Abstract

The strike of 1917 in Melbourne had its origins in the industrial changes that took place in the city in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and the industrial tensions of the decade before the war were exacerbated by the circumstances of war. Unemployment, seasonal and general, made men vulnerable to moral blackmail to enlist, true victims of "economic conscription." And the fact that industrial confrontation persisted into 1919–20 shows that the causes of industrial unrest were deeper and more lasting than war-induced inflation and the consequent erosion of living standards. Historians do less than justice to the workers involved in 1917 if we do not look fore and aft, before 1917 to the conditions that were building class-consciousness among manual workers, and afterwards to the disputes and strikes that followed in 1918–20.

References

4. Ibid., 66–7. Google Scholar
8. Bollard’s treatment of wartime inflation is largely confined to footnote 110 (on page 94), which presents figures drawn from Ian Turner’s Industrial
Labour and Politics and covering the whole Commonwealth, to show declining real wages from 1913 to 1917 and rising levels of working days lost in strikes between 1915 and 1917. Bollard observes: “The correlation between the two sets of figures is striking.”


10. Ibid. Google Scholar

11. Labour and Industrial Branch Report recorded almost 230,000 working days lost to strikes in Victoria in 1916, 760,000 days in 1917, only 165,000 in 1918, 733,333 in 1919 and 783,286 in 1920. The number fell away to fewer than 110,000 in 1921. Google Scholar


14. In 1891, total factory employment was 46,649; in 1895, 36,027; in 1901, 56,945; in 1911, 88,694; and in 1921, 117,633; see Report of Chief Inspector of Factories for the Year Ended 31 December 1921, 3. For building workers, see “Occupations,” Census of the Commonwealth of Australia (1901, 1911 and 1921). Google Scholar

15. Victorian Year Book (1905): 565; Victorian Year Book (1921): 541. For the 1880s, see Davison, The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne, ch. 2. Google Scholar


17. For changes in farming technology, see John Lack and Charles Fahey, “Harvester Wars: The Global Struggle Between H. V. McKay and International Harvester,” Ontario History 96, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 9–40. The employment figures are drawn wages books of H. V. McKay, Melbourne University Archives (MUA) and Mitchell’s Wages Books, Noel Butlin Archives Centre (NBAC), Australian National University. Google Scholar

18. See Victorian Year Book (1901–21); Wages Books and Accounts Ledgers, Hoffman Brickworks, MUA; Maize Products Wages Books, 1914–18, MUA. Google Scholar


22. B. Guest, Engagement Books, 1911, MUA; Bryant and May Engagement Book, PA 536, Box 144, SLV. In 1911, the average age of marriage in Melbourne was 28.7 for working-class grooms. The marriage ages are calculated from a 10 per cent sample of digitised marriage registers for 1911 held in the Victorian Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages. “Occupations,” Census of the Commonwealth of Australia (1911). At age 20–24, 57 per cent of women were employed; at ages 30–34, 29 per cent; and for ages 45–49, 22 per cent. Google Scholar

23. T. B. Guest, Engagement Books, 1911, MUA; Bryant and May Engagement Book, PA 536, Box 144, SLV. In 1911, the average age of marriage in Melbourne was 28.7 for working-class grooms. The marriage ages are calculated from a 10 per cent sample of digitised marriage registers for 1911 held in the Victorian Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages. “Occupations,” Census of the Commonwealth of Australia (1911). At age 20–24, 57 per cent of women were employed; at ages 30–34, 29 per cent; and for ages 45–49, 22 per cent. Google Scholar

24. Guest, Engagement Book 1911; marriage sample for 1911 (see footnote 23); and Lack, “Footscray,” especially the sections on endogamy (197–200 and Table 43) and occupational mobility (256–260 and Table 64). Google Scholar


41. For gas stokers, see Commonwealth Arbitration Report (1913): 71; for superphosphate workers, see Arbitration Transcript Federated Artificial Manure Trade and Chemical Workers, CRS B1958 Set 4, 133, 190–1, NAA; CSR figures calculated from wage returns March 1914, NBAC. For the increasing employment of women in the biscuit industry after the introduction of wages boards, see Fahey and Sammartino, "Work and Wages." Google Scholar


43. Labour and Industrial Branch Report (1914 and 1915). Google Scholar

44. Age, 29 January, 16 July 1915. Only five determinations were made during the embargo, compared with 29 for the same period in 1914; see Labour and Industrial Branch Report, no. 7 (1917): 93. Google Scholar

46. Argus, 1 August 1917. Google Scholar

47. Reported in Age and Argus, 31 July 1917. Google Scholar

50. Bollard, "The Active Chorus," quotes (incompletely) an Argus unemployment table, whereas Murphy, the Secretary for Labour, furnished detailed figures that were published almost daily in both the Age and the Argus. Google Scholar

51. Age, 14 August 1917. Google Scholar

52. Age, 17 August, 1 September 1917. Responding to a Political Labor Council (Victorian Labor Party) and Socialist Women's League deputation, Peacock opined: "The produce was the property of private individuals, who sold it when they thought the time opportune, in the same way that a working man made his labour available at a certain price if the price were suitable" see Age, 18 August 1917. Google Scholar

53. Age, 25 August 1917. Google Scholar

55. Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories, Work-Rooms and Shops for the Year Ended 31 December 1918, 5; Age, 10 August 1918; and Argus, 23 October 1918. Google Scholar


57. Ibid., 6–7. Google Scholar


"Drums of the Fore and Aft" in Wee Willie Winkie (Centenary Edition, 1969, 331). It occurs in a story that is a parallel to the poem "That Day" (see n. 15 below) and concerns an occasion when, contrary to popular belief, British soldiers fled in terror. Kipling teases out why soldiers don't follow "their officers into battle" and why they refuse to respond to orders from "those who had no right to give them" (330).