on them.

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This evidence should not be discounted because it was a 'game'. Indeed, the rapidity with which the children invented this game and the deep seriousness with which it was played are probably the strongest available evidence of the impression formed by the violence of the fights. As the Opies, the world's foremost authorities on children's lore, point out: "The folklorist and anthropologist can, without travelling a mile from his door, examine a thriving unselfconscious culture", in games and rituals of children.¹³⁵

What is so interesting about /this account is the accuracy of detail regarding weapons and strategy. In this game, as in the real battles, it is only the police who have revolvers; yet in a traditional cops and robbers game both sides would have imaginary guns. This suggests that the unusual sight of police firing on and threatening civilians had a striking effect on people's consciousness.

It is little wonder that one of the greatest struggles of the unemployed was over the issue of housing, for accommodation was one of the biggest problems facing the unemployed worker and his family.

The greatest defect of the dole system (apart from its general inadequacy) was its lack of any provision for rent. Because relief was given in the form of goods, the unemployed worker often had no way of paying for accommodation. There were some hostels for single men such as 'Hammond's Hotels', Salvation Army institutions and hostels set

135. Iona and Peter Opie, The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1959, pp.1-2.

up by the unemployed themselves,¹³⁶ but for families unable to pay rent there were only the alternatives of moving in with relations,¹³⁷ trying to find a place in the terrible conditions of the unemployed camps, or attempting to cajole or trick the landlord into waiting for his money.

a ultimately if this didn't work, of simply squatting on until they were evicted.

The latter was often the only recourse: evidence of the frequency of this situation comes from the number of contemporary jokes and stories about evading the landlord. One joke ran:

"Does that fellow collect your rent?"

"No!"

"Who is he?"

"Our rent collector".¹³⁸

Another poem expresses cynicism at the inequity of the housing situation.

This is the house that Jack built;
He laid each brick and fastened each board
For wages laid down by State Award;
But Jack lives in the slums
Worried by bums
Who gather the rent
For the noble gent
Who lives in the house that Jack built.¹³⁹

136. For Hammond's Hotels cf. B. Foot, Dismissal of a Premier, Sydney, 1968, p.93; Bernard G. Judd, He That Doeth, London, 1951, pp.156-160.; cf. N. Wheatley, op.cit., pp.94-95 re hostel established by Balmain U.W.M.

137. cf. J. Mackinolty, op.cit., p.134.

138. The Tocsin, 1/7/33, p.2; cf. also J. Mackinolty, op.cit., pp.135-6 for accounts of trying to evade landlords; Letter in S.M.H., 3/12/30, p.9, about frequency of tenants doing 'moonlight flits'; For more landlord jokes cf. The Worker, 3/12/30, p.17; 17/12/30, p.10; 4/2/31, p.10.

139. The Tocsin, 11/11/32, p.2.

To add to the bitterness of the homeless, unemployed worker, there were thousands of vacant dwellings, unoccupied because no one could afford their rent. In June 1933 there were almost 11,000 empty dwellings in the Metropolitan Area and there may well have been more in 1931 and 1932.¹⁴⁰ There would also have been many unoccupied houses in the country areas.

The importance of the housing issue can also be gauged from the prominence of demands for a rent allowance in unemployed workers' manifestoes. Coupled with the demands for rent were demands that unemployed tenants in arrears should not be evicted.

It is unfortunately impossible to know how many people were evicted in New South Wales before 1935, for until that date, the records show Orders made in the Courts of Petty Sessions only as a total, making no differentiation between eviction orders and orders relating to rents. The following table, which shows the situation in the latter half of the decade when unemployment and hence destitution had dropped, suggests that the number of unsung, unfought eviction cases at the height of the Depression must have been phenomenally high.

140. J. Mackinolty, op.cit., pp.148-149.

ORDERS MADE AND WARRANTS OF POSSESSION ISSUED BY COURTS OF PETTY SESSIONS¹⁴¹

Under Landlord and Tenant Act, 1899 (as amended)

Number of Orders for Ejectment

Year	By the Court after Investigation		By the Court with Consent of Tenant		Total	Number of Warrants of Possession Issued
	For 3 months	For less than 3 months	For 3 months	For less than 3 months		
1935	63	2,865	55	2,535	5,518	2,302
1936	106	2,959	55	2,459	5,579	2,549
1937	61	2,691	41	2,091	4,884	2,419
1938	26	2,678	14	1,904	4,622	2,264
1939	25	2,160	12	2,185	4,382	2,200

Check what this Act was about.

Lang's Landlord and Tenant Amendment (Distress Abolition) Bill of 1930 had done nothing to stop evictions, or to force rents down.

The U.W.M.'s anti eviction campaign had by June 1931 already been a long one. At the end of July, Sylvester wrote - "In the course of eight months over two hundred cases of eviction were successfully combatted ... At one period we fought ten cases simultaneously and brought each to a successful conclusion."¹⁴² *But in what sense does this mean 'successful'?*

I have already mentioned that one feature of the growth of the U.W.M. branches in 1931 was the establishment of 'special interest' committees, especially anti-eviction committees, connected with the locals. The U.W.M. advised all unemployed workers to report all cases of eviction to their U.W.M. District Secretaries, so that action could be taken.¹⁴³ As an indication of how busy these committees were, the Paddington anti-eviction

Paddo

141. N.S.W. Statistical Register, 1938-39, p.569.

142. W.W., 31/7/31, p.4.

143. IBID, 6/6/31, p.6.

look at date
is this in fact? The Dept sees where it lies - Party leaders i.e. aim to stop leftism - or are you being paranoid

committee had ten cases in hand and had won two cases within a couple of weeks of its formation.¹⁴⁴ (May)

A fitting comment on the success of this campaign is that, after the first case in which police attacked anti-evictionists, the Herald noted that this "was the first case that has been successfully carried through in the metropolitan area in spite of the efforts of the U.W.M."¹⁴⁵

Though the number of cases fought would only have been a fraction of the number of evictions, this still shows a fine record; it also shows that a large number of people were willing to approach the U.W.M. for help.

In many of these successful cases in the first part of 1931, the landlords or their agents gave in to mass pressure or to simply the threat of mass action. In most cases the U.W.M. did not have to resort to force; the usual tactic was to call mass protest meetings to confront the owner.

For example, in one case, at Glebe, the landlady cut off the electricity and gas when three weeks rent was owing. "The Glebe Branch was quickly on the scene and whilst a meeting was held outside the house, quite mysteriously the light and the gas were switched on again".
Similarly, at Granville, when the landlord "saw that the U.W.M. really meant business ... he somersaulted and practically went on his knees to the anti eviction committee and made all sorts of wonderful promises to them". The same tactics were used at this time in Annandale, three Balmain cases and at Waverley.¹⁴⁶ January

144. ibid., 8/5/31/ p.4; 15/5/31, p.4; 22/5/31, p.4.

145. S.M.H., 1/6/31, p.13.

146. W.W., 17/1/31, p.1.

The Bondi-Waverley U.W.M. had established branches of the W.D.C. and W.I.R. to work in conjunction with its anti-eviction committee. In April an agent "sent for (a) tenant to issue an eviction order, and when the tenant went along he also took our eviction committee along with him. Matters were explained to (the agent) in no uncertain manner on what action we were prepared to put into operation, with the result that the comrade is still in the house at a reduced rental from 25/- to 5/- a week."¹⁴⁷

(The landlords were not always so amenable to argument. In one Granville case three comrades went to interview a landlord at night: "After a hard walk of about 3½ miles we arrived hot and dry at the landlord's place. He was in bed. He came out. We introduced ourselves and we got so far as to say that we had come about the eviction case when Hell fell all over us. The three of us found ourselves looking down the muzzles of a double-barrelled gun and a pea-rifle. All we could hear was "Get!" We got."

Despite this, the Granville U.W.M. declared its determination to continue to fight this particular case.¹⁴⁸⁾

There were a number of cases at Newcastle. At one case at Wallsend the bailiff discovered one hundred or more U.W.M. members picketing the house and the front gate chained, so the landlord decided to postpone the sale of the furniture indefinitely.¹⁴⁹

147. ibid., 24/4/31, p.2.

148. ibid., 17/4/31, p.6.

149. ibid., 1/5/31, p.4; also S.M.H., 16/4/31, p.13.

Sometimes the U.W.M. would fight the case in court on behalf of the tenant, as well as threatening mass action if the court ruled against the worker.¹⁵⁰ This tactic was to be used more extensively in later years; it is probable that the U.W.M. at this stage did not have enough members skilled in legal tactics.

The establishment press often claimed that the U.W.M. was purely opportunistic, willing to take up - and even create - any issue, no matter how spurious, that might increase its following among the unemployed in order to manipulate these deluded workers for its own revolutionary ends.

Yet the evidence of the eviction cases shows that the U.W.M. exercised a high degree of scrupulousness in deciding which cases to fight: the U.W.M. was not willing to subject people to the dangers of violence or arrests, or even to the time-consuming business of protest meetings on just any excuse. This evidence also shows the way rank and file democracy did function at the branch level and how small the proportion of Communists in the branches was.

Smith's Weekly reported a long interview on U.W.M. eviction policy with Peters, the Secretary of the Redfern U.W.M., which was one of the most active and militant locals.

Peters was not a Communist; indeed, some of his views have a definite anti-Communist and 'petit-bourgeois' tone, which any Communist would have opposed. (Peters had earned £1,000 a year in the piano trade before the Depression, and he retained a whole-hearted belief in what

150. e.g. W.W., 8/5/31, p.4 (case at Paddington).

*of Wards
Justice House*

could be described as the 'Protestant Ethic' ^{Work} ~~Protestant Ethic~~.) His very position as Secretary shows that Communists did not always dominate the U.W.M. branch hierarchy. Also, Peters stated: 'Our members are not scarlet-died, fire-eating Communists, as people seem to think. They're just ordinary decent fellows out of work, and all they ask is a fair deal ... I don't deny that a few extreme Reds have wormed their way into our organisation, as they have wormed in everywhere. But they are entirely in the minority, and we are doing our utmost to bump them out.'

Of the U.W.M.'s eviction policy he said:

Our eviction rules are pretty stringent. The anti eviction committee first of all makes searching inquiries as to the bona fides of each case before we agree to lend our support.

It has to be satisfied that the applicant is not a loafer, and that he will pay his rent the moment he is in a position to do so. We don't encourage for one moment the non-payment of rent.

To show how careful we are that only genuine cases of distress receive assistance from our pickets, I might mention that one man, who was not a member of the U.W.M. at the time, called on us for support complaining that his landlord was going to throw him into the street. The anti eviction committee had no time to inquire into the circumstances of the case, and we decided to give the worker the benefit of the doubt. Next morning we were on the scene with about 300 men.

The landlord, when we arrived, turned out to be a perfectly reasonable man. Three of us interviewed him and he showed us every

consideration. We were able to make terms so that the tenant could stay on indefinitely, provided he undertook to pay the rent when he was in work again.

The man in the case joined the U.W.M. while the picket was round his house. The next thing we knew, after our efforts on his behalf, was that he had torn up his membership card. Then, when we had time to make some inquiries, we found he was an undesirable object for our help - though having taken the steps we did, we had to stand by him until he was defaulted. I understand that he has since received another notice to quit and this time he has NOT approached us for assistance.

We are determined therefore, that the bona-fides of every case must be established. If some of them had their way we would be helping all the metho-fiends in the world to avoid paying rent. 151

The Granville U.W.M. was another very active local which Communists did not dominate. A Granville alderman who had attended some of its meetings stated that "there were a number of Communists in the movement, but they were not in control".¹⁵² The Secretary of the branch, who was a Communist,¹⁵³ stated that of the five hundred members of the local, only seventeen were Communists, and that some members belonged to the

151. Smith's Weekly, 13/6/31, p.3.

152. S.M.H., 14/4/31, p.11.

153. This was Bateman, who in 1932 was a prominent leader in the United Front Councils.

Nationalist Party.

He also stated that the anti eviction committee "would consider each case on its merits and would only interfere when an unemployed man and his family were being put on the streets".¹⁵⁴

One case at Granville shows the desire of both Communist and non-Communist U.W.M. members to effect an amicable settlement if possible. During the first fortnight of April a house at Granville, occupied according to the Herald by "an avowed Communist, Mr. Greening"¹⁵⁵ was picketed by about sixty U.W.M. members. After ~~nine~~^{ten} days the U.W.M. Secretary called a truce to discuss terms offered by the owners. A few days later the picket was called off because a mass meeting had agreed that the owner's offer of another cottage and money should be accepted, despite the fact that the tenant wanted the fight to continue.¹⁵⁶

Another interesting feature of the anti-eviction movement is the fact that while the U.W.M. demanded that the cases it fought were truly needy, it did not practise discrimination on grounds of a man's class or political affiliations. It might be expected that the U.W.M. would regard any shopkeeper or property owner as 'petit-bourgeois' and hence beyond the pale. Yet in at least two cases the U.W.M. fought against the eviction of shopkeepers.

When a shopkeeper at Darlington was being evicted a large "threatening" crowd of several hundreds demonstrated and the vehicles

154. S.M.H., 14/4/31, p.11.

155. I have not come across his name in any Communist context.

156. S.M.H., 9/4/31, p.10, 14/4/31, p.11.

intended to remove his furniture were "disabled". Finally, the holder of the bill of sale came to an agreement with the shopkeeper.¹⁵⁷

Although the tactics of deputations and mass meetings often worked, some landlords remained implacable. The U.W.M. found that in some cases more than just a threat of force was needed. And so the occupation or siege tactic was devised. (This, incidentally, provides interesting parallels with the 'sit-in' tactics used by Anti-Vietnam demonstrators and the 'work-ins' recently conducted by Builders' Labourers and other militant unionists, as well, of course, ^{as} with recent anti-eviction protests.)

To understand the U.W.M.'s determination to win every case it must be realised that the movement saw each failure ^{as} not merely as a personal tragedy for the family involved, but as a set-back to the whole struggle against evictions: the movement hoped to force a situation whereby evictions would be impossible, whereby landlords would not dare throw out their impoverished tenants and ^{- ever more important -} the Government would be forced to change the law. *cf p 411.*

The occupation tactic was a brilliant concept. It was dramatic: it advertised both the eviction struggle and the U.W.M. It caught people's attention and their imagination. Occupied houses were usually decked with

157. ibid., 18/4/31, p.17 (cf. W.W., 15/5/31, p.4., for the prevention of an eviction of a shopkeeper at Paddington.)

It is possibly hard for us after Victoria St etc to see the freshness of the tactic then.

red flags and U.W.M. banners. They were often barricaded with sandbags and barbed wire, and were always the centre of much coming and going. News would quickly spread through a suburb by word of mouth that an eviction struggle was starting in such-and-such street. For those who did not hear of it from neighbours there were notices chalked all over the footpaths. People would come to see for themselves, and would hear speeches, receive pamphlets, meet U.W.M. members, join in arguments, start talking and thinking about the unemployment that had surrounded them for so long that it had dulled their senses.

As well as showing a way of escape from the demoralisation of unemployment through action, the activities at the occupied houses provided a welcome social outlet, a new distraction. When one occupation ended a participant wrote: "Many of the pickets are sorry the siege is over. Every night a concert was held on the front lawn, followed by lectures and debates."¹⁵⁸

An occupied house was a focal point of agitation and organisation for the whole district. Because the occupation usually lasted some days or even weeks many more people were reached, and reached more consistently, than was possible with Friday night street corner meetings. The occupations brought the unemployed movement into their own neighbourhood. They reached those who had never seen, let alone participated in, a big city demonstration. Also the permanence of the protest, the day-by-day determination of the pickets, was a shining example of militant solidarity.

158. W.W., 22/5/31, p.4.

FUN

CRA's later
 charge:
 "leftist"
 notes did
 value the
 masses.

On a wider level of propaganda, the occupations were given a much wider coverage in the daily press than were peaceful deputations. There were even photographs, at a time when the newspapers rarely pictured anything but sportsmen and socialites, and people having a good time. Thus the U.W.M. could force upon the whole community the realisation that families were continually being thrown destitute upon the street. Mackinolty notes from the evidence of the recollections she gathered, that "many people who lived in the Sydney area during the Depression years have clear recollections of evictions - of seeing families literally on the street surrounded by their meagre possessions and modest furniture".¹⁵⁹ It is possible that the fact that so many of her informants remembered the evictions is to a certain extent due to the publicity they received through the eviction protests.

By these highly publicised protests the U.W.M. was able to drag into the open one of the ugly skeletons locked away by the Lang Government - that of the misery caused by the failure to legislate over rents or provide for rent money in the dole. The protests embarrassed Lang into prevarication, slanders on the anti-eviction fighters, and, finally, some action to change the law.

The occupation tactic also cleverly inverted the traditional and legal relationship between landlords and tenants. Instead of the tenant being on the defensive, begging the landlord to allow him to remain, he was now in an offensive position of considerable power: he was asserting his right to remain and challenging the landlord to get him out. Instead

159. J. Mackinolty, op.cit., p.138.

* However, many of the landlords owned property on a vast scale & didn't themselves have been confronted or embarrassed.

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of the tenant applying to the Court to postpone his eviction the landlord now had to apply to the courts for a warrant and police to secure the ejection. The anti-evictionists were trying to enforce the old adage that 'possession is nine-tenths of the law', and the landlords had to fight pretty hard to repossess more than their tenth.

* Before, the landlord was a man of position and influence in the community, the tenant a negligible anonymous little unknown, now the tenant and his situation were not only locally well-known but also popular; he had the physical support of dozens and the moral support of hundreds, while the landlord suffered public disapprobation and possible public blackballing. (A landlord applying for an ejection order in Broken Hill told the court that he had been warned that the unemployed had a rule that no tenant would take a house from which another tenant had been evicted.¹⁶⁰ When the Redfern struggle was on the U.W.M. approached a number of the tenants of the estate agent involved, and urged them not to pay any rent. Some agreed.¹⁶¹)

Finally, the tactic was good for the morale of the participants. It got over that great difficulty of unemployed organisation - isolation and the consequent demoralisation and lack of interest. Though the long, tense waiting periods must have tested the nerves of the pickets, the fact that they were all there together, all committed to the same struggle, created a solidarity to overcome disillusionment and frustration. There

160. S.M.H., 12/5/31, p.16.

161. ibid., 1/6/31, p.10.

had they been earlier struggles in New York (either in dem part or by recently in Melb) that would give idea? Remember '88, escalation back a fourth lot done well in Brown boys, lets show them we're as tough as anyone in Newtown

was also, no doubt, a sense of militant glory that helped sustain the men; they saw themselves as part of a revolutionary fighting force. And there was much to be done on a practical level to combat the boredom: barricades to be built, traps for the police to be laid, weapons and food to be stored, meetings to be run. All this activity must have been a great relief to men who had been out of work for months.

As the occupation struggles developed, the tactic was improved, the protest became more sophisticated and disciplined. It is strange that there is no clear record of how the idea and the campaign started, whether it emanated from the U.W.M. Executive or grew naturally at branch level out of the earlier method of mass protest and picketing outside the houses. Nor is there any evidence as to whether the escalation of the anti-eviction campaign in June was ordered from above (by the C.P.A. or U.W.M. leaders) or was the outcome of a growing determination to fight evictions on the part of the U.W.M. rank and file, a determination resulting from the earlier victories and the intensification of landlords' and police attempts to enforce evictions.

In both cases the evidence suggests that the movement was not the product of the U.W.M. Executive, but the natural development of the increasing determination and confrontation of the earlier protests. The eviction struggle presents a powerful argument for the amount of initiative and local responsibility held by the U.W.M. branches.

Perhaps the strongest argument against the idea that the U.W.M. hierarchy started the campaign is the fact that the Workers' Weekly gave it no pre-publicity. Though there were often small articles about

*
id seem to grow from below

① this also the case in Slaves Debt Riots

evictions on the last page, usually concluding with a call to join the U.W.M. and fight the landlords and evictions, there is no sign in the May issues that any big confrontation is coming, there is no call to occupy houses to prevent evictions, indeed no tactical advice at all is offered beyond the ^{standard & regular directive to form} ~~formation~~ of anti-eviction committees.

Moreover, even in June, when the Workers' Weekly was praising the eviction fighters and calling for mass protests against evictions, the stress is on the old methods of mass meetings and there is no exhortation to ^{increase & adapt} copy the siege tactics.

Tacit support to the tactic is given, it is true, but the Communist Party could hardly do otherwise when some of its members and other militants had just been bashed and gaoled and when resolutions of support for the fighters were pouring in from U.W.M. branches.

It is more than likely that the Communist Party and ^{at least some members of} the U.W.M. Executive ^{from the beginning} secretly disliked the tactic. For all its revolutionary fervour, the C.P.A. was often as conservative and unimaginative as the trade union bureaucracy in its commitment to the age-old traditional protest tactics.

The Party had been reorganised after the expulsion of Kavanagh in April 1931, and it was now firmly committed to the policy of 'Democratic Centralism', which vested almost complete power in the Party's Central Committee and especially in the Secretariat 'through which the Comintern exercised formal control of the C.P.A.'¹⁶² The Party tended to distrust new ideas and was especially uneasy about ideas that did not

162. A. Davidson, op.cit., pp.52-53.

Note: was any of the Executive in the latter??

Do you want to bring out that the anti-evictionists were "leftists"?

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emanate from the R.I.L.U. or some other Soviet authority - After all, by adopting a tactic that had not been vetted by Moscow, you were risking falling into Leftism or Rightism or Opportunism or Sectarianism or any of the other numerous Plutonian pitfalls that surrounded a Communist at that time. Kavanagh's fall from grace was a cautionary example.

At the Annual Conference of the U.W.M. at the end of July the State Executive of the U.W.M. was already expressing some of its doubts about the occupation tactic, and was arguing, by implication, for a return to the old mass protest technique:

The lesson of Bankstown and Newtown is that all our forces were not thrown into the field to activate the workers, but many were engaged merely in preparing defensive measures at the scene of the eviction. Our campaign thereby showed a tendency to degenerate from mass work to conspiratorial work. Because the houses at Bankstown, Newtown and Guildford were barricaded it is wrong to assume that every house must be defended in the same way, the idea of turning every house into a fortress of barbed wire and sandbags must be condemned and every available effort must be used to mobilise the mass of the workers in the neighbourhood in support of the tenant.

The Executive concluded by calling for the activation of the anti-eviction committees. 163

The fear seems to have been that the occupation tactics were 'leftist' or, rather of that form of leftism which involved being too

militant, even provocative. (This is not to be confused with the leftism that the Party suffered under Kavanagh, when it was too involved with theory and did not concentrate enough on action.¹⁶⁴) By early 1932 all such militant tactics (such as, for example, declaring the dole to be 'black') were being condemned as 'leftist',¹⁶⁵ and by July of that year the Workers' Weekly was to announce that "Left Sectarianism has prevailed in an extreme form at Bankstown".¹⁶⁶

Apart from its inherent error of not being in accordance with strict Communist directives, the problem with leftism was its tendency to set up a popular militant group beyond the control of the Party leaders. The U.W.M. Executive may have feared that the bravado of the anti-eviction fighters might give them a strong personal local following, which would undermine the Executive's control of the U.W.M.

There is also a much more favourable and equally plausible interpretation of the Executive's dislike of the tactic. The C.P.A. and the U.W.M. leaders were later to complain that the tactic led to sectarianism and the isolation of the U.W.M., that its militancy repulsed many unemployed workers who were not yet radicalised enough for such action. This may have some truth, though the fact that crowds of onlookers supported the actions of the eviction fight pickets would seem to suggest that the eviction fighters were not isolated by their extreme radicalism.

164. cf. A. Davidson, op.cit., p.38. (Moxon was later accused of the former variation for encouraging the U.W.M. to confront the police in Victoria. cf. ibid., p.52.)

165. e.g., W.W., 8/4/32, p.4.

166. ibid., 8/7/32.

In any case, whichever of these reasons - and it may well have been a combination of all of them - caused the apprehension of the U.W.M. Executive, it seems fairly clear that the Executive did not initiate the occupation tactic, nor did it help develop it.

Though the occupation tactic, with its dramatic overtones of barricades and police battles, did not generate much public attention until June, there are reports of occupations during the earlier period.

The first report, from as early as February-March, 1931, suggests that the idea probably arose from necessity, rather than from some plan.

On Thursday, February 26th the Surry Hills Anti-Eviction Committee was notified that a Greek worker was to be evicted by the Permanent Trustees Co. the next day. So, on the Friday "the U.W.M. was on the job, and had no difficulty in preventing the bailiff and his police protectors from gaining admittance to the house". The Company, however, would make no agreement, and on the weekend made two further attempts to repossess the house. The anti-eviction committee sought legal advice "and was told that any time was legal, and that any trick could be used to gain entry".

So the U.W.M. decided that "it is therefore necessary for members of the U.W.M. to remain on the premises in sufficient numbers to at any time defeat any attempt by police or bailiffs to gain admittance; and this will be done until the workers have gained a complete victory."

Mass meetings were held every day on the scene, attracting large numbers of local residents. Evictions were frequent in Surry Hills and Woolloomooloo, so the protest struck a popular chord. A W.I.R. Committee was formed to provide food for the pickets; the fact that many local shopkeepers

and workers gave food, cash and tobacco etcetera, again shows the popular support.

A fortnight later the fight was still continuing, with apparent success.¹⁶⁷

In this case, when the landlord refused any terms and was ^{clearly} obviously going to continue to try to repossess the place, ^{the obvious thing} there was nothing else the pickets could do but ^{go in &} stay in the house to be ready for the bailiffs when they came.

An occupation at Lakemba in May again aroused great local support and the landlord, after a week of occupation, decided the tenant could remain rent-free until he found work.¹⁶⁸

^{the beginning of} By June, then, the anti-eviction campaign had had a distinct though fairly quiet success. It had easily won popular support - indeed, its popularity seemed to be rising - and it had been victorious in most cases. ^{all} The anti-eviction committees no doubt faced the future in a spirit of ^{SP 379} buoyant determination.

But why did the campaign suddenly escalate?

By far the most plausible answer is that the intensification of the campaign was the direct result of a sudden new determination of the police to enforce the evictions ordered by the Courts, no matter how much popular feeling was against the eviction and no matter how much physical resistance was offered. ^{Were there no bailiffs at the big cases?}

167. ^{WJW} ibid., 6/3/31, p.6.; 20/3/31, p.6.

168. ibid., 8/5/31/ p.4; 22/5/31, p.4; S.M.H., 2/5/31, p.15
(S.M.H. states that in the first meeting over this case hundreds paraded through the streets of the suburb).

* of what Mrs Mac said about Mijer.

But why were they occupying this house

On Saturday, May 30th, the police made the first raid upon an occupied house in the suburb of Redfern. They forced entry into the house, brandished guns and batons, and some unemployed workers retaliated. From this first taste of blood the battle, or the series of battles that made up this short war, developed, both sides becoming success^{ively} more organised and more determined. After the Redfern case the situation escalated in a sort of seesaw fashion: because the police attacked with batons and guns the unemployed made weapons; this made the police more violent which in turn led to greater resistance by the unemployed.....

modified ??

But why did the police suddenly decide to enforce the evictions? No change in the law had occurred. The police had previously seemed to want to avoid trouble over evictions, no doubt realising what an unpopular task the enforcement of evictions was. At the Lakemba case in May, for example, when Inspector Robson (who was usually not loathe to arrest Communists or supposed Communists just for speaking on a street corner¹⁶⁹) saw the thousand odd supporters of the tenant the police forces were called off and the police promised they would do what they could to have the eviction order cancelled.¹⁷⁰

*

I dispute this
...
of p399

Many police realised, it would seem, that the situation of the Depression put them in an invidious position. At the 1931 Annual Conference of the New South Wales Police Association, Gosling, the Chief Secretary, told them: "the present unfortunate state calls for tact,

169. Robson was notorious in Balmain for breaking up U.W.M. and Free Speech Meetings, e.g. L.D., 13/9/31, p.14; 11/12/31, p.5.
170. W.W., 8/5/31, p.4.

forebearance, tolerance and goodwill on the part of the Police, because when people are hungry, and have a grudge against the world at large they look upon the Policeman as the very symbol of all that restrains them from getting what they believe is theirs. And the Policeman becomes a target for their abuse".¹⁷¹

The police had previously acted with ^{compassionate} tact towards tenants and anti-eviction protestors. So why the sudden change? Was the decision made by police themselves, or was pressure put on them by the Government, by magistrates, by landlords?

The Workers' Weekly has an odd but possible explanation: as a result of the U.W.M.'s success in preventing evictions, it stated:

the landlords, becoming alarmed at our increasing power, held a secret deputation to the Government and at that interview demanded the use of the State forces in combating the U.W.M. This permission was readily granted and from then on, commencing with the Douglas Street Case in Redfern, the police were used - not only to baton and shoot the anti-evictionists - but to assist in the degrading work of throwing families and furniture onto the streets.¹⁷²

So the Redfern case was the lot me i just copy

171. The New South Wales Police News, monthly organ of the N.S.W. Police Association, 15/5/31, p.14.

172. W.W., 31/7/31, p.4.

*alarmed at what?

-398-

In another account of this the paper states:

" The landlords, alarmed, approached the Lang Government through Mr. Gosling and demanded the aid of the police force.

This can be verified by a glance at the Sydney press, at that time, all of which published the fact of the landlords' and estate agents' deputation to the Government.¹⁷³ "

while the
was done at
not: the Comm
believed it
←

Unfortunately, I have been unable to find an account of this in the press, but this is not to say that it did not happen.¹⁷⁴

check
again

However, even though Lang may have sympathised with landlords, being one himself, I somehow do not see him ordering the police into eviction battles. He was far too shrewd a politician; he would have known the strong residue of hatred for the police in the labor movement, even among the conservative trade union officials.¹⁷⁵ It was politically dangerous for a labor politician to seem to be using the police: thus whenever Garden had to call the police to protect him in a Labor Council meeting, he would not allow them to arrest his opponents.

Also, when the police did start fighting evictions the Government was very embarrassed and tried to skirt tactfully around and avoid the situation.

173. ibid., 28/8/31, p.4.

174. It was hard to look for the alleged incident as I did not know when it supposedly occurred.

175. e.g. it was always easy for Communist delegates on Labor Council to win support for a motion condemning police action.

Who actually were the bailiffs - Employed by whom?

Gosling stated in Parliament:

" I have repeatedly made representations to the magistrates urging them not to issue these (ejection) orders to the police, but to the bailiffs. The duty of the police, as peace officers, is to keep the peace, and I certainly object to them being used as eviction agents, but when an order of the court is given it must be obeyed."

He tried to have the magistrate who issued the warrant in the Redfern case redirect the warrant to a special bailiff; the magistrate quoting legal precedent refused.

Gosling added that in many cases the Government arranged for charity institutions to shelter proposed evictees.¹⁷⁶ Obviously it was by such action that the Government managed to take some of the sting out of evictions, managed to prevent many from becoming causes celebres.

It seems more ^{to me} likely to have been the magistrates, acting under ^{legal pressure} pressure from landlords, who directed the police to enforce the eviction orders.

The police may also themselves have decided to make a strong stand. The Police Association's paper leaves no room for doubt about the police force's enmity towards Communists and other militants. For example: "Revolution preachers are as cunning and unscrupulous as sewer rats. These apostles of red rule and idleness have solved the problem of living without sweating at manual toil and manage to collect from workers and workless money to enable them to wag their wicked jaws.

176. N.S.W.P.D., vol. 126, 2/6/31, pp.3057-3058.

Skunks of the type need stopping. They are a menace to the peace and contentment of the people and they are advocates of disorder. Their deportation is justified."¹⁷⁷

The May dole riots on the South Coast, when for the first time unemployed protestors retaliated with their own home-made batons, had increased this enmity - the editorial of the June issue of the Police News was a diatribe against Communist bashings of police on the South Coast.¹⁷⁸

In any case, whether or not the police had initiated or had been pressured into the new tough policy against eviction protestors, as soon as the demonstrators began to fight back it became for the police a personal battle, to be pursued both in the houses and the courts with deliberate animosity.

The BATTLES

In regard to the Redfern fight, as with all the eviction clashes, press accounts differ greatly over what actually occurred. In my discussions of the eviction fights I have drawn from the Herald, ^{the} Sun, the Workers' Weekly, and to a lesser extent the Labor Daily, for the bias in each tends to be somewhat offset when they are read in conjunction. The Sun provides a more or less 'middle ground' between the extreme anti-Communist conservatism of the Herald and the obvious left bias of the Workers' Weekly, though the Sun definitely had no sympathy with the protests and must be regarded as biased against them. However, the Sun, being an evening paper, often provides an immediate and graphic account, for reports often appear on the same day as the clash. In the Redfern

177. N.S.W. Police News, 15/1/30, p.41.

178. ibid., 15/6/31, p.3.

Does the Police News say anything re the wars?

and Leichhardt cases the Herald, no doubt in line with its policy that mention of the worst aspects of the Depression only hampered the confidence necessary for recovery, seems to have understated the events; however, in regard to the Bankstown and Newtown cases, the Herald went full steam into an anti-Communist diatribe and played up the violence of the pickets. The Workers' Weekly seems perhaps to have exaggerated police brutality in the Redfern and Leichhardt cases, though its account of the violence at Bankstown and Newtown is real enough. Though the Workers' Weekly is a Communist paper its accounts cannot simply be dismissed as propaganda; after all, it was not more biased towards Communist principles than the establishment papers were to their conservative ones. In many cases the Workers' Weekly provides the only account of what went on inside the occupied houses and how the pickets felt. As there were no press reporters inside the houses press accounts are taken from police evidence - which was hardly innocent of personal opinion.

In my accounts of the clashes I present the contradictory reports in detail, so that if the reader disagrees with any bias of my own, he ^{of his} may develop his own interpretation.

Saturday, May 30th was the expiration date of an eviction warrant on a family that lived in Douglas Street Redfern. The warrant had been issued on April 13th, and members of the Surry Hills and Redfern U.W.M.'s had been in occupation for some time by the 30th. On Friday 29th, the Agent had obtained an assurance that the police "would stand by and see that no one interfered with the eviction".¹⁷⁹

179. S.M.H., 1/6/31, p.10 (This states pickets on the premises for more than a week; Peters states "we ... picketed the place strongly for a month". Smith's Weekly, 13/6/31, p.43).

What is difference in use b/w words "picket" & "occupy"?

The case was a particularly deserving one. The tenant (a Mr. McNamara) his wife and three children had lived in the house for twelve years. "For ten and a half years they had paid their rent without missing a single week. Then for a year and a half the husband was out of work, but despite this, they paid fifty three weeks' rent all the same. Finally, because they owed £25 the owner arranged to have the family thrown out."¹⁸⁰

Both Gosling and the agent tried to discredit the tenant and the eviction fighters by making them appear completely intransigent. The agent offered to move and store the furniture and give the tenant one pound.¹⁸¹ This sort of 'assistance' was quite often offered but was no help as the real problem of the tenant's inability to pay rent remained. The Workers' Weekly pointed out that "people who are being evicted because of their inability to pay rent are shifted to another house, where they still can't pay rent and would be thrown out in about a week".¹⁸² The Government's Unemployment Housing Fund, acting under Gosling's instruction, was prepared to "(1) Provide for the parents and youngest child in their camp at Flemington ... and place the two eldest children in separate hostels; or (2) place all the members of the family in hostels and store the furniture". Gosling complained that "the wife seemed disinclined to move."¹⁸³ As well she might have been! Practically the only thing this family had left was its own solidarity, and now the Government wished to separate it.

180. Smith's Weekly, 13/6/31, p.3; The Sun, 30/5/31, p.1. concurs.

181. S.M.H., 1/6/31, p.10.

182. W.W., 28/8/31, p.4.

183. N.S.W.P.D., vol.126, 2/6/31, p.3057.

In Redfern: the woman in the house
Is this the only case of this?
-403-
Does this show they weren't prepared?
Apparently no sandbags etc

Despite the agents claim that "the utmost forbearance had been shown to the tenant"¹⁸⁴, when a clergyman offered the owner the rent owing and three months rent in advance the offer was refused.¹⁸⁵

At about 9.30 on the morning of the 30th the agent and six policemen - an Inspector, two Detective Sergeants, two Sergeants and a Constable - arrived and immediately broke down the door of the house with a sledghammer.¹⁸⁶ Mrs. McNamara, the tenant's wife, later called on the Labor Daily offices in company with the Vice President of the Redfern U.W.M. to refute reports that the police had not forced entry into the house. She stated that a sergeant had called out to her to open the door or he would break in; she had yelled back to wait till she spoke with the pickets, but the door was smashed before she could do so.¹⁸⁷

The house was barely defended: Peters stated that there were only six pickets, but other sources put the number at between ten and fifteen. Peters said that most of the pickets were attending a U.W.M. conference.¹⁸⁸ It seems possible that the U.W.M. had been deliberately misled by the Government over the possibility of any police intervention. The Redfern U.W.M. Vice President stated that "the organisation had the assurance of the Chief Secretary that the police would not take action in eviction

184. S.M.H., 1/6/31, p.10.

185. Smith's Weekly, 13/6/31, p.3.; This is confirmed by the clergyman, the Reverend Chandler, L.D., 2/6/31, p.5. Chandler was working on behalf of Gosling in an attempt to defuse the issue, and denounced the U.W.M. and the tenants as well as the landlord.

186. S.M.H., 1/6/31, p.10, gives the specific ranks of the police so it seems more accurate than the Sun, 30/5/31, p.1, which reports 3 police; L.D., 2/6/31, p.5., reports 1 sergeant and half a dozen constables.

187. L.D., 2/6/31, p.5.

188. Smith's Weekly, 13/6/31, p.3; S.M.H., 1/6/31, p.10, (states 13-15 pickets); Sun, 30/5/31, p.10 (10-15 pickets).

Cases" and so only a small party was garrisoned in the house.¹⁸⁹ The Workers' Weekly also stated that "Gosling the Grotesque, Prince of Police Perjurors, promised the anti-eviction committee that his parasites would not be used to assist in the eviction".¹⁹⁰

It seems that immediately after the police broke in they began to hustle the pickets out of the house; the reports are contradictory over the amount of force used by the police and over whether the pickets fought back.

Peters stated that "the six men inside offered no resistance whatever. How could they? But the police entered with batons in their hands and bashed in all directions. Several of the men were injured". He added that the pickets had been instructed not to resist the police.¹⁹¹

The Vice President of the Redfern U.W.M. confirmed that the pickets had been told not to resist. Mrs. McNamara stated that the police "entered the house calling to the pickets, "Get out; you are trespassing," and batoning the men and threatening them with revolvers ... The agent, who accompanied the police, also had a revolver".¹⁹²

The Workers' Weekly claims "the small garrison put up a good fight and the thugs were forced to draw their revolvers to quell them."¹⁹³

The police, according to the Herald, only "bustled the pickets into the backyard where the pickets scattered and fled in all directions".¹⁹⁴

189. L.D., 2/6/31, p.5. .
 190. W.W., 5/6/31, p.4.
 191. Smith's Weekly, 13/6/31, p.3.
 192. L.D., 2/6/31, p.5.
 193. W.W., 5/6/31, p.4.
 194. S.M.H., 1/6/31, p.10.

Were the police not really concerned to arrest them? Not yet a grudge fight - just enforcing the law. ↓ down the dummy - takes place - of p. 407

So none of the pickets arrested - The arrests occurred in Round 2.

but the Sun reports "a battle with pickets inside the house" during which the pickets "tried to push out" the police, who "retaliated with their batons".¹⁹⁵ (Gosling, when reporting on the incident to Parliament, toned down the event by not referring to any battle, let alone batons or guns.¹⁹⁶)

The police alleged that home-made batons were found on the premises, which Peters denied.¹⁹⁷ Whether or not they were there it seems clear that the pickets did not use them for there were no police injuries at this stage.

*This the best time
So not - more
than usual
Kelly*

The account so far shows that the police were well organised - the number sent was more than usual and they were high ranking officers to be employed on a simple eviction warrant. Also, they arrived prepared for the fray, bringing with them the sledge-hammer (wrapped in * brown paper ~~paper~~!!) and they made no attempt to avoid the fight by cajoling the pickets out. Mrs. McNamara's claim that "there would have been no violence but for the forcible entry of the police"¹⁹⁸ is most probably true. It seems clear that the police batoned the pickets and quite probable that revolvers were drawn to threaten them. Though reports of the revolvers - from the Workers' Weekly, and Mrs. McNamara - could be discredited by the fact that they came from left-wing sources, the reports that omit any reference to revolvers could equally be charged with being biased towards neglecting police violence. And Mrs. McNamara (and possibly the

195. Sun, 30/5/31, p.1.

196. N.S.W.P.D., vol. 126, 2/6/31, pp.3057-3058.

197. S.M.H., 1/6/31, p.10; Smith's Weekly, 13/6/31, p.3.

198. L.D., 2.6/31, p.5.

Workers' Weekly reporter) were inside the house, which the press reporters were not.

Compared with the efficiency of the police, the pickets were most ill-prepared and were easily beaten by the police.

First round: an easy victory to the stronger force.

At about 11 a.m. Round Two began. This time the constabulary got a run for their money.

Two policemen had been left at the house to supervise while the

agent sing or plural? baith(?)

agents loaded the family's furniture onto a van.

("After the removal of the furniture the wife stood in one of the bare rooms sobbing bitterly. She said she had nothing to say. The police could tell the whole story.")¹⁹⁹

Then "up" ^{from which direction?} the street dashed a red lorry containing about thirty men

and women. The lorry drew up in front of the house, and to the screams

of the women the men shouted 'Come on, fellow workers, into the house

with the furniture' and headed for the front gate."²⁰⁰ While some

started loading the furniture onto their own lorry about twenty others

armed with iron bars started fighting the police. The onlookers who had

gathered around were sympathetic to the eviction fighters: the Sun reports

that the police were "menaced by a wild crowd" while the Herald notes

"the threatening attitude of Communist sympathisers". The policemen drew

reference that all covered in ...

199. Sun, 30/5/31, p.1.

200. S.M.H., 1/6/31, p.10. (Sun gives the number on the lorry as 40.)

So: cops definitely drew revolvers in stage 2 at Redfern a passage
at stage 1
-407-
Cops definitely drew revolvers on the crowd; a maybe on the police

their revolvers on the crowd and held them off until reinforcements of police arrived from the police station (situated a few hundred yards away) and scattered the crowd. Two men were arrested for offensive language and another for riotous behaviour.²⁰¹

One of the arrested men was Noel Eatock, whose mother was on the U.W.M. Executive and whose brother was soon to be arrested at Bankstown. Noel ('Nobby') was himself to be sent to gaol for two and a half years for a dole demonstration in 1932. (Though Mrs. Eatock was on the U.W.M. Executive this does not mean that the Executive supported the action for Mrs. Eatock at this time was on the 'right wing' of the U.W.M. Executive and often differed from the policy of the C.P.A. and the Communists in the U.W.M.²⁰² She was ~~apparently~~ at this time still a member of the A.L.P. though she left it for the C.P.A. in October 1931.²⁰³)

Eatock and the two others, Fred Wills and Arthur Chant, were each fined £5, in default ten days gaol; they elected to go to gaol.

The court evidence re-emphasised that the sympathies of the onlookers were against the police: "the crowd was very hostile and it was necessary for two policemen to draw their revolvers", the prosecution stated.²⁰⁴

Though compared with the later battles the Redfern case was very tame, the fight put up by the police - and especially their drawing their

201. S.M.H., 1/6/31, p.10, Sun, 30/5/31, p.1. *Do those say police draw revolvers??*
202. e.g. T.L.C.M., 28/5/31, 4/6/31. Mrs. Eatock supports Garden against motions put up by Communists.
203. cf. Working Woman, 1/10/31, p.4, for her statement as to why she left the A.L.P. for the C.P.A. *(of course may have been a double cross to her for some time)*
204. S.M.H., 2/6/31, p.7.

revolvers on unarmed onlookers - shocked a number of unemployed workers into defiance and militancy.

Peter's reaction was probably shared by many. Until he saw a sergeant hold back a crowd of women and children with a revolver "there wasn't a spot of Red in me - I was just an ordinary law-abiding citizen. But the injustice of that case, and the definite proof that the force of the law was being used to accentuate the misery that already exists, have got me thinking I'm likely to turn pink - if not Red - any day."²⁰⁵

For the C.P.A. the case showed that Lang's 'social-fascism' had finally dropped its mask, that his veiled policy of repression had finally come into the open. The Workers' Weekly account of the Redfern fight concluded:

So, comrades, the fight is on!

Lang's Plan is in operation at last!

Lang's Plan despoiled of all its fantastic phraseology, stripped to the bare bone of bitter reality, stands exposed to the workers for what it is - the twin brother of the Niemeyer Plan, the Young Plan, and every other cursed plan of the capitalist class for keeping the workers in a condition of docile slavery!

Now the U.W.M. knows where it stands.

Too long have ~~many~~ of its members been cozened into the belief that Lang was with them! Too long have they looked to the leprous Labor government for salvation! Too long have they been kept quiet by the giddy vaporings of Lang's demoralising demagogues!

205. Smith's Weekly, 13/6/31, p.3.

Enough!

They have bitterly bought their knowledge!

The bill remains to be paid! 206

cf p 386 - a political, not personal struggle, p. 411

To understand the bitterness of the feelings of the anti-eviction fighters and their supporters it must be understood that they saw the police violence as a deliberate attack on workers by a Labor Government.

According to Comintern theory, Communists should help rip the mask from the face of Social Fascism. They should expose the moderation and inherent repressiveness of the Labor leaders, both by propaganda and by forcing the labor leaders to reveal their true colours.

WDe
On the night of Thursday, June 4th there occurred the greatest clash yet between Communists and non-Communists on the Sydney Labor Council. Dozens of men were injured on both sides, furniture was smashed, and there was general pandemonium for about twenty minutes. The riot was sparked off by controversy over a motion protesting against evictions, the Communists trying to force Council to censure the Lang Government.

shed
As this fight was part of the general escalation of animosity between the Lang forces and Communists that occurred in June it will be dealt with in the next section of this chapter. It should be noted here however, because it expressed a genuine, impulsive resentment against the police attack on anti-evictionists; this bitterness was increased after the Labor Council's refusal to censure the Government, and because of the riot.

The Communist attack on the Labor Council was also in line with the policy of exposing the social fascist leaders by forcing them to act against their own class. To understand the intensity of Communists' feelings against the Lang Government and the Labor Council one must realise that they really believed that Lang had ordered the police upon the workers, and that for them 'Social Fascism' was not just a rhetorical device, but the major obstacle to revolution.

On Friday, June 5th, the second eviction clash occurred, at Starling Street, Leichhardt.

In this case the landlady was not particularly rapacious or vindictive; indeed, one must feel ^{some} sympathy ^{for} her plight. The tenant had not been able to pay rent for nine or ten months and about £45 was outstanding. The landlady was not asking for the rent but simply that the premises be vacated so that her brother, who had been unemployed for sixteen months and had been forced out of his own dwelling, could move there.

The genuine distress of the house-owner, however, did not make things any better for the family that was going to be thrown onto the street. Gosling again sent an officer of the Unemployed Housing Fund around, but the wife stated that "she did not intend to leave the house and that she would rather sleep in the street than go into a camp". Again the officer offered to send the family members into separate hostels. ²⁰⁷

for the Mac?
A case like this really points up how the deficiencies of the relief system in regard to rent brought misery to small landlords as well as to the unemployed. The unemployed did not want not to pay their rent:

Police News

there was simply no alternative. The landlady in this case had no *real* alternative to evicting this family. The family naturally wanted to stay, for the accommodation offered would separate the family, and so the family was forced to fight.

The eviction battles were not just grudge matches or revenge action taken against particular landlords. To see them simply as such would be to ignore the fact that the eviction fighters were striving to make a political point. It was essentially the Government that the anti-evictionists were fighting; they were trying to force the Government to do something about the rent problem. In a later eviction case at Glebe the police claimed that two arrested men had said, when asked why they had smashed up a house: " We smashed (it) up for the purpose of bringing Mark Gosling to his senses, and make him act up to the promises he has made " and " 'To wake up Lang and Gosling and by the time we smash a few more they will come our way' ".²⁰⁸

The fact that police were sent in to enforce evictions was for the anti-evictionists concrete proof that it was the Government that they were fighting. (The Police News agreed with this interpretation: "It is the Government that is being attacked and for whom the police have to hazard their lives". It saw the eviction fights as "a direct revolutionary challenge to the Government which the Government expects the police to handle."²⁰⁹)

While acknowledging the financial embarrassment of Governments in the Depression, a large ^{share of the} blame for the desperation of the housing situation

208. S.M.H., 15/7/31, p.9.

209. The N.S.W. Police News, 15/7/31, p.6.

must be laid at their door. As well as not providing for rent in the dole, they left the task of providing hostels largely to charitable institutions. The Government unemployed camps (despite Lady Game's assertion that "she had seen one little home [at Happy Valley] in which she would not mind living herself"²¹⁰) were unpleasant, often insanitary and were continually being ravaged by floods and storms.²¹¹

Pickets had been guarding the Starling Street house for several weeks. On Wednesday, June 3rd, some men had called at the landlady's home to try to persuade, or intimidate, her not to continue the case, and on the Thursday between thirty and fifty anti-evictionists had held a mass demonstration outside her ^{Hurstville} home. Police dispelled the crowd and arrested one man,²¹² and "provided her with protection" on the Friday.²¹³ (Gosling had again unsuccessfully requested the magistrate who issued the warrant to redirect it to a special bailiff²¹⁴, in order to avoid more Government embarrassment over police action.)

Though accounts of the conflict differ, it does seem that the anti-evictionists offered more resistance at Leichhardt; the police were also better organised.

The police and bailiffs arrived in the early afternoon. The Sun reports that "opposition was expected and the police singly and in pairs converged on Starling Street along several other thoroughfares." One constable slipped in the back and opened the front door, admitting twenty-one of his colleagues. The forty-six guards "immediately joined issue with the

210. S.M.H., 10/6/31.

211. cf. ibid., 7/7/31 for account of a flood at Happy Valley.

212. Sun 5/6/31, p.1.; S.M.H. 5/6/31, p.11.

213. S.M.H. 6/6/31, p.13.

214. N.S.W.P.D., vol.127, 17/6/31, p.3389.

*but no back
door - not
many adjoining
street (?)*

on Friday

No suggestion that any of the crowd sympathetic to landlord.

-413-

Not real good fighters - or not enough weapons.

police There was a wild struggle inside the house ... A number of the police suffered from blows but none of them was seriously injured". The pickets' "resistance weakened, however, before the determined onslaught of the invaders" and in a few minutes the house was empty.

Women

Meanwhile, more police were engaged outside the house. The news of the struggle had spread quickly and a crowd of two hundred gathered outside the house. "Urged on by the women, they gathered round the house threateningly. The police were ordered to draw their batons, and they charged down the street driving the mob before them. Many of the crowd scattered, but others offered strong opposition and the police got into holts (sic) with a number of them ... Overawed by the rapid action of the police, there was no further interference from the crowd, in the street", and the bailiffs removed the property.²¹⁵

The Herald account is much tamer, but although it claims that the protestors put up little fight, it too suggests that the crowd was defiant: "Nearly a hundred men and a few women endeavoured to prevent the eviction but they were dispersed by a strong force of police." This paper reports fifteen constables stationed "about the vicinity of the house" but does not mention how many attacked the house. "The police met with a little opposition, but it was so slight that they did not even have to draw their batons when those stationed outside the house were told to move on they demurred, and several blows were struck in the course of a brief scrimmage However, the crowd sullenly and slowly moved down the street with the constables hurrying them

(towards downy yards?)

Note - a lot of pickets at Starling St but weak.

-414-

on. Those inside the house were then told to depart, and they did so without trouble."²¹⁶

The Labor Daily agreed with the Sun that the police charged on the pickets and the crowd outside with batons; it also stressed the determined resistance put up by some: "The militant section (of the crowd outside) stood firm and gave attack for attack" and there was another struggle between police and pickets inside the house.²¹⁷

The Workers' Weekly account was more sensational. It reports that seventy police "armed with batons and guns" fought "a small body of pickets"; the police "indiscriminately batoned, kicked and punched men, women and youths". "Acting on a preconceived plan the police rushed the house, seven carloads being deposited at the front of the house and dozens of others being hidden in surrounding backyards."

but not shooting Guns were freely flashed about in the attempt to intimidate the workers The Inspector's orders were 'Give it to them, but don't hit them on the face' "²¹⁸ (presumably so there would be no bruise marks or blood).

In the fight in the street two men were arrested and charged with assault and two women were charged with insulting or offensive language.²¹⁹ They were subsequently convicted²²⁰ and went to gaol. One of the women was sacked from her factory job as a result of this.²²¹

216. S.M.H., 6/6/31, p.13.

217. L.D., 6/6/31, p.1.

218. W.W., 12/6/31, p.4.

219. Sun, 5/6/31, p.1; S.M.H., 6/6/31, p.13.

220. N.S.W.P.D., vol. 127, 17/6/31, p.3390

221. The Working Woman, 1/7/31, p.1.

There is some mention of the weapons carried by the protestors - in particular seventeen lengths of iron piping. The police were reportedly "surprised at the varied types of batons found". One baton was a solid plug of lead weighing nearly two pounds, soldered to a flexible wire ending in a number of coils to afford a grip. A thong had been added to prevent the weapon being struck from the wielder's hand.²²²

It is hard to decide which of the accounts of the clash to accept.

All agree at least that there was a strong force of police, that there was some violent outburst, and that a sizeable crowd sympathised with the protest in opposition to the police. Although the Herald dismisses the struggle, it is obvious from the arrests that more than a token resistance was put up.

The Workers' Weekly report of revolvers must I think be discounted, but it is possible that guns were drawn inside the house. I think it is clear, however, that despite the Herald's disclaimer, batons were wielded by the police, both against the pickets and against the crowd outside.

It also seems that the fights, both inside and outside the premises were decidedly violent, although very brief.

Though the crowd did not scatter so quickly as at Redfern, though some weapons had been provided, the house was badly barricaded and the anti-evictionists were neither prepared enough nor militant enough

222. S.M.H., 6/6/31, p.13; 8/6/31, p.6; Sun., 5/6/31, p.1.

for the fight. The police had been quicker to learn the lesson of the first fight - the lesson that it was the size and strength of the fighting forces, and not the number of sympathisers that counted - and they were simply too strong for the demonstrators.

On Friday, June 12th, the Sun published its "Trouble is Brewing" article; this shows an almost hysterical reaction to the militancy of the eviction clashes. It proclaimed:

Sunday is to be Solidarity Day. Moscow has commanded that there shall be unemployed demonstrations. Secretly they are being prepared.

In every unemployed group organised in the suburbs and upon the confines of the metropolitan area Communists have been busy for weeks, working the men into a state of ferment when they might be ready to take direct action in the public streets.

Especially have the Communists worked upon the failure of the State Government to increase the dole by 25% ...

These Communist agitators have at least the merit of being thorough ... Members of the W.D.C. have been secretly touring ... wherever the unemployed have massed in any number, in order to instruct them in offensive methods against the police.

Three times have the Communists endeavoured to persuade the unemployed, in their phrase, to 'break things' in Sydney, and three times their schemes have come to naught²²³, but this weekend they claim that they will have so perfected their

223. There is no indication of when these 'three times' were.

See beginning of this chapter

organisation that they will achieve a very large measure of civil commotion, if not violent rioting.²²⁴

This article provoked Gosling to anger. The Government attempted to dismiss the eviction fights by suggesting that newspaper reports wildly exaggerated the violence, and even provoked the clashes. On the day of the Bankstown fight Gosling refused to comment on the clash, but said: "I should merely like to say that it seems to me that certain newspapers, particularly the Sun and a certain weekly journal, are anxious to do all they can to cause trouble. In fact the Sun appears to have become the official organ of the Communist Party". He then quoted from the above article.²²⁵

Gosling had also castigated the press over its treatment of the Redfern clash: "Whilst I regret the undue publicity that has been given to this case by the newspapers, I think that in the interests of the smooth working of the law the press should not give so much credence to people who have little or no credence, but who rush to it with matters calculated to embarrass the course of justice".²²⁶ Obviously the Government was sorely embarrassed.

Though the Sunday passed off without untoward incident, and though there was not "civil commotion" of the order envisaged by the Sun, there was certainly some "violent rioting" within the week.

224. Sun, 12/6/31, p.1.

225. N.S.W.P.D., vol. 127, 17/6/31, p.3356; (Smith's Weekly, 14/11/31, p.4, also claimed the Sun helped the C.P. by giving it too much prominence. The Sun certainly opposed Communism; indeed, it often opposed much more moderate strands of the labor movement. The Labor Daily, 3/6/31, p.1, ran a cartoon attacking the Sun for its anti-worker, anti-Labor propaganda. However, the Sun, being a sensational newspaper, gave much more space to Communist activities than did many other papers; it also gave more Prominence to the New Guard.

226. N.S.W.P.D., vol. 126, 2/6/31, p.3058

On Wednesday, June 17th an event variously described as "one of the most serious disturbances ever dealt with by the police in New South Wales"²²⁷, "the fiercest fight between police and Communists in the history of Sydney",²²⁸ and "the most serious and significant (event) of its kind in the history of the State"²²⁹ occurred in a house in Brancourt Avenue, Bankstown. Most appropriately, the house had been renamed 'the Eureka Stockade'. *Eureka Stockade*

In this battle the preparation and militancy on the part of the pickets lacking in the earlier struggles were most evident.

On June 11th, the landlady had obtained an eviction order on the tenant. That the police did not wait until its execution date - June 18th - but rushed in the day before, and that they illegally began the attack before 9 a.m.²³⁰ shows just how eager they were for the fray. Indeed, the defence barrister for pickets arrested in the fight later maintained *check this* that the landlady had withdrawn the warrant before June 17th, and the Judge himself was dubious about the legality of the warrant: "His Honor said he was in doubt whether the magistrate had issued a warrant at all". However, he finally decided that the warrant was valid.²³¹

227. S.M.H., 18/6/31, p.9.

228. Sun, 17/6/31, p.1.

229. L.D., 18/6/31, p.1.

230. cf. Court evidence S.M.H., 12/11/31, p.6. The Landlord and Tenant Act laid down that evictions could not take place before 9.a.m. or after 4.p.m.; the Defence also claimed the whole police action was illegal because it occurred before the 18th.

231. S.M.H., 12/11/31, p.6; 13/11/31, p.6; the whole issue of the existence or validity of any warrant became incredibly confused. Gosling, speaking from the official police statement, said that the warrant was due to expire on June 30th. N.S.W.P.D., vol. 127, 17/6/31, p.3390.

The tenant had refused to leave. Gosling and the press tried to discredit him (and hence the protest) by maintaining he was not a 'genuine' unemployed worker: "The tenant was John Parsons, a labourer, aged 39, who saw service during the war. Since his return from the war he has done only about two months work. He said to the police, 'I fought for the Government, and the Government should now keep me,' " Gosling said.²³²

Gosling and the police also claimed that "during the fracas nothing was either seen or heard of the occupant Parsons"²³³ and this was also used to discredit the affair by ^{suggesting} showing it was the work of 'outside agitators'. The Workers' Weekly complained that this was untrue,²³⁴ as indeed it was; at least, Parsons was arrested, charged, and convicted of participating so if he did not the police evidence must have been perjury.

check notes
The other slander, on his alleged parasitism and laziness, was also base. Parsons, who had a wife and daughter to support, had been invalidated home from the war but received no pension. Moreover, he was only £ 5 in arrears with his rent. His bitterness is understandable; it was shared by many ex-soldiers who had fought for a promise of a better life and who now had nothing. As the Workers' Weekly stated:

232. N.S.W.P.D., vol. 127, 17/6/31, p.3390, S.M.H., 18/6/31, p.9.

233. N.S.W.P.D., 17/6/31, p.3390.

234. W.W., 19/6/31, p.1.

He was one of those workers who were told by the boss class and their hirelings 'that we will hug you, cheer you, kiss you, when you return again!' They have kissed him, with a policeman's baton, and now they are preparing to hug him - with the chains of a convict.²³⁵

A large number of ex-soldiers took part in the picketing and of the sixteen in the house at the time of the battle, nine were ex-soldiers.²³⁶

The house had been occupied and barricaded for three weeks. As the Herald said: "They had prepared for a police attack with extraordinary thoroughness".²³⁷ On Friday, June 12th, there had been a minor struggle with officers of the Electric Light Department who had tried to cut off the power: "They were severely attacked with loaded sticks ... and were prevented from carrying out their mission. The motor lorry which they had taken with them was severely damaged"²³⁸ - its headlights were broken and there were threats to overturn it. A crowd of 1000 had gathered to watch.²³⁹

(They also tried to turn the electricity to good account: They attempted to connect the barbed wire entanglements around the house to the electric power.²⁴⁰ The Police News feelingly remarked: "It was quite illegal

235. ibid.

236. W.W., 19/6/31, p.1.; S.M.H., 14/11/31, p.10.

237. S.M.H., 18/6/31, p.9.

238. N.S.W.P.D., vol. 127, 17/6/31, p.3390.

239. S.M.H., 14/11/31, p.10.

and wicked to do this and showed desire to seriously injure the representatives of the Government as well as the representatives of the owner of the property".²⁴¹

*Impressible
house
wire
sand*

The barricades were what one might expect from a group of ex-soldiers. The front gate was secured with fencing wire. The front verandah "was closely emmeshed with barbed wire, it being impossible for a person to get through. On the verandah inside the wire, cement bags full of sand had been placed along the whole of the front. On going to the back the police found a similar condition in respect of barbed wire and sand bags. All windows and doors were closely emmeshed with barbed wire."²⁴² The photograph opposite shows the barricades and pickets a week before the fight. Photographs taken on the day are also given .

The accounts of the conflict are contradictory in some details, and the contradictions are increased in the court evidence, in which the police tried to tone down the violence of their actions. It was such a short violent battle, with fights waged on several fronts, that probably no one, not even the participants, really knew what happened.

When the police arrived at the barricaded house there were sixteen pickets inside. The Sun and the Herald put the number of police engaged in the battle at about forty - but the Workers' Weekly claimed that there

240. Sun, 17/6/31, p.10.

241. N.S.W. Police News, 15/7/31, p.6. (This maintains the pickets actually did connect electricity to the wire.)

242. N.S.W.P.D., vol. 127, 17/6/31, p.3390; S.M.H., 18/6/31, p.9 , states the house "was barricaded in an amazing fashion with sandbags and barbed wire enganglements."

were at least one hundred and sixty there altogether and that the Burwood police had stated that there were eighty-six involved.²⁴³ It is quite likely that there was a large reserve force nearby to control the crowd if necessary. Forty police was, however, quite enough for the fight. (The photograph of the scene outside the house shows a number of police stationed outside the house). *No - this wasn't the house*

In summary, the fight seems to have gone like this: the police fought their way through the barbed wire under a shower of blue metal, one group of police concentrating on the front and another group at one side and the back. There was a fight on the front verandah between police and pickets; a constable trying to break through the front shot at some men inside the house; *wounding a man def in thigh & perhaps another in scalp* in the side charge an inspector was knocked out by a stone; *plying out a window* the police finally broke in at the side, front and back and there was a short fierce battle inside. *after wheel barrow*

The Herald reports that:

When the police approached and surrounded the house the occupants ... showered them with pieces of blue metal. To cut their way through the barbed wire entanglements, the police had to expose themselves to the full force of the shower of stones. Although many of the police were hit, they succeeded in cutting their way through. Rushing the front verandah, they drew their batons and fought hand-to-hand with the defenders, who used axe-handles, garden-forks, saplings and iron bars ...

243. ^{Sun} 17/6/31, p.1; S.M.H., 18/6/31, p.9, W.W., 19/6/31, p.1.

The attackers strove to enter the house, using doors and windows. Constable Dennis was climbing through one of the front windows when he was struck with a stone on the side of the head and hit on the back with an iron bar. He jumped into the room and ordered his assailant to surrender.

Room
not
Hall
→

'Stand back, or I will shoot,' was Dennis's curt command as he drew his revolver.

The man with the iron bar disregarded the warning. He rushed and Dennis fired. The man fell back suffering from a flesh wound.

Another man then threw a stone and Dennis fired a second shot which did not take effect.

Inspector White, who had charge of a detachment of men near one side of the house, was walking near one of the side windows when a heavy piece of blue metal was thrown through the window. It struck him on the temple, and he fell unconscious. He was rushed to hospital in a serious condition

The police eventually entered the house from the side as well as the front and back. The occupants put up a short but fierce resistance, but at last, realising that they were hopelessly beaten, they surrendered." 244

The Sun report differs somewhat: The police were met by a barrage of stones so decided to rush the house. Inspector White was "leading the

was open so they cd throw - presumably windows - stones out. -427-

charge when he was hit on the head with a piece of rock while trying with a constable to force a window. He fell like a log and was rushed to hospital."

" ... From then on the police gave the besieged ... no quarter.

They rushed forward with batons drawn, cut or climbed over the wire, and broke through the windows, while from within came the ceaseless barrage of stones. Police outside, to cover their comrades, also bombarded the house with stones.

Constable Dennis reached the front door and was about to break in when one of the men hit him on the side of the head with a brick, and he fell. He staggered up again, and the man reached for an iron bar.

'I'll shoot!' cried Dennis, but the threat was ignored.

Two shots were fired, and one took effect in the fleshy part of a man's thigh."

When the police broke into the house there was a "terrific battle". "Weight of numbers soon told and the Reds, as they were led from the house showed the effects of the fight."²⁴⁵

So the Sun has the attack on White before the general onslaught, while the Herald report suggests that the two events occurred more or less simultaneously - that while Dennis was shooting at the front of the house White was hit at the side. The Sun has Dennis outside the front

245. Sun, 17/6/31, p.1.

door trying to break through it whilst the Herald has him breaking through a window and ^{jumping} into the house before shooting. The Herald reports Dennis being hit on the side of the head with a stone and on the back with an iron bar; the Sun only has him hit on the side of the head with a brick.

The point of all this hair-splitting is most important, for Richard Eatock,²⁴⁶ the man shot by Constable Dennis, was charged with and convicted of the assault on White. The court evidence, which *as was he only convicted of assault on Dennis* presents even more inconsistencies, strongly suggests that he was innocent of the attack on White. We shall deal with it here before discussing further aspects of the fight.

Both these reports definitely suggest that the stone that hit White came flying out of the side window without the police seeing the assailant. This impression is also given in the official police report which Gosling read from in Parliament, and in the account given to the Sun on the day by the Constable who was in front of White.²⁴⁷ The ferocity of the battle would seem to have made it virtually impossible for anyone outside the house to have seen who was inside throwing stones (particularly as the windows were barricaded, as shown in the photograph given earlier.)

When the seventeen men arrested were committed for trial before a magistrate, a Constable Grover stated that he identified Eatock

246. His name was Richard Alexander Eatock. He is called Alex in some accounts (and also Dick).

247. N.S.W.P.D., vol. 127, 17/6/31, p.3390; Sun, 17/6/31, p.1.

as the man who threw the stone at White.²⁴⁸ Dennis states that while he was trying to break the front door down with a hammer, stones were repeatedly thrown at him. Eatock and others were ^{seen} in the hall. He drew his revolver and, after telling them to stand back of he would fire, he fired two shots through the panel of the door. A Constable Rodgerson said that Eatock threw the stone at White, saying that he had been shot.²⁴⁹

Already the account is even more complicated. Dennis this time is outside the front door again, and there is no mention of Eatock either rushing at him or hitting him with a bar; and if Eatock is inside and Dennis outside, Eatock could not have hit him or even effectively menaced him. Moreover, apart from the important fact that Eatock was at the front of the house and White's assailant is a side room, Rodgerson maintains that Eatock hit White after he himself was shot. Yet the on-the-scene reports place the attack on White before, or at least at the same time as, the shooting of Eatock.

The case did not come to trial before a judge and jury until November. By that time the police evidence was clearly aimed at toning down police violence, and at justifying it by proving that Eatock deserved to be shot. Though Eatock was to be convicted of attacking White, the court evidence centred on his alleged attack, not on White, but on Dennis.²⁵⁰

make sure the account was for the White attack - maybe they had been completely dropped

248. S.M.H., 9/7/31, p.6.

249. ibid., 10/7/31, p.7.

250. The Herald reports of the court case do not mention the attack on White.

Dennis this time did not say he was outside the door; indeed he did not say where he was at all, but he implied that he was inside. He said, "he was struck on the left breast" (not the head this time) "with a stone, and dropped to the ground". (In his earlier evidence there is no account of his falling). "When he rose Eatock rushed at him with an iron bar and tried to strike him. He fired at Eatock who fell; he then fired another shot into the floor". (The impression given earlier was that he fired the second shot at another man with a stone.) He added that "the police had been warned not to use their revolvers unless their lives were in danger, and not to use batons unless necessary. There was a 'proper war' going on when he entered, and he thought that his life was in danger."²⁵¹

*to this point?
did not say he
did attack a
man*

Eatock was sentenced to eighteen months gaol for the attack on White. It is quite possible that he did attack Dennis, though whether with stone or bar or both is unclear, and the confusion over where Dennis was makes it possible that Dennis was not hit. However, the brief evidence available in regard to the attack on White shows such confusion in the minds of the police, if not deliberate perjury, that it is very hard to believe that Eatock was rightfully convicted.

at all, or not by Eatock

To return to the battle - the press reports stop at the point when police entered the house, simply remarking that there was a short fierce battle inside. The only evidence for what happened inside comes from the pickets, and this may of course exaggerate police violence. The

251. S.M.H., 12/11/31, p.6.

Aske to the house - ... was also in fact reluctant for talk to occur? -431- one year for damage

injury list, however, confirms the account. Also, as the rest of the evidence given here comes from the police and the establishment press, it is only fair to record the anti-evictionists' view.

One of the pickets wrote:

The police arrived in carload after carload, surrounding the cottage on all sides, and commenced operations with a volley of stones, which smashed all the windows and wrecked the thin fibro-cement walls of the house.

see the bullet holes

This was interspersed with volleys from the revolvers of the police, and though the boss press states that only two shots were fired, there are nine bullet holes in the woodwork of the cottage and Doug. Kendall received one in the scalp and Dick Eatock through the thigh.

Up till the time the police forced their way in, only three workers had been wounded.

The workers were forced back into a middle room with a police revolver jammed against their stomachs.

Shams?

It was at this point that one of the police, frantic with terror, rushed into the room and menaced everybody, including his fellow-gunmen, with his revolver. He was disarmed.

After holding off the pack of hired bashers for half an hour the workers at last surrendered.

The boys were then made to stand in a group whilst the police searched them to find if they had any means of protection.

Satisfied that their victims had nothing with which to offer further resistance, one of the cowardly horde then rushed at the tenant, yelling, "This is Parsons.

Get him! "

This was the signal for a savage and merciless onslaught upon the defenceless prisoners, each of whom was kicked and beaten insensible. The soldiers who were present state that they never saw such a brutal scene, even in the worst phases of the war.

Cursing wildly, the barbarians in uniform, who were representing the Lang Plan in action, howled for more blood, declaring they were shooting to kill, and were only sorry that every picket was not dead.

They then began an orgy of destruction, ripping, and finally burning, the small belongings of the tenant and the pickets. A violin and music, the pickets' overcoats, the tenant's child's clothes, bedding, blankets, even a few loaves of bread and tins of jam, were thrown into the bonfire. (252)

The police did make a bonfire of bedding etc.²⁵³ claiming it was dirty. To unemployed men with few possessions this would seem like ruthless and senseless destruction.

As to the alleged shooting of Kendall, it is quite possible that he was shot. His injury was described as an "incised wound on the head".²⁵⁴

He later stated in court that "shots were fired by the police from all directions. [He] was shot in the head. A constable 'stuck a gun into his ribs' and hit him with a sledge-hammer." Another of the men said "he saw Kendall shot by a traffic policeman, who stood behind a tree on an adjacent block of land".²⁵⁵ The prosecutor told the jury that this suggestion "could only have been made with the object of conveying on the minds of the jury that the police were shooting to mortally wound men".²⁵⁶ In any case, Kendall's injury was irrelevant to the Court: it was not the police who were being charged with shooting men, but the men who were ^{being} charged with inciting the police to shoot.

Other participants said in court that the police "behaved like fiends incarnate" and that the men "came out of the house with heads like bullocks' livers". (An Inspector denied this.) One man said that the police used "violent, filthy language". He said "he was present at the Gallipoli landing and went right through the war, but he had never

253. S.M.H., 18/6/31, p.9.

254. ibid.

255. ibid., 13/11/31, p.6.

256. ibid., 14/11/31, p.10.

seen anything so brutal as the actions of the police at Bankstown.
'It seemed to me that the police were using their uniforms to become
armed bandits'. "257

In the injury count, the anti-evictionists certainly came off worse than the police. Inspector White was the only policeman seriously hurt; he spent some time in hospital. Eight other police suffered cuts, bruises and abrasions. Two anti-evictionists were admitted to hospital and others were treated there before being taken to the cells. The following injury list shows that despite press claims that anti-evictionists were travelling Communists and not locals, most of them lived in the area:

- 1) Eatock, Bankstown - bullet wound in the right thigh. ✓
- 2) Makaroff, Chullora - injuries to the hands and probably a fractured skull. ✓
- 3) Kendall, Lidcombe - incised head wound.
- 4) Terry, Belmore, cuts on the head.
- 5) Boles, Bankstown - lacerated jaw. ✓
- 6) Hill, Surry Hills - lacerated scalp.
- 7) Woolfe, Bankstown - lacerated scalp. ✓
- 8) Hanson, Punchbowl - incised head wounds. ✓
- 9) Sammon, Clyde - lacerated scalp. 258

257. ibid., 13/11/31, p.6.

258. ibid., 18/6/31, p.9 (there is no record of their ages or occupations).

Though there were only sixteen pickets, eighteen men were charged.²⁵⁹ One of these was probably Griffin, who was arrested when he went to bail the men out. He was charged and convicted of assault and indecent language.²⁶⁰ Only seventeen men appeared in the subsequent court case. They were all officially charged with resisting the police in the execution of their duty, and ~~there~~^{ere} were individual charges of assault, offensive behaviour, offensive language etc. In the court case the judge as well as the police seems to have tried to discredit the men in the eyes of the jury. For example, though the defence barrister, Clive Evatt, had informed the judge that all the men intended to make a statement rather than take the oath, the judge asked each man to swear on the Bible,²⁶¹ thus emphasising for the jury that the men were terrible atheists.

The jury found all but one man, Stevens, guilty. The judge's sentences included the heaviest penalties imposed on political prisoners in New South Wales since the I.W.W. case.

The sentences were:

Richard Eatock - CP)	18 months
John Corbett)	
John Bowles)	
Douglas Kendall - CP)	12 months
John Terry)	
Robert Mitchell)	
John Parsons)	
George Hill - CP)	
Daniel Sammon)	
Alexander Mackaroff)	9 months
Murray Lavender)	

259. Sun, 17/6/31, p.9 (S.M.H., 18/6/31, p.9 says 16, but 2 men in hospital were not yet charged.)

260. S.M.H., 24/6/31, p.12.

261. ibid., 13/11/31, p.6.

* At Blain plenty of room to watch from distance; the inner city
(esp Union St, Doug St) wd've been crammed up.
-436-

Arthur Tidman)	
Jack Hanson)	6 months
Andrew Thompson)	
Harold Woolfe)	
Frederick Smith)	two year good behaviour bonds. (262)

As with the earlier eviction clashes, a large crowd had assembled at Bankstown to watch the battle, though it seems that the violence of the police caused them to watch from a "safe distance".²⁶³

(In the picture of the scene outside the house there are few persons not wearing uniform.) "News of the encounter spread round the neighbourhood like wildfire" - not surprisingly, for "the noise of the conflict could be heard a quarter of a mile away".²⁶⁴ "Faces could be seen at every window of neighbouring houses, and the surrounding streets were crowded. Several free fights occurred among the onlookers who disputed the merits of the case."²⁶⁵

Obviously not all the crowd was in sympathy with the anti-evictionists. The force of police complaints about the public reaction to the case shows, however, that the police generally felt isolated and unpopular for their actions: "We see no tangible evidence of a desire on the part of the law-abiding section of the community to checkmate the activities of these scoundrels although plenty of talk is heard. All the dangerous work of opposition falls to the Police. Perhaps when

262. ibid., 14/11/31, p.10. (Thompson was offered but refused a bond.)

263. ibid., 18/6/31, p.9.

264. ibid.

265. Sun, 17/6/31, p.1.

a few more members of the Force are knocked out, the community generally will take action, and there may be some lynchings before the Police can stop them".²⁶⁶ (This statement would seem to make it clear that whatever the feelings of the police were when the campaign against the anti-evictionists was begun, by this stage the police were not impartial enforcers of the law, but really hated the anti-evictionists).

After all these reports on the Bankstown affray there seems little point to re-stating the conclusions; whether or not one believes that the police acted rashly, over-violently, or even vindictively, probably depends on one's already-held predilections. The two points that stand out are the general violence and, again, the fact that the unemployed were just not numerous enough, not well enough armed, and probably not trained or disciplined enough to win a hand-to-hand battle with the police. One of the men said, " 'The police carried too much weight for us, but we gave them a go for it. They have had better meals than we have of late.' "²⁶⁷

However, though the pickets could not win a battle with the police, the fight they put up clearly shows their determination to do their utmost to resist .

The battle certainly stirred the labor movement out of its apathetic acceptance of the unemployed situation. The Labor Council, despite its recently refuelled opposition to Communists and Communist

266. N.S.W. Police News, 15/7/31, p.6. (article on Bankstown).

267. Sun, 17/6/31, p.1.

268. T.L.C.M., 18/6/31; S.M.H., 19/6/31, p.10.

fraternals, decided to comply with the I.C.W.P.A.'s request to bail out the prisoners.²⁶⁸ (The bail set was exceptionally high: £80 for all except Eatock, whose bail was £100. £80 was equivalent to a basic wage worker's earnings for about twenty weeks. That the bail was so high suggests that the police wanted to hinder the men's release and press the movement's funds up to the hilt).

There was barely time to protest over Bankstown before the eruption of an even greater confrontation. On Friday, June 19th the Bankstown fight was eclipsed in Newtown by "the most sensational eviction battle Sydney has ever seen".²⁶⁹

If the evidence of what happened at Bankstown is contradictory, it is even more so in regard to the Newtown affray. The main contradiction is over two most important issues: whether or not the police suffered any violence, and hence any provocation, before they shot at the pickets, and whether shooting occurred inside the house, or only at the front.

James Willoughby, the tenant of 143 Union Street, Newtown, was only £2.14.0 in arrears when a summons, due to expire on June 20th, was taken out.²⁷⁰

but battle 19th

269. S.M.H., 20/6/31, p.13.

270. Quarter Sessions at Sydney, on 4th August, 1931. No. 47 (copy) Depositions. Rex. v. Chapman, Miller, Garbett and Ors. Riot and Unlawful Assembly. pp.2-3 (evidence of Newtown Clerk of Petty Sessions and the estate agent's clerk.) This and other material used in this section is from the file of the Defence Solicitor, C. Jollie Smith & Co (in the Phil Thorne Collection in H.C. Coombes Archives). It contains statements by pickets and witnesses to the solicitor and Court Depositions of the Quarter Sessions case (including evidence of the Inspector-in-charge and 5 more police). It will be referred to here as Rex vs. Chapman. Most of the material is unnumbered.

*apparently
includes
London
No!
mildew*

The house was barricaded in the now-customary manner: the outside was enclosed with barbed wire, "On the top floor sheets of galvanised iron had been wired to the balcony railings to prevent entry from the adjoining section of the building. All doors and windows on the ground floor were reinforced with towering stacks of sandbags which reached to the ceilings. Every stack was about six feet thick at the floor and weighed probably half a ton." There were also stones and home-made batons.²⁷¹ The police later produced in court a bag of soil and some weapons; one policeman claimed he had counted sixty-eight similar soil bags.²⁷²

The police raid took place shortly before noon. There were eighteen pickets in the house. It is hard to determine both the total number of police involved, and the number of police engaged in the fight with the pickets as opposed to the number who were engaged in pushing back and controlling the large crowd of onlookers. (A large number of people were attending a meeting outside the house when the police arrived, as is shown in the photograph opposite; the crowd swelled when the fracas began.)

The Herald reports that there were forty police, arriving in half a dozen cars,²⁷³ but the Sun suggests more, for it describes police arriving in a bus, in cars, and on motorcycles;²⁷⁴ the Workers' Weekly

271. S.M.H., 20/6/31, p.13.

272. Rex vs Chapman, Quarter Sessions
Court Depositions, p.4. (evidence of Inspector Farley).

273. S.M.H., 20/6/31, p.13.

274. Sun, 19/6/31, p.1.

also notes the arrival of one bus load and several cars of police.²⁷⁵ The Police News objected to statements that forty police fought eighteen anti-evictionists: "Most of the Police were required to hold a large crowd of more than a thousand among whom were some revolutionaries, back from the scene ... Only twelve Police broke into the house."²⁷⁶

Though the Herald does not mention the bus, eye witnesses also describe it²⁷⁷ and it would be impossible for so many reports of it to have been invented. The point about the arrival of the bus is important, for the pickets and eyewitnesses claimed that the police in the bus came out firing before there was any possibility of an attack on them.

As with the evidence of the Bankstown case, I will try to present the different accounts of the battle, pointing up the contradictions.

According to the Herald²⁷⁸, "half a dozen police cars drew up some distance from the house, and forty police and detectives, under Inspectors Farley and Smith, approached the building

When the police reached the pavement outside the front fence ..., at a signal given by the leader of the defenders, a terrible shower of stones rained down onto their heads.

The fusillade took deadly effect. At an order from the officers in charge the police retired, many of them bleeding profusely

275. W.W., 26/6/31, p.1.

276. N.S.W. Police News, 15/7/31, p.6.

277. cf. Rex vs Chapman, evidence given to C. Jollie Smithe & Co. by William Ernest Hawkins, Haley, Clark, Garbett, Dare, Reginald, Hawkins.

278. The following account is from S.M.H., 20/6/31, p.13

After a short consultation, the police drew their revolvers. At a word of command they commenced firing steadily at the walls behind which the Communists were cowering. Leaving a small party to continue the barrage, the main body of police made a concerted rush, down a side passage separated from the fortified house by a picket fence."

They crashed the fence down, reached the back door which they broke down, and "after a terrific effort" forced a way through the sandbags inside.

By this time most of the pickets upstairs had rushed down to the small downstairs back room. "It was here that the terrible hand-to-hand combat occurred".^{font}

Meanwhile three police broke through onto the upstairs balcony, by means of the next-door balcony²⁷⁹ and pushed downstairs to their colleagues.

"Wielding bludgeons improvised from iron bars, lead piping, palings, chairs and wooden batons ... the Communists made frantic efforts to repel the invading police. Constable Proud, struck on the head from behind with an iron bar, crashed to the floor unconscious The room was absolutely bathed in blood. Practically every man in the room was bleeding from one or more wounds. Insensible men lay on the floor, while comrades and foes alike trampled on them. The walls were spattered and daubed with bloodstained hands.

279. The landlady lived in the adjoining house - unluckily for the pickets, as the entrance gained from her premises was the main weak spot in their defences.

One by one the Communists fell. Those who were still on their feet were overpowered, and handcuffed."

In the course of the battle the gas in one of the rooms was turned on - whether by accident or not is not known; the gas affected some of the police, one of whom was taken to hospital with gas poisoning.

At least fifteen policemen were treated by ambulance officials,²⁸⁰ and all the defenders were injured, half being taken to hospital. With what seems like deliberate understatement the Herald noted that "only one man was hit by bullets fired at the walls of the house by the police, and it is not known how the injury was inflicted. Probably the wounded man was struck by a bullet which had been deflected in its path".

Apart from this bullet which struck Joseph Garbett²⁸¹ in the arm the most serious injuries to the pickets were:

Urbanski (Surry Hills) - head injuries

Storen (Surry Hills) - fractured left hand

Murphy (Enmore) - head injuries

Clark (Darlington) - head injuries

Riley (Lewisham) - concussion and lacerations to the head.

Dare (Newtown) - head injuries

Emmerton (Newtown) - head injuries

280. This would seem to refute the Police News's claim that only 12 police fought the pickets.

281. S.M.H., 20/6/31, p.13, wrongly gives his name as Jos. Gabriel;
S.M.H., 16/7/31, p.6. corrects it to Garbett.

Hawkins (Erskineville) - head injuries

Haley (Surry Hills) - head injuries

a comm → Joshua (Redfern) - head injuries

Goldberg - fractured skull. (282)

It is obvious from the preponderance of head injuries that the police had wielded their batons widely.

(As with the Bankstown case, the participants came from around the area.)

The Sun account²⁸³ is briefer, though no less sensational.

When the police arrived there were ten men on the balcony throwing stones so Inspector Farleigh (sic) ordered the police to draw their guns. They fired fifteen shots into the woodwork at the top of the house, then smashed through the back door and three smashed in at the top through the neighbour's balcony.

At this point there is something odd in the Sun's report. The three policemen who climbed in from the balcony "narrowly escaped being shot in the first police fusillade. They were coming down the stairs when a volley of lead struck just below them."

In the account given later to the defence solicitor by the pickets, it is alleged that the police also fired their guns when inside the house - shot up the stairs in fact. Though the Herald ignores this, and the

282. ibid., 20/6/31, p.13.

283. The following account from the Sun, 19/6/31, p.1.

police in their evidence are at pains to dismiss if possible any shooting, the Sun's report does tally with the pickets' allegations. If the three policemen were going down stairs and the bullets were below them then there must have been shooting inside; also, reports of the shooting from outside make it clear that the police outside shot up at the balcony area, so it could not have been their stray bullets that were flying up the stairwell. Finally, the police outside would not have shot at their colleagues going in from the balcony, whereas police shooting inside may easily have mistaken their targets in the scrimmage and shot upstairs, not knowing that police were there.

The Workers' Weekly also claims there was shooting inside the house, and gives the only press account of police bashing the prisoners after they were arrested. (Again we cannot discount this simply because it was a Communist paper. As the Workers' Weekly itself said: "What happened inside is known only to those who were there.")

The Workers' Weekly stated that the police made an investigatory foray in the early morning. Then around noon the bus and cars arrived. "The bus drove straight at the crowd and cleared them off the street. As it came opposite 143 Union Street, the police jumped out with revolvers drawn and at once opened fire on the balcony of the house."

The main difference in the Workers' Weekly report is that it did not end with the arrests. Of events after the arrests it noted:

Emmerton and Goldberg WALKED out to a P.D. car handcuffed. Goldberg had no cuts on the head or face when he came out of the house ... (He) since (has) been admitted to hospital in a serious condition suffering from cerebral concussion. Emmerton walked out to the P.D. car. He was grazed on the side of the face (He is) now in hospital in a serious condition suffering from fracture of the skull and cerebral concussion. He was admitted to hospital in an unconscious condition and was unconscious for several hours. These workers were bashed after they were arrested and while in the police station.²⁸⁴

Allegations of police bashings after the police had won the fight in the house and had arrested the men and again at the police station, were also made by five of the arrested men in statements to their solicitor. These men described in particular the unwarranted bashings of Goldberg and Emmerton. Although these statements are lengthy I think they deserve quoting in full, if for no other reason than that, to my knowledge, these extraordinary documents have not been used before and should be read by any student of the Depression. They show, more than anything else I have read, that the unemployed as a whole did not sit passively through the Depression; they also give some impression of how it felt to be on the receiving end of a policeman's baton.

Though the statements are highly coloured they do not seem, to me anyway, 'worked up'. Though vivid, they are meticulously precise and the

284. W.W., 26/6/31, pp.1 and 4.

statements support each other without any appearance of collusion between the witnesses. It must be remembered that these statements were made privately to the solicitor so there would be no reason for the men to exaggerate police violence to discredit police as they might when on trial.

285. The typewritten copies of the statements have some alterations added by hand. These are shown in italics. Where the handwriting is illegible this is indicated. (Statements from Rex vs Chapman, evidence given to C. Jollie Smith & CO.).

GARBETT

I was on the balcony listening to the speakers. I heard the call "here they come" A big Bus' came down the street and stopped some yards from the house. The police got out of the 'bus and at once opened fire on the house. *I was shot in the arm. Joshua next to me (illegible - probably pulled)* I went back into the house in order to get out of the line of fire. I went into the backroom with two or three others. When I looked through the window I saw two policemen standing on the roof of the kitchen. They opened fire through the window. I got down on my knees and went to go down stairs. As I was half way down the stairs the police broke through part of the back door, and commenced to shoot up the stairs. I jumped over the banister of the stairs on to the floor below. *(I went towards the front room and called the others to come out of the back room into the front room. As I did so I was shot in the arm by a bullet from a pistol fired by one of the police.)* I turned around to help Murphy who had received a scalp wound and was hit on the head with a baton. I fell to the ground and I was then batoned while on the floor. I was then handcuffed, both hands behind me. They pushed me through the back door. As I went through I was hit by other police who were standing by the door. I was thrown to the ground in the backyard. One of the policeman tapped me on the back with his baton and said "Is this B-- still breathing" I was later picked up and *dragged out* taken-out to the police patrol. When I got out of the patrol in the Police Station yard the police were lined up from the end of the Patrol to the door of the charge room. *I noticed Haley in the dock and I said 'what are you doing here. You were not in the house'* . They kicked and punched at the men as they went past. Goldberg was just in front of me. As he

was going into the charge room a plain clothes policeman (Carson) hit him and knocked him to the ground. This is when his jaw was fractured broken . I heard a man behind say "give us a hand Scotty" I turned around and saw Hawkins who was handcuffed to Emmerton. Emmerton was on the ground unconscious and Hawkins was dragging him in an attempt to get away from the blows of the police. Hawkins got hold of my hands with his free hand and we dragged Emmerton into the corner of the Charge room. I was pushed into a corner of the room. I said to one of the police "mind my arm, i'm shot in the arm" He said "Pity it was not your BL--dy heart you Red B-- " He hit me across the shoulder with his baton. I was bleeding from both head and arm but received no first aid until arriving at the hospital. I was taken from the hospital to the Newtown Police station and charged. We were rushed in and out again and given no chance to ask for bail. I was taken out to Long Bay gaol, was in hospital there for one night and was then put into a cell.

In charge room I saw policemen smashing at everyone with black rulers: when finger prints later (illegible) our hands were (illegible) by rulers. One of the constables was gritting his teeth and banging everyone with rulers. He said ^{Sivens??} [saw] to Joshua and (also?) called us Russian Bs: disgrace to [Aussie?] to be associated. We got a right to shoot you at sight. Foul language.

CLARK

NO. 2

I was on the verandah and saw the police arrive in a big bus which pulled up somewhere about 20 yards from the house. The police speeded out of the bus, many of them with revolvers in their hands. As I passed through the balcony door into the front room on my way to take up a position in the back room, the police fired a volley straight into the room - bullets were thudding into the walls scattering dust and pieces of plaster everywhere. We crouched down and heaved bricks in retaliation and self-defense. The firing still continued and I half crawled in company with Goldberg and Miller, into the back room. Were it not for the fact that a sheet of iron placed against the iron railing of the balcony stopping or deflecting many of the bullets lower down, I am convinced many of us would have been fatally shot. In the back room we took up a position ⁱⁿ the corner next to the window protected from the firing of the police. While deliberating on some plan of action we saw 2 police approaching the back window with drawn revolvers. I could see them through an aperture ^a - space at the side of the window not covered with boarding. Whilst deliberating about the defense of the window 4 or 5 plain clothes police came through the door of the room and bashed us down. A smash on the rear partially stunned me. I was hand-cuffed to Miller and after hurling all the filthy abuse they could think on us, we were hustled down stairs into the back yard. Miller was ferociously attacked by a plain clothes policeman as he proceeded me through the door.

I got bashed on the head and back. As we all lay on the ground handcuffed and the majority of us soaked in blood we were subjected to vile abuse and threats by the police. They walked over across our bodies, tramping as hard as they could. Into the patrol and to the police station. On coming out of patrol, Miller, who preceeded me again, was bashed in the doorway of the charge room. I saw Golberg as he came through the door handcuffed get stuck a brutal blow on the jaw (by a policeman I'll never forget), which sent him crashing to the floor like a poleaxed steer. He was assisted to his feet by a comrade and was feebly leaning with his hands on the desk when a sergeant told him to take his hands off the desk and brutally bashed *and one or two next to him* him ~~and one or two went to him over~~ the head with the ruler

I also saw Hawkins compelled to drag his comrade whom I did not recognise but who was unconscious through the door and along the floor to the end of the charge room. Miller was unhandcuffed from me and taken outside when I heard the police belting him up. I protested from the crown sergeant: who said don't do that while the Ambulance men are here. Bring him back to the charge room again. I was taken to hospital and exrayed for fractures, thence to the Bay.

NO. 16 *Stace*

I was in the front room upstairs when I heard someone on the balcony say "Here they are". I looked out the door and saw the street full of police with drawn revolvers firing up into the balcony at us. We started throwing bricks in defense of ourselves. Just ^{when} I was standing behind and a bit to the right of Gabbit, when he grabbed his left arm saying "I am hit". I then dropped on my hands and knees to avoid the bullets and backed to the door leading on to the stairs. I stood up to see how every body had fared and how things were and a bullet or something hit the wall and plaster was splashed all over my face. I then got down stairs and into the front room. They were then bashing the back door in. When the police got into the house they batted us unmercifully whether we showed fight or not calling us Communist Bs. and saying "I'll give you red Russia you Bastards." I was knocked over in the front room, a policeman put his foot on me and batted me while I lay on the floor. I was then handcuffed and as soon as I was handcuffed I was punched on the jaw. I was then taken outside and while I was sitting *Blood everywhere I looked. Someone being bashed on floor screaming.*

in the yard the police hurled all the filthy insults imaginable at us. They said that Lang should pass a Bill to shoot the lot of us at sight. I was then taken and put in the patrol and conveyed to Newtown station. When we got there we had to walk from the patrol through a line of police to the charge room. They kicked and punched us all the way from the patrol to the charge room. As I was walking through the charge room door handcuffed, I received a heavy punch on the nose which half dazed me. When in the charge room the police still continued

to call us all the abusive names under the sun. We were then charged; some going to the hospital, some to the cells. We after appeared in the court and remanded to July the 15th.

Saw Goldberg hit in charge room. Hit on jaw: Knocked unconscious. Was only upright by the others all around.

DARE

NO. 9

About noon on the 19/6/31. I was standing on the balcony of 143 Union Street Newtown when a bus loaded with police came round the corner of the Union Hotel & pulled up about twenty yards above the house. Before the Bus was stationary a number of police jumped off holding revolvers in their hands & rushed towards the premises shooting in the air. I immediately ran down the stairs into the room where I took up a position on one side of the window. I had been there about one minute (or less if anything) when I heard a loud banging at the back door. I then ran out into the back room & as I did a part of the door was knocked away leaving an opening through which I could see the police trying to hack their way in. As I was looking through the opening I saw a policeman deliberately shoot into the room, the bullet just buzzing past my ear. I could hear a lot of shots being fired but was under the impression that they were blanks fired to frighten us but when I heard the bullet hit the wall I knew that I was very much mistaken & that the police were bent on getting us out even if some of us were killed in the process. I got out of range of the door & told Gabbett that they were firing into the room & he said that he knew that as he had just been hit in the arm with a bullet. I went into the front room then & waited for the police to come in, which they soon did & started to batten us unmercifully. Three police came at me with their battens raised to strike & I tried to defend myself as best I could. I warded off one blow but the other two gave me some curry & battened

me until I was nearly unconscious. As I lay on the floor I saw some of the police pull Murphy to his feet off the floor & Batten him something awful not letting off until he was a bloody mass on the floor. The police then pulled me to my feet & belted me with their battens again all the while saying "You bloody Communist, we ought to kick your bloody gut's out." They then hustled me outside & handcuffed me to Chant after which they flung us down on the fence in the back yard. While we were sitting there they fetched Murphy out & one policeman said "You look pretty red now you red Bastard" & punched him on the face a few times. We were there for a little while & then taken to the Newtown Police Station. Once we were inside they closed the big gates & as we were going into the Charge Room each one in his turn was given a horrid time. The police were lined up all the way inside & as one of us went they either punched or kicked us. I was kicked on the knee & nearly knocked over. Murphy was in front of me & as he went to the door a big cop kicked him & knocked him down on the floor of the Charge Room. I saw a policeman hit Goldberg on the face & he also was knocked on to the floor where he laid - (apparently seriously hurt) for a couple of minutes, he was kicked until he got up again. When the men were all in the Charge Room some were leaning on the counter when the policeman behind the counter grabbed a big round ruler & started belting them with it. I heard him hit Dorman on the head with it & it sounded pretty loud. We were there about a quarter of an hour when the Ambulance Man came and he took no notice of the way the police were treating us. In fact he just laughed when a plainclothed *detective* struck Miller

on the face a couple of times. They then decided to take Murphy to the hospital & grabbing hold of him they pummeled him all the way out of the room. Inspector Farley then came in & they stopped knocking us about. I was not ill-treated after that being taken away to the hospital.