

Confirmation of Doctor of Philosophy Candidature

Lynn Beaton

1 Title of Thesis

A History of the Ballarat Trades and Labour Council – An examination of 100 years of labour organisation in Ballarat 1854 - 1954

2 Overview of the research project

2.1 Understanding the Project

This work was initiated with a request to Federation University from the Ballarat Trades and Labour Council (BTLC) for a written history. The BTLC is one of Australia's many peak union councils to which trade union branches are affiliated. Its role is to provide liaison between unions and to develop and implement strategies and campaigns that affect all its members.

Brett Edgington, the Secretary of the BTLC said:

'Stories are very important to all of us and BTLC has a lot of important stories which form a wonderful and strong platform for us to stand on looking forward. I have read much of the popular history and little is known of our story and contribution. The Union movement had a profound influence on the society we live in today but our stories are missing.'¹

Federation University agreed that a history of the BTLC would make a unique and valuable contribution to the existing body of Ballarat history and made a PhD scholarship available for the project. A Memorandum of Understanding was drawn up outlining the relevant responsibilities; the University is providing all student facilities and the BTLC is providing access to research materials, an office and ongoing consultation and support.

¹ Brett Edgington, "Email to Lynn Beaton," ed. Lynn Beaton (Ballarat2015).

2.2 Outline of the Project

In designing the PhD thesis I have been cognizant of the need, not just for scholarly excellence, but also for relevance to the objectives of the BTLC. Ballarat is a city that has made its history a living feature of everyday life. One of its main industries is tourism, based on remembrance of the days of the gold rush and on the Eureka Stockade. Standing prominently in Camp Street, the Trades Hall is one of Ballarat's prized historic buildings but unlike most of the historic buildings its purpose and its function have been uninterrupted since it was opened in 1888. Its contribution to the heritage of Ballarat has been enormous, yet there is no written history of the BTLC and its many achievements remain hidden.

The first objective of this project is to provide a written history of the organization. The second is to draw attention to contributions made by the BTLC to the heritage of Ballarat. The third objective of this thesis is to examine how the legacy of the Eureka Stockade is manifested in the operations of the BTLC. While the legacy of Eureka is hotly debated there is plentiful argument to suggest that the trade union movement, across Australia, have been inspired by the event and believe they are the natural inheritors of its spirit. In Ballarat this is intensified as the BLTC was born and has worked in the shadow and the light of the legacy.

To meet these objectives I will employ an empiricist epistemology. I will use a Marxist approach in the design of my project in the mode of 'history from below' as brought to attention by the epic *Making of the English Working Class* of E.P. Thompson. With this approach I intend to highlight the 'agency of working people, the degree to which they contributed, by conscious efforts, to the making of history.' And to go at least some way to correcting the imbalance in their omission from the existing story. As Thompson puts it, they were, 'casualties of history' and, 'if they were casualties of history, they remain, condemned in their own lives, as casualties.'² In other words, this thesis will focus on the history of organized trade unions and their

² E. P. Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, pdf version, 1966), 12-13.

members and in doing so will provide enrichment to working class members of the Ballarat community.

3 The Research Questions

1. What are the important stories that will provide BTLC a historical understanding of their own history?
2. What were the circumstances that surrounded the establishment of the BTLC?
3. How strong is the legacy of Eureka in the foundation and ongoing work of the BTLC?
4. What contributions have the BTLC made to the history of Ballarat?

4 Brief Overview of Relevant Literature

4.1 Labour History

For thousands of years the history of Australia was told with oral stories, painted and carved images, dance and song and this is only recently being recognised as valid history.³ Since the arrival of Europeans written history has been the most valued but even so it is not the only relevant historical knowledge that is available in Australia.⁴ Most of these written histories focus on Euro-Australia's social formation.

At the time the BTLC was formed enormous pride in the achievements of the trade union movement were being expressed. There was confidence that trade unionism had the capacity to rectify the ills of society and deliver an improved world for all to enjoy. An outstanding example of this mood is the book published in 1888 for the Centenary of the arrival of the First Fleet, *The History of Labour and Capital in All Lands and Ages*. In his opening words the publisher is fervent.

³ Ann McGrath and Mary Anne Jebb, *Long History, Deep Time, Deepening Histories of Place* (Acton ACT: ANU Press, 2015).

⁴ Kate Darian Smith and Paula Hamilton, *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia* (1994).

'In these days of progressive ideas and democratic thought, the part played in the history of the world by the working classes through their organisations is daily becoming more important and comprehensive. It is the working class who are making history, both social and political. This is pre-eminently the case in Australia.'⁵

The Editor is even more ebullient in his introduction, suggesting that the discovery and settlement of America and Australia are 'the two most important events of modern times', which 'revolutionised the old, and saved modern society from political ruin and social anarchy.'⁶ These views were also reflected in early histories of the labour movement,⁷ and were formed in opposition to the repressive regimes that dominated Europe. Many who came to Australia either as convicts or free immigrants had sympathies with the resistance movements that challenged the lack of workers rights in the surging spread of capitalism. Several revolutions, most notably the French, took place in the late eighteenth century. In England in 1838 the People's Charter set down the demands of workers but its adherents were quickly outlawed. In 1846 The Communist Manifesto was written to attract workers from all over the world to unite against the capitalist system.⁸ In 1848 a wave of revolutionary fervour spread over fifty countries from Europe to South America. Most were violently repressed leaving many participants disaffected with European capitalism. Many of these 'turbulent spirits' came to Australia, bringing with them the spirit of resistance

⁵ John Norton, *History of Labour and Capital in All Lands and Ages: Their Past Condition, Present Relations, and Outlook for the Future*, ed. John Norton (Oceanic Press, 1888), iii.

⁶ *Ibid.*, v.

⁷ J. T. Sutcliffe, *A History of Trade Unionism in Australia*, vol. No. 3, Workers Educational Association Series (London, Melbourne: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1921); A. P. Taylor, "Trade Unionism as a Factor in Social Evolution," *Royal Society of Tasmania* (1892).

⁸ Karl Marx, "Communist Manifesto," in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works* (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1951).

and the desire to fight for a better world.⁹

The discovery of gold led to the building of flourishing economies with an increased need for labour while at the same time workers left paid employment and headed to the goldfields in the hope that they could escape forever their need to work for wages, In this environment workers were able to win improved conditions. W.E Murphy described these features when writing about the conditions of workers and the victories of organised labour from the early 1850s to the late 1880s. He was a stalwart of the Eight Hour Day campaign and the first Secretary of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council and his enduring work was first published in the volume mentioned above, and later he wrote a history of the Eight Hours Campaign.¹⁰ He was convinced that trade unions would deliver within the capitalist system, a society that was fair and just for all. In *Australi Awakening*, William Spence, also an activist and workers leader in the Miners, Shearers and Australian Workers Union before becoming a member of parliament, adds to the views of Murphy and Norton a class analysis; that the settlement of Australia was managed to favour a few gaining wealth while the rest were forced into wage slavery. He argues that the only way forward for the Australian people is through unionism and labour politics.¹¹

Early labour historians, or economic historians did not work mostly within the university system, but gradually their work was accepted.¹² The first labour historians came from the universities in the mid-fifties and were mostly associated with the Communist Party. Known as the Radical Nationalists, they continued the view that

⁹ Tony Moore, *Death or Liberty, Rebels and Radicals Transported to Australia 1788 - 1868* (Pier 9, 2015); Sutcliffe, *A History of Trade Unionism in Australia*, No. 3.

¹⁰ W. E. Murphy, "Part 2, Victoria," in *History of Labour and Capital in All Lands and Ages: Their Past Condition, Present Relations, and Outlook for the Future.*, ed. John Norton (Sydney and Melbourne: Oceanic Publishing Co, 1888); *History of the Eight Hours Movement* (Spectator Publishing Company Limited, 1896).

¹¹ W. G. Spence, *Australia's Awakening, 30 Years in the Life of an Australian Agitator* (Sydney: The Worker Trustees, 1909).

¹² Frank Farrell, *Themes in Australian History - Questions and Interpretation in an Evolving Historiography* (Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1990).

labour and labour organisation was the most progressive force.¹³ In 1962 they launched *Labour History: A journal of labour and social history* that promotes the interdisciplinary nature of labour history, and its acceptance of less traditional sources, including folklore and oral testimony.¹⁴

4.2 Histories of Peak Councils

Considering the significance of union peak councils in Australian economic, political, and social life, it is surprising that they have received little attention from historians. While many unions have published commissioned histories, very few peak councils have done the same. The establishment of the trades hall councils or the ACTU is completely absent in many general histories of Australia.¹⁵ Where they are acknowledged, only cursory comments are made, such as in Malony's comment that, 'by this time the Australian Council of Trade Unions had been formed to present a united front to employers and the government itself.'¹⁶ Even trade union histories don't present these formations as significant. In Turner's, 'In Union is Strength' the ACTU does not rate a mention in the index although in the text a page is dedicated to the foundation of the ACTU.¹⁷

The history of peak organisations begins with calls for unity in the nascent labour movement. In 1846 a notice appeared in the Sydney Citizen calling for 'one big union' of all trades.¹⁸ Ten years later unions in Melbourne joined together to win the Eight

¹³ Stuart Macintyre, "Labour History and Radical Nationalism," in *Australian History Now*, ed. Anna Clark and Paul Ashton (Sydney: New South Publishing, 2013).

¹⁴ Anna Clark and Paul Ashton, "Australian History Now," (2013); Darian Smith and Hamilton, *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*; Eric Fry, *Common Cause, Chapter 10, the Writing of Labour History in Australia*, ed. Eric Fry (Wellington, Sydney: Allen & Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1986).

¹⁵ Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, Cambridge Concise Histories (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁶ John Malony, *History of Australia* (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1988), 248.

¹⁷ Ian Turner, *In Union Is Strength : A History of Trade Unions in Australia, 1788-1983* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1983).

¹⁸ Ibid.

Hour Day. This led quickly to the establishment of the Melbourne Trades Hall Committee.¹⁹ The first Trades Hall in the world was opened in 1859 with enormous pride both in the establishment of the building and the winning of the Eight Hour Day that had initiated the work between unions.²⁰ In 1871 six unions formed the Sydney Trades and Labour Council which later became the Trades and Labour Council of NSW.²¹

In the 1880s the Melbourne Trades Hall Committee changed its name to the Trades Hall Council to better reflect its new direction. The rules were altered to enable it to become involved in the industrial actions of its affiliates and to increase the number of unions that could affiliate. This became a model that was adopted as other peak councils emerged in the 1880s. In the same year the Brisbane and Hobart Councils were established, the South Australian Trades Hall was opened in 1884 and the West Australian Council in 1892.²² At this time, 1883, Bate informs us, an Eight Hour Committee was established in Ballarat specifically to raise funds to build a Trades Hall.²³ While early histories treat the establishment of the Trades Hall Councils as significant events, this is not reflected in later histories. Although it was the first in the world, there is no complete history of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, although several works have been published that have dealt with periods, tendencies, strategies and particular events,²⁴ and theses that cover periods or singular aspects.²⁵ In 1993 the

¹⁹ Murphy, "Part 2, Victoria."; Sutcliffe, *A History of Trade Unionism in Australia*, No. 3.

²⁰ Robin Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1960).

²¹ Ray Markey, *In Case of Oppression. The Life and Times of the Labor Council of NSW* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1994).

²² Norton, *History of Labour and Capital in All Lands and Ages: Their Past Condition, Present Relations, and Outlook for the Future*; Sutcliffe, *A History of Trade Unionism in Australia*, No. 3.

²³ Weston Bate, *Lucky City, the First Generation at Ballarat 1851-1901* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1978), 263.

²⁴ Brian Boyd, *Melbourne Trades Hall 150th Anniversary* (Victorian Trades Hall Council, 2009); Carlotta Jane Kellaway, *Melbourne Trades Hall Lygon Street*

NSW Trades and Labour Council commissioned Ray Markey to write their history.²⁶ He also wrote a journal article describing the project as having three aims: to provide an institutional record, to offer a historical narrative, and to analyse the role of the Labor Council in the broader Australian labour movement and society.²⁷ Some regional TLCs have histories, for example the Geelong TLC commissioned a history to celebrate its centenary.²⁸

The national peak council, the ACTU, was not established until 1927, although its formation was on the agenda of the union movement from 1879 when the first Intercolonial Trade Unions Congress took place in Sydney. The congresses continued until Federation but were never consolidated into an organisation. After Federation the establishment of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) was expected to ensure that the federal needs of unions would be met, so the focus was on the political possibilities and objectives rather than the industrial.

From the start two streams co-existed within the labour movement; those that wanted to change the economic and social system and those that wanted to work within it to achieve the best possible results for the working class and both were interested in the formation of an Australian-wide union peak council. In 1907 the International Workers of the World (IWW), known as the Wobblies, established a branch in Sydney with the objective of building one massive organisation able to maximise the

Carlton: The Workingman's Parliament (Melbourne: Victorian Trades Hall Council, 1988); Marcella Pearce, *Melbourne Trades Hall Memories* (Melbourne Trades Hall Council, 1997).

²⁵ Stanley Bert Petzall, "The Political and Industrial Role of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, 1927 - 1949" (University of Michigan, 1982); Kellaway, *Melbourne Trades Hall Lygon Street Carlton: The Workingman's Parliament*.

²⁶ Markey, *In Case of Oppression. The Life and Times of the Labor Council of NSW*.

²⁷ "Writing the History of the Labor Council of NSW," *Australian Society for the Study of Labour History* 2, no. 5 (1996).

²⁸ Allan Sargent, *100 Years of Struggle* (Geelong: Geelong Trades Hall, 2009).

strength of the entire working class and take control of production and distribution to introduce a socialist society.²⁹

Support for the IWW was strong, but even stronger was the idea of the 'One Big Union'. The powerful Australian Workers Union had political disagreement with the objectives of the IWW and believed their organisation was a contender to become the one big union.³⁰ In 1922 the IWW was virtually defeated when it was refused registration by the Commonwealth Arbitration Court. IWW supporters and the Left in general were clear that a federal organisation incorporating all unions was necessary and in 1927 at a federal conference of unions in Melbourne the ACTU was formed. Turner argues that the ACTU succeeded where other attempts had failed because it built onto the existing structures of state and regional peak councils.³¹

At the time the ACTU was formed unions had suffered a number of significant industrial defeats and it wasn't able to fully find its strength until the Second World War. Since then it has been instrumental in the economic, political and social life of Australia. Despite this, there are only two substantial histories of the organisation and both were published in the early 1980s. The official, commissioned, *History of the ACTU* by Jim Hagen was published in 1981. It is a dry account that relies heavily on the minutes of Congress and covers the period from 1927 to 1980.³² A second history by Clifford Donn was published in 1983 and includes an economic and political analysis of the ACTU. It is a rarely quoted text that was published in the USA.³³ There are many articles about the ACTU in journals but they focus on particular policies or the outcomes experienced from policies. Hagan's history is still officially

²⁹ Verity Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism : The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Turner, *In Union Is Strength : A History of Trade Unions in Australia, 1788-1983*.

³⁰ John Merritt, *The Making of the A.W.U.* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986); A. G. Spence, *History of the AWU*, vol. 3rd (Melbourne: MUP, 2013).

³¹ Turner, *In Union Is Strength : A History of Trade Unions in Australia, 1788-1983*.

³² Jim Hagen, *The History of the ACTU* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1981).

³³ Clifford B. Donn, *The Australian Council of Trade Unions - History and Economic Policy* (Lanham London: University Press of America, 1983).

recognised. In 2003 the ACTU celebrated their 75th Anniversary and published a short, skeletal history as a text pamphlet and an on-line web page that cites the Hagan history as its source.³⁴

In an article that Hagan wrote subsequent to his history he argued that the development of the ACTU was the outcome of a struggle between the communists, who saw trade unionism as a means to build a socialist revolutionary movement, and the labourists, who wanted a better and more just share of the capitalist economy for unionists.³⁵ The same tensions were emphasized by the communist writer Lance Sharkey but he viewed the control of the labourists in the ACTU as a brake that weakened the potential strength and militancy of the working class.³⁶ In Sharkey's *Trade Unions in Australia* the structure of the union movement is examined showing that trades and labour councils are defined by locality rather than industry and that there is one in each state and major regional centres. The provincial councils derive their status from their association with the state based councils that are, in turn, affiliated to the ACTU.³⁷

4.3 Ballarat Literature

Ballarat's rich history is matched by a rich historiography. The gold rush and the Eureka Stockade are of such significance to the building of the Australian nation that they are featured in most general histories. Works devoted to the Eureka Stockade abound and have been published regularly since 1855 when Raffaello Carboni

³⁴ ACTU, "ACTU 75th Anniversary Commemorative History," (Melbourne: ACTU, 2003).

³⁵ Jim Hagan, "The Australian Council of Trade Unions, 1927 - 80," in *Common Cause*, ed. Eric Fry (Wellington, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986).

³⁶ Lance Sharkey, *The Trade Unions: Communist Theory and Practice of Trade Unionism* (Sydney: Communist Party of Australia, 1961).

³⁷ Ross Martin, *Trade Unions. Australia 1850-1974* (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin Books in association with University of Queensland Press, 1975).

published his account, *The Eureka Stockade* till the comparatively recent publication of *Eureka: Australia's Greatest Story*.³⁸

There are a number of general histories about the development of the City of Ballarat and the surrounding districts. The first of these is an eyewitness history by William Bramwell Withers who lived in the area from the early days of pastoral occupation. Withers's history was first published in 1871, and a revised edition was printed in 1887. The content is based on his own observations but regularly supplemented with a host of accounts from a variety of sources. This history is a boon to all historians who have followed, for not only does Withers provide meticulous detail of most events of the period, he also provides us with the views of a man of the time.³⁹ Withers covers the events around the Eureka Stockade in detail and he covers the 1873 strike by gold miners at Clunes, but he gives no other information about workers organising. The level of detail he provides regarding events in Ballarat is impressive, yet he fails to mention the organisation of workers that was taking place all around him.

A second eyewitness account, that also does not mention working class organisation, was published by the Ballarat Historical Society in 1974 as *The Spielvogel Papers* by Nathan Spielvogel. They were originally prepared to be read on the radio in 1936 and 1937. Like Withers, Spielvogel bases much of his work on his own recollections, makes his own opinion clear and uses external sources to add depth and detail.⁴⁰ Like Withers he neglects to provide information about the trade unions.

A magnificent supplement to these two eyewitness accounts is Weston Bate's, *Lucky City*, published in 1978. Covering the period from pastoral settlement to the end of the nineteenth century it offers new information and brings a more contemporary insight. In 1993 Bate published a sequel, *Life After Gold*, covering the events of the twentieth

³⁸ Raffaello Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade* (Melbourne: Carboni, 1855); David and Ure Headon, John, ed. *Eureka; Australia's Greatest Story* (Federation Press, 2015).

³⁹ William Bramwell Withers, *From the First Pastoral Settlement to the Present Time History of Ballarat: From the First Pastoral Settlement to the Present Time*, 2nd ed., vol. Facsimile edition (Carlton: Queensberry Hill Press, 1980; repr., 2nd Edition).

⁴⁰ Nathan Spielvogel, *Spielvogel Papers* (Ballarat: Ballarat Historical Society, 1974).

century. Bate weaves the information about the lives and activities of workers and their organisations throughout both volumes so we are not only informed about their existence, but also about the ways they influenced the development of Ballarat. In doing this Bate also provides a guide for further research.

4.4 Legacy of Eureka

Ballarat is distinguished from other goldfields in the national memory of Australia because it was the home of the Eureka Stockade. The rebellion involved an armed battle between diggers and the Colonial forces that resulted in the loss of at least 22 lives. The battle itself was short but its results were long lasting. When the demands of the diggers were granted precedents were set for political representation and mining regulations in Victoria. While this thesis will not go into the detail of the events at the Eureka Stockade it will explore the impact that its legacy has had on the development and ongoing operations of the BTLC. To understand the events of the Stockade I read; witness accounts of participants,⁴¹ ; of the observer⁴² , and a range of later accounts with different viewpoints and emphases.⁴³

⁴¹ Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade*; Samuel Douglas Smyth Huyghue, "Ballarat Riots," in *Massacre at Eureka, the Untold Story* (Kew: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1992).

⁴² Withers, *History of Ballarat: From the First Pastoral Settlement to the Present Time*, Facsimile edition.

⁴³ Anne Beggs Sunter, "Eureka and the Transformation of the Mining Industry in Mid-Nineteenth Century Australia," (Brisbane: Paper to 8th National Labour History Conference, 2003); Gregory Blake, *Eureka Stockade, a Ferocious and Bloody Battle* (Newport, NSW: Big Sky Publishing Pty Ltd, 2012); Peter FitzSimons, *Eureka: The Unfinished Revolution* (Sydney: Random House, 2012); Len Fox, *The Eureka Flag* (Marrickville: Len Fox, 1992); Headon, *Eureka: Australia's Greatest Story*; John Malony, *Eureka*, 3rd ed. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001); Bob O'Brien, *Massacre at Eureka, the Untold Story* (Kew: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1992); Claire Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka* (The Text Publishing Company, 2014).

The legend of Eureka has been accorded different attributes and evoked by numbers of variant causes over time. Malony argues that Eureka contained all the ingredients necessary for a permanent and powerful legend to be maintained. He says:

‘Legends, once they have flown from the nests of their creation, take on their own wings. They are capable of more powerful interpretation than events which nurtured them..... On those rare occasions, when, in their origins, they blend strands of a striving for a new order and a rejection of the old, flamboyance of gesture and word, a sacrifice which entails defeat and an attempt at their suppression, they are ensured some degree of permanence. If, to all these elements, a symbol can be added, especially if it is one that encapsulates their passion, then the legends know no bounds.’⁴⁴

In exploring the different interpretations of the legend Anne Beggs Sunter also notes the centrality of the Southern Cross Flag.

‘Eureka's greatest contribution to our public culture is its flag, which has become a truly national and truly popular symbol, in spite of not being officially sanctioned as a national flag. It is a flag of protest, but also a flag of aspiration, of bringing together migrants from many lands under the constellation of the Southern Cross.’⁴⁵

The history of the flag itself has added an independent mythology to its symbolism. From the start it was seen as a powerful image by both sides of the Stockade; diggers swore allegiance to the flag and each other under its folds, and the police and soldiers

⁴⁴ Malony, *Eureka*, 201.

⁴⁵ Anne Beggs Sunter, "Birth of a Nation? Constructing and De-Constructing the Eureka Legend" (PhD, University of Melbourne, 2002), 6.

treated it as a prize that they tore from its pole and abused.⁴⁶ It was later in the possession one of the police families and acquired by the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery in 1895 but it didn't see the light of day for almost another eighty years. It was rediscovered and prepared for display in 1973. On the 120th Anniversary of the Eureka Stockade the Southern Cross Flag was unveiled for the second time by the Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam. The symbolism of this occasion indicates the depth to which this legend had been adopted by Australia. In 2013 it was lent to the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka.⁴⁷

A large part the heritage industry in Ballarat is based on the legacy of the gold era and the Eureka Stockade. As McIntyre and Clark argue;

'History has become a major component of the tourist industry; with centres such as Longreach's Stockmen's Hall of Fame and theme parks such as Ballarat's Sovereign Hill increasingly important to their towns' fortunes.'⁴⁸

4.5 Effects of Eureka on Unions

In writing about the ACTU, Clifford Donn reflects views that are commonly held within the trade union movement when he says; 'While the Eureka Miners were not engaged in what might be called a trade union rebellion, the issues were of the type which have come to concern trade unions.'⁴⁹ It was also believed that the diggings attracted people with particular qualities that lent themselves to organizing and standing up for their rights. Murphy argues that the 'best mechanics' flocked to Victoria

⁴⁶ Withers, *History of Ballarat: From the First Pastoral Settlement to the Present Time*, Facsimile edition.

⁴⁷ Beggs Sunter, "Birth of a Nation? Constructing and De-Constructing the Eureka Legend."; Fox, *The Eureka Flag*; M.A.D.E., "The Eureka Flag," <http://made.org/explore/>.

⁴⁸ Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark, *The History Wars* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 22.

⁴⁹ Donn, *The Australian Council of Trade Unions - History and Economic Policy*.

compared to other Australian colonies because of the gold.⁵⁰ Withers says their qualities made them 'valuable as freemen, but dangerous as slaves.'⁵¹ Molony notes the early changes in the Australian workforce and the role that the Eureka flag played in the early organization of unions.

'They became shearers rather than shepherds and took on a new form of mateship called trade unionism. At Barcaldine in 1891 the shearers flew the Southern Cross as a symbol of their unity with the men of Eureka. The descendants of the Stockaders who had remained in the old goldfields became bearers of a new legend. They formed an urban workforce built homes, reared children, constructed Mechanics Institutes and made cities like Ballarat, Bendigo, and Ararat, and all those other towns that survived the gold. Above all they carried in their conscience the legend of Eureka forged by their forebears, and, in the struggles of the 1890s which gave birth to the Labor Party, the two legends of the pastoral and the golden past met and blended.'⁵²

In Ballarat the legacy was present in early trade union activities. In 1858 in Ballarat's first Eight Hour celebration the miners were invited to speak and were toasted. In 1873 when miners at Clunes physically prevented the mine owners from bringing in Chinese workers to break their strike, their action was compared to Eureka.⁵³ In 1891 when the new BTLC hosted the Intercolonial Trades and Labour Congress the President evoked the memory of Eureka in his opening address.

'A city of historic fame, gained by those democratic pioneers at the Eureka Stockade who stood for their rights and privileges, which men can demand in no better form than organising and combining for the advancement and redress of their various grievances. I would urge you to remember that we have met to

⁵⁰ Murphy, "Part 2, Victoria," 117.

⁵¹ Withers, *History of Ballarat: From the First Pastoral Settlement to the Present Time*, Facsimile edition, 73.

⁵² Malony, *Eureka*, 202.

⁵³ Withers, *History of Ballarat: From the First Pastoral Settlement to the Present Time*, Facsimile edition, 215.

try and do some good, and if you want to see a good result from your labours, consider well the question of federation.'⁵⁴

Since that time Eureka has been a significant presence and inspiration to the BTLC

4.6 Early Union organising in Ballarat.

Information about the early unions in Ballarat is sketchy. Bate provides an overview, showing that in the mid-fifties the goldfields doubled their output which enabled urban foundations to be laid in Ballarat.⁵⁵ Trade Societies and Unions were present at first Eight Hour Day Parade in 1858.⁵⁶ A short unpublished history in the Trades Hall archive asserts that there was a call to raise funds to build a Trades Hall in 1862.⁵⁷ In 1866 a miner's union in Ballarat was formed but was short-lived. Subsequently in the early seventies local miner's unions were formed and in June 1874 they joined together in the Amalgamated Miners' Association (AMA).⁵⁸ Closely linked to the building of the AMA was the birth of the Shearer's Union and subsequently the Australian Workers Union. W. G. Spence was the Secretary of the Miner's Union and

⁵⁴ President Ballarat Trades Hall, "Intercolonial Trades and Labour Congress, Session at Ballarat, Second Day," *Argus*, Friday 24th April 1891.

⁵⁵ Bate, *Lucky City, the First Generation at Ballarat 1851-1901*, 77.

⁵⁶ Ballarat Star, "The Eight Hours Movement," *Ballarat Star*, 8 April 1858.

⁵⁷ David Miller, "The Ballarat Trades Hall," (Unpublished manuscript, 1976); Ballarat Star, "The Eight Hours Movement."

⁵⁸ Beggs Sunter, "Eureka and the Transformation of the Mining Industry in Mid-Nineteenth Century Australia."; Charles Fahey, "Labour and Trade Unionism in Victorian Goldmining, Bendigo 1861-1915," in *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia*, ed. Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook, and Andrew Reeves (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Andrew Reeves, "Trade Unionism and the Australian Mining Industry" the Influence of Central Victorian Goldminers, 1870 - 1920," in *Deeper Leads New Approaches to Victorian Goldfields History*, ed. Keir Reeves and David Nichols (Ballarat: Ballarat Heritage Services, 2007).

in 1886 he became Secretary of the Shearer's Union when it formed. In 1894 the union became the Australian Workers Union (AWU).⁵⁹

Towards the end of the nineteenth century heavy industry developed to service the mining industry. By the end of the century, as gold became less significant to the economy, this industry had become independent. The western districts were opening up and becoming important primary producers and Ballarat became a major regional centre. The railway was central to the transportation needs and it became a major employer. A successful engine building plant grew and supplied trains to the whole of Victoria. Other notable industries were the Lingerie factory of Lucas, the (Phoenix) Foundry and Sunshine Harvester . It was the workers in these major industries, and the smaller ones that serviced them, who became members and influences in the BTLC.⁶⁰

More is known about the development of the Trades Hall than about its ongoing activities. In 1880 a monument to celebrate the Eight Hour Day was erected with funds raised by working people. Inspired by this a number of trade societies created the Eight Hour Committee with the objective of raising funds to build a Trades Hall. By 1887 the foundation stone was laid in Camp Street and the building opened in 1888.⁶¹ Some of the history of the BTLC emerges in Colin Cleary's book, *Ballarat Labor, from Miner Hesitancy to Golden Age* but is sharply focussed on the

⁵⁹ Fahey, "Labour and Trade Unionism in Victorian Goldmining, Bendigo 1861-1915."; Merritt, *The Making of the A.W.U.*; Reeves, "Trade Unionism and the Australian Mining Industry" the Influence of Central Victorian Goldminers, 1870 - 1920."; Spence, *History of the AWU*, 3rd.

⁶⁰ Bate, *Lucky City, the First Generation at Ballarat 1851-1901; Life after Gold: Twentieth Century Ballarat* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993); Colin Cleary, *Ballarat Labor - from Miner Hesitancy to Golden Age* (Epsom, Victoria: Colin Cleary, 1999).

⁶¹ Bate, *Lucky City, the First Generation at Ballarat 1851-1901*; Anne Beggs Sunter, *Camp Street, Ballarat: From Eureka to Federation: A Guide to Its History and Buildings* (Ballarat: Ballarat Fine Art Gallery Association, 2001); Cleary, *Ballarat Labor - from Miner Hesitancy to Golden Age*.

development of the ALP.⁶² There are two brief histories of the BTLC which are not well sourced but provide direction to further research.⁶³

5 Contribution to the literature provided by the project

The history of BTLC would contribute to Australian history on several levels.

- On the local level it would fill a gap that exists in the historical memory and commentary of a city that has purposefully harvested its history to spearhead its contemporary existence.
- It will add to labour history generally, but specifically to the paucity of information about union peak councils.
- It will add to the often-neglected labour histories of regional places, people and movements.
- On a national level it would help fill out the 'little sister' in the labour history duo of politics and working life,
- Its findings will add to the knowledge of the legacy of the Eureka Stockade and contribute to the debate that surrounds that legacy.
- By highlighting the activities of working unionists this history will help redress an imbalance in labour history and more so, in history generally, that has focussed on the lives of the famous and prominent.

⁶² *Ballarat Labor - from Miner Hesitancy to Golden Age.*

⁶³ Miller, "The Ballarat Trades Hall."; A.C. Williams, "Trade Unions in Ballarat," *Ballarat Historian* 1, no. 6 (1982).

6 Justification of the significance of the research and how it will contribute to knowledge

Ballarat is a city that values its historical legacy highly. It is a major international and domestic tourist destination, attracting nearly two million visitors each year who 'boost the economy by over \$409 million per annum and support more than 2,000 jobs.'⁶⁴ It is important that a section of that history, as large and significant as the workers who built and made that history a reality, is represented. A thesis and a publication on the history of the BTLC will address this gap.

There is much written and promoted in other media about the legacy of Eureka, however most of it focuses on the impact on national politics, and identity. This history will show the impact of that legacy on the people who reside and work in its heartland Eureka is a significant part of the identity of the BTLC. The blue banner of the Southern Cross flutters from the Trades Hall flagpole, a large handmade duplicate is displayed in the Hall, and the Southern Cross is featured on the logo and letterhead. In addressing the research question regarding the strength of the legacy of Eureka this study will deepen that knowledge and understanding of the relationship between the rebels of Eureka and the members of the BTLC.

The main hall in the Trades Hall building was originally a flamboyant hall with a 'lantern' ceiling and mezzanine. These required repair in the 1960s and a false ceiling has been put in place, hiding the original. The BTLC are hoping to acquire UN heritage listing for this hall and to seek funding for its restoration. The hall is already used for many community and tourist events, such as the Ballarat Photo Biennial and supplementary activities to the Art Gallery of Ballarat's Archibald Prize exhibition held in 2015. An authoritative academic history and a popular publication would help realise this objective.

Trade union history and the activities of the working class are often the poor relation of mainstream history. A contribution as significant as the history of the BTLC adds visibility to the lives of workers and the wealth of innovation, talent and participation

⁶⁴ City of Ballarat, "Budget 2015/2016, Budget Introduction," (Ballarat2015), 9.

in political, economic and civic life that are made by worker's organisation. The activities of trade union peak councils are especially overlooked and have played vital roles in all aspects of life. The need to understand more about the structure, character and operations of peak councils is crying out for attention. These councils make substantial and consequential contributions to society and this study will give some visibility to one of them.

7 Research approach and methods to be used

In meeting the objectives of this thesis; to provide a written history of the BTLC, to draw attention to contributions made by the BTLC to the history of Ballarat and, to examine how the legacy of Eureka has affected the traditions and work of the BTLC, I am drawing inspiration from the methodology used by E.P.Thompson *The Making of the English Working Class*, which falls within the broader spectrum of a Marxist interpretation of history. Thompson published this work amid a resurgence and re-examination of Marxist history taking place in mid-twentieth century Europe in reaction to the Soviet orthodoxy that exaggerated a crude materialism and economic determinism and ignored the potential of Marxist analysis to have application in illuminating social and cultural history.⁶⁵

Marx posited early in his research that consciousness is not merely the product of the human mind, but is related to, 'the economic structure of society', on which a superstructure develops and it is this which corresponds with social consciousness. As Crotty paraphrases Marx: 'Those who own the means of production in any society have the power to effect the kind of consciousness that obtains in that society.'⁶⁶ An argument will be mounted in the thesis that this social consciousness underlies the

⁶⁵ Michael Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research*, (Allen & Unwin, 1998). Kindle; Ann Curthoys, *Is History Fiction?* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006); Helmut Fleischer, *Marxism and History*, trans. Eric Mosbacher, Harper Torchbooks (New York: Harper and Row, 1973); John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History : Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*.

⁶⁶ Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research*. loc 1313 Of 5150.

making of history. If viewed in this light it is understandable that the dominant historical stories of Ballarat omit the contributions of worker organisations.

The other theoretical underpinning of this thesis involves the literature which explores the way that memory can be used as an historical source. It contrasted individual memory with social memory and identified a range of collective memories which can be seen as identifying features for class, nations and organisations. 'All societies have a collective memory, a storehouse of experience which is drawn on for a sense of identity and a sense of direction.'⁶⁷

The role of memory in Australian history was raised when Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton published the edited book, *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*. The reliability of memory and the relationship between memory and historical facts has been also been explored and adds to the methodology chosen for this thesis.⁶⁸

7.1 Methodology

While Thompson sought to 'rescue' those who formed the English working class, 'from the enormous condescension of posterity', I seek to write the members of the unions affiliated with the BTLC into history.

The research period will be from 1854 to 1954. The design of the research incorporates a mixed methodology of choosing objects as guides for further investigation, followed by document analysis to provide qualitative data to produce detailed accounts of related events.

⁶⁷ Tosh, *The Pursuit of History : Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*, 2.

⁶⁸ James Wickham Fentress, Chris, *Social Memory, New Perspectives on the Past* (Oxford UK, Cambridge US: Balckwell, 1992); Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992); Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory* (Oxford, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

7.2 Method

The methods are as follows:

1. to choose physical objects which embody major stories from the collective memory of the BTLC;
2. to use the selected objects as guides to identify areas, periods and topics for further research and data collection;
3. to select the most relevant primary sources to inform further study from the abundant archival sources of the BTLC as well as from newspaper articles and other existing written material and imagery;
4. to evaluate the data and prepare it to form the basis for the writing of the thesis.

8 Justification of the research approach and methods

This history will redress the notion of the BTLC that, 'little is known of our story and contribution'⁶⁹ with an understanding that the neglect of these stories arises from a philosophical outlook in which popular memory reflects the consciousness of those who rule. In seeking to uncover the stories of the BTLC and give them back to working people in Ballarat the work will also make these stories available for inclusion in the popular history of Ballarat.

Peter Love eloquently addresses this issue when writing about the significance of the contribution of E.P. Thompson's work for activist historians in Melbourne, he said,

'...it asserted the role of human agency in historical processes, proclaiming that the common people might presume to make their own history and have a hand in shaping the way they experienced class relationships.' Subsequent works, 'gave those in the labour movement who cared to listen a deeper sense of historical identity that was both reassuring and challenging.... By viewing their past in a distant mirror, they saw themselves more clearly and sharpened

⁶⁹Edgington, "Email to Lynn Beaton." *ibid.*

the focus for others to see a living, vibrant story of working lives and common

Talking about the importance of collective memory John Tosh says: 'It is through these collective – and indeed imaginative – memories that we structure our world and understand our past.'⁷¹ It is, then, especially important to expose and highlight the memories that are lacking from the dominant collective memory, for as Hamilton points out.

'There have been increases in popular representations of history and these have the potential to change popular views and to shape social memory, provide a mirror for it; or at least provide a way in which people can decide it diverges from their memory of the experience – that they do not relate to the representation and its inclusive aims.'⁷²

In *Social Memory* there is a discussion about class memory and its complexity because while it involves lived experiences it is, at the same time, bombarded with information that has a different viewpoint, that is often in contradiction with their lived experience.⁷³

8.1 Methodology

8.1.1 Choosing time span

The request from the BTLC for a written history had no boundaries and it has been necessary to frame it. This has been done in consultation with the BLTC.

⁷⁰ Peter Love, "History of the Melbourne Branch," (2012), <http://labourhistorymelbourne.org/melbourne-labour-history-a-collective-biography-of-its-first-generation/>.

⁷¹ Tosh, *The Pursuit of History : Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*.

⁷² Darian Smith and Hamilton, *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, 24.

⁷³ Fentress, *Social Memory, New Perspectives on the Past*.

There is an established and continuous presence of trade union organisation in Ballarat at least since 1858. Knowledge dating from this time will illuminate an understanding of the inspiration and motivations that led to the formation of the BTLC. In all histories of Ballarat the Eureka Stockade looms large and in Ballarat 'Eureka is everywhere'.⁷⁴ The BTLC are no exception, the Southern Cross flag flies over Trades Hall and the emblem is part of their letterhead, they have been instrumental in organising anniversary celebrations of the Stockade. In fact they were involved in an extravagant re-enactment to mark the first Centenary. Beginning from the need to specify a period that was possible to cover with some depth, these factors have informed the choice of 1854 – 1954.

8.1.2 Choosing objects

If history is, 'an unending dialogue between the present and the past'⁷⁵ my chosen methodology will enter into a discussion already being held. The objects I will choose as my guide are already shown to and discussed with visitors to the Trades Hall. This is an organic approach; it is using the indigenous, intuitive sense of the history held by the current occupants and caretakers of the Hall.

These objects are:

1. The Trades Hall building in Camp Street that was opened in 1888.
2. The minutes of the 1891 Intercolonial Unions Conference which is believed to hold a clue to an unrecognised significance of Ballarat in the formation of the Australian Labour Party
3. The Trades Hall that was unfinished when the building was opened and completed in the 1920s.
4. The Southern Cross Flag which is currently displayed in the hall in a glass case. It was hand made in the 1940s for the BTLC at the time when the actual Southern Cross banner was lying unnoticed in a drawer in the Ballarat Art Gallery.

⁷⁴ Beggs Sunter, "Birth of a Nation? Constructing and De-Constructing the Eureka Legend."

⁷⁵ E. H. Carr, *What Is History?* (London: Penguin Books, 1974), 30.

5. A system of bells that were installed in the Trades Hall to announce the arrival of the rival faction during the battle between the right and the left of the ALP and led to the split in 1955.

8.2 Using Objects as guides

The selection of objects as a starting point for this thesis is chosen with respect for the traditions and methods used by the First Australians in recording their history. It is also with respect for and consistent with the methods of popular history telling in Ballarat that is largely based on objects both from the past and recreated to resemble the past. The use of objects is particularly appropriate for an institution of the working class where the written word was not necessarily available for many decades to many of the members.

Using objects as guides is not without precedent although is mostly seen as the territory of museums.⁷⁶ Perhaps the most ambitious example is, 'A History of the World in 100 Objects', told from the objects held in the British Museum. In the introduction to this work, 'Signals from the Past', MacGregor says the history is told by, 'deciphering the messages which objects communicate across time – messages about peoples lives.' The objects 'tell of the world for which they were made, as well as of the later periods which reshaped or relocated them, sometimes having meanings far beyond the intention of their original makers.'⁷⁷

Another use of objects as guides is the two volumes, 'Radical Melbourne' which uses buildings and spaces to determine the moments of history to be explored.⁷⁸ In the introduction of the first volume, the authors say,

⁷⁶ Chris Healy, "Histories and Collecting: Museums, Objects and Memories," in *Memory and History*, ed. Kate Hamilton Darian-Smith, Paula (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁷⁷ Neil MacGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects* (London: The British Museum, Allen Lane, 2010), xvi-xvii.

⁷⁸ Jeff Sparrow and Jill Sparrow, *Radical Melbourne* (The Vulgar Press, 2001; repr., 2002); *Radical Melbourne 2, the Enemy Within* (Melbourne: The Vulgar Press, 2004).

'This book presents a guide through the first hundred years of political radicalism in Melbourne, focusing on the structures, streets and public places that remain today. It concentrates on identifying the physical traces of radical Melbourne, in the hope that geographical familiarity will provide a bridge between the struggles of the past and people of the present.'⁷⁹

This method was also used by Beggs Sunter to bring life and meaning to Camp Street by describing the buildings, their backgrounds and their uses⁸⁰.

8.3 Choosing sources and Examination of document

There are two major features to be considered in document analysis. The first is how the historian chooses which documents will need examination, and that has been described above; the second involves the constrictions that the existent documents themselves create. These are most often, what documents have managed to survive through the decades and what condition those survivors are in.⁸¹

The BTLC have been prudent with the saving of their archival material and there are nearly complete records of minutes and correspondence for the period covered. The ANU's Noel Butlin collection consists of an extensive set of minutes of the BTLC from 1883 to 1951; these are supplemented by committee minutes, reports, correspondence, propaganda, and education and information material. The Melbourne University archival collection contains correspondence from the Eight Hours Committee as it raised funds to build the Trades Hall, correspondence from the Trades Hall to 1914, financial records 1895 – 1940, miscellaneous materials 1886 – 1942. Melbourne University also holds the collection of A.C Williams who was a long-standing participant in the activities of the Trades Hall. This collection contains files regarding the BTLC 1880 to 1970, also reports and information from the Victorian Provincial Trades Hall Councils Association 1950 – 1970 and Communist Party

⁷⁹ *Radical Melbourne*.

⁸⁰ Beggs Sunter, *Camp Street, Ballarat: From Eureka to Federation: A Guide to Its History and Buildings*.

⁸¹ Carr, *What Is History*; Curthoys, *Is History Fiction*; Le Goff, *History and Memory*.

pamphlets and journals 1880 – 1900, 1930 – 1970. The State Library include miscellaneous correspondence, photographs, press clippings till 1956 and the records and personal papers of Neil Black 1838 – 1938.

9 Timetable for completion of the project

Project Stage	Anticipated timing
Confirmation of candidature	March – April 2016
Research/data collection	
Reference to secondary sources	
Archival and newspaper search	March 2016 – August 2017
Australian History Conference 2016	
Prepare and deliver paper	May 2016 – July 2016
Analysis of data	March 2017 - July 2017
Labour History conference 2017	
Prepare and Deliver paper	July – September 2017
Thesis	
Writing and editing	March 2017 – February 2018
Submission	March 2018

10 One page proposed project budget and anticipated funding source

Project Budget

Item: AHA Conference, Ballarat 4 – 8 July 2016

Costing: Registration	\$180
Accommodation:	\$750
Sub Total	\$930

Item: Conference Attendance at 15th Biennial Labour History Conference, Emmanuel College, Brisbane, 23 – 25 September 2017

Costing: Registration and Conference Dinner -	\$300
Travel Expense Melbourne – Brisbane	\$532
Accommodation	\$800
Sub Total	\$1632
Total	\$2562

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