The Tottenham Rebels: Radical Labour Politics in a Small Mining Town during the Great War

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The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

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Abstract

This thesis looks at an Australia after the defeated strikes of the 1890s but before the defeated great strike of 1917, where contrary to the standard view workers had not contented themselves with parliamentary politics and reform. The setting is the raw mining and agricultural centre of Tottenham in western New South Wales. It focusses on the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), seeking to explain the appeal of the movement in the area, and what drove some of its members to take up arms against the police—resulting in the deaths of a police officer and two members of the Tottenham IWW Local. The thesis offers for the first time a deep analysis of the IWW in an Australian rural setting, at the same time arguing that a previous focus on urban Australia, especially Sydney, has been unwarranted and misleading.

The thesis documents the lives and struggles of a ‘rebel family’ of working class agitators, whose roots were in Tottenham but who carried their revolutionary flag across Australasia and North America. It examines how the state and employers responded to the activities of the IWW in Tottenham, and to what extent the IWW used sabotage as a tactic in their class struggle.

The hastily carried out executions of two ‘Wobblies’ provoked a storm of debate, not least surrounding the unprecedented execution of a crown witness. The response to the murder and the executions accentuated the split within the labour movement; the actions of the Tottenham IWW infiltrated the national debate over conscription and the crackdown on the IWW throughout the country. The events and individuals at Tottenham influenced the fate of the IWW in Australia and beyond. Reflecting on these events, together with a consideration of non-urban work and culture, makes the Australian ‘Wobbly’ more explicable.
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Abbreviations

AFL: American Federation of Labor
AMA: Amalgamated Miners’ Association
AWU: Australian Workers’ Union
DA: Direct Action
BHP: Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited
CIB: Criminal Investigation Branch
CPA: Communist Party of Australia
CSA: Cornish, Scottish and Australian mine
FMEA: Federated Mine Employees’ Association
GCC: German Concentration Camp, Liverpool
IWW: Industrial Workers of the World
NAA: National Archives of Australia
NSW: New South Wales
NSWSR: New South Wales State Records
NSWBDM: New South Wales Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages
OBU: One Big Union
PFA: Pastoral Finance Association
PLL: Political Labour League
SMH: The Sydney Morning Herald
THS: Tottenham Historical Society
ULU: United Laborers’ Union
WFA: Western Federation of Miners
WPA: War Precautions Act

1 acre = 0.405 hectares
1 mile = 1.61 kilometres
1 foot = 30.48 centimetres
1 yard = 0.9144 metres

Currency: In Australia until the 1960s, a shilling (s) consisted of twelve pence (d); twenty shillings made up one pound (£). A sum such as 2s 6d was often written as 2/6.
Glossary

**Chicago:** The anti-political, direct actionist strand of the IWW was based in the U.S. city of Chicago, and was often referred to simply by the city’s name.

**Detroit:** Following the split within the IWW, Daniel De Leon’s followers headquarteried themselves in Detroit. As with Chicago, this strand of the IWW was given their home city’s name.

**Local:** An IWW branch. The term Local was used to distinguish the Chicago strand of the IWW from the Detroit IWW’s ‘Clubs’. The Local in Tottenham was referred to as Local no. 9. The Sydney Local was Local no. 2.

**Navvy:** A railway construction worker.

**Sab Cat:** A black cat symbol commonly used by the IWW to signify sabotage.

**Wobbly:** A member of the IWW. The origin of this term is disputed.

**Wooden Shoe:** As with the sab cat, the wooden shoe was a symbol of sabotage.
Introduction and Overview of Literature

On the 26th of September 1916, as the First World War raged and Prime Minister William Morris ‘Billy’ Hughes urged Australia to vote for compulsory overseas service, a young man named George Duncan was assassinated. Mounted Constable Duncan, the sole police officer in the western New South Wales (NSW) town of Tottenham, had been felled by a volley of rifle fire. Within three months Frank Franz, Herbert Kennedy and Roland Kennedy, three local members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, commonly known as the Wobblies) had been tried for the shooting and two of them had been executed by hanging.

Tottenham in 1916 was a town whose economy was dominated by grazing of livestock, government-backed wheat production, the copper mining industry and railway construction. There had been a number of strikes in the town and its surrounding district, and other examples of industrial conflict. The Wobblies had been building quite a presence since the forming of an IWW ‘Local’ (or branch) by young men in 1914. With their impassioned speeches in opposition to the political process, in favour of ‘One Big Union’ of the working class and sabotage as a means to achieve it, the Wobblies were no strangers to controversy. To achieve their goals they advocated ‘direct action’, as opposed to reform through parliamentary politics.

For all their bellicose rhetoric and anarchic behaviour, the Wobblies in Australia were more or less non-violent. They spat in the face of authority, but did not shoot it. The assassination of Duncan was a dramatic and unusual event not just in a small town’s

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history, but in the history of twentieth century Australia—Tottenham in 1916 was one of the few instances in which political violence took a fatal turn. The murder, however, did not occur in a vacuum. It sprang from a context that combined so many themes of national importance that it signifies a substantial gap in our understanding of Australian history.

While the IWW is at the heart of this thesis, it is not a thesis solely concerned with a political or industrial movement. As much as anything, it is an expression of local or regional history best conveyed as narrative history rather than any other methodological approach. Its parameters are not confined to a particular research question, for it is a narrative that ranges in several directions and from which any number of questions and answers can be drawn. Nonetheless chapters one and two prepare the way for two related questions that alongside Duncan’s killing—which we shall turn to shortly—form the spine of this thesis, namely: what attracted bush workers in Australia, as exemplified by those at Tottenham, to the militant platform of the IWW? And, ultimately, what was the significance of the IWW in rural Australia?

For both questions Tottenham and its region is a case study.

While Tottenham is used as a case study for the IWW, conversely, the IWW becomes a way of examining life in a small town in early twentieth century Australia. It acts as a key to unlock some of the tensions and passions brewing that might otherwise be forgotten.

These questions offer insights into a ‘lost chapter’ of Australian labour history. Those iconic shearers and miners, whose predecessors had manned the barricades at Eureka
and Barcaldine, had not contented themselves with Labor’s parliamentary program. The defeat of the great strikes of the 1890s and the failure of William Lane’s utopia was not the grave of ambitious rebelliousness, still less the coronation of reformist politics and compromise that it has been made out to be.¹ In Australia’s rural heartland many embraced the outlook of the IWW. More than a fringe group, the Wobblies had inserted themselves into Tottenham’s centre stage, rendering the community ‘uncontrollable’ according to Thomas Brown, the local Member of Parliament.² Australia in the 1910s was the scene of industrial turmoil in its rural interior. Struggles over labour issues, nowhere more so than in relation to shearers and miners, in the lead up to federation have received canonical status in the annals of Australian labour history. Attention to this area, however, largely disappears after federation. This is curious as by 1916 rural labour agitation had increased if anything, as attested by the extraordinary growth of the IWW.

The first chapter of this thesis provides a broad reflection of Australia’s politics, society and economy between 1890 and 1916. The second chapter looks at Tottenham and its district in the same manner, offering an economic, social and political overview. These two chapters form a necessary contextual background to the aforementioned lines of investigation. The first draws on standard histories of the period and key economic tomes, alongside more specialised scholarly works. The second does not have a great deal of published secondary literature to draw on. It does, however, use work by the Tottenham Historical Society and contemporary newspaper accounts.

¹ In, for instance, Vance Palmer, *The Legend of the Nineties* (Melbourne: Currey O'Neil Ross, 1954).

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Chapter three provides an introduction to the IWW. It explains the conditions that gave rise to the IWW, its worldview, and its emergence in Australia. As does the thesis as a whole, it draws on pre-existing scholarship on the Wobblies in Australia, of which Verity Burgmann’s *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia*³ and Frank Cain’s *The Wobblies At War: A History of the IWW and the Great War in Australia*⁴ are perhaps the two most important general works, while Ian Turner’s *Sydney’s Burning (An Australian Political Conspiracy)*⁵ provides a thorough insight into a specific chapter of Australian Wobbly history, the treason trials of ‘the IWW Twelve’ relating to a series of arson cases in Sydney.

Turner’s earlier work *Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia, 1900-1921* also offers a valuable analysis of the IWW in Australia, and its context within the wider labour movement.⁶ A broad array of scholarship on the IWW in the United States is also drawn upon.⁷

Chapter four examines a family that in many ways draws together all of the tributaries of this thesis. The chapter shows how the Kennedy family were important actors in the social, political and economic spheres of Tottenham and its region as well as being of importance to the IWW, not just in Australia, but in New Zealand and North America as well.

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⁷ This includes, but is not limited to: Melvyn Dubofsky *We Shall Be All: A History of the IWW*; Patrick Renshaw *The Wobblies: The Story of Syndicalism in the United States*; Robert L. Tyler *Rebels of the Woods: the IWW in the Pacific Northwest*; Joseph R. Conlin (ed.) *At the Point of Production: The Local History of the IWW*; Paul Brissenden *The IWW: A Study of American Syndicalism*
There is another important work by Frank Cain which, although not devoted to the IWW, examines the attempts by the state at monitoring and disrupting them. This is *The Origins of Political Surveillance in Australia.* By 1916, the newly established Counter Espionage Bureau (CEB) was in full swing. Although created initially with a military focus, it became clear that there was little purpose for such a role in Australia, and its chief adversary instead became the IWW. As Cain notes, the CEB was not alone in this task, with the police and the Censor’s Office sharing responsibility for counteracting the Wobbly spectre. The fact that so many organs of the state devoted such resources to attacking the IWW clearly demonstrates just how prominent a feature of the political landscape they were. The Tottenham IWW was of particular interest to the state. For this reason there is a wealth of archival material that the thesis draws upon, much of which has not appeared in secondary literature to date, the rest of which is presented in a new light.

Various arms of the state, the NSW Police prominent among them, were fastidious in their documentation of the IWW. As part of this they collated relevant material into a Tottenham-specific file now held by NSW State Records (NSWSR). The importance of Tottenham particularly, and the rural interior generally, to the story of the two combatants—the IWW in Australia and those holding the reins of power—is clear not only from the Tottenham file but from police and government files more broadly. Further insights into Tottenham and its region in the early twentieth century—its demographics, economy, politics and culture—and how this context nourished rebelliousness is provided through synthesis of archival records, press accounts and material collected by the Tottenham Historical Society. This is presented in the

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9 New South Wales State Records; NSW Police Department, Special Bundles, re IWW, 7/5590-98

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previously discussed second chapter, and chapter five, which examines the emergence of, views of, deeds of, and members of the Wobbly ‘local’ at Tottenham. These themes are developed further in chapter seven. The records of state bodies contribute significantly to chapter eight and chapter eleven, which examine how the IWW’s opponents responded to its activities in the period after the murder of Duncan.

Chapter six examines a crucial, and arguably typical, component of the IWW’s membership—itinerant railway construction workers, or ‘navvies’. They are important to the story of the IWW in Australia, but in particular the arrival of a large number of such workers in the Tottenham district from 1914, and especially in 1916 when the railway reached Tottenham, had profound implications for the Tottenham Wobblies and the Tottenham community.

Perhaps more than any other political grouping in Australian history, the Wobblies defied the top-down method of organisation. Rather, they favoured workers undertaking autonomous and often spontaneous ‘direct action’. Despite this, literature dealing with the Wobblies tends to focus on prominent individuals, especially those based in Sydney—Tom Barker, J.B. King, Tom Glynn—in the same manner that a study of a Labor or Liberal party may focus on its leaders. Such an approach misrepresents the nature of the Wobbly movement. By examining the Wobblies at a local level, this thesis offers a deeper understanding of the movement’s rank and file.

A thorough understanding of the IWW in Australia is impossible without a consideration of wider economic and labour history. Works by Butlin, Boehm, and Dyster and Meredith, among others, provide a bird’s eye view of developments in the
Australian and international economy. J.T Sutcliffe’s seminal *A History of Trade Unionism in Australia* highlights the growth in trade unionism after Federation. Writing in the 1920s, Sutcliffe was unavering in his assertion that trade unionism was stronger in Australia than anywhere else in the world. He identifies within this movement a push for ‘One Big Union’, a platform that was vigorously pursued by the Wobblies. Vere Gordon Childe’s *How Labour Governs* from the same period offers a perspective on the tensions between the labour movement and government. Greg Patmore offers an analysis from a more recent vantage point in *Australian Labour History*. Patmore also identifies the importance of the IWW and the push for ‘One Big Union’ in early twentieth century labour politics. More so than Sutcliffe, Patmore documents the importance of the Labor party, as distinct from the trade union movement, in early twentieth century labour politics. It was as much as anything the perceived failures of a party seen by many in the labour movement as too open to compromise, a comfortable career move rather than an effective platform from which to fight for the interests of the working class, that gave prominence to the Wobblies in the second decade of the twentieth century.

As mentioned the tendency to ignore local content can be a problem in literature dealing with a subject of a national or international nature such as the IWW. On the

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11 Sutcliffe, J.T. *A History of Trade Unionism in Australia* Macmillan: Melbourne, 1967


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other hand, in researching local history it is easy to ignore important influences which have their origins further afield. In focusing on political and industrial events in 1916, it would be impossible to ignore the impact of debates relating to the First World War. There is a vast amount of literature dealing with the First World War, even when the scope is narrowed to literature offering an Australian perspective. Joan Beaumont’s *Australia’s War 1914-1918* notes the IWW as being one of the few groups to openly oppose and campaign against the war, with their calls for workers not to ‘go to hell in order to give piratical, plutocratic parasites a bigger slice of heaven’. The Labor party, and the labour movement more generally, were divided during the war. Whether or not these divisions were an inevitable result of pre-existing tensions between industrial and political factions, exacerbated by Labor’s transition from opposition to government, or factors more directly related to the war, the result was a situation in which the Wobblies were attracting a growing audience in the labour movement. That the IWW gained a place in the Australian psyche is evidenced not only by scholarly studies but also the appearance of the movement in works of fiction—with two notable examples being Frank Hardy’s *Power Without Glory* and Thomas Keneally’s *The People’s Train*.

In Tottenham the seemingly disparate issues of labour politics, race relations and the war were all brought together in dramatic fashion. At a time when dozens of the town’s young men were fighting the Kaiser abroad, others sought to fight the bosses

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16 Ibid. p. 39
locally. While Tottenham district’s population never exceeded the low thousands, membership of the town’s Wobbly organisation reached the dozens, including a number of Germans. Frank Franz, executed for Duncan’s murder, was German. One of the town’s prominent Wobblies, Arthur Graham, authored an impassioned tract arguing against union victimisation of German workers. At the same time, dozens of Chinese labourers were sinking dams, clearing land and other assorted projects in the district. Hundreds of construction workers also arrived in the district between 1914 and 1916 to build a new railway line. Up to a thousand arrived to clear land for the government wheat farm. Many of these workers vocally expressed their support for the Tottenham Wobblies who by then were finding themselves the target of the law and local bosses. Frustration and anger were mounting. By late 1916, with the backdrop of a rapidly approaching and highly divisive plebiscite on compulsory overseas military service, the tensions bubbling away beneath the surface found an outlet in the murder of Constable Duncan.

This event and its aftermath is the focus of chapters eight and nine. As highlighted, in addition to the research questions focussed on the IWW in Australia, the other key area of analysis that this thesis hinges on is the assassination of Duncan. Why did it happen and what was its significance? Here we have a further example of why the thesis takes the form of narrative history. The murder was an event of profound significance for Tottenham, but also as we shall see, for NSW and Australia. Here lies an inherent tension, with the local and the national (or the local and the political) each trying to pull the killing into their own domain. It was a conscious decision not to limit examination of the killing solely to the realm of local history, nor limit it to the realm of the IWW or political history. Freed from the shackles of a restrictive
methodological scope, the thesis ranges from the local to the national to the international and back again; for the story does not belong to just one.

While this is the first in-depth analysis of the IWW at Tottenham and the shooting of Duncan, it is not the first time these have appeared in print. In 1924 John D. Fitzgerald devoted a short chapter of his *Studies in Australian Crime* to the murder of Constable Duncan at Tottenham. Fitzgerald sheds little light on motives, other than his view of the inherent wickedness of the Wobblies and their supposed German backing—“the destruction of property and of human life was a method eminently Prussian”. More importantly Fitzgerald’s work cannot in any sense be considered disinterested, for he was a key player in the events he was describing. Fitzgerald, who had served as Minister of Justice, was a member of the NSW Legislative Council. In 1916 he sat in the special cabinet meeting which considered the death sentences handed down to Tottenham Wobblies Frank Franz and Roland Kennedy, and chose to send the pair to the gallows. Had it been in his power he would have seen a third hanged. Fitzgerald was an outspoken critic of the IWW and a proponent of conscription, the latter position seeing him expelled from the Labor Party. John Patten’s pamphlet, ‘Ned Kelly’s Ghost’, published 70 years later, offered the first hint of the IWW in Tottenham having an existence outside of Duncan’s murder.

Although there was much about the Tottenham Wobblies not known by Patten, and although it does not consider a wider context—such as the backdrop of war—it nonetheless offers a valuable introduction. The standard histories of the IWW in

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21 *Ibid*

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Australia note the existence of the Tottenham IWW and note the shooting of Duncan but offer little more than that.

Although the murder of Constable Duncan; and the subsequent trials, clemency campaign and executions have received little attention in the century since they occurred, at the time they were widely covered in the Australian press—from the major national newspapers like the *Sydney Morning Herald* to regional papers like the *Bathurst Times* and *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*. There was also extensive coverage in the New Zealand press. Readers were met with screaming headlines such as ‘Tragedy at Tottenham’ and ‘The Tottenham Sensation’. The approaches these various organs took towards the events in Tottenham were to an extent reflective of their outlook in general. For example *The Australian Worker* did not mention the murder initially but extensively covered the executions, reminding its readers that “Plank 31 of the Labor platform provides for the abolition of capital punishment.” On the other hand many newspapers placed a heavier emphasis on the lurid details of the murder. It is interesting to note that most of the newspaper accounts treated both Franz and Roland Kennedy with a great deal of respect when reporting their deaths—emphasising their family links, lack of criminal record, and treating almost reverently their final moments, especially Kennedy’s farewell words of ‘Good-bye, boys’. How this was reported by the local Tottenham newspaper, *The Peer*, would offer some fascinating insights, although no surviving copies of the paper have emerged. The majority of reporting by regional newspapers has never been examined in secondary literature. Many of the local and regional newspapers have passed into relative, and in some cases total, obscurity. As such, they are yet another

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24 *The Australian Worker*, 28/12/16 p. 17
echo from a region which all the current literature would suggest was of scant importance. In the national memory much history from west of the Great Dividing Range has become a fading dream.

Chapter ten reinforces this, showing us that the Tottenham story was no aberration, by offering another example of Wobbly history from a comparable town in the same region, Cobar. This chapter is another example of the ferocity of events away from the capital cities, and away from the attention of previous analyses of the IWW in Australia. The explosive events at Cobar, never previously discussed, show that the bush was alive with conflict. As Warwick Eather noted in related to Cold War anti-communism, the climate in rural towns was “more confrontationist, strident and paranoid than that in the major cities.”25

That the discontent existing in the rural workforce has received little attention need not be surprising when one considers that the rural workforce itself, or at least a sizeable component of it, has escaped the historian’s attention. The swagman, prominent in our understanding of earlier decades, had not disappeared. ‘Labour’s lost legion’—made up of rural itinerants in the period roughly stretching from Federation to the treaty of Versailles—has been overlooked because it left little paper trail. One had to be settled in a location for at least three months, for example, to be registered on the electoral roll.

Many, if not a majority of workers in the Tottenham district wore this cloak of invisibility. Roughly three quarters of the railway construction workers in the district

at any one time—it had a high turnover rate of employees—were not on the electoral roll. Wood-cutters clearing land in the district were in the same boat. Many were beating around the bush doing prospecting or similar work. Whence does the historian encounter such people?

State statistical registers and year books can provide valuable clues. They show that in the first two decades of the 20th century Australia was not the urban nation it has often been characterised as. In 1915 an estimated 60 per cent of NSW residents lived in “country districts”, with fewer than 40 per cent in the metropolis.26 Yet even census figures have exaggerated the urban nature of NSW. In casting judgement on the 1911 census, the Official Year Book of NSW for 1916 shows that the proportion of people stated as living in urban areas was distorted and inaccurate. This was due to people being inclined to list themselves as being 'residents' of the nearest sizeable centre rather than where they actually lived. The year book points out that "[t]he number of persons who described themselves on their census forms as being residents of certain localities exceeded the population of the definite municipal areas of the same name by...over 12 per cent".27 Moreover, it goes on to argue that even the figure of twelve per cent is low when looking at the number of people employed in primary industries, still dominated by the pastoral industry as it had been for decades.28 Primary producers were by the far the biggest employer in NSW. The summation was that "[t]he number of persons set down as inhabiting urban centres must be considerably in excess of what actually obtains"!29 This point has been ignored in assessments of Australia's population. Yet biped primates were not the only creatures showing that

26 Official Year Book of NSW, 1916, NSWSR, p. 444
27 Official Year Book of NSW, 1916, NSWSR, p. 475
29 Ibid
the bush had not declined in importance. The number of horses, cattle, sheep and pigs were all higher in 1911 than had been at the time of federation.\textsuperscript{30} To talk of an urban shift is to mislead.

If the population was not urban, nor was it settled. In 1916, around 30,000 NSW residents, more than two per cent of the population, lived in dwellings of “calico, canvas [or] hessian”, that is, they lived in tents; over a thousand lived in wagons or carts; while more than 4,000 lived in “camps without dwellings”.\textsuperscript{31} Thousands too were still living in wattle and daub.\textsuperscript{32} The population was still disproportionately male.\textsuperscript{33} The population of mining settlements fluctuated wildly.\textsuperscript{34} Australian post-gold rush history has long had an emphasis on the permanent, settled mining centres like Broken Hill. Life and work in the camps of, for instance, the central copper belt was very different.\textsuperscript{35} These settlements were small, and most were fleeting, but they were prolific. Unlike a Broken Hill, here a miner did not necessarily have a hotel or boarding house awaiting him. If there was one, the miner’s family could not necessarily be brought along.

Itinerant did not necessarily translate into ‘transient’ with all its negative connotations. The rural itinerant was not necessarily a character from \textit{The Grapes of Wrath}; was not necessarily unskilled; was not necessarily short of work. It was through these men that the IWW gained its foothold in the bush.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid} p. 1129
\textsuperscript{31} Statistical Register of NSW, NSWSR, 1915-16
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Ibid}
\textsuperscript{33} Official Year Book of NSW, 1916, NSWSR, p. 438
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Ibid} p. 472
\textsuperscript{35} On the central copper belt, see Chapter Two: ‘Tottenham’
The Wobblies in Tottenham, far from being on the periphery of a city-based organisation, are rather an example of what was to a great degree a movement based in Australia’s interior. Prominent Sydney-based Wobblies such as Tom Barker have received the vast majority of attention thus far, yet Barker himself readily admitted that the IWW in Australia was characterised by itinerant shearsers and miners working west of the Great Dividing Range, operating independently of the ‘leaders’ in Sydney.  

It should be noted here that although this thesis highlights a previous focus on ‘the Sydney leadership’ of the IWW at the expense of ‘the rural grass-roots’, even this undervalues the importance of the country regions. The leaders too, in many cases, reflected the rural nature of the movement. For example, George Reeve had been a—arguably the—key leader in the early Australian IWW. He fell from grace during the split between the Chicago and Detroit schools of the IWW and was forced out.  

Reeve had cut his teeth working in the mines in Cobar in western NSW, where he established an IWW Club in 1907.  

When an IWW Local formed in nearby Tottenham he sought to join, possibly as a means of re-establishing his authority in the movement, although this was rejected on advice from Tom Barker and Fred Morgan, his factional enemies, who no doubt feared just such an eventuation. That this saga, featuring such prominent Wobblies, has not been the recipient of a single sentence of attention in any literature dealing with the IWW in Australia is yet another stunning indictment of the city-centric understanding of Wobbly history. This will be redressed in Chapter twelve, which examines the rural workforce and why they were

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37 See Chapter Three: ‘The rise of the IWW in Australia and Internationally’
38 *Cain The Wobblies At War*. p. 58

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drawn to the IWW, and poses the question, who was the Wobbly? This consideration does not restrict itself to economic or political concerns, also considering social and cultural history, including a re-examination of Russel Ward’s *The Australian Legend*.

The failure to adequately explore the story of Tottenham in 1916 is notable due to the explosive nature of events that occurred there; but it is hardly unique, rather it is symptomatic of the darkness which blankets our understanding of rural Australia during this period. Towns and villages across the nation have had their histories researched and recorded—almost invariably by locals—but this has been undertaken in a piecemeal way. Moreover, such works never enter the national consciousness, as they are deemed to be of only local interest. Perhaps in many cases this is true to an extent. But by ignoring the stories of such individual towns, we also miss what they tell us collectively, which undoubtedly is of national importance. And so, for example, while Sydney is of more importance than Tottenham in the story of the Australian IWW, the ignoring of the stories from individual country towns invariably results in the ignoring of all country towns. This has an incredibly distorting influence on our understanding of history—and so a movement which is in the words of its own ‘leader’ was characterised by itinerant shearers and miners working west of the Great Dividing Range, is understood only in terms of those members who happened to be in Sydney or other concentrated population centres.

Such is the case for an analysis of the IWW in a country setting. Yet Tottenham offers more than that. The murder of a policeman and the subsequent executions are by themselves worthy of attention. But beyond that, members of the Tottenham Local were present at some of the key moments, and with some of the key figures, of the
IWW not just in Australia but also in New Zealand and North America. One, Michael ‘Herb’ Kennedy, was in the thick of things in the Great Strike at Waihi in New Zealand—which, as we shall see, was not only a defining moment in that country but a direct spur to the IWW’s rise in Australia, a point which thus far has not been realised. His brother Kevin Kennedy agitated with the leaders of the IWW in the USA, and his arrest and deportation in 1917 marked the beginning of severe and concerted crackdown on the movement there. Another of the Tottenham Wobblies, Albert Krist, was interned at the German Concentration Camp (GCC) in Sydney—and while there had the audacity to incite sabotage. In 1915, Tottenham Wobblies were accused of dynamiting a copper mine. They were rough—they were fond of a drink and regularly got into fistfights—but they also wrote documents as impassioned and piercing as could be managed by any radical journalist or propagandist in the country.

These Wobblies were symptomatic of a period characterised by seething discontent, in which radical labour politics and imperial fervour were pitted against each other. This thesis examines how such labour politics evolved in a small mining town, in the context of the Great War, and asks what this can tell us about an ignored chapter in Australian labour history, especially in rural Australia.

39 See Chapter Four: ‘The Kennedys: A Rebel Family’
40 NSWSR, 7/5590

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1. Overview of Australia 1890-1916: Labour, Politics and the Great War

From the economic calamity of the early 1890s to the trenches of the Great War, the period examined in this chapter, if any can, can be described as a period of turmoil and flux. The bird’s eye view of the period between 1890 and 1916 that the chapter presents, with a particular focus on the labour movement and its relationship with politics, lays the contextual foundations for the thesis as a whole.

Throughout the second half of the 19th century, the Australian colonies had experienced steady economic development; increasing living standards; and trade unionism had taken firm root among the workforce.1 In the four decades to 1900, there was a four-fold growth in the economic worth of the colonies, greatly exceeding the development of most comparable countries.2 The wool industry still dominated the economy in the late 19th century.3 However, easy credit masked serious weaknesses that had been emerging in the colonial economies, and not least in the pastoral industry: in the 1880s, 75 per cent of money owing to banks was owed by squatters.4 There had been a fundamental shift in ownership of pastoral land too: bank and corporate ownership of pastoral land had risen significantly by this period.5 In the 1890s there was an economic crash, and the colonies were rocked by a crippling

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depression. During 1891 and 1892 dozens of banks collapsed, while others halted their trading. Unemployment rose and pastoral stations were repossessed at an unprecedented rate. Caught in an economic malaise, many squatters sought to cut costs by cutting wages. The situation in the rural districts was made all the worse by twin assaults from nature—devastating drought between 1895 and 1903, and the rabbit plague. The inland became a barren dustbowl.

By the end of the 1880s, the division between employee and employer in Australia was such that both anticipated a looming battle. The class division was unprecedented in the island continent. Beginning with a maritime strike in 1890 which rapidly spread to other industries, there were a number of major, and bitter, strikes between 1890 and 1894 and each time the strikers and their unions suffered a crushing defeat. A strike by Queensland shearsers in 1891 brought the colony to the brink of armed insurrection. The shearsers demanded what they had been granted only a year earlier and what the pastoralists had since reneged on—that only union labour be employed in the sheds, whereas the pastoralists asserted that they had the right to employ whomever they wanted—‘freedom of contract’. During the struggle both sides used the threat of violence. Sabotage of telegraph and railway lines took place; the match, too, was on occasion used as a tactic. Thousands of strikers gathered at

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11 Stuart Svensen, *The Shearers’ War: the story of the 1891 shearers' strike* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989). p. 106, 119-20; Svensen argues some torched sheds were insurance jobs by
camps at Clermont and Barcaldine, where the Eureka flag was symbolically raised. Their rhetoric was every bit as incendiary as that from the miners who had raised it earlier at Ballarat. Thousands of troops, replete with artillery support, were sent by the Queensland government to tame the strikers. The shearers’ camps were raided and union leaders were arrested, and the nascent rebellion quashed. Shearers went back to work. With a backdrop of falling wool prices in an abysmal economic climate, in 1894 the Pastoralists’ Federal Council abandoned the 1891 agreement, and in response shearers struck again.\textsuperscript{12} The 1894 strike, not confined to Queensland, again provoked numerous incidents of violence and threats of the same. There were tarrings, shootings and stonings. On the Darling River in western NSW, striking shearers torched the river steamer ‘Rodney’, which had been carrying ‘scab’ labourers, and threw the passengers overboard.\textsuperscript{13} At Dagworth a firefight between police and unionists left one union member dead.\textsuperscript{14} As in 1891 dozens of strikers were arrested and they were defeated again; but not so much from the force of the state as for the simple reason that the mass of unemployed provided ample numbers of men willing to work at the lower rates. Several other, and no more successful, strikes took place during these years.

The most significant geo-political development to come out of the 1890s was the affirmation that the various colonies of \textit{Terra Australis} should federate into one nation, following years of debate and referenda in each colony: as Edmund Barton memorably termed it, “a nation for a continent and a continent for a nation”.\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[12] Cannon, \textit{The Roaring Days. Book Two: Life in the Country.}
\item[13] \textit{Ibid.} p. 582
\end{footnotes}
Ceremonies across the continent, centred on Sydney’s Centennial Park, welcomed in the new federation on the fitting date of New Year’s Day 1901. The interim capital of the new country was Melbourne, and its first Prime Minister Edmund Barton at the head of a generally protectionist government. At the time of federation, the colonies were involved in two foreign conflicts—the Boer War and the Boxer Rebellion.

Trade unionism was stronger in Australia than anywhere else in the world, correspondingly the Labor Party was stronger, and came about earlier than counterparts in other countries. The first Labor government in the world was formed in Queensland in 1899, although it only lasted one week. While delivering a series of blows to the unions, the 1890s did not kill them. In 1901 there were approximately 100,000 trade unionists in Australia, in 200 unions. As Bradley Bowden notes, there was a revival of unionism as the economy grew markedly in the decade before the First World War. By 1914 the proportion of workers in Australia who were members of unions was the highest in the world. There had however been a shifting emphasis towards political representation. Political parties were established in various colonies in the 1890s to represent labour, but a national Labor party was not formed until after federation. It gradually consolidated its presence, and by 1910 the federal Labor Party had gained a majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

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20 Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia* p. 127
22 Patmore, *Australian Labour History*. p. 82

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The fear of non-whites had been a feature of Australian politics for much of the 19th century, and if anything it strengthened as the century drew to a close.\textsuperscript{23} Racial antipathy was strong in the labour movement and Labor parties, where the spectre of cheap non-white labour was raised time and again. Andrew Fisher explicitly played on racial fears in his 1899 campaign.\textsuperscript{24} It was far from a peripheral issue: as William Guthrie Spence put it, “[i]f we are not to have [white Australia] I do not think it is worthwhile working for social reform any longer, because all such reform would be nullified by the deterioration of the race...”.\textsuperscript{25} But espousal of a white Australia, it must be remembered, crossed the spectrum of political parties at the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{26} Legislation for a white Australia, the Immigration Restriction Act, was the first order of business for the new parliament after federation. Support for a white Australia was overwhelming, and had abated little by the time the Great War erupted in 1914.\textsuperscript{27}

The industrial front heated up again towards the end of the first decade of the 20th century. In October 1908 the Rockchoppers and Sewer Miners’ Union of NSW led an ultimately successful strike. Rockchoppers were crucial to Sydney’s water supply and sewerage but it was work that had a horrendous death rate, with the sandstone dust the choppers inhaled all too often leading to silicosis. In an environment where perhaps

\textsuperscript{23} Dyrenfurth, \textit{Heroes and Villains: The Rise and Fall of the Early Australian Labor Party}. p. 63
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid}. p. 64
\textsuperscript{25} Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates 25 September 1901, quoted in \textit{ibid}. p. 97
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid}. p. 97, 101
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid}. p. 98
three out of four workers would die, there was no patience for political reform, and the successes gained by industrial militancy were observed by workers elsewhere.  

In December 1908, with the pending expiry of a pay agreement at the Barrier, and tensions resulting, the Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited (BHP) announced that miners’ wages would be cut by 12.5 per cent. The local miners’ union, the Amalgamated Miners’ Association (AMA) responded by inviting Tom Mann, the famed English agitator and union organiser, to the Barrier. Mann had come to prominence during the great London dock strike of 1889, to which the Barrier AMA had offered financial support. Over a period of 20 torrid weeks in early 1909, the miners at Broken Hill were locked out. The NSW government led by Premier Charles Gregory Wade despatched 50 police—nicknamed ‘Wade’s fat fifty’ by locals—followed soon by hundreds more. The lockout was marked by numerous extraordinarily theatrical incidents, from mock graves created by unionists (and, less well known, by police) to menace their opponents; to the thousands who travelled by special train to the South Australian border to hear Tom Mann who, barred from public speaking in NSW by the courts, gave an address at the border town of Cockburn. Later in the year there was an 18 week long general strike by coal miners in NSW, who were defeated by March 1910 with the assistance of the state

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31 Ibid. pp. 15-18

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government. Gollan argues that the scale and militancy of this strike was of a level not seen since those of the early 1890s.

In the October 1910 NSW election, Wade was defeated by the Labor Party, and James McGowen became Premier. In June 1913 William Holman, a former union official who had been Attorney-General under McGowen—and acting Premier in his absence—became Premier of NSW. The Labor Party remained in power in Australia’s most populous state until 1916.

When the Austro-Hungarian invasion of Serbia triggered ‘the war to end all wars’ in 1914, the initial reaction in Australia was one of enthusiasm and imperial fervour. It was supported by all major political parties, churches and major newspapers. In the war’s early stages the labour movement had on the whole been swept along by the general tide of patriotism that gripped the nation: there were widespread expressions of solidarity with calls to get behind the war effort, both from Labor Party leaders and union rank and file. This came in spite of the war’s savaging effect on employment and wages. In fact, more than 40 per cent of recruits were trade unionists during the first five months of the war, a disproportionally high rate of enlistment.

A federal election campaign was underway when the war broke out — it was held on the 5th of September 1914. Andrew Fisher’s Labor Party won both houses of

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34 Ibid. p. 128
35 Australian Dictionary of Biography: James Sinclair, Taylor McGowan, and William Arthur Holman
36 Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia, 1900-1921. p. 69

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parliament, defeating the incumbent Prime Minister Joseph Cook. Sacrifice for the British Empire had been the dominant theme of the campaign, with Cook promising 20,000 men, and Fisher solemnly trumping it with his pledge that Australia would fight for the British cause “to our last man and last shilling”.

The Attorney-General in Fisher’s cabinet, William Morris ‘Billy’ Hughes, grew increasingly prominent in government. In October 1914 Hughes introduced the War Precautions Act, giving the Commonwealth government power to rule by regulation, a power unprecedented in its short history and beyond that set out in the constitution. Its clauses were so broad and vague (‘statements likely to cause disaffection to His Majesty’ were prohibited, for example) that, as the Solicitor-General Sir John Garran remarked, “John Citizen was hardly able to lift a finger without coming under the penumbra of some technical offence”. The Act was exercised against various opponents of the government, for instance the IWW and anti-conscriptionists, especially from 1916 onwards. When in October 1915 Fisher resigned his Prime Ministership to become High Commissioner in London, Hughes was unanimously chosen by his colleagues to be the new Prime Minister of Australia. This took place against a backdrop of pre-existing discord between Labor

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38 The Argus, August 1st 1914; John McQuilton, Rural Australia and the Great War: From Tarrawingee to Tangambalanga (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001). p. 18
41 Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia, 1900-1921. p. 103
party leaders and the labour movement; which was only exacerbated by Hughes’ divisive character.\textsuperscript{43}

In the meantime, Australian forces had landed at Gallipoli in April. The fighting there stirred a swell of patriotism among many. Yet as newspapers back home bulged with lists of casualties, it also served to bring home the vicious reality of the war—8,709 Australians died at Gallipoli, and almost 20,000 were wounded.\textsuperscript{44} The campaign there foreshadowed even greater numbers of dead and wounded on the Western Front.

The working class suffered a sharp decline in living standards and purchasing power during the war; real wages fell.\textsuperscript{45} One issue in particular which had widened the gulf between the Labor party leaders and the labour movement was Hughes’ dropping of a planned referendum on whether the Commonwealth should have the power to regulate the prices of foodstuffs, in December 1915.\textsuperscript{46} The referendum had been eagerly anticipated by a labour movement which saw life’s essentials as the subject of manipulation and profiteering. Hughes himself had campaigned for such a referendum for years.\textsuperscript{47} Yet in the face of opposition from the States, Hughes abandoned it within a week of becoming Prime Minister. Through this action Hughes had ensured his divorce from labour.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{44} Les Carlyon, \textit{Gallipoli} (Sydney: Pan MacMillan, 2002). p. 531
\textsuperscript{45} McQueen, “Shoot the Bolshevik! Hang the Profiteer! Reconstructing Australian Capitalism 1918-1921.” p. 185; Dyrenfurth and Bongiorno, \textit{A Little History of the Australian Labor Party}. p. 59
\textsuperscript{46} Fitzhardinge, \textit{The Little Digger 1914-1952: William Morris Hughes A Political Biography}, 2. p. 48
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Ibid.} p. 51

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While many a curse was directed towards the profiteer, there was never any serious action to prevent price gouging of essential items or punish those who practiced it, although there were countless investigations undertaken and reports prepared by the Commonwealth and State governments. The government floated war loans as a means of financing the war, an effort which raised £250,000,000. Again, the fact that those who could afford to buy bonds stood to make a profit from the war irked many of those who were struggling to make ends meet. By 1916 the labour movement was becoming increasingly irate. The shift towards political representation as a means of securing workers’ rights over the preceding two decades was losing its lustre. In that year there were major strikes by miners in Broken Hill and the Illawarra, which would highlight a growing militancy and support for ‘direct action’, and scepticism of parliament and arbitration. Prime Minister Hughes blamed two familiar targets for the strikes—the IWW and German sympathisers.

The push for ‘One Big Union’ (the OBU) had widespread support in the early 20th century labour movement. The way in which the OBU was seen by the IWW was contested by the Australian Workers’ Union (AWU). By merging with and swallowing other unions, the AWU saw itself as becoming the OBU. For a time this looked an achievable goal, though in the end the AWU’s officials were prominent

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49 McQueen, “Shoot the Bolshevik! Hang the Profiteer! Reconstructing Australian Capitalism 1918-1921.” pp. 197-203
51 Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia, 1900-1921. pp. 81-96
53 Patmore, Australian Labour History. pp. 84-85

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amongst those who impeded this result. Vere Gordon Childe deemed the AWU as “the rock on which the One Big Union went to shipwreck.”

In 1916 following two years of attrition and stalemate in the war, Hughes, back from an extended visit to Britain, was convinced there needed to be a greater supply of Australian soldiers to the front than was being achieved through voluntary enlistment. His solution was to introduce military conscription following a national plebiscite.

He was confident of a ‘Yes’ vote.

For a labour movement beginning to feel it had been cast adrift by its leaders, this move toward conscription was of particular concern. Whereas the unions were generally supportive of the fight against the Hapsburgs, the Hohenzollerns and the Ottomans, they were vigorously opposed to conscription as a means of doing so.

Quite aside from questions of conscription’s morality or necessity, there was a purely economic contention that conscription would drive down already low wages.

Travelling between Narromine and Trangie (towns neighbouring Tottenham), an AWU organiser struck up a conversation with a farmer, whom he claims said the following, in anticipation of conscription being introduced:

we could offer the men 5s per day to take our crops in, and if they refused it, we could ring up the police, who would get in touch with the local military camp, Dubbo, and have the men yarded to the colors (sic) and a sufficient number of

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56 Clark, History of Australia. p. 469

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men who had been trained would be sent along to take the crop in at conscription wages.\textsuperscript{57}

In a sense, it matters not whether this conversation took place at all, as it symbolised a genuine fear that many workers held. Dyrenfurth argues the zeal for conscripting the ‘last man’ with no similar approach towards the ‘last shilling’ was what particularly fed opposition.\textsuperscript{58}

William Guthrie Spence, the AWU president, supported Billy Hughes’ argument for conscription. This put him at odds with the rank and file and he was forced into resigning from the AWU in October 1916, after its executive council pushed for his suspension.\textsuperscript{59} Hughes was kicked out of the Labor Party. Hughes, along with the ex-Labor colleagues who followed him, then formed a ‘win the war’ coalition government with the Opposition, showing just how large the gulf had become between the labour movement and its most prominent parliamentary ‘leaders’. The split was mirrored at a state level in NSW, where Premier Holman was in unison with Billy Hughes’ pro-conscription message, and his view of the war in general; as a result, like Hughes, Holman became the target of hostility from the labour movement that had spawned him. Holman was expelled from the Labor party, and, like Hughes, then became Premier of a Nationalist Party government.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{57} Quoted in Hearn and Knowles, \textit{One Big Union: A History of the Australian Workers Union 1886-1994}, p. 123
\textsuperscript{58} Dyrenfurth, \textit{Heroes and Villains: The Rise and Fall of the Early Australian Labor Party}. See chapters 5 & 6
\textsuperscript{59} Harry Knowles and Mark Hearn, \textit{One Big Union: A History of the Australian Workers' Union, 1886-1994}, p. 120
\textsuperscript{60} Beverley Kingston, \textit{A History of New South Wales} (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
As Paul Adams has noted, Holman had changed his tune dramatically—he had earlier been an outspoken opponent of the Boer War, which in his eyes was being fought for the benefit of “a little gang of swindling speculators on the Rand”, but even more provocatively, he had argued of the same war that “I believe from the bottom of my heart that this is the most iniquitous, most immoral war ever raged with any race. I hope that England may be defeated.”\textsuperscript{61} In a little over a decade he had become a champion of the Empire, decrying ‘disloyalists’. In this transition Holman was, again, treading the same path as Hughes.\textsuperscript{62}

Tottenham’s contribution to the war effort could hardly have been greater, with over 50 men enlisting.\textsuperscript{63} Three locals were awarded the Military Medal: Herbert Clark, Thomas Gilbert and Arthur Moor; another local, Frank Couchman, was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. Walter Berryman, William Carty, Russell Kidston, Thomas Latham, Michael Logan and Henry Watson were all killed in action or died of wounds.\textsuperscript{64} During the war local women were involved with the Tottenham Red Cross auxiliary.\textsuperscript{65}

Given that their opposition to the war is one of the things for which the antipodean IWW is remembered, Australian involvement in the war did not feature as prominently in the discourse of the Tottenham Wobblies as one might expect. At least, that is, in their surviving writings. Of course, the war would have been a regular topic of discussion for all Australians. They did denounce war profiteering. While the trade union movement did not share the IWW’s outright opposition to the war, on the

\textsuperscript{61} Adams, \textit{The Best Hated Man in Australia: the life and death of Percy Brookfield 1875-1921}. p. 94
\textsuperscript{62} Keneally, \textit{Australians: Eureka to the Diggers}, 2. p. 220
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Tottenham Roll of Honour - 1914-1918’}
\textsuperscript{65} Terry Kass, \textit{A Thematic History of Lachlan Shire} p. 67
question of conscription they largely spoke as one. In early October 1916, for instance, the Tottenham branch of the Federated Mines Employees’ Association expressed their determination to oppose conscription at a stop work meeting.66

The story of one young man, Peter Murray, offers a fascinating glimpse into the times and conditions that gave rise to enlistment into the ranks of both the IWW and the AIF by the young men of western NSW. Of course, any number of individuals could have been chosen. Murray was born in Scotland and spent his early childhood in New Zealand. He moved to Australia where he spent his early adult life as an itinerant labourer, often as a navvy, ranging from north Queensland to southern NSW, and taking in areas of western NSW.67 He described his situation in letters to his family:

The blazing sun dries the bread and corned beef till they are like pieces of wood and reduces the butter to oil. On top of this the flies and dust and ants are into everything. And those flies are enough to drive a man crazy, in addition to being great carriers of typhoid, a disease very common in the big railway camps... [t]his knocking about with a tent and a frying pan is a mighty rough business.68

In 1916 he was working as a copper miner at Nymagee, near Tottenham.

This war seems to get more serious every day. It is not in the least improbable that they will drag us all into the Army before long. For my part I am indifferent as to what they do. I cannot say I am greatly taken up with this game of firing cannon at each other. I’ve been a tramp most of my life and in ordinary times the proffer of my services in the most humble capacities has generally met with contemptuous rejection. I am not a very enthusiastic Jingo myself having put in

66 The Australian Worker 12/10/1916
68 Ibid
most of time on the ‘outer’, and being in no way bursting with gratitude for great favours received from the ruling class.

And further:

A trip to Europe with the volunteers would be more or less agreeable though a trifle risky, however, I think I shall wait for the conscription. 69

Evidently he did not wait for conscription, as a year later Peter Murray died in the mud at Ypres. 70 He personified all the conflicting viewpoints and contradictions of Australians’ approaches to the war.

It has been argued that the defeated strikes of the 1890s had seen much of the Australian working class pin its hopes on labour being represented in parliament. 71 By the First World War parliamentary Labor and state-backed arbitration had been experienced, but the lot in life of toilers like Peter Murray had changed little. The appetite for radical action was stirring once again among workers eager for earthly salvation, or a comfortable wage.

We have seen in this first chapter the climate that would give rise to support for the IWW. Australia was slowly emerging as a nation, and the direction it should take was keenly contested. If the labour movement had attached hopes to parliamentary politics in the 1890s and at the time of Federation, these quickly faded, with increased disillusion and an increasing push towards militancy. With the Great War added to the mix, the billy was surely boiling in 1916.

69 Ibid
70 Ibid
71 Palmer, The Legend of the Nineties. pp. 140-141

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2. Tottenham

This chapter draws back the curtains on the stage for this thesis – the community of Tottenham and its district in western NSW. It looks at its transformation from a sparsely settled pastoral area in the late nineteenth century to a more populated copper mining and agricultural settlement in the early twentieth century, and the economy, politics, demographics, work and social life of the community.

Figure 1: New South Wales
Tottenham is a small town on the plains of western New South Wales, approximately 500 kilometres west of Sydney and 140 kilometres west of Dubbo. It is the closest town to the centre of NSW, a claim which has long been squabbled over by nearby

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1 Map is sourced from Diana Chase, *Window on Dandaloo: a community on the Bogan river* (Tottenham Historical Society, 2009).

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towns, who have eyed it as something of a holy grail. For thousands of years, the region in which Tottenham now lies has been inhabited by Aborigines. Centred on the Bogan River, it is the traditional country of the Warramunga Clan of the Wilay (Possum) Wiradjuri Bogan river people. The first recorded European contact with the area was an expedition in 1835 by Major Mitchell to chart inland rivers. The botanist on the expedition, Richard Cunningham, was killed in an encounter with the local Aborigines, and his grave remains on the local station ‘Burdenda’. In the decades following Mitchell’s expedition, a number of squatters began running sheep and cattle in the area in which Tottenham would develop. In 1837 Andrew Kerr, having previously worked on a station at Molong belonging to the Reverend Samuel Marsden, established a cattle run—‘Derribong’. The largest run created was ‘Orange Plains’, a sprawling station covering tens of thousands of acres. At shearing time its huge woolshed, built around 1850, was the workplace of more than 30 shearers.

While it was the rush for grazing land that brought a European presence to the area, as a town Tottenham largely owes its establishment to the hunger for copper. Its birthplace was on the edge of a sprawling mineral rich zone known as the Central Copper Belt which spread north to Girilambone, west to Cobar and encompassing Mount Hope, Bobadah, and Nymagee. Mining settlements sprang up like mushrooms throughout the area, although many of the communities have since disappeared—such

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2 Condobolin especially has been determined to claim the “centre of NSW” mantle. In 1969 the Condobolin newspaper The Lachlander declared “of course, Tottenham has always claimed to be the centre of NSW, but Tottenham is always making such fantastic claims for itself that no one really believed it”.

3 Chase, Window on Dandaloo: a community on the Bogan river. p. 2


5 Chase, Window on Dandaloo: A Community on the Bogan River, pp. 6-8.

6 Earlier, the area was known as the Bogan Gold Fields—copper was not the only resource, but history would show it to be by far the most important in this region. Tottenham Historical Society, Unearthed: The Story of Copper Mining in Tottenham and Albert (Wagga Wagga: Quick Print, 2005). p. 8, p. 25
as the mining town of Bobadah, what had been Overflow Station of ‘Banjo’ Patterson’s ‘Clancy of the Overflow’ fame. The population in the centre of the area, along the Kidman Way, to Tottenham’s west and Cobar’s south, is now just one fiftieth of what it was at the turn of the 20th century.  

Figure 3: Camp site in the Central Copper Belt at the turn of the century. 

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7 McGowan, ”Adaptation and organization: the history and heritage of the Chinese in the Riverina and western New South Wales, Australia.”

Rowan Day, University of Western Sydney
In the Tottenham district alone, around 20 mines were developed on a field that stretched seven miles, varying widely in their size and productivity. In 1902 The Caroline Copper Syndicate Limited bought a 58 per cent stake in the ‘Caroline’ mine, which had opened in 1884. The Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, was a member of the syndicate. Edmund Barton may have been a relation of Russel Barton, a wealthy shareholder at Cobar who had mining interests around Nymagee, about 50 miles west of Tottenham, in the 1880s. Perhaps Barton had been one of those the Under Secretary for Mines had in mind when he noted in his 1905 annual report that “the field [at Tottenham] attracted considerable attention from several capitalists”. In 1906 the Caroline syndicate went ‘defunct’ and its remaining money was used to pay miners’ wages. Edmund Barton did not lose his shirt.

One of the mine owners who resided in Tottenham, George Lind, had in earlier life been a member of the ‘syndicate of seven’, the original members of the Broken Hill Mining Company in 1883. However Lind, who was still in his early 20s at the time and working as a bookkeeper at Mount Gipps Station, was one of the out of luck three who, apparently not seeing a bright future for mining at the Barrier, sold their shares early, only to see BHP swim in wealth. In 1891 against a backdrop of economic calamity in Australia, BHP’s output was worth £2,300,000, and it distributed roughly

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9 J.E. Carne, *The Copper Mining Industry and the Distribution of Copper Ores in New South Wales* (Sydney: Department of Mines and Agriculture, 1908) p. 149
10 Tottenham Historical Society, *Unearthed: The Story of Copper Mining in Tottenham and Albert* p. 25
12 *Australian Town and Country Journal* ‘Mining at Orange Plains’ 4/9/1907
13 Tottenham Historical Society, *Unearthed: The Story of Copper Mining in Tottenham and Albert* pp. 25-26

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half that in dividends among its shareholders.\textsuperscript{15} Twenty years after his stint at the Barrier Lind, together with William Wallace, developed the ‘Chris Watson’ mine at Tottenham.\textsuperscript{16} The pair had a 40 acre lease which bordered the ‘Mount Royal’.\textsuperscript{17} Other important mines in the Tottenham field included the ‘Bogan River’, the Bogan River Copper Mining Company having a nominal capital of £6, 250; the ‘Iron Duke’, ‘King Edward VII’ and the ‘Underlay’.\textsuperscript{18}

By far the most significant mine in the district was the Mount Royal, which had been discovered in March 1903 by Henry Fishpool, a miner, contractor and butcher from Nyngan who had owned prospecting rights for swathes of the Cobar and Lightning Ridge areas;\textsuperscript{19} he was part of the syndicate that included Edmund Barton who bought the Caroline mine.\textsuperscript{20} Fishpool formed a partnership with his sons, and in October 1903 they named their mine the Mount Royal.\textsuperscript{21} They sold it to a Sydney syndicate in March 1907 for £12,000.\textsuperscript{22} T.V. Vale was the leading figure behind this syndicate, though residing as he did in Sydney he left the managerial responsibilities to James Gearin, “an old Broken Hill pioneer”, who had owned a pub there.\textsuperscript{23} The Mount Royal was the most productive mine in the area in its own right, but it also treated the ore of other mines in the district.\textsuperscript{24} A towering sight above the community was the 66 feet high chimney rising above the mine.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{15} Fitzpatrick, \textit{The British Empire in Australia: an Economic History 1834-1939}. p. 179
\textsuperscript{16} It was named after the local who discovered it c.1905, not the Prime Minister of the year before.
\textsuperscript{17} Neville Burgess, \textit{The Great Cobar} (The Great Cobar Heritage Centre, 2006).p. 302
\textsuperscript{18} ibid
\textsuperscript{19} Tottenham Historical Society, \textit{Tottenham Reminiscences} (Wagga Wagga: Quick Print, 2003). p. 56
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid. p. 56
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} Australian Town and Country Journal, ‘Mining at Orange Plains17/4/1907 p. 53
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid
\textsuperscript{25} Burgess, \textit{The Great Cobar}, p. 304

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As ‘copper fever’ gripped Tottenham, there was a rush of people into the area eyeing an opportunity for a fortune, or simply for a wage. Mostly they were young men. As Burgess noted in his history of the mines at nearby Cobar, “Tottenham town and Copper town ['old town', as will be discussed below] grew out of all bounds over the next couple of years. People arrived every day.”

In 1907, before Kearney’s Miners’ Arms Hotel opened, there was no accommodation available for brief visitors, who had instead “to rely on the hospitality of the miners”. A journalist who visited Tottenham in 1907 gave an insight into its isolation in the pre-railway period. The Australian Town and Country Journal despatched this ‘special representative’ to Tottenham to give an account of the mining boom, which was driven by soaring prices in London. As the correspondent explained, “Tottenham is not very easy of access”, and he had to disembark from the train at Trangie, get a coach 28 miles to Dandaloo, and completed the final 18 miles from there by “private conveyance”. Needless to say, for many a labourer heading to Tottenham to seek work at the mines, the only private conveyance available was one’s own feet. By 1915 the town was undergoing “the full force of a big boom”.

Tom and Euphemia Fowler, with their one year old son Frank moved to the Caroline mine in 1902/3. It is said Tottenham’s name had its origin with the Fowlers’ residence

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26 Alternatively spelt Gatsby, ibid. p. 303
27 ibid; Australian Town and Country Journal 4/9/1907
28 Australian Town and Country Journal 4/9/1907; in 1914 long-term board at the Miners’ Arms Hotel was 12 pounds per month: Ruth Wright and Roslyn McFadyen, Tottenham Central School 1908-2008: A Brief History (Tottenham2008). p. 12
29 The Australian Town and Country Journal ‘Mining at Orange Plains’ 4/9/1907
30 Ibid
31 Dubbo Liberal ‘The Tottenham Boom’ 23/2/1915

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at the mine, which they named Tottenham Lodge after the suburb in north London. \(^{32}\)

In Tottenham’s early years residents were split on a rather fundamental question—where the town should be located. While the township had initially sprung up around the mines, a push to escape the smell and pollution of the mines—resulting from the open-air roasting of copper ores—led to a government surveyed township being built slightly further away. \(^{33}\) In May 1907 the district surveyor, members from the Orange Plains Progress Association and other locals chose Bald Hill, a mile away from the earlier settlement, as the position for this ‘new Tottenham’ to be established. \(^{34}\) On the 5th of November 1907 Tottenham was proclaimed a village. \(^{35}\)

The fight for services between the residents of ‘old town’, or Tottenham North, and ‘new town’ or Tottenham South, then began in earnest. In 1910 a petition urging the school stay in its present location was sent to the Minister of Public Instruction. \(^{36}\) In May 1910 there was a petition circulated for the post office to be moved to the new town, and a counter petition for it to remain where it was, claiming ten businesses in the old town compared to six in the new. \(^{37}\) More than 120 people, of a variety of backgrounds and occupations, signed the latter. Gradually though, the population shifted to new town. By 1914, there was almost double the number of children living in new town as in old town. \(^{38}\) Before long, history would determine new town as the victor in this battle of geography. Whereas old town’s ad hoc development had

\(^{32}\) Tottenham Historical Society, *Tottenham Reminisces*. p. 80

\(^{33}\) National Archives of Australia, Tottenham Post Office, Box 519 Barcode 3260665, Series number C3629, Series accession number C3629/2

\(^{34}\) Burgess, *The Great Cobar*. p. 303

\(^{35}\) Government Gazette, Volume 4, 6 November, p. 6161

\(^{36}\) Tottenham Historical Society, *Unearthed: The Story of Copper Mining in Tottenham and Albert*. p. 27

\(^{37}\) Ibid.


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resulted in a “bewildering” labyrinth of disordered streets and structures, new town was a model of ordered planning.\textsuperscript{39}

As well as bestowing a name on the community, Tom Fowler, a mine owner who became head of the Tottenham Progress Association (what was formerly known as the Orange Plains Progress Association), was also instrumental in the push to extend the railway to Tottenham. Campaigning for a railway connection to Tottenham was of chief concern for locals, especially the Progress Association. The mines were an important reason for the push for a railway link—“the field is absolutely retarded for want of railway transit”—and were the biggest single reason for its ultimate approval.\textsuperscript{40} The fact that local ore had to be transported to Port Kembla for smelting was a great hindrance to productivity.\textsuperscript{41} However, as a \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} correspondent visiting Tottenham noted, it was also felt a railway link to the town would open up the mine fields beyond that locality, in places like Nymagee and Shuttleton.\textsuperscript{42} Hopes that the area around Tottenham would become a major source of wheat production were another factor.\textsuperscript{43} \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald} did not even believe that the line could have finished short of Tottenham in the first place: “this cannot possibly be true, as no Government would be guilty of such a suicidal policy of stopping this line 40 miles from its main feeders”.\textsuperscript{44}

To campaign for this cause Fowler led a delegation to Sydney. A group called the ‘Railway League’ was formed, with Fowler as secretary, to help in the lobbying

\begin{align*}
\textsuperscript{39} & \text{Terry Kass, \textit{A Thematic History of Lachlan Shire} p. 49} \\
\textsuperscript{40} & \text{\textit{The Sydney Morning Herald} 9/4/1913, p. 17} \\
\textsuperscript{41} & \text{Tottenham Historical Society, \textit{Tottenham Reminisces}. p. 80} \\
\textsuperscript{42} & \text{\textit{The Sydney Morning Herald} ‘A Unique Mining Field’ 30/7/09} \\
\textsuperscript{43} & \text{\textit{The Sydney Morning Herald} ‘State Wheat Farm’ 27/9/15} \\
\textsuperscript{44} & \text{\textit{The Sydney Morning Herald} ‘Wanted, a Railway’ 14/11/07}
\end{align*}
efforts and this received the support of the Assistant Government Geologist. The League hosted the NSW Public Works Committee in 1909. An example of the importance that many placed on a railway was offered by a writer in the *Daily Telegraph*:

> [the country which] runs parallel with but at a reasonable distance from that parody of a river known as the Bogan...is a stretch of country of which the only salvation lies with the railway... [it] must remain dormant—a sparsely settled sheep walk, with a few mining shows alternating between the hopeful and the hopeless, until roused to life by the whistle of the locomotive. After that anything is possible.

After several years of campaigning and vague promises, in 1912 tenders were called by the government for the extension of the line from Tullamore to Tottenham. Yet with nothing to show by 1914, some had begun to question whether the railway would ever eventuate. One Tottenham resident wryly observed that “as he is only a young man, and the climate is salubrious, he may possibly live to take his grandchildren to the opening of the Tullamore Tottenham railway”. However construction did begin that year, with the Public Works Department of the State Government estimating that £36,000 would be spent on the line to Tottenham. On the 18th of October 1915 the Minister for Lands and Member for Liverpool Plains, W.G Ashford, visited Tottenham accompanied by Thomas Brown, the State member for Lachlan, and they

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45 Tottenham Historical Society, *Unearthed: The Story of Copper Mining in Tottenham and Albert*, p. 26
46 *The Sydney Morning Herald* ‘A Unique Mining Field’ 30/7/1909
47 Reproduced in the *Worker* 1/4/1915
49 *Dubbo Liberal* 24/3/1914
50 *Barrier Miner* 3/12/1914

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met with Mr Fowler. The line reached Tottenham in late October 1916. In 1918 a further £16,000 was spent linking the line to the mines.52

While the Mount Royal mines were a large operation, this is not to say they always produced large profits. A decade after the Mount Royal had been bought from locals by a Sydney syndicate, in 1917 it came under the control of the wealthy businessman Alexander Hay. Hay was the half-brother of Sir John Hay and successor to the Berry Estate in 1909. He made no profit after investing £100,000 in the Mount Royal, an enormous sum at the time. Hay’s foray into the mining business ended in such a precarious financial position that he was forced to request a £4000 advance from the State government, to which Treasury acquiesced:

“This if the mines could be kept going for a few years longer”, Treasury argued, “it would serve the purpose of keeping a number of men employed, of retaining the railway service, of maintaining this locality [Tottenham] as a centre somewhere about the margin of the wheat belt around which a population may gradually be established, and of according facilities for the trucking of stock at a point farther west than would be the case if the train ceased to run”.53

For these same reasons Treasury later decided not to pursue the debt. He could have had worse luck. As with Hay, other mining bosses tended not to be local. The directors of the Bogan River Copper Mining Company only visited their mines once a year.54

51 Tottenham Historical Society, Unearthed: The Story of Copper Mining in Tottenham and Albert. p. 26
52 The Sydney Morning Herald 26/9/18
53 NSWSR, Department of Mines Minute Paper, Mt. Royal Mine, Tottenham. Series number 15079, MR00348
54 The Sydney Morning Herald ‘Orange Plains Field’ 26/1/1912
When copper was first discovered where Tottenham now lies, the only established community of any size in the area was Dandaloo, 18 miles to the east, on the Bogan River. Though Dandaloo had been a thriving community, the economic development in Tottenham centred on the mines came at least partly at the expense of its older neighbour. The linking of Tottenham to the railway network further hastened the decline of Dandaloo, which for decades has been a virtual ghost town.55

In April 1907, a post office was established at Tottenham and two months later Tottenham was connected to Dandaloo by telephone, however “no silence cabinet ha[d] been supplied to ensure the necessary secrecy.”56 The residents of the town kept up quite a correspondence, as in the space of just three months in 1908, when the town was still in its infancy and well before the mines hit peak production, sales of postal notes at the post office were over £140 and sales of stamps over £46.57 Such high numbers would indicate that many of the people arriving to work in the mines had not brought their families with them. Jack Simpson was the mail contractor in Tottenham and mail was sent and received twice weekly.58

In October 1908, a school opened in Tottenham after a concerted campaign. In that year there were 250 miners working on the Tottenham field.59 The school initially had 17 children enrolled, although within three months this had almost doubled. Again, the low ratio of children to workers is indicative of a high proportion of single young

55 Chase, Window on Dandaloo: a community on the Bogan river. p. 69
56 National Archives of Australia: Box 519 Barcode 3260665, Series number C3629, Series accession number C3629/2
57 Ibid
58 Chase, Window on Dandaloo: a community on the Bogan river. p. 65
59 NSW Lands Department, Annual Report, 1908, p. 27

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men in the town. In May 1912 the Tottenham Progress Association penned a letter to Mr Kelly, MLA, complaining that “conditions at the school were draughty, no water was available, as was very limited heating. Also only six desks were allocated for forty one enrolled students, while others sat on boxes with their teeth chattering.” In 1914 a request by John Bailes, a teacher at the school, for a new school building and a teacher’s residence was rejected by the Department as Tottenham was deemed to have “not assumed a permanent character”. An apt description of early Tottenham was provided by Inspector Black of the Department of Public Instruction. He worried about the ability of school teachers to cope by themselves in the town, as it was “a rough mining town”.

Police from the nearby town of Dandaloo would ride in to the town on the miners’ pay day, which by all accounts was a rowdy occasion. One such officer was Mounted Constable James Sykes, who was stationed in Dandaloo in 1910. He would ride in to Tottenham together with a Senior Constable. The pair would be out on patrol for days on end, and they liked to keep the people of Tottenham guessing, by appearing in the town at any time of the day or night, at times on horseback, at times cycling.

Although based in Dandaloo the police had a small hut in Tottenham in which they would sleep on such patrols. The Dubbo Liberal called the miners’ pay days in Tottenham “festive occasions”. These festivities were centred on the local pub, the Miners’ Arms, opened in February 1908 by Christopher Kearney who had shifted

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60 Roslyn McFadyen, *Tottenham Central School 1908-2008: A Brief History* p. 9
61 Ibid. p. 12
62 Ibid. p. 11
63 “The Life of James Sykes’ held by the Tottenham Historical Society
64 Ibid
65 Ibid
66 *Dubbo Liberal* 6/8/1910

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from the nearby settlement at Lansdale.\textsuperscript{67} Before long it was taken over by Fred
Veitch, an AWU agent, who described it as a ‘Labor House’ in an advertisement in
\textit{The Australian Worker}. It was a ‘first class’ hotel, with 20 rooms.\textsuperscript{68} In this period the
average pub-goer in Tottenham would probably have drunk rum or brandy, which was
consumed in “oceanic quantities”.\textsuperscript{69} As Geoffrey Blainey notes, spirits were more
popular than beer in rural areas as transport costs from the city breweries made the
latter prohibitively expensive.\textsuperscript{70} The miners in Tottenham, on pay day at least,
revelled in ‘ardent waters’ and ‘shypoo’, that is, strong but poor quality spirits.\textsuperscript{71} The
practice of ‘shouting’, in which people drink in groups and take turns to buy each
other rounds, was almost sacred.\textsuperscript{72}

The police perhaps believed they had scored a massive victory for law and order on
one of their regular pay day pub raids, when a large operation netted 20 arrests for an
illegal two-up match.\textsuperscript{73} The force’s routine targeting of alcohol, gambling and bad
language earned revenue and resentment, but effected no change in the locals’
behaviour. By 1916 Tottenham was described in parliament as ‘uncontrollable’,
although as we shall see, there was more to this than boozy pay days.\textsuperscript{74}

Opposite the pub was one of the town’s two billiard halls, which was another popular
meeting point for the locals in their leisure hours. Heads and tails was played every

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\textsuperscript{67} The Lachlan Shire Council’s thematic history of the shire (2004) has it as William rather than
Christopher. Most likely, both were involved. Susan West notes that “a pub, legal or illegal, was
usually the first capitalist enterprise established in a district after the arrival of squatters” Susan West,
\textit{Bushranging and the Policing of Rural Banditry in New South Wales, 1860-1880} (Melbourne:
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald} 21/10/07
\textsuperscript{69} Geoffrey Blainey, \textit{Black Kettle and Full Moon} (Camberwell: Penguin, 2003). p. 344
\textsuperscript{70} \textit{ibid}
\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Dubbo Liberal} 6/8/1910
\textsuperscript{72} Blainey, \textit{Black Kettle and Full Moon}. p. 350
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Dubbo Liberal} 29/10/1910
\textsuperscript{74} NSW Parliamentary Debates, 1916, vol. 66 pp. 3294-3295
Friday and Saturday night. Leisurely pursuits of a more organised variety also abounded. Sports were warmly embraced in the district, with horse racing being prominent. The first horse race in the area was held at Dandaloo in 1872. It attracted a great deal of support, though as it was wryly put in the *Town & Country Journal* “some fastidious person may not deem it exactly equal to Randwick”. ‘Banjo’ Paterson wrote of the Dandaloo races in his poems ‘An Idyll of Dandaloo’ and ‘An Evening in Dandaloo’. The latter poem narrates mayhem erupting between locals and “a crowd of Sydney stealers, jockeys, pugilists and spielers”, who:

> Beat our nags and won our money,
> Made the game by no means funny,
> Made us rather blue;
> When the racing was concluded,
> Of our hard-earned coin denuded
> Dandaloonies sat and brooded
> There in Dandaloo
> ....

> Night came down on Johnson’s shanty
> Where the grog was no means scanty
> And a tumult grew
> Till some wild, excited person
> Galloped down the township cursing,
> “Sydney push have mobbed Macpherson,
> Roll up, Dandaloo!”

Great St. Denis! What commotion!

76 Chase, *Window on Dandaloo: a community on the Bogan river*. p. 21

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Like the rush of stormy ocean
   Fiery horsemen flew.
Dust and smoke and din and rattle,
Down the street they spurred their cattle
   To the war-cry of the battle,
   “Wade in, Dandaloo!”

So the boys might have their fight out,
Johnson blew the bar-room light out,
   Then, in haste, withdrew.
And in darkness and in doubting
Raged the conflict and the shouting
   “Give the Sydney push a clouting,
   Go it, Dandaloo!”…

A horse racing club would also be formed within a short space of Tottenham emerging as a community, in 1909. Cricket was the most widely played sport in the area. Cricket teams sprang up in a surprising number of locations including Bulbodney and the stations ‘Burdenda’ and ‘Tyrie’; tennis too was played in Tottenham. Sports carnivals were held and even bicycle sports were organised. While there is no record of rugby football being played at this stage, it would be unusual if it had no presence. It was being played in the surrounding towns of western NSW—including copper towns like Cobar where it had been played since at least the 1890s and where the rebel rugby league took off in the 1910s. As Andrew Moore notes,

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77 For the sake of brevity the entire poem is not included. The author recommends reading both this poem, (it has a twist), and ‘An Idyll of Dandaloo’.
79 The Cobar Copper Centenary Celebration Committee, Cobar Copper Centenary 1869-1969 (Cobar1969).

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working class areas of country NSW began embracing rugby league from 1911.\textsuperscript{80} As with most mining towns, for those more musically inclined there was a brass band in Tottenham, which in 1916 had 22 members.

Health care in the town was fairly rudimentary. There was a ‘medical practitioner’, Richard Murphy, though his level of expertise is unclear.\textsuperscript{81} While Murphy was no doubt kept busy with injuries from the mines, residents travelled to nearby towns for anything of a serious nature.\textsuperscript{82} Eileen Lane recalled there being “no doctor in miles... [m]any homesteads have graves to bear this out.”\textsuperscript{83} Perhaps an unfortunate indicator of the health situation in Tottenham was the fact that there was a coroner in the town. In April 1915 the town was gripped by fear of an epidemic following an outbreak of diphtheria and enteric fever (typhoid). Many parents kept their children away from the school, with average attendance halving to 33.\textsuperscript{84} There are a range of illnesses linked to hard rock mining—especially respiratory illnesses—and the poor water situation would not have been conducive to a healthy community. Given that the air pollution and smell from work at the mines was such that it led to the creation of a new town, this must surely have had some impact on health in the community.

The annual Tottenham horse races were used as a fundraiser for a hospital in the town, which would eventually arrive in 1928. The death of a jockey after a fall in the 1917 races highlighted the difficulties faced by the town in both transport and healthcare: while he was still alive and in a critical condition he was forced to wait for

\textsuperscript{80} Andrew Moore, “Opera of the Proletariat: Rugby League, the Labour Movement and Working-Class Culture in New South Wales and Queensland,” \textit{Labour History}, no. 79 (November 2000). p. 61
\textsuperscript{81} NSW Electoral Roll, 1913
\textsuperscript{82} Mining accidents at Mount Royal resulting in injuries: \textit{The Dubbo Liberal} 11/4/1916 Arthur Graham claimed mining injuries were under-reported in local paper \textit{The Peer}
\textsuperscript{83} Tottenham Historical Society, \textit{Tottenham Reminisces}. p. 180
\textsuperscript{84} Roslyn McFadyen and Ruth Wright, \textit{Tottenham Central School 1908-2008: A Brief History} p. 15

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the mail service from Trangie to Dubbo to get treatment; evidently the wait was too long. The same fate befell a five year old boy who discovered his grandfather’s supply of whisky; a twelve year old boy in 1913 who accidentally shot himself; and the son of prominent local Tom Fowler in 1912 who died of pneumonia nine miles short of Trangie.  

The vast majority of the workforce in Tottenham consisted of labourers involved in unskilled work. This work tended to orbit around the mines, which were the biggest source of employment in Tottenham. In 1905 the value of copper ore extracted from the Tottenham fields was £2100. In 1906 this more than doubled, to £4593. It was a bleak year at the mines in 1914, with copper prices plunging as a result of the war, and the resulting export embargo (Germany had been the leading importer of Australian minerals). However, in the space of two years, the fortunes of the copper mining industry had been turned around by the war, with copper in high demand for use in manufacturing munitions. In 1916 the price of copper shot up to record highs of up to £150 per ton, in real terms the highest price that copper fetched in the 20th century. In that year 10,700 tons of copper ore were produced in Tottenham and 157 men were employed at the mines. As a comparison, in 1915 the large Cornish, Scottish and Australian (CSA) mine at Cobar produced less than half this. In 1917, 

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85 In a splendid example of journalistic negligence, The Sydney Morning Herald managed to run the same story on the shooting victim twice on the same page—with differing details in each article. In one article the boy is 10 year old James Jervis, in the other article he was 12 year old Bert Jervis. 
86 Australian Town and Country Journal 'Mining at Orange Plains' 4/9/1907 
89 McQueen, "Hidden Copper: the early history of the Cornish, Scottish and Australian (C.S.A) Mine, Cobar." p. 33 
90 Tottenham Historical Society, Unearthed: The Story of Copper Mining in Tottenham and Albert p. 17 
91 McQueen, "Hidden Copper: the early history of the Cornish, Scottish and Australian (C.S.A) Mine, Cobar." p. 32 

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when the mines were at peak production, the output of the Tottenham mines was £52,337 worth of copper and gold for the year, a more than tenfold increase since 1906. In that year, 304 men were employed at the mines. Mine workers were paid an average of £2 a week for their labour, less than the average Australian weekly wage which in December 1916 was 61s11d—a little over £3. The foreman at the Mt Royal blast furnace was paid £7 per week.

**Figure 4:** Tottenham miners, early twentieth century

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92 Tottenham Historical Society, *Unearthed: The Story of Copper Mining in Tottenham and Albert* p. 29

93 Ibid. p. 23; *Official Yearbook of the Commonwealth of Australia*, no. 33 ‘Weighted Average Nominal Weekly and Hourly Rates of Wage Payable to Adult Workers, and Weekly Hours of Labour, 30th April 1914, 31st December 1914, 1915, 1916 and 1917’

94 Tottenham Historical Society, *Unearthed: The Story of Copper Mining in Tottenham and Albert* p. 36

95 Photograph care of Tottenham Historical Society

Rowan Day, University of Western Sydney
The mining industry was thriving throughout the area—in 1917 there were 150 men working in the mines at Mount Hope. As well as the labouring jobs at the mines there were of course a range of other occupations necessary for them to function—engine drivers, assayers, smelters and blacksmiths among others. There were several sawmills in operation, feeding off the cypress pine trees prolific throughout the area and these too were largely geared towards the mines, though there was also a big demand for timber for construction purposes in the developing community, as well as brick kilns for the same reason. A *Town and Country Journal* reporter noted the sawyers in Tottenham as very busy in 1907; over the ensuing decade, as output at the mines soared their workload would have increased correspondingly. The sawmill in the nearby town of Nyngan was also boosted by the developments going on in Tottenham, and brought in extra machinery to keep up with the demand from its southern neighbour. Between 1908 and 1918 ‘Champion Axeman’ Peter Turner claimed to cut ten tons of wood per day, and for such labour earned a relatively comfortable £6 a week, triple what most of the miners earned.

In 1912 the sawyers went on strike for a second time. This seriously impeded production at the Bogan River mine and during the dispute a furnace was damaged to the extent that it had to be rebuilt. In 1908 a coroner’s inquest determined that the shaft of the King Edward VII copper mine had been “wilfully and feloniously set fire to” in May of that year. Incendiariism was also suspected of having caused a

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96 The Register 3/9/1917, p. 7
97 *Australian Town and Country Journal* ‘Mining at Orange Plains’ 4/9/1907, p. 38
98 Burgess, *The Great Cobar*, p. 303
100 Tottenham Historical Society, *Unearthed: The Story of Copper Mining in Tottenham and Albert* p. 18
101 Precisely how it was damaged is not clear.
102 NSWSR, 9/7213; *Sydney Morning Herald* 4/6/1908

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cataclysmic fire that forced the permanent closure of the dominant copper mines in this region of the state, the Great Cobar and the CSA.\textsuperscript{103} In 1909 miners at the Bogan River, Orange Plains and Caroline mines went on strike for three months. This did not occur in isolation, as in the same year there was a bitter dispute at Broken Hill, in which miners faced a lock out after rejecting pay cuts, and a general strike of coalminers.\textsuperscript{104} Construction workers building the railway line to Tottenham went on strike, and farm workers in the district went on strike. The workers were restless.

In addition to the larger and more lucrative copper mining industry, gravel mining had a significant role in the local economy. There were at least three contractors sourcing gravel, each with separate teams of men. In 1916 the wages for the labourers in each gravel-getting team rose from ten shillings a day to twelve.\textsuperscript{105} While perhaps used on roads, the greatest demand for gravel at this time would have been for ballast for the under-construction railway.

As the community was developing the nature of the pastoral industry was changing—the sprawling stations which had earlier dominated were giving way to closer settled blocks of land, distributed by ballot. In May 1914 there were 141 applications for 22 small farms around Tottenham, each within six miles of the town.\textsuperscript{106} While mining, agriculture and pastoralism were the dominant industries in the district, there were a variety of other businesses and occupations. There were two barbers’ shops, a wheelwright, brickyards, two fruit shops, a saddlery, a milliner (hat-maker), a

\textsuperscript{103} Burgess, The Great Cobar. pp. 322-324
\textsuperscript{105} NSWSR, 7/5590
\textsuperscript{106} The Sydney Morning Herald 30/5/1914

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butcher’s shop, a bakery, and several other stores.\textsuperscript{107} Henry Hunkel was a watchmaker, James Patterson journalist and editor of a local newspaper, while James Gillanders rather intriguingly proclaimed his occupation was an “expert”.\textsuperscript{108}

The importance of farming and pastoralism to the local economy should not be understated however. Especially significant was wheat production. Near the town was a sprawling wheat farm, ‘Woodlands’, which was owned by the NSW government. The Departments of Lands and Agriculture selected 50,000 acres for the project in 1914, although it appears only 40,000 acres of the land was used.\textsuperscript{109} To give an indication of its scale, the average area of a wheat farm in NSW in 1914-15 was 134 acres.\textsuperscript{110} The government spent more than £18,000 on clearing, ploughing and construction on the farm.\textsuperscript{111} Once established, Woodlands was a large operation, employing on a permanent basis around 80 farm workers in addition to three bookkeepers, two clerks and a pay-master. It had its own post office, butcher, vet, carpenter and an electrician.\textsuperscript{112} Preparing the land for the project was a huge undertaking. As many as 1,000 men were employed clearing land for the project, among them ex-miners from Cobar who earned particular mention for their hard work.\textsuperscript{113} Complimenting human muscle were the steam-powered and oil-powered tractors, accompanied by more than 80 draught horses, which saw the “trans-Bogan wilderness...tamed at a speed which makes pioneer settlers marvel”.\textsuperscript{114} Such toil built

\textsuperscript{107} NAA, CRS SP 32/1
\textsuperscript{108} 1916 Commonwealth Electoral Roll
\textsuperscript{109} The Worker 5/11/1914; a figure of 27,000 acres was also used in the press—still a huge area of land.
\textsuperscript{111} Windsor and Richmond Gazette, 18/8/16, p. 7
\textsuperscript{112} 1916 Commonwealth Electoral Roll; NAA, CRS SP 32/1 Bulbodney Post Office file
\textsuperscript{113} The Worker 5/11/1914, 1/4/1915
\textsuperscript{114} The Worker 1/4/1915
up quite an appetite, with the workers munching through 120 sheep per week. The farm’s store had a turnover of £1,000 per month.\textsuperscript{115}

Both Sydney’s \textit{Daily Telegraph} and the \textit{Worker} carried a report praising the Woodlands venture as “a bold, progressive, far-seeing scheme”.\textsuperscript{116} Indeed, it was hoped it would be something of a crown jewel in the nation’s agricultural production. “The State farm”, The \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} crowed, “when the full area is planted, will represent the largest wheat area in the Commonwealth, publicly or privately controlled”.\textsuperscript{117} The NSW Minister for Education argued it was for the good of the British Empire.\textsuperscript{118} This contributed to perceptions that Tottenham was something of a boom town.\textsuperscript{119} With 90,000 acres of land supposedly ready for wheat production in the district and a potential for 110,000 more, the railway coming, rumours of new hotels, and hundreds of labourers “with plenty of cash to spend” there was promise in the air.\textsuperscript{120} However the government’s plan for wheat growing in the area was not without controversy, with claims that it was a folly to be growing the crop so far west, an area with an average rainfall of 19 inches per year.\textsuperscript{121} The westward march of wheat can be seen by the fact that in 1860 the average annual rainfall in the NSW wheat belt was over 35 inches, by 1920 it was a little over 22 inches.\textsuperscript{122} The Minister for Works saw no problem in growing wheat as far west as Tottenham, arguing it was “unwise that land that should bear wheat should be allowed to carry scrub.”\textsuperscript{123}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{115}Ibid
\bibitem{116}Ibid
\bibitem{117}The \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} ‘State Wheat Farm’ 27/9/15
\bibitem{118}The \textit{Argus} 30/10/1914, p. 6
\bibitem{119}Dubbo \textit{Liberal}, ‘The Tottenham Boom’, 23/2/1915
\bibitem{120}Ibid; The \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} 27/9/15
\bibitem{121}Ibid ‘State Wheat Growing. Minister Replies to Criticism. Capabilities of Tottenham District.’ 20/11/14
\bibitem{123}The \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} 10/11/1910
\end{thebibliography}

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not just the government being seduced by visions of golden grain. Many of the new family farms had also started growing wheat; 26,000 acres at the pastoral station Orange Plains were cleared and ploughed for wheat.\textsuperscript{124} The report on Woodlands carried by the \textit{Daily Telegraph} and the \textit{Worker} in April 1915 saw the simultaneous projects of the railway extension and Woodlands as being complimentary to one another. Together they would bring wealth to the back blocks.\textsuperscript{125}

The population of Tottenham at this time was about 400—but this is a misleadingly small figure, when one considers there were as many as 1,000 people working at Woodlands outside the town, and more than 200 at the gradually shifting railway camp.\textsuperscript{126} Considering too the many farms surrounding the town, the district population would have been well in excess of a thousand. Eileen Lane recalled there being “about 1200 men working at Tottenham” in the period.\textsuperscript{127} According to Pat McCarthy, around 1916 “the population exploded to 2500”.\textsuperscript{128} Being such a young town, in the 1910s none of the workforce had been born in the town. Workers travelled from far and wide to work in the mines. Often they came from other mining areas—from nearby Cobar and Nymagee, from Broken Hill and the Illawarra; or pastoral areas like the Riverina and New England. On arrival they may have found ready employment, but the work was tough.

An incident that took place in Sydney in 1915 highlights a strong demand for work in Tottenham; and it also offers contested views of living and working conditions there.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{124} The \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} ‘State Wheat Farm’ 27/9/15
\textsuperscript{125} The \textit{Worker} 1/4/1915
\textsuperscript{126} Tottenham Historical Society, \textit{Unearthed: The Story of Copper Mining in Tottenham and Albert} p. 29, \textit{Worker} 1/4/1915, p. 17, 5/11/1914
\textsuperscript{127} Tottenham Historical Society, \textit{Tottenham Reminiscs}. p. 179
\textsuperscript{128} Pat McCarthy, ‘Tottenham’s Heritage Walk’, compiled for the Tottenham Historical Society, 2003, p. 11}
In January a crowd of unemployed descended on the office of acting NSW Premier John Henry Cann, three of whom were chosen as representatives and permitted to see him. Cann told the three that there was work available for 100 men clearing land at Tottenham. They could live at ‘Canvas Town’ for 1s 6d per week. This clearing work could have been either along the railway line or at the Government farm, but probably the latter. The Tottenham offer was rejected. The unemployed men had heard that men already working at Tottenham were not even earning enough to cover their food, despite working ten hour days; moreover, the men were not prepared to live in Canvas Town, which is to say, in tents. Cann was dismissive of the men, whom he described as a mob. In his eyes the problem was that they simply did not want to travel to the country—and if they were not willing to work at Tottenham he would not concern himself with seeking other work for them.

The men then sought out the Minister for Public Works, Arthur Griffith, but police refused the men access. While their wage fears may have been unfounded—Cann claimed 10 shillings per day was the rate of pay for clearing land, which was in line with other local labourers—the incident does draw attention to the fact that many labourers in Tottenham, after working ten grinding hours each day, had not even a room to retire to. The labourer had to supply his own tent.

As was the case in many rural areas, in Tottenham’s early days women were greatly outnumbered by men. Of the registered voters in Tottenham in 1913, roughly two

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129 *The Sydney Morning Herald* ‘Mr Cann’s Office Mobbed’ 16/1/1915
130 *Ibid*
131 *The Sydney Morning Herald* ‘Barred by the Police’ 16/1/1915
132 *The Sydney Morning Herald* ‘Mr Cann’s Office Mobbed’ 16/1/1915
133 *The Sydney Morning Herald* ‘Barred by the Police’ 16/1/1915

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thirds were male. Of those males, roughly two thirds were unmarried. Women were overwhelmingly occupied with ‘domestic duties’, rather than paid work, though there were a small number of exceptions, with one woman working as postmistress, and another working at the school. Local self-described ‘broken down old miner’ Keith Berryman, writing for the Tottenham Historical Society in 2005, offered a snapshot of what such domestic duties consisted of on an average day:

A typical day for the wife would be to get up about five o’clock, cut wood for and light the open fire, cart water in buckets from the nearest water hole, heat the camp oven up and cook a few chops if available or stew made from anything from rabbits to birds. This would be followed by washing up in a tin dish, packing her husband’s lunch which would mostly consist of salt meat and damper, dress the kids for school… make the beds, sweep the floors, wash the clothes by hand, do some darning and sewing. In addition, she would have to tend a small vegetable garden if there was enough water, cook the day’s meals, make soap, salt the meat and patch clothes, darn socks, milk a goat or cow, set milk and make butter etc. As well as being a housewife, she often had to be mother, doctor, nurse, midwife, counsellor, dressmaker, teacher and many other things. Night time would have brought about some unwanted frustrations, which would have included such things as tired and sometimes cranky husbands, collecting wayward kids, filling lanterns and cooking tea by their meagre light, ironing clothes, washing up and using the water to wet the earthen floors down after the kids had gone to bed.

Although a precise figure is impossible, there were Chinese working around the Tottenham area, generally working in labouring jobs such as land clearing, by way of ring-barking trees; digging up rabbit warrens or digging dams. This was typical of

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134 1913 State Electoral Roll, NSW, District of Lachlan, Tottenham Polling-Place
135 Statistical Register of NSW, 1916, p. 58
136 Tottenham Historical Society, Unearthed: The Story of Copper Mining in Tottenham and Albert p. 23
137 Chase, Window on Dandaloo: a community on the Bogan river, p. 17 & p. 39

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the work Chinese performed in western NSW. Their most visible achievement at Tottenham was the digging of the large government tank. There was also at least one Chinese store owner, Mr. Ah Gee, and a Chinese market garden on the Bogan River. At the turn of the century there were 55 Chinese living at Dandaloo. The Chinese workers generally lived separately to white workers. There were up to 1,000 Chinese living in the Nymagee district in the late 1880s. While there were some market gardens there, most were employed clearing tens of thousands of acres of scrub.

The squatters had a high estimation of them—they would work for lower wages than the white men, and one local squatter contrasted the Chinese’ sobriety with the white workers’ enthusiasm for “getting drunk and kicking up rows”. The white workers in the area were not so enamoured with the Chinese—their willingness to work for lower wages provoked considerable enmity. However, just how ‘willing’ the Chinese workers in the district were to work for lower wages is questionable—given that they were “under the control of two or three chief men”, and these same few arranged the working conditions with the squatters. Given not only the short distance but the fact that many miners in Tottenham had come from Nymagee, there is little reason to doubt the same attitudes existed in Tottenham. A low point in relations between the two communities in this part of the state was a mass brawl at

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138 See McGowan, "Adaptation and organization: the history and heritage of the Chinese in the Riverina and western New South Wales, Australia."
139 Chase, Window on Dandaloo: a community on the Bogan river. p. 20
140 Ibid. p. 50
141 Ibid. p. 17
142 The Australian Town and Country Journal ‘In and Around Nymagee, a Coming Mining Centre’ 19/5/1888
143 Ibid
144 Ibid
145 Ibid
146 Ibid

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Hillston in 1895 involving 50 people, which left one Chinese dead.\textsuperscript{147} One Tottenham resident, in his infancy a survivor of a massacre in New Zealand, was a veteran of Lambing Flat, where he sustained an arm injury.\textsuperscript{148} There was probably a Chinese presence among the hundreds of workers clearing scrub at the Government farm at Tottenham, and it is said by locals that Chinese workers were among those who constructed the railway line. However beyond this little is known of the Chinese in the town, as there is a paucity of documentary evidence. In Tottenham, unlike nearby Dandaloo, their presence appears to have been rather fleeting.

As Tottenham in the 1910s could in many respects be described as a ‘frontier town’, it arguably shared the lack of overt religious observance, and at times open hostility to religious authority, that Russel Ward describes as the norm among bush workers. This is perhaps best reflected in a bush song published by ‘Banjo’ Paterson in 1905:

\begin{quote}
I will go to no Church and to no house of Prayer,
To see a white shirt on a preacher.
And in no Courthouse on a book will I swear
To injure a poor fellow-creature

For parsons and preachers are all a mere joke,
Their hands must be greased by a fee;
But with the poor toiler to share your last ‘toke’,
That’s the religion for me.\textsuperscript{149}
\end{quote}

There were no church buildings in Tottenham in the 1910s, and there did not appear the same sense of urgency about establishing any as there had been for more practical

\textsuperscript{147} McGowan, ”Adaptation and organization: the history and heritage of the Chinese in the Riverina and western New South Wales, Australia.”
\textsuperscript{148} \textit{Narromine News and Trangie Advocate} 6/6/1930, p. 1
\textsuperscript{149} Ward, Russel. \textit{The Australian Legend} Oxford: Melbourne, 1989 p. 183

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institutions like the post office, a railway link and a government school.\textsuperscript{150} There were however periodic visits from the ‘bush brothers’—Anglican preachers from the Brotherhood of the Good Shepherd, established in the 1890s, who roamed through the ‘back blocks’ of western NSW and Queensland.\textsuperscript{151} At this time there were seven staff of the Brotherhood, which consisted of five probationers, a reverend based in Dubbo, and one in Nymagee. Tottenham, along with Nymagee, Canbelego and Shuttleton formed the ‘Parish of the Mining District.’\textsuperscript{152} Naturally, the brothers disputed the lack of religiosity in the bush, however even they conceded that “bushmen were generally suspicious of a clergyman until the latter showed himself manly.”\textsuperscript{153} This, often, the brothers attempted to do. They contrasted their own approach to the scattered populace of the bush with the ‘puritan moral policing’ of some of their predecessors, and for this probably encountered more success—or at the least, more respect.\textsuperscript{154} They were well-regarded in Tottenham and travelled on push bikes.\textsuperscript{155} The brothers saw good in the character of the bush workers—and, while hoping to switch their allegiance from the spirit to the Spirit—understood why many bush workers turned to drink.\textsuperscript{156}

In early 1908, of the prospective students for the hoped-for school, roughly two thirds were Anglican and one third Catholic, which gives a reasonable idea of the denominational makeup of the town; it is possible, though, that this may have changed somewhat with the influx of labourers to work in the mines and other manual

\textsuperscript{150} Two churches were constructed in the 1920s Terry Kass, \textit{A Thematic History of Lachlan Shire}, p. 56
\textsuperscript{152} Pat McCarthy, ‘Tottenham’s Heritage Walk’, compiled for the Tottenham Historical Society, 2003, p. 21
\textsuperscript{153} \textit{Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent} ‘Religion in the Bush’ 29/5/1909
\textsuperscript{154} Tomlin, \textit{The Story of the Bush Brotherhoods}. p. 49
\textsuperscript{155} Tottenham Historical Society, \textit{Tottenham Reminisces}. pp. 181-182
\textsuperscript{156} Tomlin, \textit{The Story of the Bush Brotherhoods}.  

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occupations. Peter Sheldon notes a high proportion of Irish among construction labourers in this decade, for instance.\textsuperscript{157} If Irish Catholics were over-represented in the ranks of itinerant labourers, then the reverse, that they were under-represented in Tottenham’s settled families with children, is also a fair assumption.

As noted in regards to the railway, one of the key actors in local politics in this period was the local Progress Association. They campaigned for a school, a post office, a railway connection and a permanent police presence, all of which proved successful. Members of the Progress Association included Walter Long, the headmaster of the school, who was its secretary, and Mr T. H. Conley, who was its secretary when it was still the ‘Orange Plains’ Progress Association in 1908.\textsuperscript{158}

An enduring problem in Tottenham was the lack of an adequate permanent water supply. W.E. Sheaffe of Orange Plains handed over one of the station’s dams, known as the Leg-o-Mutton, to the Tottenham community for its water supply upon it being proclaimed a village.\textsuperscript{159} It was far from satisfactory. The issue of water was being raised in 1907, and over the following decade proved a hurdle for both the town and the mines.\textsuperscript{160} The issue was still being raised 50 years later.\textsuperscript{161} This was more than a mere inconvenience, as was apparent when a fire broke out at J. Lyell’s store in ‘old town’: there was no water available and the building was gutted.\textsuperscript{162}

\textsuperscript{158} Roslyn McFadyen, \textit{Tottenham Central School 1908-2008: A Brief History} p. 9
\textsuperscript{159} Pat McCarthy ‘Tottenham’s Heritage Walk’ compiled for the Tottenham Historical Society, 2003 p. 23
\textsuperscript{160} See for instance \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 22/2/1912 p. 13
\textsuperscript{161} Ronald McKie, "Tottenham: the town where anything can happen," \textit{The Australian Women’s Weekly}, 27/8/1958 1958. pp. 4-5 & The Sydney Morning Herald 21/10/1907
\textsuperscript{162} \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald} 20/2/1913
spectacularly, in 1929 there was no water to fight a blaze which left the main street in ruins. The fire caused £10,000 worth of damage, with many businesses destroyed.163

There were two main methods of transport for most residents of the Tottenham district in this period—walking or the bicycle. With the invention of the pneumatic tyre and the use of two equal sized wheels rather than the injury-inducing penny-farthing, the bicycle became a convenient and cheap way of travelling large distances, with the added benefit of ensuring a longer life for the owner’s shoes.164 To the shearer it was a god-send, and they could pile onto it, usually precariously, food, water, clothes and tools.165 Cheap was a relative term however—many were still confined to walking. In many cases people would walk what would today be considered enormous distances, especially those residing outside of town. Children would walk for hours to attend school, women would walk for hours to the nearest shop, and men would walk for hours to the workplace.166 The use of horses was also widespread, though more often as beasts of burden than personal transport. Robert Lee notes that in 1920 there were 661,800 horses in NSW—one horse for every two people; while Queensland in fact had more horses than people.167 The motor car was a rare sight in Tottenham at this stage. For the well-off few who had access to this luxury, the primitive roads proved an obstacle. The condition of the road between Tottenham and Trangie was so dire that it gained a reputation as one of the worst roads in the state.168 In 1915, the bicycle of a visiting official from the Public Works

163 The Sydney Morning Herald ‘Tottenham Outbreak’ 11/2/1929
164 Blainey, Black Kettle and Full Moon. pp. 116-118
166 Blainey, Black Kettle and Full Moon.
167 Robert Lee, Transport: An Australian History (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010). p. 84
168 Tottenham Historical Society, Unearthed: The Story of Copper Mining in Tottenham and Albert p. 26
Department was wrecked when he rode into an “immense” hole. In parliament Thomas Brown argued the need for government-directed engineers in response to the poor state of roads and other public utilities in Tottenham and nearby communities like Nymagee and Mineral Hill.

Tottenham’s economy was dominated by primary industries, and its demographics were dominated by single men and new arrivals. By the time of the Great War, Tottenham could be looked at from two different angles. On the one hand, as identified above, it had been described by various observers as ‘rough’, ‘non-permanent’, and ‘uncontrollable’. On the other hand, it seemed to be developing into a thriving community. A variety of businesses had sprung up, output at the mines was increasing, a school and post office had successfully been established and a railway was on the way, and there was a ‘progress association’ feverishly striving for the community’s advancement. Tottenham was charging at a furious pace, but hadn’t yet escaped the frontier.
3. The Rise of the IWW Internationally and in Australia

“‘The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.”’

This chapter will narrate the origins of the IWW America, its arrival in Australia, and provide an introduction to its weltanschauung. The Industrial Workers of the World were born out of the harsh labour conditions in early 20th century America, where the nativist craft unions were seen as a largely ineffective method of securing adequate working conditions. The IWW emerged in Australia within a relatively short space of time. There, an anti-political faction of the Wobblies became dominant.

In 1905 a large convention of militant unionists, anarchists and socialists, prominent among them the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), was held in Chicago. The delegates agreed on the formation of a new front, the IWW, which would offer a stark contrast in strategy to what they viewed as the failed approach of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). A driving idea behind this new movement was that if workers were united along industry lines rather than narrower craft lines, they would find themselves in a far more powerful position, and that in such a situation their tactics, especially strike action, would prove more successful. Outside the United States the IWW had a presence in wide number of countries, but its success was generally confined to the ‘Anglo-sphere’—Australia, Canada, Britain, New Zealand

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1 ‘IWW Preamble’, quoted in Walker C. Smith’s ‘Sabotage’
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and South Africa. Both Vere Gordon Childe and Brian Fitzpatrick saw the rise of the IWW in Australia as the most important development in the country’s labour history since 1890.

The infant IWW was irreconcilably divided in 1908 on the question of whether the movement should engage in the political process or stick to the industrial sphere. Those against political participation proved triumphant and changed the preamble of the IWW constitution, removing “until all the toilers come together on the political as well as on the industrial field” and replacing it with “until the workers of the world organise as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system.” Daniel De Leon, who had assumed a dominant position in the movement and had been open to the idea of political engagement, left the movement, setting up an alternative group in Detroit. The group which remained in Chicago and favoured ‘direct action’ rather than political engagement, became the leading IWW faction in America and Australia.

The Wobblies (that is, the ascendant Chicago strand) have generally been labelled as revolutionary industrial unionists, syndicalists, or anarcho-syndicalists. The movement has been described as the Anglo world’s version of syndicalism, with

2 Burgmann, Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia. p. 41

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syndicalism being traditionally strongest in France, Italy and Spain. 6 The IWW believed that the state could be usurped by associations of workers assuming control of industries. They rejected statism and parliamentary representation. This distinguished them from many socialists, who in theory believed strongly in the State, and in practice perceived the parliament as an effective means of change.

Rather than the socialist parliamentary path the IWW preferred ‘direct action’—fighting the boss at the point of production. A recurrent theme surrounding the IWW was sabotage. In his pamphlet on the idea, ‘Sabotage’, Walker C. Smith argued that “sabotage is the destruction of profits to gain a definite, revolutionary, economic end. It has many forms.”7 To what extent the Wobblies actually engaged in sabotage is a matter for debate; certainly the idea that they were engaging in sabotage was a justification the authorities would use to clamp down on them.

Despite many wild accusations against them, the Wobblies appear to have largely interpreted sabotage, symbolised by the wooden shoe and the black ‘sab’ cat, as working slow—‘a bad day’s work for a bad day’s pay’. Such tactics gained currency after the successful use in 1889 by Glasgow dock labourers of ca’canny or ‘value for value’ to gain better conditions. This tactic was explained in the Seaman’s Chronicle thus: “Pay £4.10s a month to a seaman and he will give them £4.10s worth of seamanship or firing. Pay them £3.10s and they will give £3.10s worth of work….There will be no strike, not a bit of it! Men will remain peacefully at work,

6 Burgmann, Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia. p. 41
7 Walker C. Smith, ‘Sabotage’, copy held by NSWSR, 7/6720

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but they will hurry up or ease down according to pay received".8 This was referred to as ‘the go slow’. An example of this in the Australian context is provided by an irate letter writer to *The Sydney Morning Herald* in March 1916. He claimed to have overheard a Wobbly speaker state that he was “doing as little work as he possibly could do” at Cockatoo Island, and that in fact the whole workforce there “belonged to the ‘go slow’ brigade”.9 The speaker also boasted of having spread his idleness to the shearing sheds of Queensland.10 However individual Wobblies did on occasion hint at a more ‘destructive’ interpretation of sabotage, such as Les James writing from Narrandera, in south west NSW, in 1916:

> By Jesus Tom [Glynn] if conscription comes in persuade all rebels to spread out over the country and sabotise [sic] all and sundry (masters). If it was done on a large enough scale it’s on the cards that we would gain recognition and the Boneheads get wise.11

The governments and press in both America and Australia portrayed the Wobblies as hell-bent on pursuing violence and destruction of property. The debate over how to interpret sabotage can be taken back to the very origin of the word. Geoff Brown argues that sabotage derives from old “French usage involving the word *sabot*: such as ‘dormir comme un sabot’ (to sleep extremely deeply or heavily) and ‘travailler comme un sabot’ (to work slowly, clumsily, and over-deliberately)”, while others have argued that the word derives from throwing the *sabot*, or clog, into machines and thereby damaging or wrecking them.12

9*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Letter to the Editor, 20/3/1916
10*ibid*
11NSWSR, 7/5590, 14/9/16
12Brown, *Sabotage: A Study in Industrial Conflict*. p. xii

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While the IWW viewed the go slow and sabotage as important tools, this did not diminish the importance of the strike in their eyes. In fact the strike was viewed as the pinnacle of sabotage, a way of paralysing the means of production on a huge scale. The general strike was revered as an almost apocalyptic weapon to deploy, which if used successfully would result in the *Götterdämmerung* of capitalism.\(^{13}\) The IWW in Australia and elsewhere realised they did not yet have the strength to pursue a successful general strike. However, Australia came mightily close in 1917, at least in its most populous state of NSW, and this was at least partly through the spread of the Wobbly message.\(^{14}\) ‘The great strike’ as many labelled it, began over the unlikely issue of a new card-system designed to record work at the railway workshops at Randwick.\(^{15}\) Many of the workers there feared its intended result was ‘speeding up’. At the peak of the strike there were 69,000 workers off the job in NSW; and about 100,000 on strike nation-wide.\(^{16}\)

Australia’s first experience of the IWW was a club established in Sydney in 1907 under the wings of the Socialist Labor Party.\(^{17}\) Other clubs were formed, including one in Cobar in western New South Wales. After the split in America, the clubs in Australia initially remained loyal to the De Leonist Detroit faction. However, within a relatively short space of time the Chicago faction, or as dismayed De Leonists called

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\(^{13}\) NSWSR, Roland Kennedy, ‘Railway Workers Be Organised’ 7/5596

\(^{14}\) Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia, 1900-1921*. pp. 142-144


\(^{16}\) Robert Bollard, "The Active Chorus: The Mass Strike of 1917 in Eastern Australia" (Victoria University, 2007). p. 4


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them, the “bummery element”, would come to predominate. A great deal of Chicago’s success was due to the fact that it not only advocated abstention from parliamentary politics but fervent rejection. This appealed to the many workers who saw parliamentary representatives as sell-outs, as typified by the popular Wobbly song ‘Bump me into Parliament’, sung to the tune of Yankee Doodle:

Come listen all kind friends of mine  
I want to move a motion  
To make an Eldorado here  
I’ve got a bonza notion

Bump me into parliament  
Bounce me any way at all  
Bang me into parliament  
On next election day

Some very wealthy friends I know  
Declare I am most clever  
While some can talk for an hour or so  
Why I can talk forever

I know the Arbitration Act  
As a sailor knows his riggings  
So if you want a small advance  
I’ll talk to Justice Higgins

I’ve read my bible ten times through  
And Jesus justifies me  
The man who does not vote for me  
By Christ he crucifies me

Oh yes I am a Labor man  
And believe in revolution  
The quickest way to bring it on  
Is talking constitution

I think the worker and the boss  
Should keep their present stations  
So I will surely pass a bill  
‘Industrial Relations’

So bump them into parliament  
Bounce them any way at all  
Bung them into parliament

ibid p. 52
Don’t let the Court decay

On top of its opposition to parliamentary politics, Chicago was anti-capitalist, anti-respectable and anti-nationalist, all of which set it apart as distinct from other political and labour groupings. This strand of the Australian IWW first found expression in Adelaide. A Sydney De Leonist Wobbly, Peter Christensen, had travelled there seeking work and he proposed to the South Australian Socialist Party that an IWW Club be established. Another member spoke in favour of a Local (Chicago used the term Local instead of Club) instead, and distributed some Chicago literature among the ten members. A vote was later held and Chicago won the day. In a short space of time it spread across the country, with the Wobblies based in Sydney becoming the most prominent. This was partly due to the arrival of a number of radicals in that city in 1912-1913 from various parts of the globe who had previously gathered in, and then been forced out of, New Zealand.

The IWW in Australia had an international breadth beyond that of any other labour or political organisation of the period, at least in terms of its leadership, the ranks of which were filled with globetrotters. Tom Barker, Charles Reeve, J.B. King, Tom Glynn, Morris Fagan, Donald Grant—a veritable who’s who of the leading Wobblies—were all born overseas, mostly in other Anglophone countries. John ‘Jack’ Benjamin King was born in Canada, and had shot to prominence in the country’s largest IWW Local, in Vancouver. Lumber workers formed the core of British

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20 Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics p. 65
22 See chapter below on ‘The Kennedys: A Rebel Family’
23 Fagan also used Joseph as a first name

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Columbia’s IWW, which in turn, along with Alberta formed the backbone of the IWW in Canada. At its peak the Canadian IWW boasted 10,000 members. King had also been prominently involved with the IWW south of the border, with rumours of his alleged nefarious activities there, including murder and dynamite, swirling in Australia—none of which were true. King was firmly in the Chicago camp. In November 1911 he arrived in the antipodes as “the prophet of a new creed”, in a New Zealand undergoing industrial turmoil; “[i]f God had been a Wobbly” observed Erik Olssen, “he could not have timed King’s advent better”. He spent the summer of 1911/12 espousing industrial unionism to the workers of Auckland, during which time he earned a crust as a labourer. By December he was “the dominant ideologue of revolution”. Leaving Auckland in early 1912, he travelled around the mining towns of the North Island, and wound up at Waihi. There he ran evening economics classes, attended by around 30 workers. As he had at Auckland, King toiled alongside the audience to whom he preached: in Waihi he worked in the mines. Amidst the turmoil of the 1912 miners’ strike in Waihi, King’s effective agitating and organising raised the ire of the powers that be. His lessons on ‘sabotage’ were even raised in parliament, but he fled to Australia before the authorities could lay their hands on him.

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25 Burgmann, Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia. p. 39
28 ibid
29 Derby, "A Country Considered to Be Free- New Zealand and the I.W.W.." p. 3
31 Derby, "A Country Considered to Be Free- New Zealand and the I.W.W.." p. 3
Tom Barker was born in Britain in 1887 and served in the British army. After tiring of his lot in life in Liverpool, he headed to New Zealand in 1909 to “try his luck”. He took on a job in the tramways in Auckland, and upon joining the Tramway Union underwent something of a political awakening, henceforth taking an active role in the Socialist Party. In May 1912 Barker defected from the Socialists, in which he had been the head of the Auckland branch, to the IWW. It was a blow for the Socialists and a boon for the Wobblies. Soon he was the leading organiser of the IWW in New Zealand. He acted tirelessly during the great strike of 1913, travelling the country leading meetings and peddling Wobbly literature. Over the course of a single fortnight in Wellington he organised eleven public meetings. When farmers were being brought in to Wellington as strike breakers, Barker and others would ambush them by night, blocking the road into Wellington with barbed wire and hurling rocks at the farmers, who, trying to escape, would wind up entangled in the wire. They were anti-militarists but, clearly, not pacifists. For his work, Barker was sentenced to three months gaol for sedition, though he too fled to Australia.

Tom Glynn was born in Ireland, migrating to Australia in 1900. After fighting in the Boer War he lived in South Africa for a number of years, working in the police force and on the trams, where he helped to organise a strike. After South Africa he returned to Ireland, then made his way to North America before returning to Australia in 1912 where he became Secretary of the Sydney Local and editor of its newspaper

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34 Ibid.
35 Prebble, “Trouble Makers: Anarchism & Syndicalism. The early years of the libertarian movement in Aotearoa.”
36 Mark Derby ‘A Country Considered to Be Free- New Zealand and the IWW’

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Direct Action. Charles Reeve was another British émigré who, like Barker and King, spent time agitating in New Zealand. He became secretary of the Auckland IWW in August 1912. Over the preceding months he had agitated with J.B. King amongst others.

Befitting a movement whose leadership tended to be composed of foreign-born globetrotters, the IWW did not discriminate on grounds of race or nationality, unlike other labour and political organisations of the period. This exposed them to a large audience of workers who were otherwise unrepresented and that in many cases faced exceptionally harsh conditions. In North America the IWW was welcoming to the otherwise ignored African-American and Mexican workers, as well as the non English speaking European immigrant communities; Wobbly literature was published in a plethora of languages. This occurred on a smaller scale in Australia, with campaigning among various immigrant communities in Broken Hill; Russians in Sydney and Queensland; and Chinese and Japanese in Darwin, being three notable examples. The Russians especially offered a receptive ear, as so many of them were political refugees, already radicalised. The IWW hall in Sydney housed 600 Russian language books. The ‘foreignness’ of the IWW was often emphasised and exaggerated by opponents of the IWW, with countless examples of the “alien anarchists” label being used. However the immigrant members of the IWW in Australia were almost all from Europe or the white settler societies of the ‘new world’, and in the rank and file of Australia’s mainly Anglo-Celtic Australian-born.

38 Steiner, The History of the Industrial Workers of the World in Aotearoa. p. 4
40 Peter John Rushton, "The Industrial Workers of the World in Sydney 1913-1917: a study in revolutionary ideology and practice" (MA, University of Sydney, 1969), pp. 211-212
41 For one of many examples see ‘Murderers, Fire-bugs, and “Martyrs”’ The Register 8/12/1916

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IWW, immigrant membership was not as statistically significant as it was in the USA. Aborigines received no serious attention in terms of propaganda, and if any were members their numbers were negligible. The IWW shared the view that the Aborigines of Australia were a dying race.42

As on the subject of race, the IWW’s attitude to women also differed from other labour organisations and from mainstream society, with their ideal of the ‘rebel girl’.43 Accordingly women at times assumed the role of public speakers, a role not seen elsewhere in this period. However this was because of the ‘novelty value’ of female stump orators as much as anything else.44 The two most notable ‘rebel girls’ in Australia were May Ewart Wilson, a barmaid involved with the Sydney Local; and radical poet Lesbia Keogh, both of whom married other Wobblies.45 May Ewart married Jock Wilson in Long Bay Gaol. Tom Barker recalls that although “we had very few women members,” May was “one of our strongest supporters”.46 Despite their open attitude the IWW was predominantly white, especially in Australia, and overwhelmingly male. Tom Barker described the IWW as a masculine organisation;47 shearer Spencer Barden labelled his fellow Wobblies “the bold roughs”;48 ‘virile’ and ‘manly’ were terms used over and over again by Wobblies to describe themselves. As Francis Shor argues, their masculinity, or at the very least their self-perception of being masculine, was one of the Wobblies’ defining characteristics.49

42 Burgmann, Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia. p. 85
43 See ibid. pp. 93-110
44 Ibid. p. 98
45 Ibid. p. 100
46 Fry, Tom Barker and the I.W.W.: oral history. P. 20
47 Ibid. p. 19
48 NSWSR, 7/5590
The centrepiece of the IWW’s effort to spread its message was *Direct Action*, a fortnightly, later weekly paper published by the Sydney Local. The Wobblies in Australia were prolific writers; passionate and biting commentary appeared from a variety of contributors. Frank Cain aptly describes how *Direct Action* “preached ...in unadorned and frank prose, it used caustic and sneering comment and it provoked scepticism and incited rebelliousness from each page…it came to be regarded as the leader of Australian radical thought.”

A regular feature was the vivid and highly provocative cartoons of Syd Nichols, one of which led to the gaoling of Tom Barker. The *Direct Action* editors were not shy of praising their work, proclaiming that “one D.A. in the hands of a man who has paid for it will do more good than fourteen philosophers discussing the referenda and Michael Bakunin.” The paper had the added benefit of being a highly effective fundraising tool, earning the IWW as much as £200 each month. In 1916, at the height of its circulation, 16,000 copies of *Direct Action* were being sold each week for one penny each. Yet for all its success *Direct Action* was but one of many propaganda platforms for the Wobblies. The American IWW newspapers *Solidarity* and *Industrial Worker* were imported. Pamphlets were distributed at a frenetic pace, and there was always a warm welcome for capable public speakers. One particular site favoured by such speakers as a venue for their oratory was the Domain in Sydney—here speakers would give rousing sermons on Sunday afternoons, often with police watching on. Tom Barker claimed that the large crowds represented “up to a sixth of the population of Sydney gathering...

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51 Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia*. p. 190
52 *Direct Action* 15/1/1915.
53 NSWSR, 7/5595, Tom Barker, 14/6/17
54 Lovell, *Marxism and Australian Socialism: Before the Bolshevik revolution*. p. 132
around and trying to hear the speakers.” Another tool, which Direct Action regularly ran advertisements for, was “one of the most effective propaganda dodges that can be used”—that is, stickers, which carried simple messages like ‘fast workers die young’—which were sold to Locals in batches of 1000 for 2s 6d. Or 10,000 for £1.

The IWW had little in the way of formally prescribed doctrine aside from working class solidarity. They had the goal of One Big Union, but there was not too much attention paid to how it would operate in practice. Direct action was seen as the means to achieve it but this, as with other Wobbly slogans and symbols, was rather loosely defined and open to interpretation. Much of this was left to the spontaneity and initiative of the rank and file rather than the more ‘scientific’ approach taken by other Marxist and socialist groups. In many ways this was the attraction of the IWW.

Potential recruits were not moralised to, or lectured to on abstract points of doctrine. Direct Action argued that the “scientific socialist” could often be among “the worst enemies of the working class… he [‘the talker’] had the theory of socialism down pat, but he lived the life of one of the boss’ stool pigeons”. They did not have strict theoretical guidelines imposed upon them (though of course the class struggle was always at the centre of their thinking). Preoccupation with dogma, the IWW felt, was the bane of revolutionary movements. In a similar vein, once members were recruited they were not ordered about by any internal bureaucracy. This appealed to those workers of a rebellious streak who resented authority figures per se, whether they be in parliament, the constabulary or the labour movement. As such the IWW

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56 See, for instance, Direct Action 15/1/1916; 5/2/1916
57 Direct Action ‘Talkers and Doers’ 18/12/1915
58 Direct Action 7/7/1917

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had a rather simple message to impart. Spreading the message was made all the more easy by the fact that the typical Wobbly was an unskilled transient worker. It was through such people that the movement grew. As workers moved from place to place, those of a particular outlook would spread the message of industrial unionism by word of mouth, and increasingly through pamphlets and literature. Much, if not most, of the pamphlets were sourced from their American counterparts.

The IWW was opposed to imperialism. Unlike most other Australian groups or individuals who shared this view however, for the Wobblies this did not translate into Australian nationalism, nor for that matter Irish nationalism. In the wake of the Easter Rising in 1916, Peter Larkin, a member of the Sydney Local and brother of famous Irish activist James Larkin, expressed the view that Ireland should belong not to ‘the Irish’ but to ‘Irish workers’. In Ireland, syndicalism or Marxism and the push for independence were at times hand in hand. One of the leaders of the Easter Rising who would later be executed for his role, James ‘Jim’ Connolly, had been a Wobbly activist in America. As Connolly had put it “if you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the Socialist Republic, your efforts will be in vain”.

The Wobblies were also strongly anti-militarist. It was during the First World War that the Australian IWW shot to prominence in the national consciousness. The Labor

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61 John Newsinger, Rebel City: Larkin, Connolly and the Dublin Labour Movement. p. 119

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Party pursued the war with vigour. The trade unions and other labour organisations, while they fought conscription in 1916 and 1917, were not opponents of the war \textit{per se}, and more often than not supportive of it. Opposition to the war largely fell to the IWW, which was open in its hostility to it right from the start. In response to Fisher’s pledge of Australia’s last man and shilling, \textit{Direct Action} declared:

\begin{quote}
When George the Least, by the Grace of God and ignorance of the working-classes Emperor of the Britains (sic) and a million-pound shareholder in the American Steel Trust, wants a great European war to create a vast demand for steel, Mr. Fisher and his gang and all their toadies rise to the occasion, and are prepared to give our last man and our last shilling to see Georgie and his cobbers through the business deal.
\end{quote}

They railed from soap boxes and plastered walls with slogans such as “Don’t become hired murderers! Don’t join the army or navy”, and they distributed copies of ‘War: What For?’\textsuperscript{62} The Wobblies delighted in ironically using the term ‘Prussianism’ to describe the Australian government’s attitude to the war and to radicals such as themselves. It was the IWW’s attitude towards the war, especially, that would ultimately lead to a crackdown on them by the authorities. This intensified in 1916 resulting in the movement being outlawed and twelve of its leading members being imprisoned on trumped up treason charges after a spate of fires in Sydney.\textsuperscript{63}

By 1916 the IWW were a considerable force in Australia, bolstered by the arrival of influential foreign-born Wobblies, many of whom arrived via New Zealand. They carried a strong militant message, heightened by the ascendancy of the direct-actionist

\textsuperscript{62} Turner, \textit{Industrial Labour and Politics} p. 71
\textsuperscript{63} For a full account see Ian Turner \textit{Sydney’s Burning: An Australian Political Conspiracy} Alpha Books: Sydney, 1969
Chicago faction. Their voice was a loud one in the political and industrial landscape of Australia.
4. The Kennedys: A Rebel Family

This chapter introduces an extraordinary family, the Kennedys, who were influential in the Tottenham community and influential to the story of the IWW, in Australia and internationally. It is a prime example of why local history and wider history should not always be dealt with separately. As well as looking at the life and times of the Kennedy family the chapter will offer a glimpse at the people who were in many ways the family’s adversaries – the police.

The family were Irish Catholics originating in county Galway in Ireland’s west, the same county which produced the Direct Action editor Tom Glynn. Michael Kennedy, a farmer and labourer, was born in 1806 in the Parish of Ballinakill. In 1847, at the height of the Great Famine in Ireland, Michael and his wife Margaret joined the exodus of emigrants escaping to the New World. In November 1847 they boarded the ‘Hyderabad’ at London docks, bound for Australia, and landed at Sydney on the 19th of February 1848. Margaret, already the mother of three children, was pregnant during the voyage. The eldest of the couple’s eight children to survive, born in 1839, was given the father’s name.

Shortly after arriving in Sydney the family crossed the Great Dividing Range, settling in central west NSW. Margaret gave birth to Joseph Thomas Kennedy on the 15th of

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1 NSWBDM, Death Certificate for Michael Kennedy, 1884/009052
2 NSWSR, Reel 2135, 4/4786

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April 1848 at Boree, west of Orange. At this time Michael was working primarily as a shepherd; he also seems to have spent time fossicking for gold. In 1874 their son Michael, a farmer, married Jeanette Tasker at Parkes Roman Catholic Church. Parkes, in the district of Forbes, had only the year before changed its name from Bushman’s Creek. Michael was 36 at the time. Michael senior died in Parkes on 23rd April 1884, and was buried by the Goobang Creek on the 24th of April 1884. Margaret died in a case of accidental drowning at the Ten Mile Hotel in Parkes (a curious place to drown) on the 22nd of March 1894. She was buried two days later at Parkes Roman Catholic Church.

Michael and Jeanette and their family moved from place to place in NSW’s central-west and west, having lived variously in Molong, Carcoar, Forbes, Parkes and Peak Hill; before settling in Tottenham with most of the children in 1907, the year it was proclaimed a village. In time their children roamed much further afield. They raised a large family. Their first child, Margaret, was born in 1875; a second daughter, Ellen, followed in 1876; a third, Janet, was born in 1878. Their first son was born in 1880, and the tradition of bequeathing the father’s name on the eldest son was continued.

As a young man Michael Kennedy junior, whose middle name was Herbert and who was more often than not referred to as simply ‘Herb’, moved with the family to Tottenham, and after a short period moved to Queensland. While in his mid-twenties

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4 Ibid. p. 189
5 NSWBDM, 1874/002321; Bayley, Condobolin, Down the Lachlan Years Ago: History of Condobolin New South Wales. p. 28
6 NSWBDM, Death Certificate for Margaret Kennedy, 1894/010467

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he moved again, to New Zealand.\textsuperscript{7} By his mid-thirties, he had become something of a veteran IWW agitator. The first record of his time in New Zealand was in Patearoa in 1906, a small settlement in Otago in New Zealand’s South Island: here he became the champion of the Patearoa Draughts Club.\textsuperscript{8} During his years in New Zealand Herb was never settled in one location for any great length of time. In 1908 he was at Inangahua, a coal mining area on the South Island’s west coast. By this stage Herb had become actively involved in politics and unionism. He was elected to be a union Inspector of Mines, and at the age of 28 he was elected secretary of the Inangahua Miners’ Union.\textsuperscript{9} In August 1909 he relinquished this position to return to Australia.\textsuperscript{10} At some point during his time in New Zealand Herb met Joanna Hannigan, whom he married in 1909, and who then accompanied him to Tottenham.\textsuperscript{11}

Quite how long Herb Kennedy remained in Australia is not clear, but he was back in New Zealand by 1912, when he rose to the fore in Waihi, a company town on New Zealand’s North Island which was home to Australasia’s largest gold mine. Just how involved he was in Waihi’s politics was demonstrated in April 1912 when he ran for Mayor, though his bid was unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{7} NSWSR, 9/7213, ‘Report relative to antecedents of Michael Hebert (sic) Kennedy’, Sergeant 2/C Scott, New South Wales Police, Western District, Narromine Station
\textsuperscript{8} Otago Witness 15/8/1906
\textsuperscript{9} West Coast Times 17/3/1909
\textsuperscript{10} Grey River Argus 14/8/1909
\textsuperscript{11} New Zealand Births, Deaths and Marriages
\textsuperscript{12} Thames Star 18/4/1912

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Figure 5: New Zealand
As would be expected from someone in his position, he was in the thickest of the action during the great Waihi strike of 1912. This was the most ferocious industrial battle New Zealand had yet seen; and generally considered a pivotal moment in New Zealand labour history, partly as a result of the violence and the state’s role in putting down the strike. Ten per cent of New Zealand’s police force was deployed to the strike.

The troubles at Waihi began when moderate engine drivers tried to break away from the assertive Federation of Labour and form their own pro-arbitration union. Fearing the beginning of a divide and rule approach by the bosses, the miners struck. However the company would not negotiate and the miners were locked out. During the strike Herb Kennedy was elected president of the Waihi Miners’ Union. In May 1912 Herb Kennedy was among the 32 delegates who attended the conference of the Federation of Labour—‘the Red Feds’—in Wellington, as the delegate for Waihi. A photograph of the conference features Kennedy with J.B. King and radical newspaper editor Robert Samuel Ross, among others. The Waihi strike dominated the conference, at which there were calls to structure the Federation of Labour along IWW lines. Herb Kennedy was among those pushing for the Federation to drop all involvement with politics, including its ties to the Socialist Party.

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13 On the Waihi strike see chapters 10, 11 and 12 of Olssen, The Red Feds: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and the New Zealand Federation of Labour 1908-1914
15 Ibid, pp. 134-147
16 Ibid, no. 34, p. 161
On the weekend of the 9th and 10th of November, 1912, the atmosphere turned ugly in Waihi, with a number of fights occurring; the Miners’ Union’s store was invaded and up-ended. In response to this John Cullen, the new Commissioner of Police, met with Herb Kennedy who was at the time President of the Miners’ Union, on the 11th of November. He convinced Kennedy, with the strike committee’s approval, to disband the union picket, “owing to the disturbance”. Despite this olive branch from the miners, the ‘disturbance’ on the following day dwarfed anything that had preceded it. An anti-union mob marched to the Miners’ Union hall, with a police escort, and stormed it. The marauders painted ‘God Save the King’ on the hall’s wall, which the strikers later modified to ‘God Save J.B. King’. The Red Flag was burnt and replaced with the Union Jack. A fellow Australian member of the Waihi Miners’ union, Fred Evans, was killed during this incident. He had been knocked to the ground by Constable Wade, and ‘Pug’ Harvey, a former heavyweight champion of Yorkshire. Evans’ funeral march, held in Auckland, was the country’s biggest ever industrial procession.

Constable Wade, from Wellington, was shot on the same day. Depending on which side you believe, the shooting—“five or six revolver shots rang out”—was the trigger for the storming of the hall or came in response to it. The constable may in fact have been an ex-colleague of Herb, as Herb had previously worked as a policeman in

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17 Ibid. p. 159
18 Evening Post 14/12/1912, p. 19; Olssen pp. 155-159
19 Prebble, “Trouble Makers: Anarchism & Syndicalism. The early years of the libertarian movement in Aotearoa.”
21 Olssen, The Red Feds: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and the New Zealand Federation of Labour 1908-1914. p. 159
22 Fry, Tom Barker and the I.W.W.: oral history. p. 11
23 The police argued it was Evans who shot Wade: Olssen, The Red Feds: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and the New Zealand Federation of Labour 1908-1914. p. 159

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Wellington for 18 months. As the *Evening Post* put it, “time proved, however, that he was unsuited to the calling, and his resignation followed as a natural course.”24 Indeed it would seem a natural course, if there was any validity to the New Zealand newspaper’s claim that he “decried police, and advised his comrades never to ask their assistance, even if they were being murdered.”25

Herb was present when the hall was attacked, and was forced to seek refuge at a comrade’s house. He argued the police did not provide any protection for the attacked unionists, though they called this a “wild statement”, and claimed they had escorted Herb to the railway station.26 If so, the escort wasn’t of much use, as he was attacked and beaten by ‘scabs’.27 The accounts of this incident vary, one version having one assailant, another two, and in Herb’s account those who attacked him were part of a crowd of “a hundred toughs.”28

In the wake of the Waihi troubles, Herb Kennedy gave an interview to the *Wanganui Chronicle*:

Mr [Fred] Evans is dead—murdered by those toughs and thugs, battered to death with the approval of the Massey Government and the assistance of uniformed policemen, and we should move heaven and earth to bring his murderers to justice. The burglarious scabs and police having brutally maltreated the men within, then took possession of the hall, and all sorts of depredations were committed by the toughs under police supervision... The men are being driven to the bush, homes are being invaded, and the women are not even safe from outrage, nor the children from violence. Lawless law prevails, thuggery has

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24 *Evening Post* 10 October 1916
25 Ibid
26 *Ohinemuri Gazette* ‘The Waihi Trouble’ 27/11/1912, p. 3
27 Ibid
28 *Wanganui Chronicle*, ‘Herb Kennedy’s Narrative’, 2/12/1912

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triumphed for the time being, backed by Government corruption, police
criminality, Labour Party treachery, and the scabbery of toughs, thugs, and the
so-called arbitration unionists.29

The *Wanganui Chronicle* was dismissive of Herb’s account, mirroring police
language by calling it “wild and untruthful”; “language of the kind he indulged in ...
seems to come natural to men of the agitator type”, or “discredited loaders”, as the
*Chronicle* further described them.30

In late November Henry Gray and Henry Bostock appeared in court, charged with
assaulting Herb Kennedy during the violence on November 12th. Kennedy was
present in the courtroom and appeared frequently in the witness box. The police,
although particularly keen to refute the “diabolical” claims that the events which
occurred on the day Herb was attacked constituted a riot, did not mount a particularly
convincing case—“it was simply a series of small fights… and there was a good deal
of hunting and chasing about”, was their courtroom clarification.31 Selwyn Mays, who
represented the police, argued that Kennedy’s case was typical of other cases, and he
claimed that the ‘Red Feds’ had brought the trouble upon themselves. Mays, for
instance, went to great pains to establish Kennedy’s stance on egg-throwing (he said
he did not approve but would not tell the rank and file not to do it). As Mays went on
seeking Kennedy’s opinion on various “objectionable practices”, he asked him
whether he would mind if a person in the street called out to him “you have married a
bloody prostitute.”32 This was a reference to reports in the press on the colourful
language used by strikers’ wives and other female supporters during street

29 *Ibid*
30 *Ibid*
31 *Ohinemuri Gazette* ‘The Waihi Trouble’ 27/11/1912, p. 3
32 *Ibid*
confrontations, whose favoured chants reportedly included “dirty rotten maggoty cancerous scab” to their male opponents and “go to your kennel, you prostitute” to their female opponents. When quizzed on the thin blue line Herb Kennedy stated he “did not think the police were wanted in Waihi at all”.

Both Henry Gray and Henry Bostock were found guilty of the attack on Kennedy and fined 20 shillings each, plus court costs. Kennedy must have been surprised the Magistrate convicted the two at all, as in handing down his verdict the Magistrate nailed his anti-strikers colours to the mast. He scolded the ‘Red Feds’, while for those whom the striking miners condemned as scabs the Magistrate had nothing but praise, especially for the “remarkable self-control” they displayed during their “long period of annoyance and persecution at the hands of the strikers”. In the immediate aftermath of the violence in Waihi between the 9th and 12th of November, many of the strikers were hounded from the town. The names of dozens of prominent “followers of the Red Flag” were published, along with a 48 hour ultimatum for them to leave. It was in this context that the police had ‘escorted’ Herb Kennedy to the railway station.

J.B King, Tom Barker and Charles Reeve, and a number of other direct-actionist wandering Wobblies, were in New Zealand in the same period as Herb, and it was at this time that they forged their links with each other, before continuing their work, and their friendship, on the other side of the Tasman shortly afterwards. They had all

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33 Bay of Plenty Times ‘Waihi Affairs’ 26/11/1912, p. 5
34 Ohinemuri Gazette ‘The Waihi Trouble’ 27/11/1912, p. 3
35 Evening Post 30/11/1912, p. 9
36 Ibid
37 Olssen, The Red Feds: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and the New Zealand Federation of Labour 1908-1914. p. 159
38 Ibid p. 160
been involved in the Waihi strike. Tom Barker was a prominent figure in the general strike of 1913, and was sentenced to three months gaol for “one of the most dangerous speeches made in the history of the industrial trouble and probably in New Zealand”.  

39 He was the first person to be charged with sedition in New Zealand. He was released on a £1500 bond, most of which was paid for by George Higgins, a well-off sympathiser.  

40 Not confident of sticking to the terms of ‘keeping the peace for twelve months’, in February 1914 he left for Australia.  

41 J.B. King’s agitation was even mentioned in parliament, but he also fled to Australia before the authorities could lay their hands on him (after having previously fled Canada).  

42 Charles Reeve too fled across the Tasman in 1913 when the attempted general strike was being put down, around the same time as Tom Barker. The threats against him were not idle ones—his last experience on New Zealand soil was receiving a beating as he attempted to board his ship. Thus when Herb Kennedy arrived back in Tottenham he was among the vanguard of active, influential radicals in the Southern Hemisphere.

With the new mining settlement not having a school when the Kennedys arrived in Tottenham in 1907, the youngest of the family’s children, Roland Nicholas, was forced to start his working life—in the mines—at the age of twelve.  

43 Roland was born in Peak Hill. Given his age, Roland’s name would be used in a list of eligible children in the campaign for the establishment of a school, successful the following the year. He appears to have never attended though. The various jobs he picked up over the years were all unskilled labouring roles, generally about the mines. By the

39 Mark Derby “A Country Considered to Be Free: New Zealand and the IWW”  
40 Fry, Tom Barker and the I.W.W.: oral history. p. 15  
41 Ibid. p. 13  
42 Derby, “A Country Considered to Be Free- New Zealand and the I.W.W..” p. 3  
43 Truth 8/12/1916, ‘One Who Knows’, ‘Tottenham’  

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age of 15 he was described as having become politically active. For the most part he resided with his parents, though by the age of 20 he had a separate hut, about 400 yards away, in which he slept. Herb lived with his wife in a house belonging to William Evans, a local miner. Part of Roland’s routine outside of wage-earning hours included collecting kurrajong branches to feed his mother’s cow. His carved name remains to this day on the trunk of one such grand old kurrajong tree outside the town. As well as a cow, the Kennedys owned several horses. Roland spent six months working in Tasmania and New Zealand (when exactly this was is not clear). Police would later find an IWW contribution card from Reefton on New Zealand’s South Island among Roland’s belongings, so he may have had an introduction to the movement while there. Reefton is very near Inangahua where Herb had been involved with the Miners Union earlier (it may, then, have been Herb’s contribution card rather than Roland’s). There had been a bitter lockout in Reefton at the same time as the Waihi strike.

Roland Kennedy played the tenor horn in Tottenham’s brass band. Brass bands were a popular cultural expression in mining towns, and had a strong association with unionism. The Sydney IWW Local had its own brass band. At the Barrier, the brass band of the AMA marched strikers to the picket line during the 1909 lockout. In 1914, at the age of 18, Roland began writing letters to the prominent Wobblies of the Sydney Local. He had at some point been shot in the face. He carried a scar from the

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44 Ibid
45 NSWSR, 9/7213, ‘Exhibit T’
46 NSWSR, 9/7213, ‘Exhibit X’
47 NSWSR, 9/7213
48 Truth 8/12/1916, ‘One Who Knows’, ‘Tottenham’
50 Walker, Solidarity Forever: A part story of the life and times of Percy Laidler. p. 71
bullet wound on his right jaw. However the details of this are a mystery. One assumes the locals would have known the story. Perhaps it was an accidental wound from his kangaroo or rabbit shooting, though one would have to be extraordinarily unlucky to be accidentally shot in the face. Kennedy was also slightly deaf—there is a fair chance this was linked to his being shot.\footnote{Bathurst Times 19/10/16}

Figure 6: Roland Kennedy and the Tottenham Brass Band, 1916.\footnote{Roland Kennedy is fourth on the left in the third row, left of the moustached man. Photograph care of Tottenham Historical Society, 2011}

Another of Michael and Jeanette’s sons was Kevin Kennedy, born in 1891 in Parkes, who was also a staunch advocate of the Wobbly ethos. Like his older brother Herb, he
was mates with J.B. King; and, again like Herb, he was something of a rambler, always on the move. In August 1914, he was in the small central Queensland town of Many Peaks, and he was at Tottenham for a period in the same year.\(^\text{53}\) Kevin’s international efforts surpassed even those of Herb. He had been a member of the IWW in Australia before heading to the United States in 1916. According to US immigration authorities, Kevin Kennedy had admitted to committing highway robbery in NSW before his arrival in America.\(^\text{54}\) He became deeply involved with the IWW in America, and would get to intimately know its leaders including the one-eyed bear of a man William ‘Big Bill’ Haywood, of the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), a founding member of the IWW and one of its most influential figures; and Joseph James Ettor and ‘the Rebel Girl’ Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, both well known IWW organisers.\(^\text{55}\) Kennedy traversed the continent under the alias ‘Kennet’ Kennedy, via the only method available to most Wobblies and migratory workers in general—‘riding the rails’.\(^\text{56}\) The IWW controlled transients’ use of America’s freight trains. Joseph Murphy recalled Wobblies as being willing to use force to evict those riders who had not taken out an IWW ticket, and Kevin Kennedy was witness to such practices.\(^\text{57}\)

In June 1916, he was in New York City, living in Brooklyn, from where he sent a postcard to J.B. King.\(^\text{58}\) Kennedy and another Wobbly were caught riding on top of a box car out of New York by police. When they tried to flee the police shot at them, and Kennedy fell in a river, although he managed to escape. The following night they

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\(^{53}\) NSWSR, 7/5598  
\(^{54}\) NSWSR, 7/5590, U.S. Department of Labor to NSW Inspector General of Police.  
\(^{55}\) Direct Action ‘Industrial War in the U.S.A’ 26/8/16  
\(^{56}\) NSWSR, 7/5590, U.S. Department of Labor to NSW Inspector General of Police.  
\(^{58}\) NSWSR, 7/5590

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tried to leave New York again by the same means, and on that occasion were successful.\footnote{Letter from Kevin Kennedy 6/7/16, probably to J.B. King, confiscated by police at the Sydney IWW headquarters. It was published in the Bathurst Times on December 8th 1916, though the paper (and perhaps the police) didn’t pick up on exactly who he was.} The following month he was involved in a bloody strike by miners against J.P. Morgan’s United States Steel Corporation, America’s first billion dollar corporation, in Duluth, Minnesota.\footnote{Direct Action ‘Industrial War in the U.S.A’ 26/8/16; Dubofsky, We Shall Be All: A history of the I.W.W. p. 6} He sent an emotional report on the strike to Direct Action back in Australia. It was probably here that he first encountered Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Joseph Ettor. In October 1916 Kennedy was in Salt Lake City, Utah, carrying on the IWW’s work in the state that Wobbly icon Joe Hill had refused to be buried in.

He continued his travels at a furious pace. In January 1917 he was back in New York, and by March he was in Chicago, where he was arrested for riding the rails. In June 1917 he was in Canada and by the end of the month he was in Buffalo, New York State, where, clearly demonstrating his prominence in the movement, he was given the responsibility of running that city’s IWW’s headquarters.\footnote{Cain, The Wobblies at War: A History of the I.W.W and the Great War in Australia. p. 282} It is not clear if he received pay for this role, but in the months beforehand he had been unemployed.\footnote{NSWSR, 7/5590, Letter from Kevin Kennedy 6/7/1916} For a time he lived at nearby Niagara Falls with another Australian, Fred Raison, and the pair agitated around Lake Erie with an American named William Burns, who in 1916 had been gaol after an altercation with a Sheriff.\footnote{Joseph Conlin, At the Point of Production: the Local History of the I.W.W (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981).} According to Raison he and Kennedy had planned to return to Australia in February 1917.\footnote{NSWSR, 7/5598, Fred Raison to J.B. King (c/o the Governor, Bathurst Gaol) 23/1/1917} Why they did not do so is not clear. When Kennedy visited Canada in June 1917 he was shocked at the returned soldiers suffering from wounds and disease, but took note of the opposition
to conscription there. In remarks noted by American authorities he declared he would rather ‘rot in a dungeon than serve in the army of any country’.65

The Bureau of Investigation, the forerunner to the FBI, also took note of Kennedy’s prominence among the American Wobblies. They hired a private detective from the Washington Detective Agency to ‘get to know’ him.66 On the 17th of July 1917 Kevin Kennedy was arrested at the Buffalo IWW headquarters. Raison took over the running of the headquarters but he too was arrested only two days later. Kennedy’s charges concerned him allegedly assisting a man named Bixby to avoid registering for conscription. Less than a month earlier he had noted that there had already been 20,000 arrests for failing to comply with the Selective Draft Act.67 Kennedy admitted knowing Bixby, by his alias Bank, but the case fell apart and the charges were dismissed. ‘Big Bill’ Haywood thanked him for not asking the IWW for bail money. Even though the charges were dismissed, he was deported anyway.68 In an unlikely addition to the story the private detective, G.S. Schaffer, claimed that Kennedy had confessed to having a suitcase of letters from a German agent.69 Tying the Wobblies to the Kaiser was a constant preoccupation of the authorities on both sides of the Pacific. As Kennedy seems to have known who Schaffer was by this stage, most likely Kennedy was simply winding him up, if the story was not an outright fabrication.

A letter sent to his mother while in America reveals the depths of Kevin Kennedy’s convictions:

66 Cain, _The Wobblies at War: A History of the I.W.W and the Great War in Australia_.
67 NSWSR, 7/5590
69 _Ibid_
I want you to understand that when they of the ruling class penalize me with imprisonment, or even death, I will accept it as the greatest thing that they can bestow upon me. The powers that be, think, that by sending us to the gallows and their Bastiles (sic) that they are quelling the onward march of the workers, but nay; it only serves to invigorate our energies and reanimate our spirits, we of the Revolutionary army, hold our lives as naught, we have realised life with all its grim realities, of poverty, want and woe...

The imposing edifice of society above my head holds no delight for me, it is the foundation of the edifice that interests me. There I am content to labor, crowbar in hand, shoulder to shoulder with intellectuals, idealists and class conscious workers, getting a solid pry now and again and rocking the whole edifice. Some day, when we get a few more hands, we will topple it over, along with all its rotten life, and its monstrous selfishness, and sodden materialism. Then we will cleanse the cellar and build a new habitation for mankind, in which all the rooms shall be bright and airy.  

As with Herb, Kevin was on friendly terms with J.B. King. Indeed, on occasion Wobblies did not feel the need to use Kevin’s full name when referring to him in letters to King, referring to him as simply ‘KJK’. In 1914, before his American journey, Kevin Kennedy was in Many Peaks, Queensland, a copper mining town near Gladstone. While there he was involved in a fistfight with an AWU organiser, who had come to the town with two Labor parliamentarians for negotiations in response to a wildcat strike. J.B. King was confident that Kevin would have given the AWU organiser “a good run for his money” and in a letter to him said he wished that he had been there when the fight happened.  

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70 NSWR, 7/5590, Kevin Kennedy to Jeannette Kennedy.
71 NSWR, 7/5598, J.B King to Kevin Kennedy, 1/8/1914
72 NSWR, 7/5598
73 ibid
74 The Worker ‘Many Peaks Dispute’ 2/7/1914
75 NSWR, 7/5598
that he had missed his brother Herb when he had visited Sydney, and wondered where Herb currently was. “Dinnie and Curly are in some little mining camp in the back blocks of NSW” he informed Kevin. Curly was a shearer named Spencer Barden who had used the wooden shoe in the sheds of western Queensland.\textsuperscript{76} Just who ‘Dinnie’ was is a mystery; however the location of the pair may well have been Tottenham, which was where Herb was by that stage.\textsuperscript{77} King wanted Herb to write to him, and although he probably did, no letters from him survive. In late July 1915 more than 60 miners were laid off at Many Peaks.\textsuperscript{78} The majority of those sacked were single men, and Kevin Kennedy was likely one of them. Many of them then headed north to Mount Morgan, a gold mining town. It is perhaps not coincidental that an IWW Local was formed at Mount Morgan within a few months. Their assessment of the town was a bleak one:

> Fat only makes about three quarters of a million a year out of the hides and muscle and sinew of the wage workers of that town. Every quid is a tragedy, a tragedy of broken bodies, and crushed limbs, of miners’ complaint, and of young and vigorous manhood murdered by the plundering profit-ghouls, at the portals of manhood. Mount Morgan is hell. It is hell so that Park Lane may be heaven.\textsuperscript{79}

Herb and Kevin had the connections, the ideological conviction and an already established reputation in radical circles; and Roland had the youthful zeal. This ‘brotherhood’ were not interested in being spectators. The three of them would act on their revolutionary impulse.

\textsuperscript{76} NSWSR, 7/5598, Spencer Barden to ‘Jack’; Burgmann, \textit{Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia}. p. 163

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{ibid}

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Morning Bulletin}, Rockhampton, ‘Many Peaks’ 28/7/15

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Direct Action} 17/3/1917

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Another brother, Sydney Kennedy, born in 1889, expressed sympathy for the goals of the Wobblies in a letter to Herb and Joanna—“the great day will come when we will rise out of this slaves hall we are in”—although he does not appear to have been as active in the movement as Roland, Herb and Kevin.80 He too was in Queensland, in the small town of Marlborough north west of Rockhampton, and worked as a sawyer. Another sister, Ada, was born around 1883; Taskar was born in 1887, whose name was certainly a reference to Jeannette’s maiden name;81 another brother, Thomas Phillip Kennedy, born in 1885, also worked as a sawyer, in the Pillaga scrub near Coonambole in north west NSW.

In April 1903, Thomas Kennedy was charged with burning down a slaughter house and its yards in the western NSW mining town of Peak Hill, where the family was still living. Edward Dunn, the owner of the slaughter house was, like Michael Kennedy, a local butcher so it is possible there had been some rivalry over business between the two families.82 However he was acquitted after a trial in Forbes.83 It was a strange incident; and more drama was soon to follow for the family in the district. In February 1904, William Skewes Tregaskis, a Welsh/Cornish miner and selector, was murdered in Bulgandramine near Peak Hill by a Chinese man named Ah Chick, reportedly after a dispute over money. Ah had been doing ringbarking work for Tregaskis.84 Tregaskis was the husband of Michael Kennedy’s sister Mary, that is, the aunt of Roland, Herb et al. It was a particularly gruesome murder—Tregaskis was

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80 NSW Births, Deaths & Marriages; NSWSR, 7/5590
81 One assumes the name had been recorded incorrectly given the Tasker/Taskar discrepancy.
82 *The Sydney Morning Herald* ‘Fires’ 16/3/03
83 NSWSR, 9/7213, ‘Report relative to antecedents of Roland Kennedy’, Sergeant 2/C Scott, New South Wales Police Western District, Narromine Station
84 *The Age* (Queanbeyan) ‘Two Death Sentences’ 20/5/1904
shot, and his body was then mutilated with an axe and his head almost severed.85

After his arrest members of the family attacked Ah Chick while he was being
transferred to the courthouse, knocking out a tooth; and again in the court, planting a
large rock on his jaw.86 The police and coroner’s jury fought off the family members,
but Ah was seriously hurt. The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times
described it as an attempted lynching.87 Ah Chick was executed at Dubbo gaol for the
murder on the 23rd of June. The execution, overseen by a rookie hangman, was a
messy affair. The Reverend George Loo Hoo Fen, who had been attending Ah, was
splattered in blood.88 Such dramas at Peak Hill were no doubt a spur for the family to
move on to Tottenham.

The father of the family, Michael Kennedy, was something of a ‘jack of all trades’. As
well as being an ‘Inspector of Nuisances’, he was a storekeeper in Tottenham in 1909.
However his store cannot have been overly successful, as by 1913 he was cutting
wood for a living. Previously he had worked as a butcher. The matriarch of the
family, Jeanette Kennedy, was working as a servant at the time of her marriage to
Michael in 1874. The Kennedy parents, whose children would go on to fight
authority in four countries, were from a time and place in which antagonism towards
authority, especially the thin blue line, ran strong. Just a few years earlier, the area’s
most famous son, Ben Hall, had been “cowardly butchered” by “the bloodhounds of
the law”, as it was expressed in a ballad, at Goobang Creek, near Forbes. Michael
Kennedy senior was buried by the banks of the same creek.89 Russel Ward argues the

85 The West Australian ‘A New South Wales Tragedy’ 15/4/1904
86 Western Mail ‘Sensation at an Inquest’ 27/2/1904
87 The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times ‘A Chinese Murderer. Believed Attempted to
Lynch Him’ 25/2/1904
88 The Advertiser ‘A Chinaman Hanged’ 29/6/1904

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popular sympathy for Ben Hall was a symptom of the “hatred and contempt” many people in the bush felt for police in this period. While hardly an impartial observer, iconic bushranger Ned Kelly put it thus:

People who live in large towns have no idea of the tyrannical conduct of the police in country places far removed from court; they have no idea of the harsh and overbearing manner in which they execute their duty, or how they neglect their duty and abuse their powers.

To what extent Michael and Jeanette Kennedy subscribed to this popular belief, and whether this context helped shape the family’s outlook, is all but impossible to say. Their children, the boys at least, had little time for the police. While they railed against politicians, bosses and the press, it was most often the thin blue line that was their visible adversary.

The police in western NSW, like the citizens they watched over, had to contend with rougher conditions than their counterparts in the city. In the first half century or so of white settlement a large proportion of the force were drawn from the ranks of convicts, while there were very few ‘currency’ in the force. Prior to the 1860s there was no unified approach to policing in NSW. There were a number of independently operating groups such as the mounted police, the native police and the water police among others, and police were ruled by magistrates. This changed in 1862 with the introduction of the *Police Regulation Act*, which led to a single unified force with a centralised authority. This was not a great leap forward in the bush. As Susan West observes, this new centralised authority, of course, had

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90 Ibid.
91 *The Mercury* ‘Interview with Ned Kelly’, 14/8/1880, p. 2

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little understanding of the demands the inland environment placed upon police, [and] they had little knowledge of the rural native-born. An emphasis on respectability, rather than skills, resulted in the rural working classes being overlooked as a source of police recruits.92

Mounted constables were stationed at Dandaloo from 1871 onwards, with a beat of four thousand square miles, including Bald Hill, the future Tottenham.93 The NSW Police Force acquired its first motor vehicle in 1912, although this was for the Inspector General’s use alone. Over the following years their use became more widespread in the force, however in the bush during the 1910s the horse reigned supreme. Mounted constables were paid £2/2- per week, though a little extra was provided for accommodation. Prospective officers had to pass a riding test before being accepted into the force. Upon induction each officer was allotted a horse, and the riding equipment was expected to be maintained in a polished, immaculate condition. There was a very regimented and martial training regime, which included parading, revolver practice and sword drill. In western NSW police officers had to assume a number of roles far beyond what was expected of their city brethren. The officer stationed at the small village of Tomingley for instance, about 70 kilometres east of Tottenham, was supervisor of the Aboriginal mission, Sergeant Clerk of Petty Sessions, and the agent for the Government Savings Bank on top of his ‘regular’ police work.94

The small community of Nevertire proved just as much of a handful for the thin blue line as Tottenham, its near neighbour to the south west. Mounted Constable James

92 West, Bushranging and the Policing of Rural Banditry in New South Wales, 1860-1880. p. 291
93 Chase, Window on Dandaloo: a community on the Bogan river. pp. 13-14
94 ‘The Life of James Sykes’, held by THS

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Sykes, who worked in both Tottenham and Nevertire, recalls having “quite a busy
time there keeping law and order” while stationed in Nevertire, between 1914 and
1916. On one occasion ‘the notorious Frank Murdock’, a drover, ‘took charge’ of
the Nevertire hotel for a day, while Sykes was out of town. Perhaps he had heard the
stories of Jerilderie and Canowindra, and fancied himself as a latter day Ben Hall or
Ned Kelly. At any rate his fate was not far removed from theirs—in 1922 he was shot
in a showdown with three police officers at Cowra, while brandishing an axe.

As it had been for decades in western NSW, cattle duffing was rife throughout the
region encompassing Tottenham and Nevertire in this period. When a hermit cattle
duffer was caught at Jumble Plains station outside Tottenham, a considerable distance
from the police station, with evening approaching Mounted Constable Sykes and his
prisoner had to sleep handcuffed to each other in a deserted homestead. Clearly the
life of the mounted police in western NSW was far removed from the life of a city
copper.

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95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 Barrier Miner ‘Drover Shot At Cowra While Menacing Police’ 4/12/1922
98 ‘The Life of James Sykes’ held by THS
5. The Tottenham IWW

“I called on the literature sec. when I was in Sydney a few weeks ago; he armed me with a bundle of stickers. I have decorated this town with them from one end to the other. One storekeeper scratches them off every morning but I paste fresh ones on his verandah posts each night…”

Chapter five refines our analysis of the Australian IWW to the Tottenham chapter of the movement, ‘Local no. 9’. It offers a first glimpse of Wobbly membership – their motivations, their employment, their lives; and it examines IWW organisation in the town and its district. This examination is continued in Chapter seven.

Aside from the Kennedy family, the driving force behind the creation of an IWW ‘Local’ in Tottenham was one such pamphlet-distributing rolling stone by the name of Arthur Graham. Graham was born in the small NSW mining town of Nundle, south of Tamworth, in 1886 but had been in Tottenham since at least 1913. In 1910 he was in the Sydney suburb of Drummoyne, where he married Daisy Rudd. It appears the pair moved to Tottenham shortly afterwards, as Graham later spoke of industrial troubles in the community during this period, seemingly from first-hand experience.

Not unusually, Daisy Graham was not formally employed in Tottenham, but, curiously for a Wobbly, during his time in Tottenham her husband ran a store. Technically this fact should have barred him from membership of the IWW. A

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1 NSWSR, 7/5598, letter from Arthur Graham 6/4/1915
2 Direct Action ‘AMA Tactics at Tottenham’ 11/3/1916: The period of late 1909 and 1910 appears to be the time in Tottenham that Arthur Graham refers to in this article—however he does not say this explicitly and no dates are given. It is possible that it was closer to 1916

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requirement that members be wage earners had meant that one of the movement’s leading propagandists, Bill ‘Hobo’ Jackson, could not be an official member, as he sold spectacles for a living. However, Arthur Graham also dabbled in shearing.

Another Wobbly in Tottenham, Hugh Mclelland, had an ineligible occupation—he was a share farmer. This involved sowing and harvesting a crop on somebody else’s land and then giving a certain percentage of the profit, which in the early 20th century was in the order of 25-50 per cent, to the land owner. A NSW Royal Commission

Figure 7: Arthur Graham.

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3 NSWSR, 7/5598  
4 1916 Commonwealth Electoral Roll  
5 Although it was monetarised, Michael Cannon compares share farming in 19th century Australia to feudalism. Cannon, The Roaring Days. Book Two: Life in the Country. p. 484
into share farming in 1917-18 found it was a practice almost exclusively carried out in wheat farming. Evidently McLelland did not reap a fortune from his share farming, as like Arthur Graham, he was forced to supplement his income with labouring work.

In December 1914 Graham appeared in a list of missing persons being sought by police. He had “left Tottenham for Sydney some time ago, and is believed to be now in Sydney. Some very important news awaits him.” By early 1915 Graham was back in Tottenham and in regular correspondence with the Sydney IWW; however he had been distributing IWW propaganda in the town for a long time. It was he who arranged the official paperwork for the formal establishment of a Local and promptly became its ‘literature secretary’ (the IWW referred to its pamphlets and newspapers as literature). His first letter to the Sydney Local, addressed to ‘Sir’ rather than anyone in particular, informed the reader that Herb Kennedy was at Tottenham, not doubting the reader would know who he was. Herb had made a name for himself.

Following an exchange of letters between Arthur Graham and Roland Kennedy in Tottenham and Tom Barker, J.B. King, Fred Morgan and Joe Fagan in Sydney, the Tottenham chapter of the IWW –“Local number 9” – was officially formed on the 15th of May 1915. The application form for an IWW charter had been signed by 16 Tottenham residents. This was a considerable number for such a modest sized town. Enclosed with the application form and a fee was a brief note penned by Graham expressing a quiet confidence—“I think we will get along very well when we get

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7 *Evening News* 21/12/1914, p. 8
8 NSWSR, 7/5590 Arthur Graham to Local no. 2, 6/4/1915
9 Ibid.
10 NSWSR, 7/5590 Arthur Graham to Local no. 2, 22/4/1915

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established.” Such a measured assessment of their capabilities would very quickly give way to an exuberant self-belief. On hearing of Herb Kennedy’s presence in Tottenham and engagement with the new Local, Tom Barker had nothing but praise—“I am very glad to hear that Herb Kennedy is going to give a hand as he thoroughly understands the movement”, a sentiment echoed by J.B. King—“he will be a great assistance”.12

With 16 people signing the charter application form, and the group subsequently attracting new followers, a reasonable estimate of Local no. 9’s size by 1916 would be somewhere between 15 and 30, with a hard core of about six. At least some of Local no. 9’s members had transferred across from other Locals.13 Four dozen copies of Direct Action were being sold each issue, though at least some readers were probably curious rather than committed to the cause.14 In late 1916 police found 19 IWW membership contribution books among Roland Kennedy’s belongings.15 One hundred (blank) membership application forms were found among Herb Kennedy’s belongings.16 While our knowledge of membership figures is thus imprecise, Tottenham is not unique in this regard. It is nigh on impossible to pin down the exact numbers within Locals at any given time, especially in the bush. Numbers fluctuated wildly over time, though this generally correlated with the demand for work in the area. The number of card-carrying, financially-contributing members is not as significant as one may assume though. The police were aware of this, for instance when they were discussing a group of ‘Wobbly’ navvies on the NSW north coast:

11 NSWSR, 7/5590 Arthur Graham to Local no. 2, 22/4/1915
12 NSWSR, 7/5590, 7/4/1915, 3/5/1915
13 NSWSR, 7/5598 This is clear from Arthur Graham’s enquiry in a letter as to whether such members needed new dues books.
14 NSWSR, 7/5590, Arthur Graham to Sydney IWW 9/5/16
15 NSWSR, 7/5590
16 Ibid.
“there are about 100, all of whom cannot be termed MEMBERS of the IWW but are certainly sympathisers of that organisation”.17 As Richard Brazier recalls, “we Wobblies were very restless men and as we were mostly migratory workers, were on the move continually.”18 The transient nature of the group led to numbers shifting rather rapidly from place to place depending on local conditions. Witness Albert Krist, a Wobbly who spent 1915 in Tottenham though he was registered with the Scarborough Local on the NSW south coast.19 They really had very little formal structure to speak of: even when settled in one location they were beset (or, conversely, blessed) by what John G. Brooks terms an “inherent dislike of organic restraint… no one uses the word ‘organisation’ oftener or practices it less”.20 This free-flowing attitude characterised the IWW as a whole and Tottenham was no exception. The lack of organisation and centralisation meant that prominent members of the Sydney Local, the Direct Action editors at least, were oblivious to the very existence of many small-town Locals (Krist’s Scarborough Local, for instance), an oversight which has been continued by historians of the Australian IWW.21

The central tenet of the German sociologist Robert Michels’ seminal work Political Parties is the argument that any form of organisation has an inevitable tendency towards oligarchy.22 Whether or not the Wobblies grasped the existence of such an ‘iron law’, they acted as if they had. The syndicalists, with whom the IWW has been

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17 NSWSR, 7/5590. ‘MEMBERS’ is police capitals.
19 NSWSR, 7/5596
21 See for instance Burgmann, Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia, pp. 123-124, though Burgmann is not alone in leaving smaller Locals off lists of those in existence.
closely identified, rejected representation as it “could only be betrayal, deviation and bourgeois corruption”, Michels argued. He asserted that this approach was flawed in that it was only limited to representation by political parties and ignored the tendency towards oligarchy within the movement itself—“for the syndicalist leaders, as for others, the preservation of their own power becomes the supreme law.” In effect, syndicalism suffered the same organisational flaws as political parties and were its exponents to have achieved their goal of superseding parliamentary representative government, they would almost certainly still have succumbed to the very same problems.

As we have seen however, the IWW was not purely syndicalist, it also shared much of the anarchist worldview (which in any case substantially overlaps). Anarchism, Michels stressed, suffered less from the tendency to oligarchy than syndicalism. While it still featured leaders seeking to assert themselves, this would take more praiseworthy forms—via “the means utilised by the apostle and the orator: flaming power of thought, greatness of self sacrifice, profundity of conviction”. While Michels’ language may be florid, the same path to influence as the apostle and the orator is a fair means of describing the ascent to prominence of Tom Barker, J.B. King et al. The organisation, or lack thereof, of Australian Locals bore a closer resemblance to anarchism than syndicalism. They certainly did not reflect Michels’ claim that syndicalist leaders seek to preserve their own power. From the point in 1913 when direct actionists took over the Australian IWW, those who held positions of influence within the movement showed an almost casual indifference to

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23 Ibid. p. 319  
24 Ibid. p. 324  
25 Ibid. p. 326  
26 As did much of its propaganda: “You know the way without leaders. When leaders attempt to lead you let them lose themselves”. Direct Action 10/8/1914

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maintaining their roles if circumstances changed. Positions fluctuated, such as secretary, treasurer and literature secretary, but there was never any disquiet over this. Tom Barker offered to abandon his position in Sydney for the chance to travel west to Local no. 9 at Tottenham.27

In the Tottenham Local, Arthur Graham and Roland and Herb Kennedy were from the beginning the three most prominent IWW members, but this prominence rested entirely on enthusiasm or what Michels termed ‘profundity of conviction’ rather than any officially designated positions. Arthur Graham performed the role of literature secretary, and there were similar positions in other Locals, but he seems to have taken on the role of his own accord. And if there was no official hierarchy at the Local level, there was little at a wider level either. The Sydney Local could be considered the headquarters of the IWW in Australia, but of all the correspondence between it and Local no. 9, there were plenty of suggestions but not a single order. Not long after Local no. 9 was established, Tom Barker told Arthur Graham that Tottenham members should choose their own tactics and that these would depend on local conditions.28 Had he known all this, perhaps Michels would not have been so quick to stress that as soon as anarchists left the world of ideas and delved into the more practical concerns of forming associations, once again the tendency to oligarchy is unavoidable (though it must be stressed the IWW did not consider itself anarchist). There was a continuity apparent in the approach of Local no. 9 and the earlier approach of Herb Kennedy during his brief stint as head of the Miners’ Union at Waihi. When questioned in a New Zealand court as to whether he had ordered the rank and file to not engage in aggressive or illegal behaviour during the strike,

27 NSWSR, 7/5598
28 NSWSR, 7/5598, Barker to Graham, 14th of June 1915.

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Kennedy replied in the negative, for the rank and file “were well able to judge for themselves”.  

To whom did the newly minted Local no. 9 spread its message of class war? It was the labourers of the district, many of whom were involved with the mines, and few of whom had been in the area longer than a few years. Its goal was to convince these workers that firstly they were ‘wage slaves’, and secondly that they need not be.  

One question which unfortunately cannot be answered with certainty is whether the IWW in Tottenham made attempts to organise the local Chinese labourers. Tom Barker launched a scathing attack on the AWU for ignoring, among others, Chinese workers. Sadly, the Chinese workers at Tottenham left behind no document trail. For all of the IWW’s non-racism, its outreach to Chinese workers in the Northern Territory may have been an exception. This is hardly surprising, as Chinese were the largest non-Aboriginal section of the Northern Territory’s population in the early 20th Century. There is little evidence to suggest active organising of Chinese workers elsewhere in the country—non Anglo-Celtic converts to the IWW in Australia were overwhelmingly immigrants from Europe. Furthermore, given that one of the Kennedy clan had been murdered by a Chinese ringbarker in such horrific circumstances near Peak Hill, it would not be surprising if some Tottenham Wobblies harboured a degree of resentment towards the Chinese community. In the surviving correspondence of Local no. 9 there is but a single reference to Chinese—a mildly disparaging but in any case hypothetical remark about ‘Chinamen’ by an ore-carter to

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30 Direct Action 1/4/1915  
31 Regina Ganter ‘The View from the North’ in Martyn Lyons and Penny Russell Australia’s History: Themes and Debates Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010 p. 54  

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Herb Kennedy during an IWW street-meeting. It would appear that the IWW’s theoretical acceptance of Chinese labourers as fellow workers did not result in any practical interaction between Wobblies and Chinese in the community.

As discussed there had been a great deal of communication from Arthur Graham and Roland Kennedy to the Sydney IWW about establishing a Local in Tottenham. With its formation this correspondence continued, especially between Arthur Graham and Tom Barker, and moved on to heartier issues.\(^{32}\) One particular item on the agenda in these letters was a desire by Graham to get a Wobbly speaker from Sydney to come to Tottenham. Barker promised none other than J.B. King, his former comrade in New Zealand. The hefty Canadian was one of the most prominent Wobbly rhetoricians in the Sydney Local and would later end up incarcerated as one of the ‘Sydney Twelve’. Or, if King could not go, Barker offered the alternative that “he may relieve me, and I will come over”.\(^{33}\) That Barker would abandon his leadership role in Sydney to come to Tottenham, even if temporarily, indicates what the Wobblies were achieving in the town, or at least what they believed they could achieve. Travel to Tottenham from Sydney was neither straightforward nor comfortable. None of the Wobblies had access to motor cars and the railway line did not yet extend to Tottenham. This would not have stopped Barker—who travelled central Queensland on a horse—but in the end neither he nor King could come, as they were both imprisoned. King was gaoled for involvement in a money forging scheme (shortly before the ‘Sydney Twelve’ treason trials), and Barker was sentenced to twelve months hard labour for publishing a provocative cartoon in *Direct Action*.\(^{34}\) The cartoon in question, by Syd Nicholls,

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\(^{32}\) Barker was the most prolific letter writer, but most prominent Sydney-based Wobblies were in contact with Tottenham, including King, Fagan and Morgan.

\(^{33}\) NSWSR, 7/5598

\(^{34}\) Cain *The Wobblies At War* p. 194, 234

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depicted a soldier being crucified, his blood nourishing ‘Fat’, accompanied by the following caption:

“FAT (intoxicated with ‘patriotism’): ‘LONG LIVE THE WAR! HIP, HIP ‘OORAY! FILL 'EM UP AGAIN!'’”35

Arthur Graham argued that pastoralists who had crowed over increased returns as a result of the war proved the cartoon’s accuracy.36

If one of the prominent Sydney Wobblies had ended up travelling to Tottenham however, it would not be at all surprising, as a number did indeed travel to western New South Wales, including J.B. King. Some, including Tom Barker, went to Lithgow. Broken Hill was a favoured destination; Barker went there in 1916.37 Donald Grant went to the Hill but was arrested for treason in the Sydney Twelve case. He was sent back to Sydney for trial, in an elaborate and secretive motorised escort that required the assistance of police in Broken Hill, Wilcannia and Cobar.38 The secrecy sprang at least partly from a fear of demonstrations along the way. Sydney police demanded Grant be brought not only secretly but promptly. Perhaps Grant gave a wry smile when the roads and railway line to Cobar were then washed away in torrential rain. Earlier in the same year J.B King travelled to Moree, where he was involved in a shearers’ strike. As a direct result of the war the price of wool had skyrocketed, with pastoralists receiving increased returns in the order of 60 per cent. There were no corresponding increases to shearers’ rates, which had not changed in

35 Direct Action 4/12/1915
37 Fry, Tom Barker and the I.W.W.: oral history. p. 23
38 NSWSR, 7/5590

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eight years, and the AWU had not pressed the matter. 39 According to the local police, whilst in Moree King “addressed meetings of shearsers and shed hands… he strongly urged them not to work unless at the increased rates demanded”. 40 The Sydney police elaborated on his role: “[King and other Wobblies] went to Moree and paid fines amounting to nearly £40 for shearers convicted for breaches of their agreements; also that after paying the fines they brought the shearers to Sydney to attend a conference of the IWW”. 41 The strike was a success and the IWW was not backward in claiming credit. “They [the shearers] won, through us finding the money on the Sydney Domain to keep them on strike” recalled Tom Barker. 42

While even the most prominent Wobblies frequently traversed the countryside, this is not to say they always enjoyed such excursions. Charles Reeve travelled to Port Pirie—“a hell of a place to live in”—before heading to Broken Hill—“dam near as bad” (sic). 43 He confided that “I’ll be glad to get back to Sydney, still, fellow worker, one has to do one’s duty as a soldier in the Industrial Army, and we cannot expect to pick out all the nice spots and leave the mud and dust holes unorganised”. 44 The leading IWW agitators travelled around the ‘mud and dust holes’ because this was generally where the most receptive ear was to be found, amongst the unskilled manual labourers of the mines, the farms and the shearing sheds. Many were members of what the Wobbly Bill Beattie called a “small army of swagmen”. 45 The agitators travelled by the same methods as the workers they sought to organise: rail, bicycle and foot; and unlike the Labor Party and the unions the ‘officials’ were no better off

39 NSWSR, 7/5598, ‘Curly’ to ‘Jack’
40 NSWSR, 7/5590, ‘Police Station Moree 8/8/1916’
41 NSWSR, 7/5590, Police Department, Inspector General’s Office 5/8/1916
42 Fry, Tom Barker and the I.W.W.: oral history. p. 20
43 NSWSR, 7/5598, 5/7/1914
44 Ibid

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financially than the members. Police investigating J.B. King at the time of the Moree shearsers’ strike noted that “King is not looked upon by his fellow members as a man of means, nor does he own a motor car… I may also add that any member of the IWW who showed such ostentation, could not attain the popularity which King enjoys in the movement, unless his wealth was used for the common cause.”

This was not just symbolism, King himself was a labourer. Amongst other manual jobs, he had worked as a miner and a stoker. Tom Barker recalled of the IWW that “there were no strap hangers or people who were living on the organisation”.

J.B. King was impressed by the IWW’s success in the bush well before his involvement with the shearers. “The propaganda work going on in the country districts is very encouraging”, he confided to Roland Kennedy in 1914, “the boys are getting in the One Big Union dope”. This point was echoed in the same year by a Wobbly in Forbes, in central west NSW, who explained that “cokey (sic) country” was fertile ground for IWW propaganda.

Reeve’s trip to Port Pirie had included the use of a Wobbly tactic that had often been successfully employed in America—that of flooding gaols with willing prisoners. Reeve’s case followed the standard ‘free speech fight’ template: refusing to follow police instructions to move on, then opting for gaol time rather than paying a fine. The authorities would then be back-footed by a surge of sympathisers following the same pattern, and the gaols became virtually unmanageable. As Tom McMillan

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46 NSWSR, 7/5596, Detective Moore ‘Relative to one J.B. King, of the IWW, and the Moree Shearers’ Strike’ 12/8/1916
48 Fry, Tom Barker and the I.W.W.: oral history. p. 20
49 NSWSR, 7/5596, J.B. King to Roland Kennedy
50 Direct Action ‘Propaganda Notes’ November 1st, 1914

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recalls, at the Port Pirie fight “fellow workers… came by rail and boat, on bikes, tired legs and blistered feet to show to the world that our solidarity was not a vain empty boast.”51 Large numbers of Wobblies and sympathisers arrived in a short space of time from Broken Hill and Adelaide, and before long many were arriving from further afield.52 Hundreds of people left from Sydney alone to pack the Port Pirie gaol.53 This was not a singular event, other free speech fights occurred, with a notable one in Newcastle in 1915.54 Similar free speech fights took place across the Tasman in New Zealand.55

While Local no. 9 at Tottenham obviously sought as many recruits as possible, one particular applicant, George Reeve, caused quite a stir. The fate of Reeve (not to be confused with Charles Reeve) highlighted the turn the Australian IWW had taken, from its early De Leonist agnosticism on the issue of political engagement, to an embrace of direct action and a repudiation of parliamentary politics. Born in Deniliquin, Reeve, a miner, had cut his teeth working with the IWW Club in Cobar, which he established in 1907, before moving to the metropolis and rising to the position of Secretary Treasurer of the Sydney Local, of which he had been a founding member.56 He was a follower of Daniel De Leon and had no time whatsoever for the methods espoused by the Chicago IWW.57 In 1910 the “voluble” Reeve represented the United Laborers’ Union (ULU) before the Wages Board, where he asserted that

52 Direct Action July 1 1914
54 Burgmann, Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia. p. 123
56 Cain, The Wobblies At War p. 58
“dog tired” labourers had no time for leisure or study—“I would like to get more time off to cultivate hobbies, that is, what the capitalists call hobbies.”

Reeve’s appearance before the Board indicated a colourful personality. His joke that he “moved to Sydney from the country in the year that Clean Sweep won the Melbourne Cup” had the audience in convulsions of laughter, yet only moments later he was warned by the judge to not lose his temper. At the time he was earning £2 8s working for the Sydney Harbor Trust, a board of port overseers established in response to the outbreak of bubonic plague in 1900. He seems to have been popular in the ULU, being re-elected as its representative to the Wages Board in September 1910 after resigning earlier in the year. In 1913 Reeve was tossed aside by the IWW’s ‘bummery element’, which rallied around Tom Glynn and included Fagan and J.B. King, in what was effectively a coup d'état at a stacked meeting. Reeve derisively labelled his successors as ‘skull-crackers’. Henceforth they would lead the IWW into not just abstaining from, but cantankerously rejecting, the political process. When the IWW Local formed in nearby Tottenham he sought to join, possibly as a means of re-establishing his authority in the movement, although this was rejected on advice from Tom Barker and Fred Morgan, his factional enemies, who no doubt feared just such an eventuation. Morgan explained to the Tottenham Wobblies that “he is charged with confiscating the property of Local 2 [the Sydney Local] and retaining it in defiance of the membership”; the property concerned being the IWW charter issued from America. Barker was dismissive of both Reeve as a

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58 Barrier Miner 24/2/1910
59 Ibid
60 Ibid
61 The Sydney Morning Herald 8/9/1910
64 NSWSR, 7/5590
person—“his top-structure is out of repair”—and his commitment to the cause, claiming he put his religion and patriotism before industrial unionism.\textsuperscript{65} Reeve was not to be ousted without a struggle. He appealed to the Adelaide IWW and to Vincent St John in the USA; he continued to use the title Secretary Treasurer and threatened court action.\textsuperscript{66}

Though he was out of favour, the fact that figures as prominent as Reeve were from or drawn to towns like Tottenham further reinforces the point that these locations—the Tottenhams, Cobars, Milduras, Cloncurrys and Innisfails—were not backwaters inconsequential to the movement, they were the Wobbly heartland, its lifeblood. One can imagine several reasons for Reeve wanting to join Tottenham’s Local. Its proximity to Cobar would have been a draw card. Perhaps he had converted to the Chicago world view; or perhaps he saw the differences between Chicago and Detroit as not that significant in the scheme of things, and that all his blustering about ‘skull cracking bums’ was mere empty rhetoric. One can possibly add wounded pride to the list—he had realised there was little future for De Leonism in Australia, but could not quite bring himself to join the Sydney Local alongside Glynn, King, Fagan and the rest. However, spurned by the Tottenham Local, Reeve re-joined the De Leonist Sydney IWW Club three months later.\textsuperscript{67}

The rhetoric of the IWW in Tottenham was every bit as fiery, if not more so, as that employed by Wobblies elsewhere in Australia and in those other parts of the world where the movement existed; for instance in Roland Kennedy’s declaration that “the

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{66} Burgmann, \textit{Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia} pp. 35-36; Cain, \textit{The Wobblies At War} pp. 58, 61-62
\textsuperscript{67} Cain, \textit{The Wobblies At War} p. 62
slaves of this little village are going to hold the fortifications of the one big union in the near future”, or his brother’s declaration that “we of the revolutionary army hold our lives as naught”. Sabotage featured prominently in their propaganda—when Tom Barker was gaoled for publishing a poster ‘prejudicial to recruiting’, Roland Kennedy wrote that the Tottenham Wobblies “are doing all we can for Barker’s release. A wooden shoe.” The wooden shoe, along with the ‘sab cat’ were symbols for sabotage. Having said that, there were attempts to subvert the common understanding of the term—an IWW sympathiser in Tottenham described it as an organisation that defended the working class from “the sabotage of the employers”. Or, perhaps less seriously, when in 1916 some of Roland Kennedy’s orders for Direct Action had not been delivered, his assessment of the situation was “I have been sabotaged...”.

For all the rhetoric, it must also be remembered that there was an ever-present tinge of humour, such as Arthur Graham’s joke that mining bosses might try to get the local kangaroos to victimise his fellow Wobblies (though he was confident the kangaroos would not succumb to the bosses’ propaganda). Graham, who ordered IWW propaganda stickers by the thousand, had a running battle with a local storekeeper, in which he would plaster the shop with IWW stickers at night, only to have them vigorously scraped off every morning. In cases like these the Tottenham Wobblies remind one as much of schoolboy pranksters as they do of hardened revolutionaries.

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68 NSWSR, 7/5598: Roland Kennedy April 12 1915; Kevin Kennedy 23/6/1917
69 NSWSR, 7/5598
71 NSWSR 7/5598, Letter from Roland Kennedy to Local no. 2, 10/4/1916
72 NSWSR, 7/5590, Arthur Graham to Sydney IWW 29/3/16

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Graham certainly appears to have been a more than adequate custodian of the ‘literature secretary’ role of the Tottenham Local. As well as distributing copious amounts of papers and pamphlets, he authored much himself, including a number of articles for _Direct Action_. These ranged across a variety of issues, often incorporating local, national and international topics in the same article. His article ‘Blood-stained Profits’ is directed towards the familiar Wobbly target of war-profiteers, in this instance wool growers:

> Are not the squatters now virtually drinking the blood of the fallen soldiers, for, on their own admission, while the war lasts, profits are soaring upwards. The golden fleece should now be termed the scarlet fleece; the profits therefrom are certainly blood-stained.73

This anger at the rising returns from the ‘scarlet fleece’—or perhaps more importantly, and in contrast, the stalled rates for shearers against a backdrop of a rising cost of living—had led to the shearers’ strike in western NSW in March 1916, shortly before Graham’s article was published.74

Graham’s rhetorical style ranges from gentle humour to biting sarcasm, and while incorporating standard Wobbly lexicon—plenty of references to “slaves” and “masters”—he also at times displays a remarkable originality. His insatiable appetite for reading radical papers and pamphlets kept him well abreast of developments across the world. The letters which he did not intend for publication, but which were later confiscated by the police, contain the blunt yet friendly conversation that one could expect from two close mates gossiping and boasting over a beer. A perfect example of this is his description of an encounter with some local ‘scabs’: “one assaulted me and I jobbed him, when his mate attempted to get in for his cut, but he

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73 _Direct Action_ 25/3/1916
74 Childe, _How Labour Governs: A Study of Workers’ Representation in Australia_. p. 145
missed, tho’ I did not”. 75 When Graham takes on this familiar tone it is perhaps the clearest example on offer of the informal camaraderie of the Wobblies—after all, this is a figurehead of the movement he is addressing. One could hardly imagine a rank and file AWU member, for example, writing to their leadership to boast about winning a fist fight. Graham was hardly unusual among Wobblies in employing such informal language in correspondence—Wobbly shearer ‘Curly’ from Walgett in western NSW eschewed ‘yours sincerely’ in favour of “trusting you are doing ok and just as fat as ever”. 76 This letter was written to ‘Jack’, probably J.B. King, which again would be a figurehead of the movement being addressed. Curly (Spencer Barden) knew Kevin Kennedy, and he, along with a mate called ‘Dinnie’, were possibly working at the Tottenham mines in 1914. 77

It was not only the IWW based in Sydney that Arthur Graham and his Tottenham comrades corresponded with. Letters received by the Tottenham Wobblies and later confiscated by police included some from the Australian Socialist Party at Broken Hill; IWW Local no. 3, also at Broken Hill; the Anti Conscription and Anti Militarist League in Melbourne, and even the IWW in Chicago. 78 There is thus more than a hint of irony in the term ‘Local’. Their relationships were local and international, like their politics.

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75 NSWSR, 7/5590, Arthur Graham to Sydney IWW 9/5/1916
76 NSWSR, 7/5598
77 They were at “some little mining camp in the backblocks of NSW”, and being friends with the Kennedys there is no reason to assume this wasn’t Tottenham: NSWSR, 7/5598, 1/8/1914
78 NSWSR, 7/5590; 7/5598

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6. The Navvies

This chapter examines a crucial, perhaps typical segment of the IWW’s membership—itinerant railway construction workers. They are important to the story of the IWW in Australia, but the arrival of large numbers of navvies in the Tottenham district had implications for Tottenham and for the Tottenham IWW.

The Kennedy brothers were certainly no more shy of the pen than Arthur Graham. While Roland may not have matched Graham’s (generally) articulate rhetoric, his writing was of a level that made his disclaimer in a letter to Tom Barker—“excuse this note but the hand of capitalism never allowed me to be educated sufficiently”—unnecessarily self-deprecating.\(^1\) However it was not without some justification, as he had started his working life at the age of twelve, making his level of literacy impressive. He authored, among other things, a six page letter entitled ‘Railroad Workers Be Organised’.\(^2\) This was a fairly typical Wobbly document, urging railway construction workers—commonly known as ‘navvies’—to embrace Industrial Unionism. It is not clear whether he intended this exhortation to be published, most likely in *Direct Action*, or whether he planned to personally distribute it among the navvies working locally on the railway line to Tottenham. The latter is probable as Roland himself managed to get three months’ work on the line, laying pipes in mid-1916. In September he, Hugh McLelland, and Charlie Martin were sacked by a new

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\(^1\) NSWSR, 7/5598
\(^2\) NSWSR, 7/5596, ‘Railroad Workers Be Organised’
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ganger for their membership of the IWW. In his plea to the navvies he rejects submission to ‘law and order’:

Fellow workers, do not let a dozen or so individuals sit in office and make laws for us to obey. What else could you expect through obeying law and order but slavery?... Show us the masters that can go and take on a shovel, jumper, or carrying sleepers etc for eight or nine hours every day. Then come home and boil the billy and have a feed of corned dog and a pint of black tea that’s perhaps not fit for a dog to drink, as you fellow workers do… We [the IWW] are now suffering for your future welfare.

The document praises the general strike, arguing it could bring an end to capitalism if carried out effectively. Kennedy concludes by urging the reader to act (with a wooden shoe) for the release of Tom Barker, who by this stage was in gaol.

The navvies working on the line to Tottenham had also gained Arthur Graham’s attention. In a letter to Local no. 2 he asked that extra literature be sent to the Tottenham Wobblies for distribution among the construction gangs, as there were a number of “livewires” among the men. The sound of “rebel songs” filled the air each day at their worksite. Graham crowed that when their camp moved to walking distance from the Tottenham pub the navvies came in on their pay day, and throughout their binge sang Wobbly songs, praised the IWW and spoke out in favour of local Tottenham Wobblies who were being targeted by employers. It is hardly surprising that there would have been livewires among them, as the industry was a

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4 NSWSR, 7/5596 ‘Railroad Workers Be Organised’; corned dog was slang for corned beef
5 *Ibid*
6 NSWSR, 7/5590, Letter from Arthur Graham to Local no. 2
7 *Ibid*
hotbed of labour activism. The typical navvy, like the typical Wobbly, was an unskilled male, and often itinerant.\textsuperscript{8} Though the language they employed could not be more different, the police’s analysis of the navvies in the district would tend to corroborate Arthur Graham’s view of the men. Constable Sykes, stationed at nearby Nevertire, argued that the railway construction work at Tottenham had brought “a great many undesirables” to the town.\textsuperscript{9} In his eyes the hundreds of men employed clearing land at the Government Wheat Farm were in the same league.\textsuperscript{10}

While the 1916 electoral roll listed 50 people working on the railway line to Tottenham, the \textit{Worker} claimed there were more than 200.\textsuperscript{11} To be listed on the electoral roll one had to be settled in the same location for at least three months, so it is hardly a reliable indicator for navvies. Some of those not included on the electoral roll included 15 Maltese workers.\textsuperscript{12} At least four of the navvies brought their wives with them, a symbol of their loyalty perhaps, but one which condemned their better halves to ‘home duties’ in a ramshackle hessian tent.\textsuperscript{13} At the same time as the Tullamore to Tottenham line was being constructed, there was extensive railway construction taking place over huge tracts of the NSW north coast and its hinterland, stretching north from Kempsey as far as Glenreagh and encompassing Coffs Harbour. Along the entire stretch police, business owners and others shuddered at the arrival of these rough-looking IWW-riddled navvies, many of whom had come from Broken Hill.\textsuperscript{14} Fantastical tales ran rife: after two fires broke out in Coffs Harbour the IWW

\textsuperscript{9} ‘The Life of James Sykes’ held by THS
\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Ibid}
\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Worker} 1/4/1915, p. 17
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{The Navvy} 26/7/1915
\textsuperscript{13} Sarah Gibson, Margaret Harmon, Lillie Murphy, Ida Smith. 1916 electoral roll
\textsuperscript{14} Kennedy, \textit{Silver, Sin and Sixpenny Ale: a social history of Broken Hill 1883-1921}. p. 129

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was immediately blamed. Storekeepers who had attended conscription meetings were so terrified they took to sleeping in their shops. It was feared the IWW would take over Macksville. The towns of Kempsey and Coffs Harbour Jetty would be burnt down. Tunnels along the line would be blown up. Large amounts of gelignite were reported missing. The district agent for the Norton Griffiths company overseeing construction was appalled to find his mail had been opened in transit, with posters praising sabotage inserted. Special guards were ordered to protect all supplies of explosives. Detectives were dispatched to take stock of the Wobbly menace. “Law-abiding residents are terrorised and demand more police protection” was the Inspector General’s preliminary finding.

While not surprisingly much of this was the product of over-active imaginations, the militancy of many of the navvies was nonetheless apparent. At Glenreagh the concrete workers had gone on a wildcat strike while building a tunnel, which the IWW was suspected of being behind. The AWU (whose general secretary in the same year referred to the IWW as ‘a German-American organisation’) was not prepared to tolerate such behaviour, and its representative cooperated with the company and the police to weed out any IWW members. The local police at Uranga were not prepared to tolerate any Wobbly presence in their area, and reported ‘clearing out’ three IWW members. In 1916 there was a dispute about the use of non-union labour, and the line was declared black. For five months little work was carried out. Conservative businessman and politician Sir Allen Taylor toured the works and bemoaned the

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15 NSWSR, 7/5590
16 Ibid.
17 NSWSR, 7/5590
18 Ibid.
20 NSWSR, 7/5590

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situation to parliament. “For five months the whole of the interest on £300,000 lay dormant, and nobody dared move” he pined.\textsuperscript{21} The navvies on the Tottenham line responded “loyally” to an appeal by the union to assist their North Coast “mates” on strike.\textsuperscript{22}

Railway lines were being constructed at a frenetic pace in Australia during this period. Navvies were also hard at work on a line between Condobolin, Tottenham’s southern neighbour, and Broken Hill. The work on this line was done partly as a means of alleviating the dire levels of unemployment in Broken Hill.\textsuperscript{23} While the major cities had long been linked, the railway was now spreading its tentacles throughout NSW and the Eastern Seaboard.

The railway workers’ union newspaper from the period, \textit{The Navvy}, offers a revealing insight into the life and work of the navvy, including those on the Tullamore to Tottenham line. The paper was produced by the Railway Workers and General Laborers’ Association of NSW, which merged with the AWU in 1917. Its pages offered a diversity of opinion on the IWW, with attacks on the movement countered by, for instance, several articles in defence of Tom Barker, and a lengthy article entitled ‘Sabotage - Why Not? The Rebel Gives a Word in Favour’.\textsuperscript{24}

In 1914, 14 of the navvies who had been clearing land for the railway line’s construction downed tools between Tullamore and Tottenham. The strikers sought to include the time it took to walk to and from their camp in the pay-sheet. The ganger

\textsuperscript{21} NSW Parliamentary Debates 19\textsuperscript{th} July 1916 p. 46
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{The Navvy} 20/6/1916, p. 7
\textsuperscript{23} Adams, \textit{The Best Hated Man in Australia: the life and death of Percy Brookfield 1875-1921}. p. 28
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{The Navvy} 18/7/1916

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refused on the grounds that it was less than a mile, and promptly sought to hire new workers in place of the strikers, claiming he “will have no difficulty in replacing the men”. Presumably this was not the sympathetic and anti-militarist ganger who, when the under-construction railway line was nearer Tottenham, was asked for a match by a navvy to which he “said in a joking manner ‘you don’t want a match to smoke do you?’ the navvy said ‘no I just want it to sabotage’”. In the same year, navvies building a line in Victoria had had the same grievance as those on the Tottenham line. Their ganger, “a big surly tyrant whom we called Crooked Mick” was refusing to grant paid time for walking large distances to and from camp. Rather than striking, they took ‘direct action’: burning down the ganger’s tent, twice, following which he seemed to adopt a more philanthropic outlook. In 1915 a self-described ‘tramp’, George Pile, reported a dispute arising on the Tullamore-Tottenham line over hours, about 14 miles from Tottenham. According to the award, lunch was supposed to be at noon, but the ganger kept the men working until 12.30. The ganger and the chief engineer warned the men that anybody taking issue with the 7.30 to 12.30 stretch should “clear off the works quickly and not show their faces again.” The navvies split along ethnic lines with the Maltese workers accepting the conditions and the Australians in the gang rejecting them. Consequently the Australian workers were “tramped”, setting off on the wallaby track. The issue of Maltese workers in Australia was a burning one for the labour movement during the war. This was in the context of a perception that, were military conscription to be introduced, the jobs of the departed Australians would be filled by cheaper ‘coloured’ labour, that

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25 Sydney Morning Herald 16/1/1914
26 NSWSR, 7/5590, Arthur Graham to Sydney Local Literature Secretary 29/3/1916
27 Direct Action ‘Taming The Ganger’ November 1st 1914
28 The Navvy 26/7/1916
29 ibid
conscription would be used as a tool by capitalists to undermine White Australia. The arrival of two ships bearing Maltese immigrants in 1916, the *Arabia* and the *Gange* crystallised these fears. One writer to *The Navvy* declared that “the loss of 100,000 of Australia’s soldiers would be a smaller loss than the loss of manhood by the introduction of 20,000 Maltese to Australia. The loss of soldiers can be repaired. The introduction of Negroid-Arabic blood could not be eradicated in a million years.”

The ‘tramp’ who narrated the dispute over hours on the Tullamore-Tottenham line had walked from Galong—300 kilometres away—to get there. He hit the track again the same day. The other navvies gave him £1 6/6 to help him on his way.

Not long after the dispute over hours, a visiting union organiser reported more trouble on the line, with the navvies lamenting the lack of access to boiling water and again claiming they were kept working in their lunch hour. When the organiser complained to the ganger he was met with the familiar retort that “if they are not satisfied they can go and get their time”. 31 navvies quit that day. Four of them picked up work in another gang but were sacked at the behest of their previous ganger. These four ‘blackballed’ navvies were apparently not alone, as a separate organiser paying a visit to the line in November reported a “secret system of blackballing that is carried out by the Government and some of its officers”, by which any navvy seeking better

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31 Ibid.
32 The latter was a political disaster for Hughes who went to great lengths to prevent the Maltese disembarking in Australia. They were required to sit a Dutch language test and predictably failing this the “214 Maltese British subjects [became] prohibited immigrants” *ibid* p. 84; Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia*, pp. 196-197
33 The Navvy 6/6/1916
34 The Navvy 26/7/1915
36 Ibid
conditions under a different ganger would be rebuffed.\textsuperscript{37} Taking a more upbeat tone, he reported in \textit{The Navvy} that there was plenty of work available on the line, should readers require a job. All the while the disputes kept rolling—in November one of the gangers complained to the horse boss that the horses were not being worked hard enough; while the sleeper choppers had not been receiving their pay.\textsuperscript{38} At the end of November there was yet more trouble over the lunch break, with the ganger ordering the platelayers back to work 15 minutes early. The men were, predictably, warned they could get their time if they did not like it. They did not like it. The adzers, who were then directed to do the platelayers’ work, took a vote on the matter, and refused. One worker involved in the troubles tried to get reinstated: “The ganger was down on me like the monster Hydra who terrorised Lernia long ago. I had to roll the swag once again. I left the tent there though. I am going to seek another job on the line.”\textsuperscript{39} The same issue of \textit{The Navvy} that carried this swagman’s account of the trouble between the platelayers and the ganger carried an advertisement from the resident engineer on the same line: “Platelayers Wanted.”\textsuperscript{40}

In March 1916, with the line only two miles from Tottenham, it was the turn of a government inspector to stoke the fires of discontent. Inspector Bayne, determined to rigidly follow specifications and oblivious to the kind of environment in which the timber-getters were working, laid down the law on what sleepers were acceptable. The workers found his orders farcical. The old-hands swore that specification sleepers, while suited to the coastal environment, were manifestly inferior in the western environment. In any case, the specification timber was simply not available

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Ibid} 16/11/1915
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ibid} 12/6/1915, 27/6/1915, 16/11/1915
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{The Navvy} 30/11/1915
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Ibid}
anywhere near Tottenham. “But what is common sense compared to specifications
and the inspectors’ rule?” was their lament. At Albert 70 workers turned out to a
meeting with a visiting organiser from Railway Construction Workers’ Union, who
also met with the water supply gang at Tottenham.

The same union organiser returned in June, meeting with all the gangs working on the
line, culminating in a big night-time meeting in Tottenham. He noted several more
“serious complaints” from the workers, some of which were before the court; while
the turnover of platelayers continued apace.

In August the heavens opened up. Another visiting union organiser reported that as a
result of the rain “it was very hard for men to earn tucker, and my advice to all and
sundry is not go near that place unless they can be sure of arriving there with a few
shillings in their pocket.” In spite of the weather the organiser held a meeting with
the navvies. The audience stood ankle deep in water.

A large part of the appeal of ‘the go slow’ and the sly ‘sab cat’ as an industrial tactic
sprang from the all but impossible task of the boss ascertaining with any certainty
what was a deliberate act of sabotage and what was simply ‘Murphy’s law’. In July
1916, as the railway line neared Tottenham, the end of the line and the project’s
completion, there came the news that its finish would be delayed by three months.

\[\text{\footnotesize 41} \text{ Ibid 28/3/1916}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 42} \text{ Ibid}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 43} \text{ The Navvy 15/8/1916}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 44} \text{ Ibid}\]

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to be taken up and re-laid at least eight inches higher.\textsuperscript{45} Perhaps the navvies had taken heed of Roland Kennedy’s call to “make the good times last”; perhaps they had let the sab cats loose to take revenge on their ‘Hydra monster masters’ who had so often responded to any display of discontent with sackings; or perhaps it genuinely was an oversight in unfamiliar terrain. It is nigh on impossible to say. The go slow and wooden shoe were not followed by claims of responsibility.

Navvies offered a sympathetic ear to the message of the IWW, which was partly explainable by the insecure, laborious and (geographically shifting) nature of their work. The arrival of the railway line in the Tottenham district, bringing with it industrial disputes and militant navvies, reinforced the ranks and views of the Wobblies at Tottenham. Conversely it reinforced the perception among those who opposed the IWW of the Wobblies and their ilk being dangerous ne’er do wells.

\textsuperscript{45} The Sydney Morning Herald ‘Railway Delayed’ 8/7/1916, p. 14

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7. Further on the Tottenham IWW

This chapter continues our examination of the IWW at Tottenham. We look further at what kind of people the Tottenham Wobblies were, and what drove them. We look at the organisation of the Local, its activities, and the disputes it was involved in as the local atmosphere heated up over the course of 1916.

Copies of *Direct Action* were “selling like hot cakes” in Tottenham, Arthur Graham informed Tom Barker, in a letter in which he placed an order for four dozen copies per issue. An A wide variety of other journals, newspapers and pamphlets were distributed in the town. Many of these were from overseas, especially America, including: *Rebellion*, published by Covington Hall, a radical poet from America’s deep south; Abner Woodruff’s *The Advancing Proletariat*; *International Socialist Review*, published out of Chicago; *Industrial Worker*, the Wobbly organ for America’s west and *Solidarity*, the organ for its east, for which there were “many enquiries” in Tottenham. A dozen of these were sold each issue. In a case of cross-fertilisation, Kevin Kennedy helped to arrange the import of *Direct Actions* to America, if only on a small scale. *Ross’s Monthly of Protest, Personality and Progress* was also distributed in Tottenham, a journal produced by Robert Samuel Ross, an Australian who was of particular interest to the Censor’s Office, and had previously edited *The Barrier Truth* in Broken Hill, the Victorian Socialist Party’s

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46 NSWSR, 7/5590
47 Ibid.
48 See for instance Kevin Kennedy to J.B. King on Kiefel’s missing DA’s, NSWSR, 7/5590. At the same time as Kennedy was in Minnesota, the Agricultural Workers’ Organization, a section of the IWW, in the same state was placing orders of 100 *Direct Actions* per week. It is not clear if Kennedy had a role in this. *Direct Action* 7/10/1916.

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paper the *Socialist*, and the *Maoriland Worker* in New Zealand. Ross met Herb Kennedy in New Zealand at a conference of the Federation of Labour in Wellington in May 1912.\(^{50}\) Also circulated in Tottenham was *Sabotage*, and ‘Industrial Efficiency and its Antidote’ an essay by Tom Glynn who would later be arrested as part of the ‘Sydney Twelve’.\(^{51}\) In July 1915 Tom Barker (unasked) sent Graham 24 copies of *How the War Came* to distribute in Tottenham; *The Invasion Bogey* was yet another publication handed out in the community. Arthur Graham did not confine himself to reading radical propaganda. Sticking firmly to the principle of ‘know thine enemy’ he took to reading, among other things, the quarterly magazine of the Pastoral Finance Association (PFA).\(^{52}\) The labourers of Tottenham and their Wobbly ‘tutors’ were nothing if they were not avid readers.

In this respect, Local number 9 was typical. Locals often had their own libraries which, aside from the periodicals like *Direct Action*, would stock radical classics like Emile Pouget’s *Sabotage* and Walker C. Smith’s pamphlet of the same name; and Vincent St John’s *The I.W.W. Its History, Structure and Methods*.\(^{53}\) David Lovell described the Australian IWW as a “clearing house for large numbers of inexpensive pamphlets, many of them from the United States”.\(^{54}\) This ideal of the ‘well-read rebel’, of which there could be no better symbol than Arthur Graham wading through his journals, was a sentiment echoed by their American counterparts. John Reed, an American journalist who had been involved with the Wobblies, declared:

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\(^{50}\) Incidentally, in August 1916 Ross also sent a very warm letter to Tom Barker welcoming him out of gaol: NSWSR, 7/5598
\(^{51}\) NSWSR, 7/5596
\(^{52}\) Arthur Graham ‘Blood-stained Profits’ *Direct Action* 25/3/16
\(^{53}\) Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia*. p. 73
\(^{54}\) Lovell, *Marxism and Australian Socialism: Before the Bolshevik revolution*. p. 53

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wherever, in the west, there is an IWW local, you will find an intellectual
centre—a place where men read philosophy, economics, the latest plays, novels;
where art and poetry are discussed, and international politics.\textsuperscript{55}

However, there is a danger here of romanticising the typical Wobbly as some kind of
Oscar Wilde in dungarees. While the Wobblies and their sympathisers in Tottenham
were never short of reading material, this was overwhelmingly radical journals and
pamphlets, and there is little to suggest otherwise elsewhere. The average Wobbly had
more pressing issues (namely earning a crust and preaching class loyalty) than to be
overly concerned with the latest novels or spending time at the theatre, rightly or
wrongly often derided as the domain of the well-heeled. Needless to say there was no
theatre in Tottenham. A point made by Olssen in relation to Robert Samuel Ross’s
\textit{Maoriland Worker} is equally applicable to \textit{Direct Action} and Wobbly type literature
in general. “[It] had to attract and educate shed-hands, navvies, wharfies, miners,
shearers, swaggers and rouseabouts. The theory and the philosophy had to be kept
lively and to the point.”\textsuperscript{56}

The issues the Tottenham Wobblies campaigned on were a mixture of the local, the
national and the international, or at times a combination of the three. As would be
expected their rhetoric focussed most consistently on issues of class. There can be no
better summary of their attitude to this matter than the preamble to their constitution:
“the working class and the employing class have nothing in common… Between these
two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organise as a class,

\textsuperscript{55} Salerno, \textit{Red November, Black November: Culture and Community in the Industrial Workers of the World}. p. 8
\textsuperscript{56} Olssen, \textit{The Red Feds: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and the New Zealand Federation of Labour 1908-1914}. p. 44

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take possession of the earth and the machinery of production and abolish the wage
system”. While across Australia the IWW launched strident campaigns on a variety
of issues, with their opposition to conscription being the most famous example, it was
always the struggle between labour and capital which dominated their thinking, and
this was no different in Tottenham. In all the surviving writings of Arthur Graham and
the Kennedy brothers, the scribes of Local. No. 9, there is not a single document
devoted solely to conscription, and not even a mention in passing of ‘the woman
question’.

The Wobblies in Tottenham did seem to garner a sizeable sympathetic audience
among local labourers, an audience which would have been boosted by the arrival of
the ‘livewire’ navvies. They were never short of a crowd at their street meetings or
Sunday sing-alongs. Herb Kennedy regularly addressed these meetings. There was a
restive spirit among the workers, as demonstrated by their willingness to go on strike.
In the Tottenham district between 1907 and 1916 there were separate strikes by
miners, navvies, wood-cutters and farm workers, some of which lasted for months.

The 1909 miners’ strike, affecting the Bogan River, Orange Plains and Caroline
copper mines, went on for more than two months. The strike, on which there was
negligible commentary in the press, may have been in solidarity with striking miners
elsewhere. 1909 saw a general strike of coalminers, as well as a strike at the Barrier.
But low copper prices had also led to closures of local mines by management, so this
was a more likely source of the troubles. The inadequate water supply also led to

58 Barrier Miner 11/10/1916, p. 3

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some mine closures over the next couple of years. The miners ended their strike after a vote held by the AMA. Arthur Graham later criticised the Tottenham AMA for not sending money to the striking Barrier miners. Robin Gollan notes 1909 as a year marked by an industrial militancy not seen since the torrid 1890s. Clearly some of the miners at Tottenham were still aggrieved, as around a third of them voted to continue the strike. On the day the strike ended, a bushfire tore through the area. “To a man” the miners turned out of the mines and battled the fire. Through their efforts the mines and Tottenham town were spared, though several thousand acres of country was burned.

Probably the most significant strike at Tottenham took place at the Government wheat farm. In April 1916 around 80 workers walked off the job. A police officer’s assessment of the workers at the wheat farm was that there were “a great many undesirables” among their ranks. It is not clear if there was any direct IWW involvement with this strike; however it did, at the very least, have a Wobbly flavour to it. The general farm hands sought a wage increase from 9/ per day to 10/6 per day. The rate they desired was above that agreed upon by the AWU. When their demand was rejected the traction engine drivers—who were paid 12/6 per day—went on strike in sympathy, though not making any claims themselves. Such examples of striking in sympathy were precisely what the IWW sought to encourage: indeed, it too formed part of their famous preamble:

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60 The Sydney Morning Herald ‘Strike Ended at Tottenham’ 13/12/1909, p. 9
61 Direct Action ‘AMA Tactics at Tottenham’ 11/3/1916
63 The Sydney Morning Herald ‘Bush Fires’ 11/12/1909; The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate 18/12/1909, p. 6
64 Sydney Morning Herald 11/4/1916
65 ‘The Life of James Sykes’, THS.
66 The Advertiser 8/4/1916, p. 9
67 Ibid.
The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping to defeat one another in wage wars…These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organisation formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.  

The Government wheat farm was a huge operation, and the strike naturally sent reverberations throughout the community, but it was not only a local concern—it gained the attention of Macquarie Street’s ‘Bear Pit’, the Legislative Assembly of the NSW Parliament. The time and the place for this strike were perfect from the strikers’ perspective. Two inches of rain had fallen the previous week and sowing the wheat had begun—every day the strike went on meant between 300 and 350 acres less land being seeded. There is only a limited time frame each year in which sowing can take place, which would have added a sense of urgency to the situation. This was a point acknowledged in parliamentary Question Time by John Fitzpatrick, the Liberal member for Orange, in his grilling of William Grahame, the Minister for Agriculture, and John Estell, the Minister for Labour and Industry. Estell was in fact no stranger to Tottenham, he had previously visited the town, where he toured the mines as part of an inquiry into the war’s impact on labour conditions. There appeared to have been rumblings of discontent among farm workers in the district for some time.

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70 The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times 12/4/1916, p. 6
71 N.S.W. Parliamentary Debates, Session 1916, 66. 10/4/1916, p. 6359
72 Barrier Miner ‘The Unemployed: Mr Estell and Western Miners’ 21/9/1914
1914 the local shire’s Farmers and Settlers Association had sought out wheat buyers and agents to gauge how they would react should industrial conflict arise. Grahame rejected the labourers’ demands out of hand, informing them that no concessions would be made and that “it made no difference to him whether or not the crop was sown”.

The fact that Woodlands was a Government owned farm added another dimension to the strike. There was a perception that were these farm workers to be successful in gaining higher wages, it would set a clear precedent and would be the “basis for similar claims upon farmers throughout the state”. For the state Opposition, the strike at Woodlands was just one more example of NSW being stuck in a quagmire of industrial turmoil. Daniel Levy, the member for Darlinghurst, was a persistent parroter of this theme. In July 1916, drawing on the most recently available official Commonwealth statistics, which dealt with 1913, he thundered that in that year four times as many workers had struck in NSW as the rest of the states combined; there had been three times the amount of lost wages as the rest of the states combined; more than three times as many lost working days and double the number of industrial disputes.

The AWU were clearly irked by the wildcat strike at Woodlands and, in turn, the Tottenham Wobblies were clearly irked by the AWU. Only a few weeks earlier Arthur Graham had written “what a quantity of extra profits the members of the AWU are producing for their masters... will these workers demand more pay, or leave the

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73 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 30/5/1914
74 *Warwick Examiner and Times* 29/4/1916, p. 6
75 *The Advertiser* 8/4/1916
76 NSW Parliamentary Debates Volume 64, 25/7/1916, p. 173

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profits to the “good old” squatter, so that he may invest it in the War Loan at 4 ½ per
cent?”77 A couple of weeks after the strike began, one of the book keepers from
Woodlands, who was an AWU member, crashed an IWW meeting. Local no. 9
Wobblies were conducting a question and answer session with local workers;
whereupon the AWU member asked a series of questions on the IWW’s attitude to the
King and the war.78 “Knowing who this pimp was”, Arthur Graham explained, “we
were aware that his questions were a deliberate attempt to try and induce us to say
something which may be called prejudicial to recruiting”.79 This incident occurred
after Tom Barker had been charged with just such an offence.80 When the provocateur
declared his patriotic colours he was drowned out by Wobbly songs.

On the 13th of April Fred Page, member for Botany, stated in NSW parliament that “in
view of the trouble that has occurred” [i.e. the strike], the Government farm should be
divided up and granted to returned soldiers, and entreated the Minister for Lands,
William Ashford, to make representations to the Minister for Agriculture on this
matter, to which Ashford consented.81 Within twelve months this was decided upon
in the affirmative, with the farm to be parcelled off in blocks of around 1000 acres. By
1919 the carving up of Woodlands had been carried out.82 Immediately the
Government was criticised, with claims that the farm had been a failure, and they had
simply been looking for a convenient excuse to get rid of it.83 This was rebutted with
claims that the farm had been a resounding success. “We are sorry to leave it” argued

77 Direct Action ‘Blood-stained Profits’ 25/3/1916
78 NSWSR, 7/5590
79 Ibid
80 Turner, Sydney's Burning: An Australian Political Conspiracy. p. 16
81 N.S.W. Parliamentary Debates, Session 1916, 66. p. 6594 13/4/1916
82 NAA, Bulgodney Post Office file SP32/1. 1900 - 1919
83 The Sydney Morning Herald ‘Woodlands State Farm. For Soldier Settlements’. 3/2/1917

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the Minister for Agriculture. However in a case of the Government wanting to have their cake and eat it too, there were vague hints about the impact of the dreaded ‘go slow’ on the farm. Given that the toil by the workers and the rapid progress they made—“a speed which makes pioneer settlers marvel”—had received such praise in the press, it is difficult to take talk of the go slow being a hindrance at Woodlands seriously.

There was probably some truth to the Government being reluctant to offload the wheat farm—after all it was a huge operation, and its short lifespan had hardly been long enough to condemn it as a failure. While it is not clear if the strikers had caught wind of the idea to partition the farm, the strike was settled by the 17th of April. The Minister did not disclose the terms of the settlement to parliament at the time, though it was later disclosed that the labourers had been promised an extra six pence per day “on account of the fact that they were living so far from the nearest railway station.” When the farm labourers took the decision to strike, given the timing and location they would have had every reason to believe it was a tactical masterstroke. To find they had reaped little other than looming unemployment, the upcoming harvest would have been a bitter one indeed.

The conduct of the AMA towards one of the local miners who went on strike—an ‘alien’—later came under fire from the IWW. The striker was informed that “the AMA did not issue strike pay to aliens, though they did not mind taking his dues and

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84 Ibid
85 The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times 15/2/1917
86 The Worker 1/4/1915
87 The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times 26/4/1916; Windsor and Richmond Gazette 18/8/1916, p. 7

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levies.” This was just one of a series of accusations the IWW levelled against the AMA in Tottenham: it had neglected to support striking miners in Broken Hill; it had sacked hard-working German miners merely for being German yet more than hypocritically not cared about German businessmen, shareholders and squatters; they remained silent when accidents took place in the mines; they formed an “overtime clique” who ensured they and their mates got full time and plenty of overtime while other workers struggled to get a few shifts; the AMA treasurer had made off to Sydney with up to £100 of members’ money (one can imagine the stir this would cause in a small town). But most of all, they were “good, obedient slaves of the arbitration loving type” in thrall to their “philanthropic master”.89

The relationship between the IWW and the AMA in Tottenham did not resemble the well-documented amiable relationship between the two organisations that existed at Broken Hill.90 The IWW in Tottenham accused the AMA of not merely being timid in both word and deed, but actually run at the behest of the boss. For a period of several months the mines had closed down,91 during which time the AMA fell into disarray and ceased operating. When work started again IWW propaganda began to fill the void left by the AMA. According to Arthur Graham the AMA was then re-established at the request of bosses who were having “nightmares” about the IWW. The bosses sought out a few of the most “obedient slaves” to get the AMA running again, and granted them use of the Mount Royal engine room for their meetings.92 There was never any semblance of cooperation between the two organisations in Tottenham.

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88 Arthur Graham ‘AMA Tactics at Tottenham’ in Direct Action 11/3/1916
89 Arthur Graham ‘AMA Tactics at Tottenham’ in Direct Action 11/3/1916
90 Cain The Wobblies At War. p. 157
91 This may have been as early as the miners’ strike in late 1909, or more likely in early 1913 when mines shut due to a lack of water.
92 Arthur Graham ‘AMA Tactics at Tottenham’ in Direct Action 11/3/1916

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In July 1916 the Tottenham Local received a letter from the Broken Hill Local, requesting that they endorse a resolution passed at a joint meeting with the Barrier branch of the Australian Socialist Party – “that we oppose with all our might the registration of persons available for service [mandatory registration was introduced in anticipation of a ‘yes vote’ in the forthcoming conscription referendum]” and requesting the AMA hold a special meeting on the issue and ‘make a stand’. 93 There is little doubt that the Tottenham Wobblies would have endorsed it, but their response does not survive.

Not all ‘masters’ were treated with the same amount of scorn by the Tottenham Wobblies. One of the local gravel mining contractors unilaterally increased his employees’ wages from ten shillings a day to eleven in early 1916, and when they put the hard word on him he raised them again to twelve. The other contractors were forced to follow suit. 94 Despite being an employer, this particular contractor appears to have been sympathetic to the Wobblies; he offered to employ any soap boxing agitators who arrived in the town, so as to prevent them from being “victimised”. 95

...this Boss openly advocates the OBU himself, of course in reality he is a wage slave, but seeing there was a chance to make money a little faster by exploiting a few fellow men who would have been exploited in any case by someone else had he not taken it... 96
Graham’s attempt to excuse this particular master may not have been a particularly ‘ideologically sound’ explanation, and it shows the challenges that can confront theory in a local context: where does a well-known boss who is regarded as less of a ‘robber baron’ and more of a ‘good bloke’ fit in to the class war? One suspects, however, that militant anarcho-syndicalist bosses did not keep the IWW awake at night. Other (small) business people were sympathetic to the labour movement in broad terms. The publican in town, Fred Veitch of the Miners’ Arms Hotel was an AWU agent, and advertised the pub as ‘A Labor House’ in *The Australian Worker*.

Veitch raised £3 through ticket sales for the union’s anti-conscription campaign. The other AWU agent in town, Harry Hutchinson, ran a general store called The Pioneer. He also happened to be the father of the first child born in Tottenham. Then of course there was Arthur Graham who also ran a store himself.

In July 1916 ballots were held at branches on the question of the amalgamation of the AWU and the Railway Workers and General Laborer’s Association of NSW. In Tottenham 37 members of the latter voted yes and only one voted no. These numbers were largely in line with vote counts in other comparable centres. Clearly the idea of the One Big Union was gaining currency among the workers of Tottenham and the workers of Australia, not just the IWW. The AWU had been taking over smaller unions since 1912, and on occasion liked to think of itself as the ‘One Big Union’.

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97 *The Australian Worker* 12/10/1916
98 Noel Butlin Archives, Australian Workers’ Union, Central Branch, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, E154/41/1
99 *The Navvy* 18/7/1916

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While Local no. 9 may have found some willing ears among the labourers of the district, as one might expect their rhetoric also raised the ire of other locals. Either way, they were being noticed. James Patterson, the editor of the local newspaper *The Peer* (the Wobblies called it ‘the sausage wrapper’), expressed his distaste towards them on a number of occasions, a distaste which earned a promise from Tom Barker to write him a letter that would “give him a bit of a shock”. Arthur Graham was angered by the local press’ silence about accidents at the mines; he also had more personal reasons for disliking *The Peer*. As he put it to Tom Barker in May 1916, “I have to appear on June 7th on a charge of assaulting two scabs... Editor of the local rag or sausage wrapper is trying to prejudice my case through his pernicious rag.”* The Peer* was a subject of mirth for its larger cousin the *Dubbo Liberal*, which in January 1916 delighted in reprinting *The Peer’s* statement to readers that “there will be no issue of *The Peer* next week, as the proprietor intends putting in a few days rabbit catching in order to make a few bob for a start in the new year”.

Another person paying attention to Local no. 9’s endeavours was Thomas Brown. Brown was a Labor politician, elected in 1913 as the member for Lachlan in the NSW parliament, following the death of the previous member Andrew Joseph Kelly. Interestingly this seat had one of the highest rates of informal voting in NSW, perhaps an indication of disillusionment towards parliamentary politics. Brown had between 1894 and 1903 been member for Condoublin (an early variation of Condobolin) in the NSW State parliament, and was the member for Calare in Federal parliament from

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101 NSWSR, Tom Barker to Arthur Graham 14/7/1915  
102 NSWSR, 7/5598, Arthur Graham to Tom Barker.  
103 *Dubbo Liberal* ‘Newspaper Worries’ 21/1/1916  
104 Antony Green, ”N.S.W. Election Results 1856-2007,”  
1906 until 1913. ‘Honest Tom’, as his backers called him, was a farmer, an advocate of early closing hours for hotels, and a loyalist who became the first secretary of the Australian branch of the Empire Parliamentary Association. Although he was a member of the Universal Service League, he stayed with Labor after the split over conscription. He declared of Tottenham in 1916 that:

A turbulent element came into existence which made things very disagreeable for the law abiding section of the community… the turbulent IWW element was such that it was practically impossible to control it.

No doubt the members of Local no. 9 would have seen this as a ringing endorsement. They certainly raised the ire of the local Progress Association, who had successfully campaigned for a permanent police presence in the town instead of a reliance on patrols from nearby Dandaloo. Their demands were not fully met though. It was agreed that an officer would be stationed in Tottenham, but the Progress Association were adamant that one officer was not enough.

When Thomas Brown made his claims to parliament, he was speaking in the aftermath of the murder of Constable Duncan, but the speech described this as just one example of a wider policy failure. He argued that the events in Tottenham would have been avoided had the department heeded the calls for a stronger police presence. This was caused by the shortage resulting from a policy of keeping the jobs of those police who had enrolled in the military vacant awaiting their return. He characterised

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105 John Atchison “Brown, Thomas (1861-1934)”, Australian Dictionary of Biography
106 Ibid
107 N.S.W. Parliamentary Debates, Session 1916, 66. 5/12/16 pp. 3294-3295
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.

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this as a worthy goal in theory but, in practice, an abject failure. It left police chronically overworked and unable to perform their duties.110

While a number of police had headed overseas to join the war, many in the IWW had come from the other direction. Local no. 9 reflected the wider Wobbly movement in that it had a rather international character. The Kennedy family mirrored this dimension—Kevin Kennedy crossed the Pacific to agitate with the IWW in America, before being deported back to Australia, while both Herb and Roland had travelled to New Zealand. There were also a number of ‘Germans’ in the Local including Frank Franz, Albert Krist, Charles Martin and George Wann. With the First World War raging, Germans in Australia were the targets of open hostility, and enemies of the IWW seized on any hint of a German connection to the movement.

The German tag was often thrown around loosely. It was a substantial community—at the time of the 1911 census there were over 35,000 Australian residents who had been born in Germany or Austria; the number of people of German or part-German descent was of course far greater.111 During the war almost 7,000 ‘enemy aliens’ were interned.112 Germans were the fourth largest European migrant community in Australia after the English, Irish and Scottich. However, it should be noted that many people who were in this period described as ‘German’ had in fact been born in Australia. Of the enemy alien internees about 770 were either ‘Naturalised British Subjects’ or ‘Native Born British Subjects’.113 Most ‘German’ Tottenham Wobblies

110 Ibid.
111 Cain, The Origins of Political Surveillance in Australia. p. 4
113 Ibid.
had been born in Australia, such as Bertold Tresiton Frank Franz, invariably called
Frank. Paul Gustav Bertold Franz, Frank’s father, was indeed a native of Prussia, but
Frank had been born in Wellington N.S.W, to a Scottish mother, and he married in
Orange before moving to Tottenham. He was married to a Scottish-Australian,
Elizabeth Earsman. George Wann, too, was born in Australia—in Drake, near
Tenterfield.¹¹⁴ He arrived in Tottenham in 1916, in the company of another
‘German’.¹¹⁵ There is no record of his associate’s identity beyond his being a German.
The itinerant worker ‘on the wallaby’ would typically “throw in his lot with a
mate.”¹¹⁶ Those Tottenham Wobblies who were Australian born and bred can
themselves be considered international to an extent, in the sense that they read
overseas pamphlets, sang foreign songs, and genuinely felt themselves a part of a
global movement.

The fact that Local no. 9 was made up of new arrivals to the town, both from overseas
and within Australia (after all Tottenham in the 1910s was a town still in its infancy),
would strongly suggest that the success of the Wobblies in the district reflected a
wider trend rather than unique circumstances in Tottenham. That is to say, they did
not have an especially long time to be radicalised solely by local conditions. Local
factors may have played a part—for instance Thomas Brown suggested an inadequate
police presence contributed to the Wobblies flourishing in the town. However this
seems more like symptom than cause, and with none of the Wobblies being born and
bred in the community, local factors could not have been the whole story. Tottenham
was not unique in this regard: in Broken Hill, which had been settled longer than

¹¹⁴ NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages: Birth Certificate of George W. Wann
¹¹⁵ Bathurst Times 28/9/16
¹¹⁶ Vance Palmer, The Legend of the Nineties p. 21
Tottenham, most of the radical agitators during this time had arrived after 1909.117 Perhaps another factor worth considering is that being a young town, Tottenham did not have to any great degree the old established ‘bunyip aristocrat’ families asserting a conservative influence on the community that some older country towns did.

As John G. Brooks said, for a movement that continually preached the need to organise, the Wobblies were very unorganised.118 Where Locals had been established they were rather chaotic, with people coming and going all the time. They were almost the antithesis of the Bolshevik ideal of a disciplined vanguard. In many ways though, this fluidity was their strength. The IWW saw most trade unions as being content to settle for meagre compromises instead of working for the full emancipation of the working class. Many in the international labour movement who shared elements of the Wobbly outlook preferred the ‘bore from within’ approach of joining the existing unions and attempting to radicalise them—notably the French syndicalists.

Verity Burgmann argues that the IWW in Australia followed the same path, and this distinguished them from their American comrades for whom there was little in the way of existing unions.119 Boring from within does not appear to be the best way of characterising the approach of the Wobblies though. They spread propaganda among the workers, many of whom were also union members. This made an impression within the union rank and file, especially in Queensland and western NSW. However the IWW was approaching them as fellow workers rather than as union members.

118 Salerno, Red November, Black November: Culture and Community in the Industrial Workers of the World. p. 25
119 Burgmann, “Antipodean Peculiarities: Comparing the Australian IWW with the American.” pp. 382-383

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There was never any push to co-opt existing union structures for their own purposes. As Tom Barker explained in a letter to Arthur Graham: “The I.W.W must take good care not to antagonise the members of the craft organisations as they are the material we have to work upon, and therefore every care should be taken to keep their good will”, but this is a far cry from boring from within, it is simply a sensible approach to propaganda. Indeed, a craft union official applied to join the Tottenham Local, but Fred Morgan, financial secretary of the Sydney Local, informed Tottenham that “I will refer you to the constitution, which states that a member of the IWW shall not hold any office in a Craft Union”. Further, the need to maintain good will did not stop Graham publicly denouncing local unionists from the AMA as “good, obedient slaves of the arbitration-loving type”. The IWW viewed craft unions as inherently reactionary as they promoted a fragmentation of the working class, and were in any case obsolete in the face of modern capital’s power. Direct Action summed it up thus: “let us ‘smash from without’ instead of sinuously ‘boring from within’”. However, despite not having a formal bore from within approach, this did not stop Wobbly ideas gaining sympathy within the union rank and file. Arthur Graham claimed there was significant sympathy for the IWW among the craft unionists in Tottenham. Unionists of a more militant streak were especially prominent in western New South Wales and Queensland, and they were vocal in opposing arbitration. Timothy Rory O’Malley identifies the pastoral regions of Queensland and western NSW as being the centre for radicalism within the AWU, with the AWU

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120 NSWSR, 7/5598
121 Arthur Graham ‘A.M.A Tactics at Tottenham’ in Direct Action 11/3/1916
123 Direct Action 1/1/1915
124 NSWSR, 7/5590, Arthur Graham to Local no. 2, 9/5/1916

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representatives from this area constantly at loggerheads with officials in Sydney and Brisbane. In 1916 shearsers in these areas snubbed the AWU officials’ calls for calm and instead downed tools and embraced the Wobbly exhortation to “give the warm weather and the blowflies a chance [that is, use the threat to sheep posed by fly-strike].” This was the period in which J.B. King was agitating with the shearsers at Moree. A Wobbly shearer in Walgett, western NSW, informed a fellow Wobbly that the direct action approach was achieving great success in that district, in spite of the AWU’s opposition and insistence on arbitration. In desperation the pastoralists were resorting to Aboriginal boundary riders and ‘scabs’ who were only just learning to shear, to get the wool off their sheep. Quality shearing though is a craft picked up through years of toil. It cannot be learnt overnight by ‘scabs’, unless small tallies of bloodied sheep is the desired outcome. According to unionist shearsers during the 1891 strike, blackleg shearsers averaged 26 ‘tomahawked’ sheep per day—a miniscule number. The back blocks strategists considered the same tactic in 1917: “whatever [shearsers in] NSW wants, they will have to get off their own bat, and they can do it easily with the assistance of the Blow Fly”.

The reason why the AWU officials opposed direct action was clear in Arthur Graham’s mind – “the high paid officials of this organisation [the AWU] won’t hear of resorting to direct action, because such a course might jeopardise their own jobs.

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127 Fly strike, a serious problem in Australia, occurs when blowflies lay their eggs on sheep, the maggots then proceeding to eat tissue. A ‘flyblown’ sheep risks death if not treated. Shorn sheep are less prone to such an affliction.
129 Svensen, The Shearers’ War: the story of the 1891 shearers’ strike. p. 95
130 Direct Action 17/2/1917
To such a pass has the principle of arbitration and the ‘sacred right of contracts’
brought the workers of Australia.”

One figure no doubt held in high esteem by the Tottenham Wobblies was Joe Hill who, internationally, had probably been the most influential Wobbly of all. Hill, born as Joel Haggeland, was a Swedish immigrant to America who became a songwriter for the IWW. His songs included *Tramp, Tramp; Hallelujah I’m a Bum*; and *The Preacher and the Slave*, a song which went by various other names and from where the saying ‘pie in the sky’ comes from:

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Long-haired preachers come out every night,
Try to tell you what’s wrong and what’s right;
But when asked how 'bout something to eat
They will answer in voices so sweet

You will eat, bye and bye,
In that glorious land above the sky;
Work and pray, live on hay,
You'll get pie in the sky when you die

And the Starvation Army they play,
And they sing and they clap and they pray,
Till they get all your coin on the drum,
Then they tell you when you're on the bum

Holy Rollers and Jumpers come out
And they holler, they jump and they shout
Give your money to Jesus, they say,
He will cure all diseases today

If you fight hard for children and wife-
Try to get something good in this life-
You're a sinner and bad man, they tell,
When you die you will sure go to hell.

Workingmen of all countries, unite
Side by side we for freedom will fight
When the world and its wealth we have gained
To the grafters we'll sing this refrain

You will eat, bye and bye,
When you've learned how to cook and how to fry;
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\[131\] *Direct Action* ‘Blood-Stained Profits’ 25/3/1916

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The enmity towards the Salvation (‘Starvation’) Army on display here was a recurring theme in Wobbly rhetoric in both America and Australia. The IWW often complained that Salvation Army ‘ranters’ were given free rein to spread their religious flavoured message, a message they saw as promoting resignation to poverty, whereas attempts to spread their own message were constantly impeded by authorities. This rivalry produced interesting scenes on the streets of Wellington in western NSW where a “religious maniac... frequently in receipt of messages from the almighty” was preaching against the Wobblies, assuring his audiences that ‘all IWW’s are the Devil’s Imps’ and Satan would be using the Wobblies as his means of victory during the end times.

Joe Hill was executed in Utah in 1915, for a murder many believe he did not commit. The musical legacy he provided, together with the manner of his death ensured he would be viewed as a martyr by the IWW. What happened next had all the symbolism of a religious ritual. His ashes were put in hundreds of envelopes and sent to be scattered in every American state (except Utah, ‘where he didn’t want to be found dead’) and locations across the world, including in the Domain in Sydney. Tom Barker received Hill’s ashes in the post. The Wobblies planned to have a “ceremonial depositing of the ashes... in the garden near the domain, so that we could say that we had Joe planted firmly in Australia.” Hill had no respite even in death, though, as

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132 Kornbluh, Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology. p. 133
133 See, for instance, Dubofsky, We Shall Be All: A history of the I.W.W. p. 177 and p. 197
134 Direct Action ‘The Devil’s Imps’ 2/10/1915
135 Fry, Tom Barker and the I.W.W.: oral history. p. 22

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the ashes destined for Sydney were confiscated by police in a raid and subsequently tossed on the fireplace at Central Police Station. 136 A Joe Hill memorial card sent from the IWW in Chicago was among items later seized by police from Herb Kennedy in Tottenham. 137

When the Tottenham Wobblies held their gatherings, often in Roland Kennedy’s hut, Joe Hill’s songs would be sung as a matter of course. At these gatherings, at which there were often curious or sympathetic attendees as well as the signed up Wobblies, the songs would have been a useful propaganda and recruiting tool. They make an interesting comparison to church-based hymns, with both being passionately sung on a Sunday. After the working week one could choose between Hallelujah and Hallelujah I’m a Bum. With the IWW being a largely non-religious, and at times anti-religious movement, their ‘hymns’ were all focussed on the downtrodden worker in the here and now, rather than ‘that glorious land above the sky’ of which their rivals sang. At one such sing along, an intruder tried to sing ‘God Save the King’ (‘Gor Save’), which was instead drowned out by ‘My Country tis of thee’. 138 In general, the songs were clearly more than a bit of fun to try and recruit a few new members—they symbolised the whole Wobbly ethos. They were full of anger; but they were also tinged with a black humour, both irreverent and self-deprecating, that was all too often lacking elsewhere in the labour movement, and politics in general. And if there need be any more evidence of the globetrotting and international nature of the IWW,  

136 Ibid. p. 22  
137 NSWSR, 7/5590  
138 Ibid. This was a curious choice of song. Perhaps they were suggesting they felt a stronger affinity to America than to Britain. Tom Barker commented that “what went on in America was of considerably more interest to us industrially than what was happening in Britain or Europe” Fry, Tom Barker and the I.W.W.: oral history. p. 19
there is the fact that an itinerant Swede in the U.S provided the chorus for German
and Russian migrants to Australia.

On the night of the 26th of March 1916, a Sunday, the Wobblies held a street meeting
in Tottenham. It followed a spate of sackings specifically targeting members of the
IWW. Herb Kennedy spoke about his own experience, in which after being sacked
from the Mount Royal, he found work at the Iron Duke. Here he was ‘encouraged’ to
leave as his new boss informed him “in a half weeping way… that while he kept him
on the mine the carter would not cart his ore to the siding”. The carter happened to
be in the audience at the street meeting, and “jumped up and said what the Iron Duke
boss said was a lie, that so far as he was concerned he would cart it if it was mined by
Chinamen—and if the boss came out he would prove him a liar.” Herb was clearly
a capable public speaker, and this was evident earlier during his time agitating in New
Zealand.

In true Wobbly fashion, Arthur Graham wandered off from Tottenham in June 1916,
at times by foot, at times by bicycle. In January 1917 Graham again raised his head
in Direct Action. He made a plea to his fellow shearers on the importance, and
success, of direct action tactics in the shearing shed, tactics which he assured them
even the AWU had now adopted. He ended his plea quoting Byron – “Hereditary
bondsmen! Know ye not, who would be free, themselves must strike the blow? By
their right arms the conquest must be wrought?”

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139 NSWSR 7/5590
140 Ibid
141 Ibid
142 Direct Action, 13 January 1917.

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With the spate of sackings of Wobblies by local employers Graham leaving Tottenham may have been an economic necessity (although his constant ordering of large quantities of literature would seem to suggest some form of financial security). It may also have been an attempt to flee from the charges he faced for ‘jobbing scabs’ in the same month. Graham’s charge did not result from an isolated fight; it took place during a small riot involving miners and other locals, apparently resulting from workplace tensions between craft unionists and militants at the mines. After the “rumpus” seven “rioters” including Graham were charged, while two “delinquents” were charged with ‘language’. Graham was fined one pound plus court costs. The riot was not mentioned in the city press. In Graham’s absence, Local no. 9 continued to function, with Herb Kennedy taking over Graham’s organising and literature secretary role. Sing-alongs and regular street gatherings continued to be held. By this stage though, the Wobblies in the town were becoming ever more bitter, and in the face of an increasingly stringent crack down upon them, things would take an explosive turn in September.

Operating as it did within a relatively small community, Local no. 9 shows us the IWW at its most pure and at its most human. The campaigning, the machinations, the posturing all took place in a rather confined context—in which it is not the collective ‘worker’ being victimised, but a mate. When Arthur Graham writes of, for example, AMA tactics at Tottenham, he is writing of miners, unionists and bosses whom he

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143 This is what Patten suggests in Patten, “Ned Kelly's Ghost: The Tottenham I.W.W. and the Tottenham Tragedy.” If this was the case it would have given police the chance to arrest him, which it does not appear they did.
144 The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate 9/6/1916; NSWSR, 7/5590.
145 The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate 9/6/1916
146 Arthur Graham’s correspondence with the Sydney Local was handed over to Herb. ‘List of papers, books etc, found at Michael Kennedy’s home 11/10/16. By Detective Devlin and Constable Downey.’, NSWSR, 7/5590

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personally knows, which is far more compelling than the abstract musings of an author in Sydney or Chicago on the shortcomings of a union which they may have pondered over at length, but with which they have never had any involvement. For Local no. 9, the class struggle was a reality, and it was personal.
8. Suppression of the IWW: Nationally and in Tottenham

“For sabotage or for slavery? Which?” – Walker C. Smith

Having examined the IWW at a local, national and international level, we can now turn to those who saw the IWW as a threat, of which there were many, and how they sought to counteract this threat. We will then turn to the question of sabotage, and a bombing at the Mount Royal mine.

Business leaders and governments had disapproved of the IWW since its inception—as far back as 1908, Billy Hughes had claimed that “the contempt of the IWW for methods which do not reek with the promise of much violence and at least a promise of bloodshed is overwhelming”.¹ At that stage, though, the Wobblies were viewed as little more than an irrelevant fringe group in Australia, and the anti-political direct actionists were not yet at the front and centre of the movement. By 1916, the rhetoric of state and federal governments, and especially Billy Hughes, was becoming more focussed on the IWW, and fiercer. No longer a mere nuisance, the Wobblies were now portrayed as a potent adversary: “they must be attacked with the ferocity of a Bengal tiger”, Hughes thundered.² The IWW was hardly enthralled with Hughes either, with Donald Grant describing him as “the dwarfish popinjay who is Labor Prime Minister of Australia, and whose sole claim to eminence and notoriety is the

¹ Burgmann, Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia. p. 21
² Turner Sydney’s Burning: An Australian Political Conspiracy. p. 20

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‘gift of the gab’.

They turned the table on the tiger metaphor, too: “let the worker threaten his [the boss’s] profits and instantly his smug, wowserite countenance wears the expression of a Bengal tiger.” Hughes’ line was echoed, if less colourfully, by most of the press. The Sydney Morning Herald spearheaded the charge in this regard. In September 1916, it warned “it is idle to deny the force and rapid spread of the doctrines of the IWW. They are spreading at a rate that is really appalling”; “the only way to deal with this organisation of anarchists is to wipe it out as thoroughly as an epidemic of smallpox is wiped out”, argued the Adelaide Register. But it was not only tough language being used, the authorities took concrete steps to combat the ‘IWW menace’.

On the 6th of August 1915 George Black, Chief Secretary in the Holman-led Labor government in NSW, approved a greater police crack-down on IWW public speakers. At a federal level, the War Precautions Act was also greatly strengthened. From this point on it became an offence to utter or publish a statement ‘likely to prejudice the recruiting, training, discipline or administration of any of His Majesty’s Forces’. The police who kept a watchful eye on Wobbly gatherings, especially those in the Domain in Sydney, ensured this was zealously enforced. It was not just the Domain soapboxers who were finding their words muzzled though. Within weeks Tom Barker

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4 Direct Action 6/1/1917
5 Cited in Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia, 1900-1921. p. 124
6 ‘Murderers, Firebugs and Martyrs’ The Register 6/12/1916
had been prosecuted under the provisions of the revised War Precautions Act for printing a poster prejudicial to recruiting.\(^8\)

Another tool used by the state to attack the IWW was the Counter Espionage Bureau (CEB). During the second half of the war it singled out two foes—the IWW and supporters of Irish nationalism.\(^9\) The CEB had been established with a purely military focus in mind, though before long it became clear that Australia was geographically so far removed from the fighting that such a role was not necessary. Seeking something to do it turned to fight the ‘internal enemy’:\(^10\) The Governor General, Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, described his Official Secretary George Steward as being “specially engaged in unravelling the schemes of the IWW and following the doings of various malefactors of this type and of aliens.”\(^11\)

The Censor’s Office was also heavily involved in ‘fighting the good fight’ against the IWW.\(^12\) From the 11\(^{th}\) of September 1916 it began to “secretly censor the correspondence of the Secretaries of the clubs and branches of the IWW”.\(^13\) After a raid on an anti-conscription group, the Censor’s Office added all the members to the ever-growing list of people who would have their mail secretly examined. Of course, the group’s membership was diligently scoured for people with German-sounding names.\(^14\) In parliament Labor backbencher W.F. Finlayson described the degree of

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\(^8\) Turner, *Sydney’s Burning: An Australian Political Conspiracy*, p. 16; The Australian experience was not unique. For an account of the Canadian authorities’ approach see Jeffrey A. Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada’s Great War* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1996).

\(^9\) Cain, *The Origins of Political Surveillance in Australia*, p. 8

\(^10\) Ibid. p. 8

\(^11\) Ibid. p. 7

\(^12\) Fewster, “Expression and Suppression: Aspects of Military Censorship in Australia During the Great War.” pp. 154-157

\(^13\) Cain, *The Origins of Political Surveillance in Australia*, p. 116

\(^14\) Ibid. p. 111
censorship in Australia as “unparalleled in the history of the world”.\textsuperscript{15} Holding such
an opinion, Finlayson would not have been surprised to see his speech censored in the
press.\textsuperscript{16} The ability of various arms of government to undertake such actions was
made possible by an environment in which the government was taking an
unprecedented lurch towards a stealthy authoritarianism. Even the Governor General
himself, though not publicly, expressed the view that the government was exhibiting
an authoritarian streak. He declared to the Colonial Office that Billy Hughes’
“autocratic ways excite alarm… Ministerial and Parliamentary responsibility is
evaded, the Executive Council becomes an instrument of registering the will of the
Prime Minister, or even civil servants; while, in moments of crisis, responsibility is
apt to be constantly shifted to the Governor General [himself]”.\textsuperscript{17}

The Inspector-General of Police requested that police-districts in which Wobblies had
a presence provide information which would be included in a comprehensive report
into the IWW.\textsuperscript{18} While they were already being monitored, up until this point the
approach had been rather haphazard. Police were watching soapboxers, and there
were periodic raids on Wobbly meeting rooms, but there had been no coordinated
strategy. A good example of the new surveillance environment occurred in 1916 when
J.B. King travelled to Moree to get involved with the shearers’ strike—he was closely
watched, and intelligence was shared between Sydney police and the local police.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{15} Fewster, "Expression and Suppression: Aspects of Military Censorship in Australia During the Great
War." p. 151
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Evans, The Red Flag Riots: A Study of Intolerance  pp. 13-15
\textsuperscript{18} Cain, The Origins of Political Surveillance in Australia. pp. 149-150
\textsuperscript{19} Sergeant Robinson, Moree to Inspector General of Police, Sydney 8/8/1916, 7/5590

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The police would also often be in touch with their overseas counterparts when known Wobblies moved between countries.\textsuperscript{20}

The campaign against the Wobblies stepped up a gear in the lead up to the first conscription plebiscite.\textsuperscript{21} The vast majority of the press argued in favour of conscription, and were only too happy to lead the charge against the IWW.\textsuperscript{22} Just how important the role of the IWW was in opposing conscription has been a topic for debate;\textsuperscript{23} but it is clear that the movement’s influence was far beyond its numbers. Those advocating conscription heavily incorporated the line of the ‘lurking IWW menace’ into their platform. ‘IWW Assassins Want You To Vote No’, ‘it will put new heart into the IWW to vote no. It will cheer up the poor old Kaiser’ and similar slogans were a recurring theme in pro-conscription posters and advertisements.\textsuperscript{24}

The debate over conscription was heating up in the west too, where it had weaved its way into local politics. \textit{The Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent} railed against the Dubbo Mayor, who had used the council’s name without its permission, in an attempt to create local committees “with a view to secure a majority in favour of the Government’s proposal to conscript human flesh and blood”.\textsuperscript{25} “This shameful violation of citizens’ rights and privileges”, the paper argued, “will go down in local

\textsuperscript{20} Military Intelligence and police were in contact with their counterparts in New Zealand, America, Britain, South Africa and Japan, NSWSR, 7/5590; Cain \textit{The Origins of Political Surveillance in Australia} pp. 182-185

\textsuperscript{21} Despite the tendency, at the time and since, to call it a conscription referendum, technically it was neither a referendum (it was a plebiscite), nor was it asking about conscription (which the government already had authority on – it was a plebiscite for compulsory overseas service)

\textsuperscript{22} There were only four capital city daily newspapers in Australia not supportive of conscription, and one of those, Sydney’s \textit{Mirror}, was neutral on the matter. Fewster, \textit{“Expression and Suppression: Aspects of Military Censorship in Australia During the Great War.”} p. 149

\textsuperscript{23} For instance see the stoush between Brian Fitzpatrick and Martin Haley in the pages of Meanjin in 1954-55 Martin Haley, \textit{“The I.W.W. and Conscription,” Meanjin 14, no. 2 (1955).} The proposition by Haley, a supporter of Franco, that the IWW had virtually no influence is an extreme one.

\textsuperscript{24} See for instance \textit{Trundle Times: Bogan Gate, Tullamore, Tottenham and Fifield Chronicle} 27/10/1916

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent} ‘Usurping Civil Rights’ 6/10/1916

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history as the most extraordinary insult to a law abiding community of the present age”. 26 Though in no way an anti-war paper, *The Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent* was never afraid to be critical of patriotic excesses. In December 1915 it chastised soldiers who had attacked Greek fish shops in Sydney. 27

On the 14th of September 1915 Tom Barker was sentenced to six months gaol for publishing the following poster:

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TO ARMS!!
Capitalists, Parsons, Politicians,
Landlords, Newspaper Editors, and
Other Stay-at-Home Patriots.
YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU IN
THE TRENCHES!
WORKERS
FOLLOW YOUR MASTERS!! 28
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In typical form, his defence rested on arguing that it was, in fact, a serious recruitment poster. On appeal his conviction was quashed. Bill Beattie remembers Tom Glynn as in fact being the author of it (though Barker’s recollection differs). 29 It was a watershed moment, raising the IWW’s prominence in the public’s consciousness, and signalling that the Wobblies would not be tolerated to do as they pleased.

The government repeated *ad nauseum* the refrain that the IWW were backed by the German government. Whether or not they actually believed this, it certainly proved a

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26 Ibid
27 *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent* ‘Riotous Soldiers’ 17/12/1915 Fewster notes the position of the *Dispatch* in arguing provincial newspapers were often less enamoured with conscription than the capital city press: Fewster, "Expression and Suppression: Aspects of Military Censorship in Australia During the Great War.” p. 149
28 Barker, “Self-Portrait of a Revolutionary.” p. 20
29 Beattie, “Memoirs of the I.W.W.” p. 37

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powerful propaganda tool. Throughout 1916 periodic reports surfaced of the insidious German menace. There was the German experimenting with chemicals, resulting in a fire at the T&G building in Sydney. The ‘German’ was a Jewish New Zealander, and the fire caused by a short circuit.\(^\text{30}\) Then there were the two seen experimenting with inflammables and explosives on Bridge Street in Sydney. In reality this was two English chemists trying to make synthetic vanilla.\(^\text{31}\) The *Sydney Morning Herald* informed its readers of a favourable reference to the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in the pages of *Direct Action*.\(^\text{32}\) In this it divined a Wobbly wish for German rule, drawing a long bow indeed.

There was no credible evidence to support the claims that the IWW was being sponsored by the Kaiser. It was a scare campaign. There were, however, a number of itinerant Germans, and Australians of German descent, who were Wobblies—and it is not hard to see why they would turn to such a movement, if the workplace discrimination they faced in Tottenham is any measure. The issue was examined by Arthur Graham in an article he wrote for *Direct Action* in early 1916. Although the article is thick with the hyperbolic language that can be expected, his basic premise of union victimisation of German workers rings true. He describes confronting members of the AMA (which according to Graham stood for ‘Amalgamated Mugs and Asses’) on the issue of some sacked German miners, whom “the “loyal” AMA slaves refused to work with”. He asked them “if they knew anything wrong with the men, but their excuse was that the miners in other parts of Australia refused to work with Germans

\(^{30}\) Rushton, “The Industrial Workers of the World in Sydney 1913-1917: a study in revolutionary ideology and practice.” p. 252  
\(^{32}\) *The Sydney Morning Herald* 31/7/1916

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and they must therefore refuse on principle... result: the sack”.\textsuperscript{33} In a similar instance, the IWW poured scorn upon strikers who refused to work with two Germans “who hadn’t been intelligent enough to be born under the protective folds of the Union Jack”.\textsuperscript{34}

One of the sacked German workers in Tottenham was probably a miner by the name of Albert Krist.\textsuperscript{35} In November 1916 the Inspector General of Police was forwarded the details of an interrogation by Detective Nicholas Moore of a detainee at the German Concentration Camp (GCC) at Liverpool.\textsuperscript{36} Moore was an Irish Protestant detective who worked for Military Intelligence during the First World War; he was engaged in political surveillance, above all surveillance of the IWW. His work included monitoring the soap boxers in the Sydney Domain on Sundays.\textsuperscript{37} His November interrogation at the GCC was of Albert Krist, one of more than three thousand interned Germans, a Wobbly who ‘confessed’ to having been at Tottenham. He was one of the readers of Arthur Graham’s \textit{Direct Actions} that were “selling like hot cakes”.\textsuperscript{38} This was one of the questions put to him by the detective at the camp.\textsuperscript{39} Moore and Krist discussed sabotage. In typical Wobbly fashion Krist had also spent time in New Zealand and the Illawarra. He had previously been a member of the International Socialists. The interview “may be of interest to the Crown Solicitor” trumpeted Moore “in connection with the treason-felony charges at present pending

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Direct Action} 11/3/1916
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Direct Action} 15/10/1914
\textsuperscript{35} NSWSR, 7/5596
\textsuperscript{36} Variously referred to as Liverpool or Holdsworthy/Holsworthy
\textsuperscript{37} Frank Cain., ”Nicholas Moore,” in \textit{Australian Dictionary of Biography.}
\textsuperscript{38} NSWSR, 7/5590
\textsuperscript{39} NSWSR, 7/5596
[the Tottenham and Sydney 12 trials]. Indeed it would have been: every attempt was made to link the IWW with Germany.

A letter signed by Krist and dated the day after his interrogation by Moore was addressed to the editor of *Direct Action*, that position having once again been taken up by Tom Barker, who had been released from gaol in August. What otherwise would not be an unusual Wobbly-penned letter is, when one considers the context, quite bizarre.

The letter refers to the interview by Moore (whom he refers to as a ‘D’), lavishes praise on the idea of sabotage and requests that a dozen copies of Walker C. Smith’s *Sabotage* along with “500 pairs of wooden shoes” be sent to the German Concentration Camp where he was interned. The camp was strictly regimented, with barbed wire fencing and two roll calls each day. While there were a limited number of (English language) newspapers allowed in to the camp, anything which questioned the status quo, and especially the necessity or conduct of the war, was banned. This naturally included *Direct Action*, but extended to more mainstream papers such as *The Worker* and *Truth*. Krist would surely have known this. Internees were permitted to write two letters each week, strictly limited to 150 words (Krist’s letter exceeds this) and they were, obviously, censored. Controversial topics were off limit. This was not a place where the inhabitants were free to pursue their fancies as they pleased, especially subversive fancies.

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40 *Ibid*
41 *Ibid*
Figure 8: Concentration Camp Letter from Albert Krist.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{45} NSWSR, 7/5590
Given that it was inevitable the letter would be read by authorities, it is difficult to believe that Krist would write to the IWW in such provocative language, as in his request that they “send a pair [of Sab Cats], we’ll get them to propagate and after the war let the kittens loose”.\textsuperscript{46} One could be forgiven for suspecting the letter was a ‘dirty trick’ by the authorities (presumably Moore who was fluent in the Wobbly tongue) designed to bolster the perception of links between the IWW and Germany. And yet, were the authorities to have faked the letter they surely could have been more ambitious and produced a ‘smoking gun’ showing direct links between the Wobblies and Berlin. Moreover the letter does not seem to have appeared in the press. The final paragraph explicitly touches on a plan to tie the IWW with Germany and raises the possibility that Moore acknowledged this to Krist; in doing so suggesting that Krist probably was the author, unless Moore was too clever by half:

Should this police officer [Moore] act on his chief’s orders in [illegible] to incriminate you with the Germans as a whole, and forget that the workers in here (the GCC) are enemies \textit{only} of his types good for nothing blood hounds and the common enemies the capitalists [sic].\textsuperscript{47}

If Krist was indeed the author of the letter then, to use a Tom Barker-ism, his top structure was out of repair. There would hardly be a quicker way for a camp internee to bring trouble upon themselves.

It was not the first time in which the GCC and the IWW were linked. In July 1916 seven prisoners escaped from the high security ‘Sing Sing’ section of the camp after

\textsuperscript{46} NSWSR, 7/5598

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid

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digging a 40 feet tunnel. Among them was Fritz Georgie, the only escapee whose freedom lasted longer than 24 hours. Georgie was close to a number of prominent Wobblies, and after his escape got back in touch with them. In order to have at least some possibility of anonymity, his Wobbly associates helped him remove the distinctive tattoos which saturated his body, using a painful chemical concoction. Afterwards he went to Broken Hill, where he worked in the mines under an assumed name. While there he was a roommate with Tom Barker at the Imperial Hotel. Georgie was eventually caught though, and he too maintained that the police had been trying to ‘expose’ links between the IWW and Berlin. In 1917 the CIB was claiming that German involvement with the IWW was at such a level that it must be “an enemy organised scheme... of inciting to industrial upheaval in war-time”.

In the context of the war, exaggerating the German influence in the IWW was an effective method of demonising the group. However, the Germans were not the only community receiving specific attention. Russians were another target of official scorn, and when the authorities singled them out it was yet another way of emphasising the ‘non-Britishness’ of the Wobblies and similar-minded radicals. The Chief Censor in Queensland, J.J. Stable, claimed “the Russians are the real IWW….they live and move and have their being in its revolutionary atmosphere—it is their very existence.” While this was said in 1918, after the Bolshevik revolution, a similar attitude had been held by the authorities for a number of years. In 1915 the Brisbane IWW were warned by police not to be led astray by “those Nihilists from barbarous

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50 Turner *Sydney’s Burning* p. 49
51 NSWSR, 7/5590, C.I.B letter, 7/8/1917
52 Evans, *The Red Flag Riots: A Study of Intolerance* pp. 30-31; in 1919 the Censor commented thus on a letter from the Russian Association in Brisbane: “events are shaping towards a revolution in Australia, and... the Russians intend to take an active, if not a leading, part in it” NAA, A6286, 1/17

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Russia… [who] are only here for murderous purposes”. In the Australian IWW, the leading Russian was one Joseph Fagan, born near Smolensk. He arrived in Australia in 1910, taking up residence in Kings Cross and shortly thereafter became involved with the Sydney Local. He was well-enough regarded by the Wobblies to be appointed Literature Secretary of the Sydney Local, a role which saw him in regular contact with Arthur Graham of Tottenham. Police invariably misspelt his name as ‘Fagin’. Although this was probably not done purposely with the Dickens character in mind, it is aptly symbolic of attempts to portray the Wobblies, especially the foreign Wobblies, as a corrupting influence.

A similar problem for the State’s guardians was the ‘Irish question’. Sectarian divisions had been a feature of Australian politics since the earliest days of European settlement. Many Protestant Australians held a strong belief that Irish Catholics were inherently disloyal to the British Empire. With the outbreak of war, this fed a belief that Irish-Australians would not be as supportive of the war effort. The Catholic Archbishop Daniel Mannix in Melbourne, an opponent of conscription, was one prominent personality viewed with suspicion by loyalists. Their fears were heightened by events back on the Emerald Isle. On the 24th of April 1916 the Easter Rising began in Dublin. It was put down within days, at the expense of hundreds of lives. In early May 15 of the rebels (one had been a Wobbly) were executed by firing squad. Some, including the Censor, were led to ponder and fear the possibility

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53 Ibid. p. 6  
54 NSWSR, 7/5596  
56 Cain, The Origins of Political Surveillance in Australia p. 26  
57 Newsinger, Rebel City: Larkin, Connolly and the Dublin Labour Movement. pp. 135-153
of such an outbreak of rebellion happening in Australia, a twentieth century Vinegar Hill.58

Hughes was one such person preoccupied by the fear of disloyalty, and was enraged by the IWW’s opposition to his pet project, conscription, viewing it almost as a personal insult. Wobbly forays into some high profile labour disputes were also a matter of concern for the former union boss, especially a waterfront dispute in February 1916. The IWW had been involved in the Broken Hill 44 hour dispute, and in August 1916, by which time Hughes was back in Australia, they became heavily involved in the shearer’s strike in NSW. The AWU opposed the strike (much to the chagrin of the increasingly militant rank and file), so when it was ultimately successful it proved a publicity coup for the IWW.59

Just as Hughes had called on the IWW to be “attacked with the ferocity of a Bengal tiger”, if any of the rumours swirling around in the press about them were to be believed then the IWW was striking back with the ferocity of the proverbial wounded tiger. The IWW were blamed for every piece of misfortune under the sun. They were accused of sabotaging HMAS Brisbane when it broke down shortly after being built at Cockatoo Island.60 Truth, though hardly a bastion of diligent journalism, satirised such reports with its headline “Town Hall clock two minutes slow: IWW suspected”.

If a boiler blows up or a steamer goes down
Or somebody curses the Cross or the Crown

58 Fewster, “Expression and Suppression: Aspects of Military Censorship in Australia During the Great War.” pp. 144-145
59 Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia, 1900-1921. p. 90
60 Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, Volume LXXX, 18th December 1916, p. 10101; Cain, The Wobblies at War: A History of the I.W.W and the Great War in Australia. p. 120

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To find out the culprit, no, don’t let it trouble you
Put it all down to the Eye Double Double -You

None of the reports in Australia, though, could hope to compete with a story that emerged in the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1918. Police had purportedly uncovered a rather ambitious plot to simultaneously destroy every port in Australia, New Zealand and the west coast of America, and to destroy or seize every ship in the Pacific Ocean. Preposterously, it was deemed necessary to send the article to both Prime Minister Hughes and Premier Holman.

On the 23rd September 1916 twelve members of the IWW were arrested and charged with treason felony, an archaic law that had been designed by “medieval English monarchs to defend their position and power against usurpation by powerful rivals”, and which had never been used in Australia. Over the preceding months there had been four major fires in Sydney stores and businesses, while inflammable cotton waste had been found in several apparent arson attempts. A case was constructed that the twelve were behind the fires, effectively in a war against the state. This was set against the backdrop of the use by a number of Wobblies of menacing language and threats of sab cats on the loose following Tom Barker’s imprisonment over the *Direct Action* cartoon. Charles Reeve, for instance, had urged Fred Morgan to “Let us see to it that the kittens travel and Bryant and Mays [a famous brand of matches] is

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61 Mark Derby, “A Country Considered to be Free: Towards a Transnational Study of New Zealand Links with the IWW”, The Institute for Anarchist Studies, 2009  
65 For a full account of the case see Turner, *Sydney’s Burning: An Australian Political Conspiracy*.  

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Donald Grant had solemnly declared to his audience in the Domain that “for every day Barker is in gaol it will cost the capitalists ten thousand pounds”. This verbal incendiaryism was the basis of the case against him which led to a 15 year gaol sentence. Henry Boote, writing in The Worker summed it up grimly as “fifteen years for fifteen words”. The twelve included Charles Reeve, J. B. King, Fagan and Donald Grant. The Crown alleged that:

they, not regarding the duty of their allegiance, but wholly withdrawing the love, obedience, fidelity and allegiance which every true and faithful subject of the King did and of right ought to bear….feloniously and wickedly compassed, imagined, invented, devised or intended to levy war against the King within the State of New South Wales, in order by force or restraint to compel him to change his measures or counsels. It is also alleged that they conspired to raise, make, and levy insurrection and rebellion against the King; that they did feloniously and wickedly conspire to burn down and destroy buildings and shops in Sydney and elsewhere in the State… and that they endeavoured to put force or restraint upon the Parliament of New South Wales and that they attempted to intimidate or overawe Parliament.

With the language used, one could be forgiven for assuming a vast revolutionary army was marching down Macquarie Street. Such language was necessary, though, for the case to fall under the treason felony law. After stating the charges, Ernest Lamb, K.C., then, predictably, raised the spectre of the Kaiser—“how far these acts were due to direct German influence it was impossible to prove directly” (which is to say there

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68 Boote’s ‘The case of Grant: fifteen years for fifteen words’ appeared in The Worker in June and July 1917
69 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 11/10/1916
was no solid evidence whatsoever).\textsuperscript{70} Much was made of the fact that some of the accused had been associates of the escaped German detainee Fritz Georgie. On the whole the case was dubious—much of it rested on informants whose testimonies have been called into question. There was a clear case of perjury when a detective claimed to have seen Reeve acting suspiciously at the scene of one of the fires. Reeve was in Long Bay Gaol at the time.\textsuperscript{71} In Bill Beattie’s words, “the ‘trial’ stank to high heaven”.\textsuperscript{72}

In a move that so incensed the courtroom that all the women present were removed, all twelve were found guilty on various counts. Having been trained in the school of soap boxing the twelve once again put their rhetorical skills to good use. Declared Bill Beatty (not to be confused with Bill Beattie, another Australian Wobbly): “I am a little over thirty years of age. A little over thirty years ago I was condemned to penal servitude for life, so that any sentence you impose on me now troubles me not”.\textsuperscript{73} King followed: “I am not the cause of class strife, I am the product of it”.\textsuperscript{74} King was sentenced to five years hard labour (in addition to his sentence in the forgery case); Charles Reeve and three others were sentenced to ten years hard labour; while the remaining seven, including Fagan, Tom Grant, Tom Glynn and Bill Beatty were sentenced to fifteen years hard labour.\textsuperscript{75}

Detective Nicholas Moore, Military Intelligence’s expert on the IWW who interviewed Krist, did quite well financially out of his work. He received a £25 reward

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid
\textsuperscript{71} Turner \textit{Sydney’s Burning: An Australian Political Conspiracy}. p. 189
\textsuperscript{72} Beattie, “Memoirs of the I.W.W.” p. 38
\textsuperscript{73} Turner \textit{Sydney’s Burning} p. 57
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid p. 59

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for his “exceptional zeal and assiduity” in assisting the prosecution’s case with his intelligence reports. He would later receive a further £50 from the federal government and the King’s Police Medal. On top of this he was paid an allowance of 1/- per day “in recognition of very good work performed in plain clothes”, and another 1/- per day for “excellent work performed...for the Defence Department”.

The fate of these twelve prisoners became a cause celebre in the labour movement. There was a widespread belief that ‘the IWW Twelve’, the ‘Sydney Twelve’ or simply ‘the Twelve’, as they became known, were the victims of a frame-up, or at the very least, their sentences were excessive. Percy ‘Jack’ Brookfield, a radical State Labor (soon to be independent) parliamentarian from Broken Hill took up the IWW Twelve’s cause, arguing that they were political prisoners. Indeed, his support for ‘the Twelve’ was one of the key planks of his election platform. Brookfield, who had himself experienced gaol time thanks to the War Precautions Act, told a rally in Broken Hill “there are twelve men in gaol today. My sentence was only a month, and they got ten to fifteen years for saying, in some cases, less than I did.” Tom Barker, an anti-politician, recalled Brookfield being “a very direct and splendid type of man.” Labour writer Henry Boote, who was described by Ian Turner as the most respected and well-known figure in the labour movement, also took up their cause in The Australian Worker, and produced a pamphlet ‘Guilty or Not Guilty?’ One hundred thousand copies of this pamphlet were distributed.

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76 ‘Nicholas Moore’ “Australian Dictionary of Biography Online.”
77 NSWSR, 7/6720
79 Ibid.
80 Fry, Tom Barker and the I.W.W.: oral history. p. 29
81 Noel Butlin Archives of Business and Labour, P16/1/2, ‘Guilty or Not Guilty?’; Henry Ernest Boote, Australian Dictionary of Biography
82 Turner, Sydney’s Burning: An Australian Political Conspiracy. p. 85

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The Australian Worker, it must be remembered, was not in the least a pro-IWW paper. It was the widely read organ of the AWU, which saw itself as the rightful ‘One Big Union’, was supportive of arbitration, and which took every effort to dissociate itself from the IWW’s direct action. The Australian Worker seems to have had an approach of deliberately ignoring the IWW before 1916, as the AWU’s rival was entirely absent from the paper’s pages. However by October of that year the weight of publicity the movement had attracted made this position untenable, and on the 19th of October it dealt with the IWW on its front page. It accused Billy Hughes of trying to link the AWU with the IWW for his own political purposes. “The mystic letters “I.W.W” take on a sinister and devilish significance when he utters them in conjunction with our cause”.83 In the AWU’s eyes this was an attempt to discredit the labour movement in general terms, but there was also a specific agenda of trying to de-legitimise the anti-conscription campaign: “...all at once the conscriptionists discovered it [the IWW]. Frantically looking around for something to beat us with, they stumbled on the IWW”.84 Clearly the paper, and its parent the AWU, were no friends of the IWW. Yet on these pages a campaign for the release of the twelve was prominent.85 That it would advocate on behalf of imprisoned Wobblies shows just how much of an issue their fate was in the wider labour movement.

The Mount Royal bombing:

In the context of the arson cases and various other issues, sabotage was a pressing concern. The Tottenham district appears to have been fertile ground for industrial sabotage, powerful examples of which occurred well before Local no. 9 had been

83 The Australian Worker 19/10/16
84 Ibid
85 See for instance Boote’s ‘Guilty, Or Not Guilty’ The Australian Worker 7/12/1916

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formally established. In 1893 two pastoral workers tried to torch some grazing land, although they only succeeded in burning half an acre.\textsuperscript{86} In 1908 a local copper mine, the King Edward VII, was hit by an arson attack. It was investigated by the coroner, but the perpetrators were never identified.\textsuperscript{87} Four years later, in the midst of a woodcutters strike which had paralysed production at the Bogan River mine, a furnace was damaged to the extent that it had to be rebuilt.\textsuperscript{88} The question of sabotage is crucial both in Tottenham and at a broader level. The Tottenham district had experienced some examples of industrial sabotage in its short history. Did the Wobblies take this further, with a willingness to use ‘violent and destructive’ sabotage? Or did the authorities wilfully exaggerate the threat posed by the group in order to stifle dissent?

One specific incident encapsulates all of these questions. In early 1916 the Kennedy brothers were sacked from the Mount Royal mine for their membership of the IWW. Herb had worked as a weighman, and rumour has it his scales did not tend to favour the boss.\textsuperscript{89} When Roland and another Wobbly later found work at another mine in Tottenham, the Underlay, according to Arthur Graham “the boss of the Mount Royal mine told the boss of the Underlay that he would not treat any more of his ore through the Mount Royal jacket if he did not sack the two rebels, of course he had to obey the demands of the millionaire mine owner”.\textsuperscript{90} From this point on it proved almost impossible for Wobblies to find work in the district. Over a period of 18 months Roland managed to get only three months’ worth of paid work. He resorted to

\textsuperscript{86} Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal 14/3/1893, p. 3
\textsuperscript{87} The Sydney Morning Herald ‘A Mine Shaft Fired’ 4/6/1908
\textsuperscript{88} Precisely how it was damaged is not clear—a furnace, one can safely assume, would be impervious to arson
\textsuperscript{89} Peter Kennedy, 2011
\textsuperscript{90} NSWSR, 7/5590, Arthur Graham to Local no. 2, 29/3/1916.

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rabbiting and kangaroo shooting, and a bit of prospecting. Arthur Graham, though, saw a bright side to their predicament: “the Kennedys’ loss is the IWW’s gain” he claimed, “as they and other speakers are getting a better hearing since, and the fight is being fought all the fiercer”. By mid-1916 Roland Kennedy was in arrears for his IWW subscriptions, which suggests that money was becoming a serious issue for him, as his devotion to the cause had strengthened if anything. It was not just the Kennedys who were being targeted and it was not just at the mines. Later that year Roland found work on a pipe laying gang on the railway line. In September 1916, when a new boss found that he, Hugh McLelland and George Wann were Wobblies they were sacked again. Frank Franz, who was “a great cobber” of Roland’s—and who the ganger does not appear to have realised was a Wobbly—followed them off the job in solidarity. When, in March 1916, Herb Kennedy had faced the sack at another mine, the Iron Duke, “the boss seemed to be afraid that Herb might have a strong wooden shoe in his old clothes”. Perhaps this was a well-founded fear.

Following the murder of constable Duncan in September 1916, Sergeant 2/C Scott at Narromine police station wrote a report on the backgrounds of Roland and Herb Kennedy and Frank Franz. Of Herb Kennedy he wrote “[he] was suspected of being connected with the blowing up of the Tottenham mine recently”. The same was said of Roland, and all three were further described as associating with a “most dangerous” and “very rough class”. In *Studies in Australian Crime* published six years later, John D. Fitzgerald, who had been Solicitor-General and Minister of Justice in the

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93 NSWSR, 9/7213, ‘Exhibit J’; Fitzgerald, *Studies in Australian Crime*, p. 153; it was Herb who described the pair as great cobs.
95 NSWSR, 9/7213
96 Ibid.
NSW government, repeated the claim of the Wobblies blowing up a mine in Tottenham:

The members of the IWW seem to have been a terror to the townspeople. An explosion of dynamite in the copper mine in the district had been laid at their door; and they were suspected of other acts of lawlessness.\(^7\)

There were references to the explosions at the Mount Royal mine in a select few regional newspapers, but it was not reported at all in the city press. The Orange Leader was in no doubt that this was a deliberate bombing:

A dastardly outrage was perpetrated on the No. 3 level in the Mt. Royal Mine, Tottenham, which points to an act of spite on the part of some person or persons acquainted with the use of explosives. Only recently the platt at the No. 3 level had been re-timbered, and upon this work the act of destruction was made. It is surmised that a charge of dynamite was placed upon the caps of two of the main legs supporting the roof timber and a third in an ore truck filled with mullock standing on the platt. When the explosions took place the truck was flattened out and other damage done, causing considerable loss and inconvenience to the proprietary and miners. That the act is one of vindictiveness is beyond question. For no one explosion (accidental) would work in the same manner as that done on the platt referred to. Fortunately human life was not sacrificed, nor was anyone injured, all work being suspended at the time, but that does not alter the fact that the act is one of a cold blooded murderer, for assuming that one of the charges failed to explode, and had any miner in clearing away the debris accidentally struck the the live charge, then the probable result may be better imagined than described. Whether the perpetrators will be caught and brought to

\(^7\) Fitzgerald, *Studies in Australian Crime*. p. 148
justice remains for future developments, but the matter is in the hands of the police, who should be assisted by every resident desirous of keeping the town free from cowardly skunks who would not hesitate to take life.\textsuperscript{98}

It appears the only other paper to cover the incident – relevant copies of the local Tottenham paper \textit{The Peer}, no longer survive – was the \textit{Dubbo Liberal}, which reported that “a dynamite outrage is reported from Tottenham. A [illegible] charge was exploded in no. 3 level of the mine.”\textsuperscript{99} That was the extent of the article.

Other than those emanating from the police there appears to be no other records referring to this. It is curious that the first reference to Herb Kennedy’s involvement was not until after Duncan’s murder, by which stage the Sydney Twelve treason trials were underway, but suspects aside, the bombing accusation itself was not lacking in detail. Detective Moore wrote that “fifty plugs of gelignite were stolen, and in an attempt to blow up the entrance to the shaft the entire pumping plant was destroyed”. And further, the language in the \textit{Liberal}’s and the \textit{Leader}’s initial reports—that the explosion was an ‘outrage’ and ‘an act of vindictiveness’—is a clear indication that this was viewed as no accident. Other than the police account, that Herb was “suspected of being connected” with the bombing, the question of who was responsible remains a mystery, and it never went to trial.

Resorting to ‘the deed’ would signify that the Tottenham Local had unleashed the sab cat in its most ‘wild’ form. There was no suggestion of any persons being targeted in the dynamiting. Though, having resorted to dynamiting the point of production,

\textsuperscript{98} The \textit{Leader}, 24/9/1915, p. 4
\textsuperscript{99} The \textit{Dubbo Liberal} 24/9/1915

\textsuperscript{99} The \textit{Dubbo Liberal} 24/9/1915

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perhaps turning their sights on the police could be viewed as a natural progression—at least this is how Fitzgerald saw things. Equally, it must be remembered, such a conclusion would have fitted quite nicely with the arguments of the state prosecutor, as well as the government; and they had been fishing for such a link. A telegram from police in Sydney to Detective Devlin via Tullamore police station (near Tottenham) urged him to obtain “information connecting members [of the] Industrial Workers of the World with trouble generally about mine” (sic).\(^{100}\) Even if Herb and other firebrands had no involvement in the explosion, if rumours were circulating in Tottenham that they had been involved, then it would help to explain the mining employers’ desperation to be rid of them.

Events were heating up elsewhere. On the 20\(^{th}\) of September 1916 the *Police Gazette* announced that there was an arrest warrant out for the Wobbly Fred Morgan who had skipped bail after being charged with forgery. A number of Wobblies had been involved in a scheme of forging £5 notes, to the tune of £25,000 worth, at Maroubra in Sydney’s south east. J.B. King was also charged, though being the schemer’s cook was the extent of his involvement. Exaggerations of the scope of this attempted money-forging venture have since seen it described as a cunning plot to debase capitalism.\(^{101}\) While some might argue that such a quixotic endeavour as paralysing capitalism through money forging was entirely characteristic of the Australian IWW, those involved did not see counterfeit fivers as a rival to the general strike; rather, an ‘up yours’ to the system.

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\(^{100}\) NSWSR, 7/5590

\(^{101}\) For instance: “The Australian IWWs were particularly bold in using direct action to oppose World War I. The group also had an adventuristic wing which among other schemes sought to paralyse the capitalist economy by flooding Australia with counterfeit money.” Dan Georgakas Stewart Bird, Deborah Shaffer, *Solidarity Forever: An oral history of the I.W.W.* (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1985). p. 208

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The following edition of the *Police Gazette* offered a £200 reward for Morgan, and claimed he “usually carries firearms”.\(^{102}\) Morgan, who had previously written to the Tottenham Wobblies, was never heard from again. Whether he had been smuggled from the country by sympathetic seamen, perhaps to his native Wales, or whether he drowned at Maroubra beach, there is a touch of Harold Holt to the theories surrounding his fate.\(^{103}\)

**Enter George Duncan:**

A couple of days after the reports about Fred Morgan had been published, a new police officer was stationed in Tottenham to replace Constable Norman McLean. McLean was a 31 year old from Gundagai in southern NSW, and had been Tottenham’s first resident police officer.\(^{104}\) As a parting gesture to Local no. 9 McLean gave a summons to Frank Franz for riotous behaviour shortly before he left. Franz had grown up in Wellington, NSW, and after his schooling moved to Sydney, before moving back out west, to the Tottenham/Nevertire district. He took up a labouring job near Nevertire under E.K. Rutledge and George Connor, according to whom “he bore a good character”.\(^{105}\) After this he worked as a labourer on the large Burdenda station, roughly ten miles outside Tottenham.\(^{106}\) In Tottenham he became familiar with Wobbly ideas and joined the IWW, in which he took “an active part and

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\(^{102}\) *Police Gazette* 27/9/1916  
\(^{103}\) Turner, *Sydney’s Burning* p. 25  
\(^{104}\) NSWSR, Reel 3043, 8/3253  
\(^{105}\) NSWSR, 9/7213, ‘Report relative to antecedents of Frank Franz (or Tresiton Franz)’, NSW Police, Western District, Narromine Station, 1916  
\(^{106}\) Commonwealth Electoral Roll, 1916

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interest” according to police. There is no record of the details of the ‘riotous behaviour’ for which he was charged by McLean, but it may have been at a Wobbly street meeting (or equally, it might have been at the Miners’ Arms Hotel, a common scene for such charges).

The new arrival was Constable George Joss Duncan, a 27 year old who had joined the police force on the 4th of January 1913. Before coming to Tottenham he had been stationed in other towns throughout western NSW, including Forbes, Bogan Gate, and Grenfell. Duncan was also briefly stationed at Bathurst, where his commanding officers described him as a “fearless officer”. Duncan was a native of Aberdeen, Scotland, and had only been in NSW for 5 years. His father Andrew was a farmer. He had two sisters and two brothers, one of whom was fighting overseas. While stationed at Grenfell, where he had family, Duncan proposed to a resident of the town. The pair’s wedding was scheduled to take place about a month after he took up his new posting in Tottenham. By the time he arrived in Tottenham, the town had built up a reputation for “disorderly conduct” in the eyes of the thin blue line, a state of affairs which Constable Mclean had not been able to change. Duncan seems to have had a reputation as something of a disciplinarian. According to James Sykes, a

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107 NSWSR, 9/7213, ‘Report relative to antecedents of Frank Franz (or Tresiton Franz)’, NSW Police, Western District, Narromine Station, 1916
108 NSWSR, Reel 3043, 8/3253; NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Death Certificate of George Joss Duncan.
109 The Sydney Morning Herald 28/9/1916
110 Bathurst Times, 28/9/1916
111 NSWBDM, Death Certificate of George Joss Duncan
112 The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate 29/9/1916, p. 4; Western Champion 5/10/1916; The Lachlander and Condobolin and Western Districts Recorder 4/10/1916
113 Western Champion 5/10/1916; The Lachlander and Condobolin and Western Districts Recorder 4/10/1916
114 THS, ‘The Life of James Sykes’

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fellow police officer stationed in the area, Duncan had been sent to Tottenham to “clean up the town”. ¹¹⁵

Coinciding as his arrival did with the IWW feeling the ‘iron heel’ of the state, Duncan’s first actions in Tottenham were not out of step with those of his counterparts in Sydney and elsewhere. Immediately upon his arrival he sought to carry out his brief and assert some authority on the ‘uncontrollable’ town. He made two arrests, with both of those detained being described as German. One of the arrests was of George Wann, a Wobbly who had arrived in Tottenham that year, for ‘obscene language’. ¹¹⁶ The other was of a labourer named Charles Martin, another Wobbly, for the possession of firearms. ¹¹⁷ Given the context, in which Germans were being sacked from the mines and ostracised in general, it is easy to see why the pair would have been drawn to the IWW. It was the arrest of George Wann in particular however which caused a great deal of commotion in the town. The arrest took place around six o’clock on the evening of Monday the 25th of September. According to Hugh McLelland the arrest was because Wann had used the word “bugger”. ¹¹⁸ Although the arrest was for language, *The Bathurst Times* later reported that it was carried out under the provisions of the War Precautions Act—so it is possible that there was a political dimension to it. Though this does not appear to match accounts of what went on.

In a letter to *Truth*, an anonymous writer described a crowd gathering in the street while Duncan attempted to subdue Wann, and the crowd began ‘hooting’ the

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¹¹⁵ Ibid
¹¹⁶ Wann is sometimes spelt Wand
¹¹⁷ *Dubbo Dispatch & Wellington Independent* 10/10/1916
¹¹⁸ NSWSR, 9/7213, ‘Exhibit X’, Bathurst Circuit Court 1916

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policeman. The locals’ reaction is hardly surprising if the arrest was simply over the use of the word ‘bugger’. Wann “violently” resisted the arrest. At one stage the constable and Wann were both on the ground. It must have been a rude introduction to Tottenham for Duncan, finding himself rolling in the dirt as a crowd of locals hurled abuse at him. When he had finally secured Wann in handcuffs and lugged him to the lockup, Duncan returned to the scene of the arrest, where a crowd was still gathered. The constable approached the Kennedy brothers, who were among the throng, and an exchange took place between Duncan and Roland Kennedy. Minutes earlier the recently charged Charles Martin had walked over to the Kennedys from the pub, commenting on “the constable being cruel”, “that is rough handcuffing a man for language” he remarked. The Peer editor James Patterson later claimed to a police officer that Roland Kennedy had assisted Wann to resist his arrest, though other accounts make this appear improbable. It seems more likely that Kennedy was in Hutchinson’s store when Duncan first approached Wann, as he claimed.

There are several slightly differing accounts of how Roland’s conversation with Duncan unfolded, by the time of which Roland was opposite the pub with his brother Herb, Charles Martin and Hugh McLelland. After he walked up and down past the Kennedys and McLelland several times without saying a word, Duncan seems to have asked for Roland’s name. In Roland’s version of the conversation, he said “what do you want my name for?” and upon not receiving an answer, said “I will give you my name, it is Roland Kennedy, I’ll write it down for you”. The constable replied “oh you

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119 The Bathurst Times 21/12/1916
120 The Sydney Morning Herald 19/10/1916
121 NSWSR, 9/7213, ‘Exhibit U’ transcript of interview given at Tottenham Police Station, 30/9/1916
122 Ibid
123 THS, ‘The Life of James Sykes’.
124 Truth ‘Tottenham’ 8/12/1916

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are too illiterate”. According to ‘One Who Knows’, the letter writer to Truth, Kennedy then laughed at Duncan, who responded “it is no laughing matter.” Roland however said that Duncan had walked off and there was no laughing. Another version of the conversation had Kennedy being the one telling Duncan that he [Duncan] was too illiterate, rather than the other way around. This exchange took place at approximately 6pm.

Whichever account is to be believed, the flavour of the conversation is largely the same. Perhaps Roland already knew of Duncan, as both had briefly lived in the Forbes area. Frank Franz would later claim Roland called the new constable ‘a bastard who would have to be stopped’ several days before he arrived in the town; yet it appears highly unlikely that they knew each other personally, in light of Duncan asking for Roland’s name. More likely awareness of his mission to “clean up” Tottenham preceded him. There was a further scene of commotion when Wann was put on the police coach to be transported to the police station at Dandaloo, with Duncan guarding him and Jack Simpson driving. It is not known whether there were many people present at this second incident. Jack Simpson was the mail contractor on the Tottenham to Dandaloo route, so there was nothing unusual in him driving the coach. Herb Kennedy returned to the scene of the earlier incident at around seven o’clock. Charlie Martin was still hanging about. Herb warned Martin to go home as Duncan had threatened to “get him” [Martin].

125 NSWSR, 9/7213, ‘Exhibit U’ transcript of interview given at Tottenham Police Station, 30/9/1916
126 Truth ‘Tottenham’ 8/12/1916
127 The Sydney Morning Herald 10/10/1916, p. 10
128 NSWSR, 9/7213
130 Chase, Window on Dandaloo: a community on the Bogan river. pp. 82-83
131 NSWSR, 9/7213
Kevin Kennedy, war correspondent:

By the time Wann was arrested, news would probably have reached Tottenham of Wobblies in Sydney having been rounded up on treason charges. It is likely that a siege mentality had taken root amongst the IWW. And in the midst of all these developments, the Tottenham Wobblies had some very interesting reading material indeed. On the 26th of August 1916 Direct Action published on its front page an article from Kevin Kennedy who at the time of writing, July 10th 1916, was in Duluth, Minnesota. With a backbone provided by Finns and Scandinavians, the IWW had a strong presence in Duluth. The movement there proselytised to transient and manual workers in five languages. Kennedy’s article tells of “20 000 Austrians, Italians, Finns, Poles and other nationalities on the Iron Range standing side by side in a grand and glorious fight against the greatest oppressors of freedom in the world, the United States Steel Corporation...” United States Steel was a towering symbol of American corporate might, with J.P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, among others, having an interest in the corporation. Patrick Renshaw described U.S. Steel as “the climax of the trust movement.” On the Mesabi Iron Range, Kennedy encountered many of the IWW’s most prominent agitators, who had been dispatched by Big Bill Haywood after the AFL and WFM turned down requests from the striking miners for assistance. Carlo Tresca was there, an Italian immigrant who had been secretary of that country’s largest union, before fleeing to America to escape gaol. Joe

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132 Carl Ross Richard Huddelson, By the Ore Docks: a Working People’s History of Duluth (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006). p. 68
133 Direct Action ‘Industrial War in the USA’ 26/8/1916

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Schmidt, a Lithuanian who had been banished by the Russian Tsar to Siberia, was another IWW organiser on the Range.¹³⁶

Kennedy helped man the picket lines, where he took part in some colourful exchanges and was threatened by “bulls”.¹³⁷ He seemed genuinely overwhelmed by the events taking place, and believed the victory of labour over capital was nigh. The miners had some success in persuading dock workers of Superior and Duluth, from where ore was transported across the Great Lakes, to join the fight.¹³⁸ He went on to say “should they [the miners] be defeated in this fight they are going to turn loose all those vicious SAB CATS they have been feeding on cream all winter. And, oh, Mister Corporation, look out for those CATS, as their claws have never been cut.”¹³⁹ Critically, he then goes on to describe the killing of “two dirty contemptible blood-hounds” in a “battle”, as payback for the murder of John Alar, one of the striking miners who had been shot, “and the miners swear by all the power they possess that for every striker killed there will be a repetition of the former occurrence.”¹⁴⁰ At Alar’s funeral the large crowd swore an oath “that if any Oliver gunmen shoot or wound any miner we will take a tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye or a life for a life”.¹⁴¹ The mining companies on the range formed their own militia, with over 500 armed private 'police’, who together with the regular police, were—according to state investigators—more violent than the strikers.¹⁴²

¹³⁶ Richard Huddelson, By the Ore Docks: a Working People's History of Duluth. p. 69
¹³⁷ Bathurst Times 8/12/1916
¹³⁸ The Evening Tribune (Minnesota) ‘Would Tie Up Lake Traffic- IWW leaders want Dockmen to go on strike’ (8th August 1916); Muskogee Times Democrat ‘To Paralyze Shipping’ 8/8/1916
¹³⁹ Kennedy’s (or perhaps the Direct Action editor’s) capitals
¹⁴⁰ Direct Action ‘Industrial War in the USA’ 26/8/1916; Bathurst Times 8/12/1916
¹⁴¹ Oliver Mining Company was a subsidiary of U.S. Steel. Eleff, “The 1916 Minnesota Miners' Strike Against U.S. Steel,” p. 63, 69
¹⁴² Dubofsky, We Shall Be All: A history of the I.W.W. p. 326
Readers in Australia may have been shocked by the news of a wage dispute descending into revenge killings. On the minefields of America’s west though, bloody industrial conflict was almost routine. In the USA the IWW was involved in incidents of violence, generally on the receiving end, that far outstripped anything that took place in *Terra Australis*. The ‘Centralia massacre’ which culminated in the castration and lynching of Wobbly Wesley Everest; and the ‘Everett massacre’, in which vigilantes and police opened fire on the passenger ship *Verona*, that had hundreds of Wobblies bound for a free speech fight aboard, leaving seven dead, were but two of many examples.\(^\text{143}\)

It is more than likely that Kevin sent a private letter to his brothers in Tottenham describing the events at Duluth, for he sent one to mates in Sydney, in which he expounded on the same theme: “The bloodhounds of the law are out in all their most vicious tactics to defeat the miners. They are battoning, shooting and committing atrocities worse than the average Australian can conceive.”\(^\text{144}\) Even if he did not send a letter about these events to Tottenham, the Wobblies there would undoubtedly have read about his encounters with ‘contemptible blood hounds’ in the *Direct Action* article. For Roland and Herb, coming from their brother, it would have been an immensely powerful document.

We have seen in this chapter the rhetorical assaults on the IWW – the portraits of it as a violent, conspiratorial, and Teutonic movement. Further we have seen the more concrete measures taken to combat the Wobblies – from surveillance to legislation. The IWW met antagonism with antagonism. We saw with Kevin Kennedy in the US

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\(^{144}\) *Bathurst Times* 8/12/1916

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that the IWW was willing to respond to violence with violence. Were the Wobblies in Tottenham prepared to respond to moves against them with sabotage?
9. The Killing of George Duncan

“The police are so low and degraded that when they die they will need to climb a ladder to reach hell.”

“We are desperate men, and with time our desperation grows, and no one knows what may happen if the powers that be do not relax.”

With the increasingly tempestuous environment described in the previous chapter, we see in the shooting of George Duncan at the Tottenham Police Station, arguably the greatest demonstration Australia provided of these contemporary tensions exploding into violence.

On Tuesday the 26th, the day after the public disturbances surrounding Wann’s arrest, Duncan returned to Tottenham after transporting Wann to the lock-ups at Dandaloo. The road was precarious at the best of times, but on this occasion Duncan described it as being in “a dreadful state” owing to heavy rain. 1916 was the wettest year in the Tottenham area in a quarter of a century. When he arrived back at his lodgings in Tottenham that night he was tired and dripping wet. Quite likely he had been on the receiving end of Wann’s abuse all the way to Dandaloo. Perhaps he felt he had lost face in front of the townspeople with all the “hootings” the previous day. Soaked to the bone, he was not inclined to let the matter rest. Rather than call it a day, he headed out

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1 Wobbly speaker at the Port Pirie free speech fight, *Direct Action* July 1914
2 *Direct Action*, April 1916
3 Burdenda Station rainfall records, ‘Rainfall Records from the Nyngan, Bourke, Cobar, Mount Hope and Condobolin Districts from earliest records to 1970’, G.M. Cunningham, Western Area Technical Bulletin, no. 18, May 1980
4 NSWSR, 9/7213

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again to give Roland Kennedy a summons for indecent language and offensive behaviour.⁵ He enquired of him at the pub but he could not be located. News of the summons found Kennedy before Duncan did.

Roland Kennedy and Frank Franz gave differing testimonies of what happened next. Franz’s account had Kennedy approaching him on the verandah of Hutchinson’s store saying that Duncan was “a bastard and would have to be stopped”, such a statement may have related to Martin’s arrest and the commotion at Wann’s arrest; or perhaps Kennedy had got wind of Duncan’s mission to ‘clean up’ the town.⁶ According to Franz, “[w]e’ll shoot him tonight” was how Roland proposed stopping him. Afterwards, Franz walked up to ‘Old Kennedy’s’ (Michael senior’s) place, where Roland again broached the topic, saying “go and bring your rifle. We are going to shoot the policeman”.⁷ As Franz was leaving Roland warned him “do not forget to get your rifle, or I will blow your brains out”.⁸ When he returned Herb Kennedy was sitting on the verandah. Herb said to Franz “wait here with me for a while. Roland has gone up town to look for the policeman, to see if he has a summons for him. As soon as Roland gets back we will all three walk round to where the policeman is living.”⁹

Roland Kennedy’s version of events differed to Franz’s. He claimed that it was Franz who proposed killing Duncan: “when the constable got back from Dandaloo, Franz had a pocketful of quartz stones and he said we’ll stone the bloody bastard, and I said “No”. He said well we’ll shoot the bastard.”¹⁰ According to Roland, Franz then said

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⁵ NSWSR, 9/7213; NZ Truth 21/10/1916
⁶ Bathurst Times 19/10/1916
⁷ NSWSR, 9/7213
⁸ The Sydney Morning Herald 19/10/1916
⁹ NSWSR, 97213
¹⁰ NSWSR, 9/7213, ‘Exhibit U’
“I’ll go straight away and get my rifle.” He went away and got his rifle and came back to my father’s gate, and said to me “you go up the town and see if you can see the constable.” I wanted him to come too, and he said he didn’t want to be seen in the light with his rifle. I then went back and got my rifle, and we were going to get my brother Herb, and he would not come. We told him what we were going to do, and he said as he was a married man it was not worth his while.

Whichever account is to be believed, the conclusion of both took place that night. At around nine o’clock Duncan was at his desk typing up a document on his typewriter, his back to the station window. Neighbours heard the sound of gunfire at the police station. A.L. Travis, a smelter who lived close to the station, heard three shots. Tinsmith William Henry heard two shots, immediately followed by cries of “murder”. The number of shots would later prove of critical importance to the investigation. When William Henry rushed to the scene he found Duncan groaning and leaning on a fence, where he collapsed without uttering another word. The railway station master, who had been talking to Duncan only an hour before the shooting, arrived at the station to find Duncan mumbling and pointing at the window, before he finally died. One bullet had torn through his right lung, a second bullet shattered two ribs. He had been typing a report on the seizure of diseased animals.

Police were sent from far and wide that night. The first to arrive was Mounted-Constable James Sykes, who reached Tottenham at 7am, after a 45 mile horse ride

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11 NSWSR, 9/7213
12 The Sydney Morning Herald 19/10/1916
13 ibid 10/10/16
14 ibid, 28/9/16
15 The Lachlander and Condobolin and Western Districts Recorder 4/10/1916
16 NSWSR, 9/7213, Dr Bertram’s Post Mortem.
17 NSWSR, 9/7213; Barrier Miner 14/10/1916, p. 3

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from Nevertire in pouring rain.\textsuperscript{18} Several years earlier Sykes had undertaken regular patrols of Tottenham while stationed at Dandaloo. \textit{The Peer} editor James Patterson, a travelling dentist by the name of Thomas Johnson, and two other men were guarding the station when Sykes arrived, not allowing anybody near the window through which the shots had been fired.\textsuperscript{19} Johnson had heard the shots, but managed to convince himself it was merely a cow mooing, until he heard Veitch bellow “Amy, Amy, Amy, the policeman is lying in a pool of blood!”\textsuperscript{20}

Sergeant Meagher of Dubbo was dispatched to Tottenham by the first available means, the midnight goods train to Trangie.\textsuperscript{21} Sergeant Scott of Narromine arrived the next morning after an “awful night in the rain and mud”.\textsuperscript{22} Sergeant Meagher sent for Dr. Thomas Bertram of Trundle, whose motor car proceeded to get bogged in the mud six miles short of Tottenham. Bertram knew Duncan personally, most likely from when the Constable was stationed at Bogan Gate.\textsuperscript{23} Other officers came from Warren, Trangie and Dandaloo. Later Inspector Percy Whitfield arrived from Forbes as did Detective-Sergeant Joseph Develin and Detective Patrick Downey from the Criminal Investigation Branch (CIB) in Sydney, who arrived via the mail coach. Constable Norman McLean, who had previously been stationed in Tottenham, also arrived to assist with the investigation. There was an Aboriginal tracker living in town and another six miles away, but the police could not convince either to venture out, the unnamed pair apparently seeing it as a futile undertaking in such horrendous weather. Yet the downpour had not washed everything away. Tracks were discovered leading

\textsuperscript{18} THS, ‘The Life of James Sykes’
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid; Sykes mistakenly remembered the dentist as Douglas
\textsuperscript{20} NSWSR, 9/7213
\textsuperscript{21} Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent 10/10/1916
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid
\textsuperscript{23} NSWSR, 9/7213, Dr Bertram’s Post Mortem.

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away from the station, which although made somewhat indistinct by the rain, had seemingly been left by two men.\textsuperscript{24} This was a vital detail. Constable McIntosh searched Duncan’s body, finding his pocket book, inside which was a note about Roland Kennedy behaving in an offensive manner. Inside the station was the summons Duncan had prepared for Kennedy.\textsuperscript{25}

It was not long before five suspects were rounded up—Frank Franz, Roland and Herb Kennedy, Charles Martin and one other, presumably another Wobbly, and probably Hugh McLelland. With the recent arrests of Wann and Martin and the pending summons for Roland Kennedy, it is natural enough that the investigators would have been interested in some of the Wobblies, especially given Constable McLean’s intimate knowledge of the community.

The rudimentary conditions at the police station posed a serious obstacle for the investigation. There were, for instance, no means by which to fingerprint anybody.\textsuperscript{26} Two of the suspects had to be held in a wooden cell in the back yard, while the others were kept under guard in the office—with the result that “it was difficult for the police to converse without the prisoners hearing them.”\textsuperscript{27} Conversely, it had the benefit of the police being able to listen in on the prisoners. Detective Devlin, for instance, stated that he overheard Charlie Martin say to Roland Kennedy “well I always knew you were a very headstrong young man, but I never thought you would take up a rifle and shoot a man like that”, to which Roland replied “I wouldn’t have

\textsuperscript{24} Barrier Miner 29/9/1916, p. 4; The Sydney Morning Herald 29/9/1916, p. 8
\textsuperscript{25} The Sydney Morning Herald 10/10/1916, p. 10
\textsuperscript{26} NSWSR, 9/7213
\textsuperscript{27} Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent 10/10/1916

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done it only they forced me into it.”

The police may have found it unpalatable to be sharing their office with the prisoners. Far more unnerving though would have been the gruesome task of sharing the office with Duncan’s corpse. They had the body of their slain colleague in full view from the Wednesday to the Friday, which the ex-Tottenham officer Norman McLean, by this stage a Sergeant, described in a stoic understatement as “a strain”. “It was a great relief when the body passed out of our sight”, he remarked.

It proved impossible to bury Duncan in Tottenham, as the grave filled with water as soon as it was dug. Instead, Duncan was laid to rest in the Presbyterian section of Parkes Cemetery on Sunday the 31st of September. The corpse was taken there by train, accompanied by Constable Sykes, who delivered it to the morgue. There, two doctors, one local and one sent from Sydney, found a 32 calibre bullet in the body—an earlier post mortem in Tottenham carried out by Dr Bertram had failed to find a bullet. Sykes was then dispatched back to Tottenham with the bullet.

At the funeral a procession of police officers, on horseback and on foot—led by the Parkes Town Band playing Handel’s masterpiece of melancholia, the ‘Dead March’ from Saul—signified the solemnity of the occasion, and the fact that this was no ordinary funeral. A large crowd followed the procession, the steady rain a backdrop to the sombre occasion. The Reverend C.F. McAlpine stated that

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28 Bathurst Times 19/10/1916
29 Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent 10/10/1916
30 NSWBDM, Death Certificate of George Joss Duncan
31 Sykes referred to him as Dr Buttam
32 THS, ‘The Life of James Sykes’
33 Western Champion 5/10/1916

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although the perpetrators of this cowardly crime may escape human justice, the Divine justice, grim, unerring, terrible, will not allow them to escape...let us take our lesson both from those who die at the front fighting the battles of the Empire, and those who are faithful to duty unto death at home, to do our duty faithfully, unwaveringly. There alone is honour, true happiness and by God’s grace eternal reward.\textsuperscript{34}

Later in October, police officers began subscribing to raise money for a monument to be erected at Duncan’s grave.\textsuperscript{35}

Inspector Whitfield from Forbes police station interviewed Frank Franz on the 28\textsuperscript{th} of September, and as had Roland, Franz denied any involvement in the murder. He was asked if his father was German, and responded in the affirmative, but he was not asked if his mother was Scottish-Australian (the answers to both questions were of course already known). He admitted possessing four rifles, for the purpose of kangaroo shooting, and around 100 bullets. He was also asked about the incident surrounding Wann’s arrest, to which he denied ‘getting excited’.\textsuperscript{36}

On the 29\textsuperscript{th} of September Roland explained his whereabouts in a statement at the police station in which he denied any involvement in the murder.

On Tuesday the 26\textsuperscript{th} instant I was at home about six o’clock in the evening. Mick Donohue came across to my place and told me that Constable Duncan was looking for me, that he had a summons for me. I said to Mick he will see me after tea I will be over in the billiard room. I had no idea what the summons was for, but I knew it was in connection with what happened when he took my name. I came to the billiard room that night about eight o’clock. I remained playing billiards until 9 o’clock. I then left the billiard room alone and met Mr Veitch the

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{35} The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate 24/10/1916 
\textsuperscript{36} Sydney Morning Herald 10/10/1916
Hotel Keeper. I remained speaking to him for five minutes. I then went straight home. I reached home at least not later than ten minutes past nine o’clock. I remained talking to my father, mother and brother Herb at home until ten o’clock.\textsuperscript{37}

One wonders why Kennedy would have included Mr Veitch in his alibi, as Veitch was later singled out for praise for his cooperation with the police, in an article written for the Dubbo press by Sergeant Meagher.\textsuperscript{38} It is possible that he did talk to Veitch at some point in the night. Other billiards players corroborated Roland’s presence at the billiard hall after eight o’clock. He admitted owning a 32. calibre rifle, which he used for shooting rabbits.\textsuperscript{39}

Franz must have been feeling the pressure, as 24 hours after denying any involvement, he sought out Inspector Whitfield to “tell him something which he could not keep to himself any longer, as he had not slept for the last few nights.”\textsuperscript{40} He then gave a second interview, in which he accepted involvement, though he said he had been pressured into it by the Kennedy brothers. He fired a shot, but his bullet did not hit Duncan.\textsuperscript{41}

Faced with Franz’s confession, Roland initially maintained his innocence—“it is all lies”—however he “turned very white, beads of perspiration came out on his forehead, he was trembling all over, sagged at the knees and clutched hold of the door for support, and said “give me a drink of water”. Franz was then brought into the

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{37} NSWSR, 9/7213, ‘Exhibit T’
\textsuperscript{38} Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent 10/10/1916
\textsuperscript{39} NSWSR, 9/7213
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid
\end{footnotes}
room and asked to confirm that Roland was the man referred to in his statement. Roland was then formally arrested. This was the 30th of September. Roland then gave a statement to the police confessing his involvement in the murder. He argued that Franz was the instigator—“only for Franz I would not have taken any part in the shooting”—and that his brother Herb had not been involved.

Detective Develin and Constable Downey interviewed Herb Kennedy at Tottenham Police Station on the 29th of September. Earlier in the day an officer had visited his house and taken possession of his rifle. Develin and Downey’s first questions related to the ruckus that had taken place at Wann’s arrest. Develin then put to Herb—“are you not a permanent member of the IWW and do not a section of that organisation advocate the destruction of life and property?” “Yes, I am a member”, Herb replied,

but I do not believe in those principles. It would be a folly to kill a King or the Czar or for instance to shoot a policeman, because as soon as they are gone others will be put in their place. I believe in proper social reforms where these people can be done without.42

Much was later made of this statement, the implication being that Herb did not think killing was wrong per se, only that it was not an effective tactic. A “strange conception nurtured in brutality” in the “perverted mind” of an “utterly callous” individual was how one newspaper put it.43

42 NSWSR, 9/7213; Sydney Morning Herald 10/10/1916
43 New Zealand Truth 4/11/1916
After the interview Herb was allowed to leave, but the following day when he came to visit Roland, who had been locked in the cells that day, Detective Develin had a few words with him, then put his hand on his shoulder and placed him under arrest. He was interviewed again by Develin, this time in the presence of Whitfield. In this interview he again denied all involvement and disputed Franz’s statement when it was read to him. At this point he broke down in tears. Develin said to him “if you are innocent of this crime what do you want to cry for?” Kennedy replied “it would make any man cry, a charge like this a man might swing for, and many an innocent man has gone behind the iron bars”. When the detective prodded further, questioning why Herb had not gone to see Duncan after the shooting, as had most of the rest of the townsfolk, he shot back “it was none of my business and I did not come to loot upon dead bodies”. On the 2nd of October Herb was shown the five pegs which had been put in place outside the station window by Roland and Franz. To this he again replied “I wasn’t there, I know nothing about it.”

On the same day Herb’s housemate, a miner named William Evans, was interviewed. He was questioned on his and Herb’s whereabouts on the night of the shooting, and on his relationship to the IWW. He was not a member but admitted to being a regular reader of Direct Action. The police took his rifle, which was in a dusty condition. Gun possession was of course common in Tottenham.

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44 Ibid
46 This should probably be ‘look’ rather than ‘loot’ - there are more than a few spelling errors in the interview transcript.
47 NSWSR, 9/7213
48 Ibid
On the morning of the 1st of October, word reached the IWW in Sydney that IWW men had been arrested over the shooting. The immediate reaction there was that it was a police frame-up. Ted Giffney, The IWW secretary-general wrote to the Melbourne Local the same day, informing them of the news from Tottenham and further arrests in Sydney—“all sorts of charges are being framed up against our men” was his glum assessment.49

On the 2nd of October, in the company of Inspector Whitfield, Detective-Sergeant Develin and Constable Downey, Frank Franz was asked to re-enact the murder. He placed three pegs in the ground outside the police station window, to indicate from where the shots had been fired by he and the two Kennedy brothers.50 Roland Kennedy was then brought to do the same. He placed a peg in the ground where he had fired from and another where Franz had fired from, maintaining there was no need for a third peg as Herb had no involvement.

The coroner presiding over the inquest into Duncan’s death was none other than James Patterson, who had previously raised the ire of Arthur Graham and Tom Barker with his local Tottenham anti-IWW paper The Peer.51 Patterson “returned a verdict of murder, feloniously and maliciously committed by Roland Kennedy, Frank Franz and Herbert Kennedy”, and the three were then committed for trial.52

In the midst of all this, on the 4th of October Michael Kennedy, Roland and Herb’s father, died at the age of 79 of gastritis, which is often caused by prolonged heavy

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49 Letter from Giffney to Melbourne Local, quoted in Turner, Sydney's Burning: An Australian Political Conspiracy, p. 61
50 NSWSR, 9/7213
51 Ibid
52 Sydney Morning Herald 10/10/16

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drinking. Before his death police came around to his home and talked to Jeanette. She told them it was her husband’s dying wish that he could see Roland and Herb one last time. This wish was granted. As the boys were bidding their father farewell, Herb’s wife Joanna told her husband “we know you are innocent, keep a stiff upper lip”. According to Detective Develin she then put her finger to her upper lip “in indication”. Perhaps an indication of a stiff upper lip, or perhaps an indication of silence. Jeanette told the officers her boys were innocent and that Roland had been at home with her when she heard the shots, while Herb had only just left for his house. Michael Kennedy was buried on the 6th of October in an unmarked grave in the Tottenham cemetery. There was no minister at the burial. It is not known if Roland and Herb were allowed to attend the funeral, nor whether there was much of an attendance, although AWU agent and storekeeper Harry Mills and fellow storekeeper A.P. Mathewson were in attendance. James Patterson determined there was no need for an inquest into his death.

On the 10th of October the Sydney-based detectives Downey and Develin returned to Tottenham. They searched the homes of the two accused Kennedys and Frank Franz for documents relating to the IWW. There was a trove of IWW literature, correspondence and other documents at the Kennedys’ residences, including letters from Tom Barker, J.B. King, Fagan, Fred Morgan and other prominent Sydney Wobblies; an IWW contribution card was all they found at Frank Franz’s residence.

53 Death Certificate of Michael Kennedy, NSWBDM
54 NSWSR, 9/7213
55 Ibid.
56 As told by Peter Kennedy, 2011; NSWBDM
57 Ibid
58 These two are listed as witnesses of burial on Michael’s death certificate, NSWBDM

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The detectives also conducted investigations into other local IWW members. By this stage the two Kennedy brothers and Franz had been transported to Bathurst, via Dubbo.

After the shooting a sense of fear understandably gripped the town. Tottenham resident Peter Simpson recalls his grandfather Jack Simpson expressing his belief that there existed a hit-list. He had often helped the police, and in his role as mail contractor he had assisted Constable Duncan transport George Wann to the police station at Dandaloo on September the 26th. Simpson worried that he was next in line to be killed. Accordingly, wherever he went he armed himself with a shotgun.

After the arrests of Franz and the Kennedy brothers, Pat Harford got in touch from Sydney with their mother, Jeanette Kennedy. Harford was the secretary of the Workers Defence and Release Committee, a Wobbly-esque group which sprang up as the state began to dismember the IWW. When the movement was declared unlawful in December 1916 the IWW assumed this new name and carried on as best it could. Harford sent Mrs Kennedy a telegram which she received on the 7th of October, asking for clippings from local newspapers and enquiring whether “anything is being done to defend the boys.” Pat, an artist and stained-glass maker with “a taste for alcohol and propensity to violence” would later marry Lesbia Harford (nee Keogh),

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59 NSWSR, 7/5590, Letter from Develin and Downey 11/10/1916.
60 Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent, 6/10/1916, p. 1
61 Turner, Sydney’s Burning: An Australian Political Conspiracy, p. 70
62 NSWSR, 7/5590
the famed antipodean ‘Rebel Girl’. Later in October he was fined for collecting money to help fight for imprisoned Wobblies without police permission.

Press coverage of the murder, the trials and the executions was widespread. When news of the murder broke, most coverage adopted a similar tone, offering the scant details that were readily available under headlines such as ‘The Tottenham Sensation’, ‘Tottenham Terror’, ‘Tragedy at Tottenham’ or, inexplicably, ‘Trangie Tragedy’ (with the same article blaming an escaped lunatic). In these early days there was no political dimension to the story. Once it became apparent that IWW members had been implicated in the murder, much of the newspaper commentary took on a more alarmist tone. The Bathurst Times was certainly not reserved in its judgement of the case – “what Chief Justice Cullen described as a ‘callous, terrible, cold blooded outrage’ will go down as one of the most sensational, in many respects, yet recorded in the history of the west”; Cullen himself believing the west had been disgraced. “The Tottenham murder was one of the most revolting and cold blooded in the history of crime in this State” added the Queanbeyan Age. Given the prominent role Herb Kennedy had played in the dispute at Waihi and elsewhere in New Zealand, the press there showed a keen interest in the case. The Evening Post and NZ Truth, amongst others, were more thorough in their coverage than many Australian newspapers.

64 NSWSR, 7/5590
65 The Bathurst Times 21/12/16; The Advertiser 21/10/1916, p. 14
66 The Queanbeyan Age and Queanbeyan Observer 22/12/1916, p. 4
67 See for instance Evening Post 10/10/1916, 19/10/1916, NZ Truth 21/10/1916, 4/11/1916

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10. The Trials and Executions

Figure 9: Frank Franz, Roland Kennedy, Michael Kennedy.¹

¹ Barrier Miner 14/10/1916

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This chapter looks at the aftermath of Duncan’s death. It examines the trials of Herb Kennedy, Roland Kennedy and Frank Franz for his murder; the death sentences handed down and the resultant political storm.

On the 16th of October 1916, ‘Rex v. Kennedy and Others’ opened to a crowded audience at the Bathurst Circuit Court, with the NSW Chief Justice, Sir William Cullen presiding. Roland Kennedy and Frank Franz were tried together, and separately from Herb Kennedy. The trial opened with a differing approach by the pair from Tottenham—Frank Franz pleaded not guilty, but Roland Kennedy pleaded guilty. Kennedy does not appear to have entirely understood the process. The judge explained to him that “in the case of a guilty plea there was only one course left to the judge—to pass sentence. In a case of such moment it was a matter for serious consideration whether the accused should not have the full circumstances investigated.” Kennedy then asked the judge “if I plead not guilty I shall have the privilege of giving further evidence, but if plead guilty I shall not have that privilege?” When the judge replied in the affirmative, Kennedy changed his plea to not guilty.2

Roland Kennedy argued that on the night of the 26th of September he and Franz alone had gone to the station, with Franz leading the way. Franz said “Count three! When I say three we will let go together. We will let two volleys go.” The two of them fired simultaneously at Duncan through the window as he sat at his typewriter. Several

2 The Bathurst Times 19/10/1916

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seconds later Franz fired again, but Roland’s rifle misfired on his second shot. The pair then ran off as soon as they had fired the shots, with Franz calling out “come on, we’ve got the bastard now!”³ “Only for Franz I would not have taken any part in the shooting of the Constable” he insisted.⁴

In Frank Franz’s version of events he, Roland and Herb Kennedy all walked up to the station. Roland and Herb fired a simultaneous volley at Duncan. The two brothers then threatened Franz that they would shoot him if he did not fire. He then fired a shot though he could not see Duncan as he was firing, as the constable had lurched from his seat after being hit by the Kennedy’s fire. The following evening after a day spent drinking at the pub he met Roland who warned him that the two of them should not be seen together, that Franz should not get drunk, and that if he went to the police he would “blow his brains out”.⁵

Coming at the same time as the Sydney Twelve trials, the Tottenham case was able to be put into a narrative in which the Wobblies were portrayed as not only treacherous, but inherently murderous and a very real threat to civilised society. This point was made continually in relation to the radical literature they perused: special mention was made in court of the book Rebellion: Made up of Dreams and Dynamite and numerous copies of Sabotage, either by Emile Pouget or Walker C. Smith, found by Detective Develin at Herb Kennedy’s house.⁶ There were desperate attempts to link the Sydney Twelve with the Kennedy brothers and Frank Franz. In the trials they raised the issue of a letter from Roland Kennedy to the Sydney IWW, which police

³ NSWSR, 9/7213, ‘Exhibit U’
⁴ ibid
⁵ NSWSR, 9/7213, ‘Exhibit K’
⁶ Barrier Miner 17/10/1916; The Argus ‘Treason Charge, IWW Correspondence’ 17/10/1916

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had seized, signed off “yours in revolt” and with a post-script of “we are doing all that is possible for Barker’s release—a wooden shoe”. This letter was in fact not remarkable, as Roland and other Wobblies in Local no. 9 had sent dozens of letters to Sydney. It was also noted that three letters written by the Russian Joseph Fagan, one of the Twelve, to the Tottenham Wobblies were found.

A link between the Sydney Twelve and the Tottenham ‘German’ defendant would have thrilled the prosecution in both cases. Franz was no wordsmith though, and there was no documentary evidence tying him to any Wobblies outside Tottenham. In the trial of the twelve Ernest Lamb, K.C, raised a (rather tenuous) link between J.B. King and Tottenham, through Direct Action. “It had been proved that King was the publisher of this journal. In one of the issues found, that of May Day 1915, was a paragraph intimating that… communications were being received from their fellow-workers at Tottenham.” All the time they were attempting to drum up the links between King and the Tottenham accused on such shaky grounds they were unaware that he and Herb Kennedy were in fact on quite intimate terms from their time in New Zealand. Just in case linking King to the Tottenham murderers was not enough for the court, Lamb had another terrifying exposé up his sleeve: “another column in the same paper was headed “what we believe” and one of the beliefs was “we believe in free beer because attending church is free”. Surely, J.B. King was the devil incarnate. Murder, arson and free beer!

In his statement to police Franz said that he had been ‘led astray’ by the IWW, a point which was taken up by the Crown Prosecutor, Alfred Blackett, King’s Counsel,

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7 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 11/10/16
8 *Barrier Miner* 17/10/1916; *The Argus* ‘Treason Charge, IWW Correspondence’ 17/10/1916
9 NSWSR, 9/7213

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during the trial. “Did your leading astray mean that you went to Duncan’s place and that but for the IWW you would not have done so?” he enquired of Franz. “I mean that I was put in a position in which people did not care whether they employed me because of my association with the IWW.”

Belying the gravity of the trial, proceedings were interrupted by mirth when Franz was handed a rifle and asked to demonstrate how quickly he could load and re-load. “But never mind about the cartridges” said the lawyer. “If you want to aim at something aim at that clock there” suggested the judge, to a chorus of laughs. Franz said, smiling, “I don’t suppose that people would like me to aim at them”—“so he merely turned his aim on to the reporters!” noted one astonished reporter. But there was a serious point being made here. The time it took for Franz to re-load, while not conclusive, did support his claim that there had been three gunmen and he had only fired one shot. He stated again that he had missed Duncan on purpose.

The Crown Prosecutor’s argument concerning a motive for the murder was set out as follows:

Why was a crime like this committed? Is it conceivable that these men should deliberately murder the constable because of his arresting Roland Kennedy? I do not put that before the jury as a matter of consideration at all. The Crown would not think of saying that the murder was the result of revenge for this threatened prosecution for abusive language. That would be too slight altogether. But it does not matter what purpose the accused intended to serve. Any purpose must have been trivial in comparison to the crime. It would be quite sufficient to show that these men were those who carried out the killing. But I think that when the whole secret of the case is known — and it will come out clearly during the proceeding of the case — that the reason for this awful murder was the pernicious literature of the

10 Ibid
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IWW. Both the accused were members of this organisation. Both of them are young fellows whose minds might be inflamed and poisoned by the pernicious literature that they might read. There have been undoubted cases where boys have saturated their minds with lurid fiction of the Deadwood Dick class and committed foolish crimes. I think it will be abundantly clear that these men obtained the literature of the IWW. It may be that we shall have an opportunity of putting before the jury the contents of some of that literature, and the purposes and methods of this organisation. The explanation of this awful crime is that the IWW documents circulated throughout the country have been read by these men until their minds have been inflamed and saturated with the thought of crime, and that it needed only a casual opportunity to enable them to carry into effect their awful designs and purposes that were in their minds by reason of the literature which they read.12

The trial only lasted one day. Both Roland Kennedy and Frank Franz were found guilty by the jury. Franz later tried to appeal to the court of criminal appeals but this was dismissed. Sir William Cullen promptly sentenced the pair to death by hanging. The two were asked if they had anything to say against the sentences, and Franz used this time to query why Herb Kennedy was not on trial with them. The judge said it was not the time for such a question, and he did not answer. Roland Kennedy thanked the jury.13 He remarked to Franz “I hope they will give us the same length of rope.”14

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12 Bathurst Times 21/12/1916
13 New Zealand Truth 4/11/1916
14 The Advertiser 20/10/1916, p. 6

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Figure 10: Roland Kennedy\[15]
Figure 11: Frank Franz

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where and When</th>
<th>Offence</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bathurst G.O.</td>
<td>18 10 1916</td>
<td>Murder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executed in Bathurst G.O. at 9 a.m. on 26th December 1916</td>
<td></td>
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16 NSWSR, NRS1998, 3/13078
Herb Kennedy appeared separately from the other two, though still before Chief Justice Cullen, on the 20th of October. His trial was originally scheduled for the morning of October the 19th. The counsel for the defence, Mr Pilcher, had wanted his mother Jeanette Kennedy to give evidence; however this proved impossible as she was in hospital in Sydney, seriously ill with bronchitis.\textsuperscript{17} Within less than a month her husband had died, one son had been sentenced to death and another was potentially facing the same fate, so events would have taken their toll on her. She died in 1918 in Redfern.\textsuperscript{18} She informed the court by telegram that to the best of her knowledge Roland and Herb were at her house when she heard the shots.\textsuperscript{19} In place of Mrs Kennedy, Detective Develin was placed in the box when the trial opened on Friday the 20th.\textsuperscript{20}

Not surprisingly given he had maintained his innocence all along, Herb pleaded not guilty. For the Crown Prosecutor, Alfred Blackett once again, Herb’s agreement with the goals of the Industrial Workers of the World was reason enough for him to be implicated, though he pointed out that he was loath to use the term ‘industrial’ in describing them.\textsuperscript{21} “I think the jury will see that, in the iniquity of these doctrines which they seem to hold in common there is a reason why Michael Kennedy would have been with the other two men on the evening of the murder.”\textsuperscript{22} Frank Franz appeared as the Crown’s chief (and only) witness, and spoke at length.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{17} The Sydney Morning Herald ‘Tottenham Murder Case’ 20/10/1916  
\textsuperscript{18} NSWBDM  
\textsuperscript{19} NSWSR, 9/7213  
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid  
\textsuperscript{21} The West Australian ‘New South Wales Tragedy’ 21/10/1916  
\textsuperscript{22} Bathurst Times 21/10/1916  
\textsuperscript{23} Examiner ‘Murder of a Constable- third man acquitted’ 21/10/1916 ; Sydney Morning Herald ‘Tottenham Murder- Michael Kennedy Acquitted’ 21/10/1916  

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Some of the forensic evidence pointed towards a third actor, as Franz had asserted.\(^{24}\) At the trial of Roland and Frank Franz, the prosecutor Alfred Blackett was adamant that there was a third actor—“there were three men outside the window with rifles, and two of them were the accused before the court.”\(^ {25}\) However, Chief Justice Cullen advised the jury to find Herb Kennedy not guilty. However strong the likelihood of a third gunman may have been, this did not necessarily mean it was Herb. The sole evidence implicating him was the testimony of another accused, Franz, testimony that was contradicted by Roland’s. “According to British Justice the evidence must be corroborated” declared the judge. The jury followed the judge’s recommendation, without retiring for consideration, and the former police officer went free.\(^ {26}\)

By the 25\(^{th}\) of October 1916 Sydney Kennedy, who was at this stage in Marlborough, Queensland, had heard the news of his brother Roland’s fate through the “capitalistic paper”.\(^ {27}\) He was understandably greatly moved by the news, and his emotions showed through in a letter he sent to Herb and his wife Joanna—“Just a line in our sad hour of trouble. I am very sorry to hear the sad news about poor Rolly, oh god I don’t know what to do as I can’t get home, and it is very hard to bear”.\(^ {28}\) He was greatly concerned for how their mother was coping, but did not appear aware that Herb too had just stood trial. In Syd’s eyes his brother had not died in vain—“poor Rolly... has gone for a cause that will live forever...”\(^ {29}\)

\(^{24}\) However, as mentioned earlier, the tracks discovered leading away from the station appeared to be those of only two people.
\(^{25}\) *The Sydney Morning Herald* 19/10/1916
\(^{26}\) *The Sydney Morning Herald* ‘Tottenham Murder- Michael Kennedy Acquitted’ 21/10/1916
\(^{27}\) NSWSR, 7/5590
\(^{28}\) *Ibid*
\(^{29}\) *Ibid*
At this point Kevin Kennedy was in Salt Lake City, Utah, and he did not hear the news until the following year. To him it was the firmest possible re-affirmation of his revolutionary beliefs. In June 1917 he sent a letter to his mother saying:

Well Mother, you no doubt are greatly grieved over the loss of poor old Dad and Rolly’s fate. Well Mother I can assure you there is no necessity to worry, as I know that as a Revolutionist that it came to Rolly as a great relief to know that he was executed not because of what he had done, but because of his accepting a Revolutionary philosophy and dared to expound it to the workers that they may enjoy life.

Should anything of a similar nature befall me at any time while fighting for Industrial Freedom I do not want you to mourn over me, I want you to understand that when they of the ruling class penalize me with imprisonment, or even death, I will accept it as the greatest thing that they can bestow upon me. The powers that be, think, that by sending us to the gallows and their Bastiles that they are quelling the onward march of the workers, but nay; it only serves to invigorate our energies and reanimate our spirits, we of the Revolutionary army, hold our lives as naught, we have realised life with all its grim realities, of poverty, want and woe.

You will perhaps read these lines and say that I am boasting, or that I am crazy, but such is not the case, I am speaking from the bottom of my heart. I know that you do not understand the physicology (sic) of a Revolutionist Mother, but perhaps you will learn a little from this epistle.

Only a youth as intense as he could feel as deeply as he did the flight of time. Life was very short, child that he was he had never had a childhood. He had early seen struggle and forced to struggle. He thought himself hard, stern and uncompromising. Of course he was not; it is only that he had a few illusions, and that the sensitive nature of childhood and youth had suffered at what he beheld in the Industrial Penitentiarys or slave shops. This suffering and this reaction against what is called organized society, but is in reality a chaotic barbarism, became the basis of his philosophy.
Life is very short Mother, so do not worry about things that were. The melancholy of materialism can never be better expressed than by Fitzgerald’s O Make Haste.\textsuperscript{30} One should have no time to dally, and further, should you know me, understand this I too was a dreamer but early in life the hard hand of the world was laid upon me, it has never been relaxed. It has left me sentiment but destroyed sentimentalism. It has made me practical. It has taught me that reason is mightier than imagination, that the scientific man is superior than the emotional man.\textsuperscript{31}

The final two paragraphs, the “epistle” through which Kevin hoped his mother would come to understand her “Revolutionist” children, were taken from Anna Strunsky Walling’s ‘Memoirs of Jack London’, first published in the radical magazine The Masses in July 1917, which in turn was drawn from the letters the iconic author and activist London wrote to Anna Strunsky at the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{32} Kennedy sent the letter to his mother before Strunsky’s piece appeared in print. This is a strong indication that Strunsky Walling was yet another of the prominent radicals known personally by Kevin Kennedy.

A revealing, and anonymous, letter to Truth gave a sympathetic account of Roland’s life. It is interesting to consider who may have authored the letter. It was obviously someone close to Roland—either a family member, a close friend or a fellow Wobbly. There is no mention of Franz in this letter. Clearly his talking to the police had not been well received by the author. Of Roland, “he started working on the mine at the age of twelve, and at the age of fifteen became interested in unionism and politics. For the active part he took in these matters the employers began to victimise him.” It then moves on to the Duncan’s summons of Roland for offensive behaviour following the

\textsuperscript{30} From Edward Fitzgerald’s translation of The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.
\textsuperscript{31} NSWSR, 7/5590, Kevin Kennedy to Jeannette Kennedy.

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arrest of Wann. “Knowing that he was not guilty of any wrong, and seeing the injustice of being put to the expense of travelling a distance of 36 miles [that is, a return trip to Dandaloo] to defend himself against groundless and false charges, drove him, in my opinion, to desperation, which I am sure in his saner moments he would never think of doing. He was never guilty of cowardice, and I have seen him often stop a bully from knocking drunken men about”. 33

Roland Kennedy was anything but a social outcast. He had many mates in Tottenham and was actively involved in community life. As noted he was, for instance, a horn player in the town band. The only known surviving photograph of Roland prior to the murder of Duncan is of him among his fellow band members (see figure 6). Though the exact date is not known it was in 1916, the last year of his life. In a sea of serious expressions, Roland bears something of a sly grin—there is nothing cold or stern betrayed by his expression. There is a ring of truth to his brother Kevin’s statement that “he [Roland] thought himself hard, stern and uncompromising. Of course he was not”. 34 He looks like a boy.

The death sentences captured the public’s attention, with widespread coverage in the press, and a great deal of opposition—not just from Wobblies and radicals. Most of the outcry was based on opposition to the death penalty on moral grounds rather than any claims that the two were innocent. What was perhaps most controversial was the fact that Frank Franz was a Crown witness. Never in Australian history, before or since, has somebody been executed after becoming a witness for the Crown, or ‘turning King’s evidence’. In Truth’s eyes, this was “not merely extraordinary: it is

33 Truth 8/12/1916
34 NSWSR, 7/5590, Kevin Kennedy to Jeanette Kennedy

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without precedent in any British community”. The execution of a Crown witness was indeed unprecedented, for good reason. Without some form of reward, such as the reduction of a sentence, there is little motivation for a criminal suspect to cooperate, especially when they are often faced with the very real threat of violent retribution for informing. As Truth put it, “there is no liking in this community for an informer: on the contrary, he is generally detested as a base creature, even when his services may be necessary for the due administration of justice”. Still more shocking, in light of his being executed, was how Franz came to be a Crown witness in the first place. He told his attorney that the police had informed him explicitly that his life would be spared if he made a confession and gave evidence for the Crown. Not only this, he was told that he or his family would probably be granted the reward of £200.

Thirteen days before the two Wobblies were to be hanged, a public meeting was held at Sydney Town Hall with the intent of lavishing praise upon the police for their response to the IWW. The meeting was presided over by Sir Allen Taylor, the conservative politician and ship owner who had been so incensed by navvies on the NSW north coast. Unfortunately for Taylor, among the 200 people in attendance was a “disturbing element” of IWW sympathisers, relishing the chance to rain on his parade. They booed loudly throughout the proceedings, and broke into laughter when a motion was raised to offer support for police.

35 Truth 3/12/1916
36 Ibid
37 Ibid
38 ‘Honouring the Police’ Sydney Morning Herald 6/12/1916
39 The Sydney Morning Herald 8/12/1916

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On Sunday the 3\textsuperscript{rd} of December, a certain Mr Sinclair chaired a Wobbly gathering in the Sydney Domain. The police monitoring the proceedings made record of his impassioned speech, a speech brimming with the same anger as ever, yet also showing a fatalistic resignation to the impending dismemberment of the movement; and an understanding of how the news from Tottenham fitted into this. “I want to read this to you” [he proceeded to read an article on the confirmation of Franz and Kennedy’s death sentences, to which he added “To Hell with the Premier, Mr Holman”]… “No member of this organisation is surprised; no man who understands the position is surprised. No man who has seen working class suffering in the past can be surprised. (“Hear Hear”) If this organisation has got to go under, I say I am going to have a finger in the pie, why should we allow a judge to sit on the bench and do things like that when we have got the power. This country is not worth living in”.\footnote{\textit{NSWSR, 7/5590, ‘Utterances of the I.W.W. Speakers in the Sydney Domain on Sunday the 3\textsuperscript{rd} December 1916’}}

Numerous other speakers in the Domain drew on the events in Tottenham. One made a comparison between Franz, a crown witness, being hanged and Scully and McAllister, crown witnesses and perjurers on whose evidence the Sydney Twelve had been convicted, walking free. Roland Farrell gave a speech which undoubtedly landed him in hot water:

They point to one of the men of Tottenham, because a member... believed in using the forces behind the working class to gain his ends. The only man in this country who has ever pleaded guilty to such a charge. I don’t know why he murdered const. Duncan. Nobody knows how a tortured brain will go if a man is dogged round and round. “If I was a murderer I
would have gone with the 1st Contingent of soldiers to leave these shores for the battlefield of Europe, but I am not a murderer and I will not go.”

In the police transcript of the speech that final sentence is placed in quotation marks—attention was drawn to it almost certainly because it would have fallen under the ‘prejudicial to recruiting’ category. Many speakers had been charged for less provocative statements; while the speakers themselves often claimed that their statements were less provocative than what the police had transcribed, especially in examples like the above.41 While the IWW viewed soldiers as pawns of capitalism, slandering the soldiers doing the fighting as murderers was not their style—their targets were “George the Least”, Billy “gift of the gab” Hughes, and above all ‘Fat’, tending to his investments while exhorting others to sacrifice.

A fortnight later on Sunday the 17th of December, the Anti-Conscription League held a meeting in the Domain where the following motion was carried—“that this meeting of citizens protests against the reversion to barbarism in connection with the death sentence imposed upon the Tottenham murderers, and requests the authorities to commute the sentence to one of life imprisonment”.42 A week earlier the Amalgamated Coach Makers’ Society carried a similar resolution.43 The East Woollahra Anti-Conscription League “protested emphatically...against the carrying out of the capital sentence against the Tottenham murderers, believing that [it] can serve no good purpose”.44

42 Barrier Miner 18/12/1916
43 Ibid 10/12/1916, p. 4
44 The Register 8/12/1916, ‘Murderers, Firebugs and “Martyrs”’
Opposition to the death sentence was such that the executive of the Political Labour League made at least a semblance of an attempt to commute the punishment to life imprisonment.45 A committee from the executive was formed with the aim of persuading the Attorney General, David Hall, to follow this path.46 It consisted of William Lambert, an AWU official and ex-shearer from Dubbo who was the president of the Labor Party in NSW, W.A. Gibbs and William O’Brien, the member for Annandale. Whether this was a committed last minute effort or simply a gesture, in the end the government chose not to intervene—“the law should be allowed take its course” was the response by the Attorney General to Tottenham’s local member Thomas Brown, when he inquired of the committee’s decision in parliament.47
Kennedy and Franz met the news “calmly and with apparent indifference.”48

In the meantime the former Labor Premier Holman had entered a coalition with the conservative opposition and formed a new government, with himself as Premier. However cabinet was, still, composed of people who ostensibly were moral opponents of just such an outcome. As The Australian Worker noted, “[b]oth Mr. Holman and Mr. Hall, now in the Coalition cabinet, have declared themselves personally opposed to the death penalty, and a bill was in course of preparation dealing with the subject. Because the law had not been abolished, however, the law was carried out, for the first time in New South Wales since 1912”.49 They would be the first executions at

45 In 1918 the PLL would become the NSW branch of the ALP Childe, How Labour Governs: A Study of Workers’ Representation in Australia. p. 21
46 The Sydney Morning Herald 13/12/1916
48 The Tamworth Daily Observer 2/12/1916, p. 2
49 The Australian Worker 28/12/1916

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Bathurst since 1894. John McGirr, the member for Murrumbidgee, asked of the Attorney General in parliament:

...is it not a fact that he has for the last twenty years supported a platform, one of the planks of which is the abolition of capital punishment? Has the honourable gentleman departed from that principle, and will the honourable gentleman say that the first act of the National Government is to resort to the barbarous method of hanging?

Truth made the point that the Holman government had previously commuted the death sentences of murderers to life imprisonment, and that the arguments for hanging Franz and Kennedy now were equally applicable in those instances. What particularly angered Truth, and a number of letter writers, was a murder case almost five years before the Tottenham killing. A young man by the name of Campbell Moir was sentenced to death for a murder in Glebe, inner Sydney, and this was upheld on appeal. However at a special meeting of the State Executive, Cabinet decided to intervene and declared the sentence would be commuted to life imprisonment.

Holman, then Attorney General, stated this was amongst other things on account of his youth. An important point here is that Campbell Moir was a relative of one of Holman’s colleagues. ‘One Who Knows’, the anonymous letter writer to Truth who gave an account of Roland Kennedy’s life, took the same stance. “Did they allow the law to take its course in young Moir’s case? No! Why? The public know.”

The PLL experienced division within its rank and file over the death sentences imposed on Kennedy and Franz. When the Gundagai League of the PLL passed a
motion criticising the planned executions, the Sydney executive demanded they show cause why their League should not be considered bogus. Gundagai responded that they, one of the oldest Leagues in NSW, represented the true spirit of the labour cause. The Sydney executive, on the other hand, they compared to Simon Legree, a cruel slave driver from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.54

A petition against the death sentences handed down to Roland Kennedy and Frank Franz was circulated door to door in Sydney, in a “campaign of resistance”, accompanied by the following message:55

…The basis of death sentences is that when a person commits murder the State then steps in and repeats the offence by murdering the murderer. Such conceptions may have been very fitting in the brutal days of feudalism, and primitive savagery, but in this era, the people should be beyond punishing one crime by committing another… the Ministers of the Labor Party have identified themselves with the Liberal Party better known perhaps as the “Leg Iron” Party, and as a result of the influence of their new colleagues, are commencing to put the death penalty again into operation.

Two young men, just on life’s threshold, Frank Franz and Roland Nicholas Kennedy have been sentenced to death for shooting a constable at Tottenham. The Executive Council has decided that these men must be done to death at Bathurst on December 20th.

Without going into the merits or demerits of the accused men (who are no more guilty of murder than prominent citizens who make fortunes by adulterating and poisoning food-stuffs etc.) I would ask for your assistance, as a fighter for light against darkness, love against hate, liberty against oppression, to use your efforts and influence to get the sentences of these men commuted to imprisonment.

54 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 11/12/1916
55 NSWSR, 7/5590

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No time must be lost if the sentence is to be thwarted….the future can only be made noble for mankind by abolishing the blood-thirsty mistakes of the past, not by reverting to them.\textsuperscript{56}

This leaflet and petition caused much annoyance to the police, who examined closely the backgrounds of the men who had compiled it—Robert Webster, Hugh McCue and EA Giffney. All were involved with the IWW.\textsuperscript{57} The petition was sent interstate, with the Victorian Typographical Society being one recipient.\textsuperscript{58} Another petition was organised by Peak Hill Municipal Council, Michael Kennedy having been an alderman on that council. The petitions triggered a protracted speech in federal Parliament by Tasmanian Senator Thomas Bakhap on what the reaction to Duncan’s death said about the moral state of the nation:

...I do not know what is wrong with the people... Is there a great outburst of public feeling; is there any great outburst of feeling on the part of politicians even; is there any large outburst of regret because of the fate of the policeman? Undoubtedly we regret in a sub-conscious sort of way his death, but we do not find people organizing subscriptions, nor the public declaring as an organized body their regret at the death of the man. But we find in some quarters a most pernicious intention to show sympathy to those who have actually cut off an unfortunate man in the prime of his life, and in the execution of his duty. We want our moral atmosphere cleared... What are we coming to in Australia when we have petitions presented to secure the reprieve of dastardly, cowardly murderers?

...We are substantially inferior to our ancestors of two or three centuries ago. I remember reading in one of the standard histories of England of a very much loved magistrate who, in the seventeenth century, was found foully murdered... He was followed to his grave by dozens of thousands of people... they were not reserving their sympathy for the murderer... [In France] a gang of ruffians...

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid
\textsuperscript{58} The Argus 19/12/16, p. 7
murdered right and left, they committed all sorts of crimes... They were at length captured, and found guilty, and the people insisted upon their being guillotined. The executioner was brought along, and the long-disused guillotine was erected. The people congregated in thousands, and the recital of what took place fairly warmed my heart. My heart glowed when I read how these honest French country folk cheered as every scoundrel’s head was shaved off and fell into the basket. That is the sort of thing I wish to see. I do not wish to see petitions for the reprieve of murderers, and a murdered man followed by only his wife and children to the grave.59

Although George Duncan’s funeral was hardly the lonely affair that Bakhap portrayed, there was some truth to a claim he made in the same speech of there being little public sympathy for Duncan’s family. Not a line was given to them in the major newspapers, although some mention had been made of the fact he was soon to be married in country newspapers.60 Bakhap’s point may have gained more traction if he had left out his love of rolling heads.

Both Kennedy and Franz received regular visits from family members while in their cells until the night before their execution.61 For the families, staying in Bathurst would no doubt have been a welcome reprieve from the small-town spotlight of Tottenham. The Australian Worker provided a revealing glimpse into their final days:

Since their conviction both men gave little trouble. Kennedy, though, at times, would show signs of breaking down, but succeeded in maintaining his expressed determination to die gamely. However, he, as well as his confederate in crime, clung to the hope of a reprieve up till Tuesday, but the hope was shattered by the decision of the State Cabinet on that day. Franz always protested his innocence,
and complained that he had not received a fair trial. He felt his position keenly, and at times would completely break down, and weep bitterly. Both men passed their time reading and writing, and eagerly accepted the spiritual ministrations offered them. Franz was attended on the scaffold by Archdeacon Oakes and Canon Wilton, and Kennedy by Rev. Father Cooney. Both men saw their relatives and friends for the last time on Tuesday night. Each passed a fair night, awoke early, and partook of light breakfast. Just prior to execution they expressed themselves as perfectly resigned and fully prepared to die. Franz’s last words before he left the cell were in regard to his wife and children.

He had two children, Ruby aged two and Pearl aged one. After being ushered from his cell he was taken to Kennedy’s where the two were pinioned. While his arms were still free Franz shook hands with Kennedy, saying to him “well, good-bye, Rolly old boy; this is the last time we’ll meet here”. Kennedy accepted his hand, though clearly he had not forgiven Franz for talking to the police: “Franz”, he responded, “if it wasn’t for you, the two of us wouldn’t be here now.”

If Fitzgerald, who was not present, is to be believed, the behaviour of the two condemned on their final day, a hot December’s day, was worlds apart. Franz was grim in the face of his impending death; Kennedy, on the other hand, was “flippant and irresponsible”. When the time came to be taken to the gallows, he sang (“the copper bosses killed you Joe... says Joe “I didn’t die”, perhaps?), he danced around and joked about being lassoed. He continued his dancing right up to the scaffold,

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62 This is quite interesting given how he claimed his confession was extracted.
63 *The Australian Worker* 28/12/1916
65 Ibid. Fitzgerald offers an alternative explanation, that Roland may have been referring here to his earlier assertion that it had in fact been Franz who instigated the shooting. Fitzgerald, as has been noted, was not disinterested in the events he was describing. One curious inclusion is his statement of fact that Herb Kennedy had also been involved in the shooting, after the case against him had been dismissed. This has subsequently been repeated in Danny Webster, *Beyond Courage: The circumstances of New South Wales police officers who have lost their lives* (Sydney: New South Wales Police Association, 2004).
66 *Bathurst Times* 21/12/1916

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above which hung the “hideous-looking ropes”.68 A sense of awe pervaded the audience; the gaol was silent. According to Fitzgerald, when Kennedy faced the people gathered, he “laughed somewhat hysterically”.

This is at odds with the accounts of the representatives of the press in attendance, who made no mention at all of Kennedy laughing or singing. The thorough Bathurst Times correspondent emphasised the silence above all.69 Whether or not he had been ‘flippant’, at the end, Kennedy took on a serious tone, and exclaimed “Good-bye, boys.”70

This is starkly different to the account The Australian Worker gives of Franz, who “showed unmistakeable traces of fear. His legs trembled, and his face twitched nervously. As the hangman adjusted the caps over the eyes of the men his lips moved as if he was about to say something, but the bolt was drawn and both men died instantly”.71 While on the platform both men looked straight ahead. The two were within three feet of each other when the white caps were drawn over their faces and the nooses placed around their necks. Within 31 seconds of stepping onto the platform, the lever was pulled, the men fell seven feet, and their necks were broken.

The two were buried the following day in Bathurst cemetery. Only their immediate relatives were in attendance at the funerals. There was little chance of Roland Kennedy or Frank Franz being celebrated as martyrs for the cause à la Joe Hill. With the IWW facing the full wrath of all arms of state power, not to mention the press,

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68 Bathurst Times 21/12/1916
69 Ibid; Bathurst Times 21/12/1916
70 Ibid
71 The Australian Worker 28/12/1916

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they were hardly in a position to celebrate the actions of convicted murderers. While they did not ignore Franz and Kennedy, they were confined to advocating the withdrawal of the death sentences. This is not to say they would have celebrated the actions of Kennedy and Franz in any case, even if they had been able to.

According to the *Barrier Daily Truth*, a number of IWW members travelled to Bathurst for the executions, but they seem to have behaved fairly passively, and held no demonstration. They handed out leaflets, though these were likely nothing more inflammatory than expressing opposition to the death penalty—perhaps the same ones handed out door to door in inner-Sydney.

In an interesting, yet somewhat macabre side-note to the executions, a gallows pay dispute erupted. While the executions were to be simultaneous, the hangman would receive double pay, given two men were being killed. The Sheriff’s Officer attending the executions, who had customarily been paid £5/5- owing to “the very disagreeable nature of the work involved”, also sought double pay. In the eye of the Public Service Board ‘if one corpse was worth five guineas then two were clearly worth ten’. The Attorney-General’s Department however saw this as an ‘extravagant waste of public money’, as the executions would be simultaneous. “They stand on the platform together and fall at the same time”. The Sheriff’s Officer’s haggling got him nowhere, Franz and Kennedy’s lives netted him the standard £5/5-.

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72 *Barrier Daily Truth* 21/12/1916  
73 *The Argus* 21/12/1916, p. 9  
74 Turner, *Sydney’s Burning: An Australian Political Conspiracy*. p. 79  
75 Ibid.
Within days of the hangings commentary was offered by Direct Action. Yet describing it as the position of Direct Action does not adequately capture the feeling behind the words. After all, Tom Barker was the editor of the paper, and the Kennedy boys were his mates:

Sir William Cullen is stated to have described the Tottenham murder as the most callous and cruel in the annals of Australian crime.
We hear the same comment upon all murders, and it appears to be used to attempt to justify the legal murder which is likely to follow.
We hold no brief for murderers, and we consider all murders brutal, but how one planned and executed within a few minutes can compare for cold bloodedness and cruelty with a legal murder planned months ahead we cannot see; nor do we understand why a public officer or a group of public officers who premeditate a murder should claim superiority over a person who does his own killing.
In our opinion the official who orders the murder is quite as guilty of it as the hangman.
The man who kills in hot blood under the mental strain of some real or imaginary wrong is a superior individual to the one who premeditates and plans a crime weeks ahead, and he is certainly far more manly than the one who premeditates it for months and then hides his bloody hands behind the cloak of legality.\footnote{Direct Action 30/12/1916}76

Such thought Barker. No doubt Fagan, Charlie Reeve and especially J.B. King, also mates with the Kennedy brothers, were also shocked about the events in Tottenham and Bathurst. These three though, had concerns of their own to deal with, given that they were all in gaol. There was more commentary on the executions in Direct Action the next week, entitled ‘Shooting and Strangling’ (the title obviously meant to imply murder had taken place on two separate occasions).

The post-mortem examination on Franz and Kennedy, who were hanged last week, disclosed the fact that death in each case was due to strangulation. These

\footnote{Direct Action 30/12/1916}76
men are said to have murdered a policeman, and it seems that they did. It is a sad, and a mad, and a bad thing for a man, or men, to murder anyone – even a policeman. The fact that the above-named reckoned the policeman had injured them doesn’t mitigate the crime; neither does the fact that they were more or less drunk at the time. But what about the hangman who committed two murders for nothing at all, but his blood money?77

It is quite plausible that Kennedy and Franz had been under the influence of alcohol when they shot Duncan. Franz told the police that he had had “quite a few drinks” on the night of the shooting, while Herb said he had been drinking with Franz “and a man named Dave” that day.78

The day after the executions the Sunday Times printed a cartoon in which Ned Kelly, standing next to a firestick and gun-toting Wobbly, remarks “if they hanged me, what should be done with him?”79

77 Direct Action, 6/1/1917
78 NSWSR, 9/7213
79 Sourced from Patten, "Ned Kelly's Ghost: The Tottenham I.W.W. and the Tottenham Tragedy." p. 1

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At the same time as this saga was unfolding, the IWW found itself being tied to another murder. A man named James ‘Paddy’ Wilson, a sailor from Ireland who had spent time in America, wound up in gaol after being involved with the Maroubra money forging scheme, or at least on the receiving end of some of the £5 notes from Joseph Fagan. In October 1916 he escaped from Tamworth gaol but he and a fellow escapee, an American Wobbly named Charles Coxen (also known as Elmer Emerson), were rearrested in nearby Quirindi shortly afterwards. Back in custody the American decided to talk to the police. He told them that in Long Bay Gaol, Wilson had admitted to murdering a Sydney café owner named George Pappageorgi in early April, along with another man named Swiss.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{80} The Advertiser ‘Charge of Murder’ 22/12/1916, p. 7
Pappageorgi’s body had been found on the George Street café’s kitchen floor on the 5th of April. Despite offering a £100 reward the police were left baffled.\textsuperscript{81} There was no political dimension to the brutal murder; the motivation appeared to be simply theft as all cash had been taken from the till.\textsuperscript{82} Pappageorgi had a rope tied around his neck so tightly it caused his tongue to stick out, and his skull was smashed in from behind with a cleaver.\textsuperscript{83} Wilson denied any involvement, saying all he knew of the murder was what he had read in the newspapers. However on December 18\textsuperscript{th} 1916 he informed police that he would plead guilty to willful and premeditated murder.\textsuperscript{84} Contradicting Coxen, he denied having had an accomplice.

According to Arthur Leary, a detective who interviewed him, Wilson had said “I can thank the IWW for the trouble I am in. I never had any trouble until I joined that organization. Curse the IWW! They made a criminal of me, and many others beside”, to which Wilson (in court) replied “are you not twisting words into a meaning I never intended?”\textsuperscript{85} On the back of this alleged statement ‘Curse the IWW!’ became a popular headline in the press, and the IWW link to the murder was mentioned in every subsequent article.\textsuperscript{86} The \textit{Barrier Miner} reported that Wilson was a ‘prominent’ member of the IWW, but there was no truth to this—he had in fact earlier told Tom Glynn to cancel his membership as he was “sick of it.”\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{81} Turner, \textit{Sydney’s Burning: An Australian Political Conspiracy}. p. 21
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Queanbeyan Age and Queanbeyan Observer} ‘Brutal Murder in Sydney’ 11/4/1916, p. 4
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Ibid}
\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Barrier Miner} 21/12/1916, p. 2
\textsuperscript{85} \textit{The Advertiser} ‘Charge of Murder’ 22/12/1916, p. 7
\textsuperscript{86} \textit{The Brisbane Courier} 21/12/1916; \textit{The Register} 21/12/1916; \textit{Cairns Post} 22/12/1916; \textit{Townsville Daily Bulletin} 22/12/1916; \textit{The Advertiser} 22/12/1916
\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Barrier Miner} 12/12/1916, p. 1; 21/12/1916, p. 2

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Under the title ‘Degenerates and Others’, *Direct Action* responded to the news about Wilson thus:

It is alleged by the police that James Wilson confessed to a murder, and blames the bad influence of the IWW for leading to his act. The IWW has never taught anything but industrial revolution; neither has its literature. It has written and preached in the open light of day always. Those workers whose brains are so deranged by the system as not to know the difference between social war and individual spite, between social restitution and individual garroting, are respectfully requested to first earn a stretch in gaol on their own responsibility, and on release to become agents for the police after the manner of their kind. The IWW needs their room for reasonable men.  

Tom Barker claimed there was no possibility of James Wilson having committed the murder in the first place: that on the night in question he was fast asleep, dead drunk, on a pile of *Direct Actions* in the IWW rooms on Castlereagh Street, Sydney, as was his habit after a binge; that he chose the gallows as a form of suicide. According to Barker,

while he was doing his time in jail [four years for the forged fivers, and five years for assaulting a warder during his escape], he suddenly got to hate the whole thing, decided it wasn’t worth it, so, like a nut, gave himself up for this murder. It’s an absolute impossibility that he could have been in the shop with the Greek that night. I’m positive about that, but, of course, the police don’t care how they get you. The moment he started to talk like that they fixed him.

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88 *Direct Action* 6/1/1917

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Whether he was in fact suicidal, or a murderer, or both, Wilson was sentenced to death and was hanged on the 31st of May 1917 at Long Bay Gaol. He did not utter a word at the gallows.\footnote{The Register 1/6/1917, p. 8}

Three weeks after the executions of Kennedy and Franz an incident took place in the small southern NSW town of Oaklands, where two labourers had started working on the wheat stacks at the railway station. The two, David Hinds and Patrick Browne, were both IWW members who had previously worked as wharfies.\footnote{NSWSR, 7/5590} According to \textit{The Argus} the fact that they carried weapons alarmed the other labourers, who refused to work with them. When the two were propagandising outside the local pub (Browne was “addicted to drink”), Browne got into an argument with a ‘stay at home patriot’.

“What do we want a bloody King for?” he thundered. When the local constable got involved Browne continued: “what do we want the police for? They could not take a man if they did not have a revolver and baton, but by Christ they are not the only ones who have them!” Browne then pulled out a newspaper article on the murder of Constable Duncan in Tottenham, and the officer was warned “to be careful”.\footnote{Threatening a Constable: Tottenham Case Quoted ‘ The Argus 10/1/17 There are some significant discrepancies between the newspaper article and police correspondence regarding the incident. The latter appears more accurate.} “[T]he same thing is likely to happen here tonight” he threatened. It did not, and he was charged.\footnote{NSWSR, 7/5590}

A legend has since developed in Tottenham that Roland Kennedy willingly allowed himself to be cast as the scapegoat for murder when in actual fact Herb had been the ringleader. That in a Christ-like sacrifice Roland took on the sins of his older brother

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and accepted death to spare Herb’s family from losing their husband and father (Roland being single and childless). With Herb the hardened, veteran agitator and Roland barely out of his teens, there is a hint of credulity to the idea, and one which offers a touch of poignancy to the tale. Whether there is any truth to the legend or not, Roland was not coming from a position of innocence. Whether there had been two shooters or three, it is ‘beyond reasonable doubt’ that he was one of them.

The final months of 1916 were an extraordinary period in Australian politics. The murder of George Duncan had its origins in a climate of hysteria. While the decision to pull the triggers was ultimately made by individuals, powerful political, social and economic forces shaped the environment in which such an event was able to happen. As with the Tottenham Wobblies, Duncan too was a creature of his time. In Duncan and Roland Kennedy there were two diametrically opposed world views. Each saw themselves as engaged in a titanic struggle. Duncan, his mind no doubt drifting constantly to his brother fighting overseas, saw it as his duty to uphold an order which others in the town saw as their duty to overthrow. The tragic result was perhaps two, perhaps three men with rifles creeping up to the police station window and shooting him in the back. The reaction to the murder says as much as the fact that it took place. That a Cabinet in the process of preparing an anti-capital punishment bill would so firmly endorse two hangings, one of which was of a Crown witness, shows clearly that this was a time unique in modern Australian history. However, even in a small community like Tottenham, the sensation provided by the murder should be seen as an underline rather than a full stop. Within a week of Duncan’s murder, branches of the Federated Mines Employees’ Association held stop work meetings. The

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Tottenham branch joined in, “determined to fight conscription”. The inexorable march of political life was not slowed. If anything, as we shall see, in some nearby areas it sped up.

This chapter has shown the shooting of Duncan to be, far from a local concern in a backwater, an incident of state and national importance. It galvanised the labour movement, and as we shall see became a final nail in the coffin of the IWW in an organisational sense. The hanging of Franz, a crown witness, was unprecedented, and the whole affair was probably the most politicised and polarising example of executions in Australia of the 20th century, and since Ned Kelly.

94 *The Australian Worker* 12/10/1916, p. 11

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11. The Cobar Conflagrations: The Struggle Continues

This chapter shows us the IWW in the aftermath of the crackdown documented in chapter eight. It documents the ferocious struggle between the IWW and its opponents in Cobar, showing us that when it came to the bush towns of western NSW, Tottenham was not unique.

As 1916 turned into 1917, the IWW was terminally ill in much of Australia, relentlessly pursued by the state. The attack on the Tottenham police station was partly to blame. The treason trials of the ‘Sydney Twelve’ had taken place and all twelve were in gaol. On the 18th of December 1916, a few days before the execution of Frank Franz and Roland Kennedy, the Unlawful Associations Act had been passed in federal parliament, with the intention of destroying the IWW. The bill would not normally have been legal, but it was made possible at this time by the War Precautions Act. The War Precautions Act would expire six months after the war and hence so would the Unlawful Associations Act.

Under the provisions of the Act, the IWW was considered an unlawful association, and any member who advocated any action which would hinder the war effort—hindering the war effort was interpreted very broadly—would be gaol for a

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1 Some elements of the following section have appeared in: Rowan Day, “With Fists and Boots Being Freely Used: Anti-IWW Violence in Cobar 1916-17” The Hummer vol. 7, no. 1 (2011)
2 The Sydney Morning Herald ‘Suppression of IWW’ 20/12/1916

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minimum of six months. Liberal Senator Edward Millen thought six months “very tender as a penalty” for what he saw as a gang of murderers, and Labor Senator Patrick ‘Paddy’ Lynch agreed, conceding “it is quite true that it is perhaps somewhat too tender”. When Billy Hughes introduced this legislation into parliament he catalogued a list of crimes associated with the IWW, with the Tottenham murder coming first on that list. As well as the other well-publicised cases, of arson and forgery, he made two extraordinary allegations to parliament. In addition to Constable Duncan, Hughes claimed that the IWW had murdered a government agent. When questioned by Kelly he refused to give any details of the alleged murder. Other government agents, Hughes went on to inform parliament, had infiltrated the IWW and discovered that every Wobbly possessed an automatic pistol. To a man they would bring their weaponry to meetings. These concocted stories helped the Act through parliament, but it was the Tottenham shooting that was drawn on again and again. When one senator questioned if such draconian legislation was necessary, Tasmanian Senator Thomas Bakhap retorted “…policemen [have been] shot down at their desks”.

In the face of such pressure, the standard narrative has the IWW disappearing at this point in any organised sense, a spent force. This is because western NSW has not been included in the narrative. While such measures as the Unlawful Associations Act did effectively kill the IWW in Sydney, in some areas of western NSW it had the opposite effect. The state’s actions and the press focus only served to draw attention to class tensions. In the west this was a boon to the IWW. In the town of Cobar, for

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4 Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, LXXX. 19/12/1916, p. 10152
5 Ibid. 19th December 1916, p. 10169

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instance, there was a spike in interest in joining the IWW and participating in its meetings. Cobar is not far west of Tottenham, in the same copper belt, roughly halfway between Dubbo and Broken Hill. Like Tottenham, its emergence as a town of any significance was a result of copper mining. In 1913 Cobar had a population of about 7,000, and when copper prices peaked in 1916/1917 the Cobar district’s population may have exceeded 10,000 people.\(^6\) While further west on the Barrier highway the famous Broken Hill has received iconic status in the history of unionism and working class agitation—‘the Gibraltar of Unionism’—Cobar has been almost entirely ignored, which is interesting, for as Geoffrey Blainey noted in his history of Broken Hill, many of the radicals at the Barrier had come from Cobar, “where the IWW had a foothold”.\(^7\)

While moves had started to organise a Local in Tottenham in 1914, in nearby Cobar there were no moves to formally establish a (Chicago strand) Local until January 1917. Cobar had in fact been one of the first locations in Australia to host an IWW Club, however its importance gradually diminished after the split between the Chicago and Detroit lines, and the ascent of the former. This was reflected in the case of the Cobar man, George Reeve, who was forced out of the leadership position to make way for what their opponents called the “bummery element” of globetrotting direct actionists including J.B. King, Tom Barker and Donald Grant, all of whom rejected parliamentary politics. Reeve dismissed them as violent skull crackers and preachers of theft.\(^8\)


\(^7\) Blainey, The Rise of Broken Hill. p. 126

\(^8\) See Chapter 6: The Tottenham IWW; Rushton “The Industrial Workers of the World in Sydney 1913-1917: A Study in Revolutionary Ideology and Practice.” p. 62
In many senses Cobar would have been the ideal location for a Local. Like Tottenham it was dominated by the copper mining industry and the workforce was in fact considerably larger; it was on the highway to that seething hotbed of discontent, Broken Hill; there were no shortage of industrial disputes, with a number of strikes taking place; from here would sprout prominent Labor and union leaders, including William Guthrie Spence; and from here those same leaders would be denounced for being sell-outs (after all, Spence had “brushed the western soil from [his] patent leather boots at the earliest opportunity for a life in the leafy city suburbs.”) In fact as an example of the prevalence of Wobbly ideas out in the west, in 1916 an IWW member, A. McNaught, challenged Spence for the presidency of the AWU. The self-confident Spence would have been shocked to see how close the result was in the Western Branch of NSW—2080 votes for him, 2042 for McNaught. McNaught in fact defeated Spence in Longreach, 3063 votes to 2645.

In Cobar in late 1916 and early 1917 Wobbly agitators held frequent street meetings and membership surged, and they sought to create a new IWW Local in the town. The success of the IWW in Cobar in late 1916 and early 1917 inevitably provoked hostility from some quarters, including the Federated Mine Employees’ Association (FMEA). If there was one thing the Wobblies were known for and sought to promote, it was direct action, or agitating on the job. They did just this at the Great Cobar mine, where they were making “extreme demands”. The previous year there had been separate disputes at the mine involving miners and engine drivers, though these were

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9 For instance, an Engine Drivers’ strike in 1907 or the strike at the ‘Great Cobar’ mines in 1916
12 *Barrier Miner* ‘The IWW at Cobar’ 6/2/1917, p. 2

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settled with pay increases. While the FMEA may have frowned upon the IWW spreading propaganda in the streets, their agitation at one of Cobar’s biggest mines in the final days of January, where they threatened “serious trouble” appears to have been the final straw for them. Cobar’s “industrial future” was at stake, they argued. However as much as anything, it appears to have been a little name calling that roused temper, with officials from the FMEA being especially outraged at being called ‘boneheads’, perhaps the Wobblies’ favourite insult. The simmering tension led to altercations on successive nights in late January and early February.

On the night of Saturday the 3rd of February around a thousand people, a substantial proportion of the town’s entire population, gathered in the main street of Cobar. When one of the Wobbly speakers sought to address the crowd, violence erupted, which the IWW claimed was pre-arranged” The Adelaide Advertiser reported that “every IWW man who was caught was severely dealt with, fists and boots being freely used.” The fighting reached such a level that it forced some of the Wobblies to seek police protection, however this does not appear to have been forthcoming. One Wobbly had escaped the mob and sought shelter in a chemist’s shop. He was dragged out of the shop by a police officer and handed over to the mob, which proceeded to beat him to a pulp. Other Wobblies had sought shelter in various other shops along the main street but they too were pursued, dragged into the street, and beaten. Soon after another shopkeeper, who was in company with police officers,

13 Burgess, The Great Cobar, p. 322
14 The Argus 8/2/1917, p. 4
15 Ibid
16 Bob McKillop Rails to ‘Copper City’: The Nyngan to Cobar Railway in ‘Australian Railway History’ Volume 60, no. 863 September 2009
17 The Advertiser 6/2/1917, p. 9
18 Ibid

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urged that the Wobblies be killed. As it turns out nobody was killed, however there were many serious injuries, including the Wobbly literature secretary who had his jaw broken after receiving attention from both boots and knuckle dusters. A writer to the *Bulletin* described the scene thus:

> Up and down the street the battle raged and the best the police could do was to act as unofficial masters of ceremony, steering contestants away from the plate glass windows and picking up the wounded. You can buy IWW stocks in Cobar today at seven for sixpence.\(^{20}\)

The reference to the windows was actually quite an accurate one: afterwards local police reported that “owing to the size of the crowd the police could not prevent the assaults...[however they were able to protect] valuable windows and property that were in the vicinity”.\(^{21}\) The *Sydney Morning Herald* made a brief reference to the events, describing it as “exciting”.\(^{22}\) The Hobart *Mercury* praised the “cheering” violence, rejoicing that the Wobblies were “thrashed with such vigour... would the same could be said of all the other Cobars!”\(^{23}\) It gave a sigh of relief that finally “their ‘Go Slow’ abomination, their ‘Sabotage’ frightfulness, and the rest of their mean, decadent, dog-natured” ideas had been replaced by “manly stand-up fighting”.\(^{24}\) What delighted the paper even more was the fact that the IWW was being taken on in ‘the home of the go-slow’, New South Wales, which in its words was “that happy hunting ground of loafers of all kinds”.\(^{25}\)

\(^{20}\) *Cairns Post* 4/7/1918, p. 4  
\(^{21}\) NSWSR, 7/5590  
\(^{22}\) *The Sydney Morning Herald* 6/2/1917, p. 6  
\(^{23}\) *The Mercury* ‘Getting Their Deserts’ 8/2/1917, p. 4  
\(^{24}\) Ibid  
\(^{25}\) Ibid  

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The IWW naturally disagreed with the mainstream press over the cause of the violence. They argued it did not arise out of a dispute between themselves and the FMEA, and indeed the local secretary of the FMEA wrote to several newspapers arguing they had no problem with the IWW.\textsuperscript{26} The AWU backed this up, claiming that of the thousand-odd crowd, just two were FMEA members. The IWW claimed the violence was planned and instigated from within the office of the Great Cobar Mine, after the bosses became fearful of their presence. That these bosses had colluded with the Mayor and local police to bludgeon them out of town, in imitation of tactics that had been used against the IWW in America: it was a conspiracy by “police, [the] Mayor, J.P.’s, boss-lovers and bosses.”\textsuperscript{27}

It was not the resounding victory employers may have hoped for though, as the following night there was further fighting at the local stadium when the FMEA tried to hold a mass meeting. \textit{Direct Action} claimed they gained 75 new members on the same day.\textsuperscript{28} Whether or not there was any truth to the charge that the mayor had been involved in planning the violence, after the second night of fighting he had had enough and went to the local press, where he made it clear that the directive that “no person shall loiter on any footway, road or public place” would be strictly enforced.\textsuperscript{29}

Broken Hill’s \textit{Barrier Miner} newspaper closed off its report of the violence with the observation that “the opinion is now freely expressed that the town will in future be free from the IWW men”.\textsuperscript{30} In fact one reader was so impressed by the turn of events that he wrote a letter threatening to raise his own vigilante mob and drive the IWW
out of Broken Hill. Two weeks later, a crude bomb was thrown at the *Barrier Miner*’s office, damaging its roof “shortly after the expiration of an open air IWW meeting”. The same office was hit by a more serious blast less than twelve months afterwards. The *Barrier Miner* had in its early life identified with “the cause of the working man”, but by this period it was conservative, pro-business and pro-conscription.

In response to claims such as those by the *Barrier Miner* that Cobar would now be rid of the IWW, *Direct Action* trumpeted that “We never forget”. The IWW was nothing if it was not persistent, and did not give up on Cobar. Less than a month later, the moves that had been in place to establish an IWW Local in the town were formalised at a public meeting to which 50 aspiring members turned up and at which four pounds worth of pamphlets were sold. If *Direct Action*’s figures are to be believed, IWW membership in the town would by this stage have been in the hundreds, including about 125 new members since the evening street violence. A month after this, a Wobbly agitator called Bill ‘Hobo’ Jackson arrived in the town and managed to attract an audience that half filled the local stadium. Bill’s nickname was fitting. He was not always sure where he was going: after Cobar he went to Narromine and Lithgow before tentatively deciding to make for Newcastle. In many ways he was a typical Wobbly, wandering around the bush, with no family ties and no fixed address.

The police had never looked kindly upon the Wobblies, and this would hardly have been helped when a fellow officer was shot in nearby Tottenham a few months

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31 *The Sydney Morning Herald* ‘Bomb in Newspaper Office’ 19/2/1917
32 *The Register* ‘Bomb at the Barrier: Newspaper Office Menaced’ 21/1/1918
34 *Direct Action* 3/3/1917

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previously. *Direct Action* accused the police of being in on a conspiracy to drive them from Cobar, and at the very least they clearly did little to help the Wobblies who had been attacked. Nowhere is this illuminated more clearly than in the aforementioned case of one officer dragging a Wobbly from his shop refuge and turning him over to a mob. Despite their clear loathing of the IWW, the police were not quite as excited by the violence as sections of the press had been. In the aftermath of that night’s violence they fretted that the two camps were arming themselves and that serious blood-letting was on the cards.\(^{35}\) Senior police figures in Sydney were alarmed about reports of weapons being smuggled into the town. Detective Nicholas Moore, Military Intelligence’s IWW expert was at this time preoccupied with the fear of Wobblies acquiring firearms. He visited Sydney’s leading gun-smiths and firearms dealers to gauge if there had been any increase in sales (there had not); while pressing for tighter regulation of the trade.\(^{36}\)

The IWW literature secretary who had had his jaw broken in the riot was hauled before the courts four months later. He had referred to the mayor of Cobar, Mr Duffy, as “Duffy the stuffy, the plum pudding if you like, parasite of Cobar, who fattens on your back.”\(^{37}\) For this apparently outrageous insult he was sentenced to three months hard labour.\(^{38}\) Duffy was a forthright opponent of the IWW, and according to the *Sydney Morning Herald* had “always taken an active part in recruiting”.\(^{39}\) On a pro-conscription campaign trail in the lead up to the 1916 referendum, he informed a farmers’ rally in regional Victoria that the referendum offered a simple choice—between Billy Hughes and David Lloyd George on the one hand, and the devilish

\(^{35}\) NSWSR, 7/5590  
^{36}\) NSWSR, 7/6720  
^{37}\) *Mayor and the IWW* *Queanbeyan Age and Queanbeyan Observer* 12/6/1917 p. 2  
^{38}\) *Ibid*  
^{39}\) *The Sydney Morning Herald* ‘Country News’ 18/12/1918, p. 13
IWW on the other. For all this, Duffy was not what you would call a typical ‘loyalist.’ In 1918 when the Cobar Catholic church flew an Irish flag above the Union Jack, Duffy behaved obstructively towards those seeking to have it taken down.

While the Wobblies had stood fast in the face of attempts to drive them away through violence, they were less of a match for assaults from the judiciary such as hard labour for ‘offensive language’, so many of the Wobblies packed up their few belongings and headed north to another copper mining area, Cloncurry in North West Queensland during 1917. Raymond Evans described the area as “a haven of rest for them from the clutches of the police who were hunting them down”. One of the most prominent of the Wobblies at Cloncurry was one such refugee from Cobar, a passionate soap boxer originally from Switzerland, who depending on which alias he preferred was called Fred Anderson or Henderson. In late 1917 ‘Hobo Bill’ also found himself at Cloncurry. In February a mine manager at Cloncurry declared the district could potentially rival ‘the Belgian Congo’ in copper production “but, unfortunately, it was being infested with the IWW, whose policy was to ‘go slow’”.

Three years later, mining at Cobar was brought to a dramatic end by a suspected arson attack. At the CSA mine, a fire broke out underground at a level at which no work had been carried out in seven years—thus seemingly ruling out a work-related accidental fire. The board of directors of the mine declared there could be “no other

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40 West Gippsland Gazette ‘The Farmer’s Vote’ 31/10/1916.
41 Barrier Miner ‘Flying the Irish Flag’ 9/12/1918, p. 4.
42 Evans, The Red Flag Riots: A Study of Intolerance p. 88
43 Ibid
44 Examiner 8/2/1917
45 Burgess, The Great Cobar, p. 322; Bruce Fleming, History of Kandos (Bathurst: Bruce Fleming, 1984). p. 43

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The inferno was such that a steel plate placed over the shaft burned through in a matter of days. After a number of weeks the fire was presumed exhausted. However, after seven weeks it broke out again, and in the meantime an internal collapse, which led to gas pouring throughout the mine, resulted in an inferno beyond all hope of control. The mine was sealed, but as such fires can rage for years—a sealed mine in Broken Hill had burned for more than eleven years—it had to be abandoned. The fire, as it turned out, continued to burn until 1936. The smaller mines in the area were dependent on the larger mine and they too were forced to close. The Great Cobar closed in the same year. The mine’s Receiver, Sir Arthur Whinney, sent orders from his London abode that it be shut permanently. Much of Cobar’s population were forced to leave, “leaving behind a town of emptiness and despair”. Had all this indeed been the result of arson, it is unlikely the culprit could have foreseen the full extent of the consequences of their action. Ken McQueen questions the assumption that arson was to blame, suggesting the self-combustion of backfill or remnant sulphides as a possible cause, and pointing out there had been a precedent at the CSA mine of ore catching alight spontaneously. Blainey—in characterising this time as a period of particular conflict between mining bosses and managers on the one hand and radical unionists on the other—includes the Cobar blaze among some devastating mine fires in the 1910s and 1920s arguably started by militants, alongside North Lyell in 1912, Broken Hill in 1919 and Mount Morgan in 1925.

46 Barrier Miner 29/7/1920
47 The Cobar Copper Centenary Celebration Committee, Cobar Copper Centenary 1869-1969.
48 Burgess, The Great Cobar, p. 322
49 Ibid. p. 323
50 McQueen, “Hidden Copper: the early history of the Cornish, Scottish and Australian (C.S.A) Mine, Cobar.” p. 37
51 Western Mail ‘Commonwealth and New Zealand News’, 24/6/1920
52 Burgess, The Great Cobar, p. 323
Again, if it was arson, for which there was no hard evidence, it arose from a context of bitter division throughout this area of the state, obvious in Tottenham, which had fuelled industrial tension at the Great Cobar mine. This in turn fuelled the outbreak of violence in Cobar’s main street three years earlier: an event which would have left bitterness among those on the receiving end of the violence. While it remains unproven, it is possible that three years later some of those caught up in that incident realised their ultimate revenge.

Much political mileage was made out of the IWW’s newfound notoriety in western NSW. Ahead of the state election due to be held in March 1917, and the federal in May, in late April a rally was held in Condobolin, the largest town in Tottenham’s shire. Ernest Buttenshaw, of the Nationalist Party of Australia, was campaigning to be the local member. Fellow Nationalist parliamentary aspirant Reginald Weaver, formerly of western NSW though by now living in North Sydney, and contesting the well-heeled seat of Neutral Bay, addressed the rally. He informed the audience in Condobolin that there was a “close connection” between the Political Labour League [the Labor Party] and the IWW. The Nationalist Party won the seat, which Buttenshaw then held until 1938. Weaver was also successful in Neutral Bay. The same tactic was used elsewhere. John Garland, the Minister for Justice addressed a rally in Dubbo for Murdock McLeod, another Nationalist Party candidate, where he decried the “tyrannous” PLL, which was under the sway of “the IWW extremists”. His declaration was met by cheers.

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54 The Sydney Morning Herald 27/4/1917, p. 8
55 The Sydney Morning Herald 16/3/1917, p. 8

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The rhetoric was not tamed with the conclusion of the election. In July George Fuller, the acting Premier, gave a speech in Wellington in western NSW on behalf of McLeod who had been elected, where again the PLL was tied to the “diabolical incendiaries” of the IWW. Even Holman, the Premier, was in on the act. “Every day”, he announced, “we are receiving fresh evidence of the sympathy that exists between a large section of the PLL and the IWW”. The day before the election he ratcheted up his rhetoric even further, declaring that the following day would offer a choice between “the forces of anarchy and IWWism under Mr Brookfield’s [i.e Percy Brookfield, who was running for the Broken Hill-dominated seat of Sturt and who had campaigned on behalf of the Sydney Twelve] red flag of revolution” and “responsible government and the safety of the Empire, as symbolised in the National Flag.” Brookfield, who had earlier been an itinerant worker and in 1913 worked in the mines at Cobar, was shot dead four years later. The Argus nailed its colours to the mast—it was confident that should the PLL win the election, a dictatorship would be established. The paper rejoiced when the results came through on the 26th of March, with the numbers indicating that the PLL “revolutionaries” would not be able to introduce their “dictatorship”.

It was west of the Great Dividing Range that the spectre of revolution was raised—by both sides—most prominently. There, hard attitudes were forged in hard work and a hard environment. In the west, the line between violent rhetoric and violent deed was not always a strong one.

56 Barrier Miner ‘State Politics’ 25/7/1917
57 The Sydney Morning Herald 22/3/1917, p. 6
58 The Sydney Morning Herald ‘PLL & IWW’ 24/3/1917, p. 12
59 For an excellent account of Percy Brookfield’s life and death, see Adams, The Best Hated Man in Australia: the life and death of Percy Brookfield 1875-1921.
60 The Argus 15/3/1917, p. 6
61 Ibid 26/3/1917, p. 6

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12. Twilight of the Wobblies in Tottenham and Australia

This chapter examines what was effectively the end of the Wobblies in an organisational sense in Tottenham and Australia. Throughout 1917 and 1918 the campaign for the release of the Sydney Twelve continued apace. For the besieged IWW it became their chief preoccupation, in a sense transforming the movement from an offensive one to a defensive one.

Henry Boote continued to publicise the campaign in the *Australian Worker*, and Percy Brookfield, whose vow to fight on behalf of the Twelve formed part of his election platform, continued to raise it in parliament. His boisterous support for the Twelve would see him expelled from the Labor Party.

In August 1918 a Commission of Inquiry presided over by Justice Phillip Street was opened into the trial of the Twelve.¹ Those sympathetic to the Twelve derided the Inquiry’s findings as a whitewash, but the Inquiry did serve their cause by bringing to public attention the questionable evidence used in the trial. In 1920 a Royal Commission headed by Justice Norman Ewing from Tasmania examined the trial of the Twelve. His report was concluded in July and was far more damning than Street’s earlier Inquiry had been.² Ewing found that six of those gaoled were innocent, and five others had already served sufficient time. Four of the Crown witnesses were

² Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia.* pp. 242-243

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perjurers.\textsuperscript{3} Tom Barker agreed with Ewing’s version of events.\textsuperscript{4} The Government followed Ewing’s advice and released all except Charles Reeve and J.B. King. Ian Turner argued convincingly that the three who probably had been involved in lighting fires were released while Charles Reeve, the one prisoner Ewing condemned, had no involvement.

In the aftermath of the shooting and hangings the Wobblies of Tottenham all went their separate ways. Most lived out quiet lives in rural or regional NSW. Arthur Graham died in Tamworth in 1961.\textsuperscript{5} After living in Gosford for a number of years, Kevin Kennedy moved to Broken Hill for a second time, where he was killed in a hit and run car accident on Christmas Eve in 1951 at the age of 60.\textsuperscript{6} He left behind a widow and two sons, to one of whom, Dallas, he had given the middle name Roland.\textsuperscript{7} His brother Herb ended up in Ardlethan, a small town between Temora, West Wyalong and Griffith. He died there in 1966. His wife Joanna died a year earlier in Guyra, between Armidale and Glen Innes in northern NSW. George Wann ended up not too far from Herb, in Deniliquin, where he died in 1961—the “unnaturalised German”\textsuperscript{8} had lived out his entire life in Australia, the land of his birth. Hugh McLelland died in the Sydney suburb of Drummoyne in 1932, coincidentally a suburb that Arthur Graham had lived in before he moved to Tottenham. The hapless Albert Krist was almost certainly deported at the end of the war. Charles Martin is the only one of the Wobblies of whom there is record of being in Tottenham after the hanging.

\textsuperscript{4} Fry, \textit{Tom Barker and the I.W.W.: oral history}. pp. 28-29
\textsuperscript{5} NSWBDM
\textsuperscript{6} \textit{The Barrier Miner} 27/12/1951
\textsuperscript{7} \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald} 20/6/1952
\textsuperscript{8} Most of the press was content to simply call him German, but the \textit{Lachlander} conferred on him the additional label of unnaturalised, 4/10/1916

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of Franz and Kennedy. In the following years he had further run-ins with the law, including being charged again for the possession of firearms, and stealing wire from the railway yards and wheat from a local station, as well as frequent charges of drunkenness. While Duncan’s killing and the subsequent inevitably anti-IWW environment would have been a spur for Tottenham Wobblies to move on, this was not especially uncharacteristic of Wobblies elsewhere. As the crackdown intensified, most Wobblies found “urgent business in other parts of Australia” as Tom Glynn put it.

In May 1917, delivery of Direct Action through the post was forbidden. In July 1917, the Unlawful Associations Act was strengthened even further, making membership of the IWW illegal; distribution of IWW propaganda was also made illegal. The Workers’ Defence and Release Committee, too, was banned. Discussing these changes to the Act in parliament, Senator Patrick Lynch gave a novel justification for legislating against the IWW—not doing so, he reasoned, would delegitimise European settlement in Australia: “[w]e came here and dispossessed a native race. On what grounds? On no other ground than that its members were ‘going slow’ and were not making the best use of it...now it is suggested that we, in our turn, should ‘go slow’ as the Aborigines before us had been doing”. After the amendment to the Unlawful Associations Act more than a hundred IWW members, mostly from NSW, were arrested and gaol for their membership of the organisation.

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9 THS, Summons and Charge book for Tottenham and Dandaloo, Petty Sessions 1918-1928, June 1919, October 1924
12 Ibid. p. 86
13 Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, LXXX. 19th December 1916, p. 10154

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anticipation of mass arrests in Sydney, *Direct Action* called on IWW members and sympathisers from country areas to travel to the metropolis, and keep the struggle going by replacing those incarcerated.\(^{15}\)

Some of those who received gaol and hard labour for their IWW membership were also deported—although none to the land of their birth—under the Alien Restriction Order, which in turn was made possible by the War Precautions Act.\(^{16}\) In 1918 British-born Tom Barker and seven other Wobblies were shipped to Chile, a country with no immigration laws, aboard the *Mineric*.\(^{17}\) Four other Wobblies would be deported to Chile. The Australian government, after criticism from their British counterparts, gave a somewhat laboured explanation that the Wobblies were not deported to Chile, simply from Australia, and that the ships just happened to be sailing to Chile.\(^{18}\) Paul Freeman, a miner and prospector who had lived at Broken Hill and Cloncurry, was deported to Germany despite his protestations that his American ancestry went back five generations. This came after farcical attempts to dump him in the United States, where he was refused entry, which saw him shipped back and forth across the Pacific four times. Freeman’s hunger strike and large demonstrations in Australia did not prevent his removal from the country.\(^{19}\) This ‘German’ did not choose to make Germany his home, travelling in 1920 to Russia.\(^{20}\) The onus was cast on the individual Wobbly to prove that he was born in Australia.\(^{21}\) A Wobbly named Charles Thompson, for example, claimed that he was born in NSW, but the

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\(^{15}\) *Direct Action*, August 1917

\(^{16}\) *Northern Territory Times and Gazette* ‘Aliens Restriction Order’ 15/7/1915; Cain, "The I.W.W: aspects of its suppression in Australia, 1916-1919.” p. 58

\(^{17}\) Fry, *Tom Barker and the I.W.W.: oral history*. p. 32


\(^{19}\) Adams, *The Best Hated Man in Australia: The Life and Death of Percy Brookfield 1875-1921*. pp. 193-209


\(^{21}\) Cain, "The I.W.W: aspects of its suppression in Australia, 1916-1919.” p. 56

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summation of the authorities was “[n]ot satisfied of Australian birth. Recommend deportation.”

In December 1917 Kevin Kennedy arrived in Sydney after being deported from America along with his fellow Australian Wobbly organiser Fred Raison (who had been using the alias Reginald McPhee). Busy as it was arranging the deportation of as many Wobblies as it could, Australia was not keen on new ones arriving. Kennedy had to prove to the military authorities that he was Australian-born; because Raison was not able to prove Australian birth he was denied entry to the country. Kennedy’s arrival was watched in high places, with related correspondence being forwarded to the Inspector General of Police, the Chief Censor and various senior figures in the Intelligence Section. According to the Inspector in charge of his case in Buffalo, Kennedy had admitted to the “commission of a crime or misdemeanour involving moral turpitude prior to his entry to the United States, highway robbery in New South Wales.” As no record of this in Australia is forthcoming, it may simply have been a pretext to facilitate his deportation. The same Inspector advised the NSW police to keep Kennedy under surveillance. This they did—when he arrived in Coledale, a coal mining village north of Wollongong within two weeks of disembarking at Sydney, the police took careful note.

This small village was a curious location—Kennedy’s arrival in Coledale came in the wake of a sensational shooting in the locality, the aftermath of which dragged in the

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22 Ibid.
23 NSWSR, 7/5590
24 Ibid
25 Ibid
27 His whereabouts were forwarded to the Inspector General of Police, Intelligence, and the Censor. NSWSR, 7/5590
IWW. It was a settlement not without sympathy for the IWW. In January 1917, the Coledale Miners’ Union had sent a resolution to the Prime Minister criticising “the harsh and unjust treatment meted out to twelve members of the Industrial Workers of the World by a class biased judge” and demanded their immediate release.28

On the 25th of August railway fireman Alfred Green was shot in the chest while tending a train’s fire, as it passed through bush near the village, on the way to Nowra from Sydney. The shooting occurred in the context of the 1917 general strike, and Green was one of the volunteers working to keep the trains in operation. He survived the gunshot. Two local miners, Frederick Lowden and James McEnaney, both members of the IWW, were arrested for the shooting in September. Interestingly, the same detectives who worked on the Tottenham shooting, Develin and Downey, were among those involved in this investigation.29 Before long it emerged that Charles Thorburn, a known police agent provocateur, and on whose evidence the two Wobblies had been arrested, had fabricated his allegations.30

In seeking a slice of the reward, Thorburn had chosen to blame Lowden and McEnaney because they were Wobblies. But he further contended that he made the accusation on the advice of Detectives Robertson and Surridge, a pair who had been involved with the Sydney Twelve case. He [Thorburn] “had a quid off the police”, and was “going back to get more” he remarked to John Hughes, the man who revealed his role in the conspiracy, adding “this is the sweetest thousand a man ever got.”31

Detective Surridge had told him, he alleged, “we can get the thousand [pound

28 Direct Action 6/1/1917
29 The Sydney Morning Herald ‘Coledale Outrage’ 30/8/1917
30 Turner, Sydney’s Burning: An Australian Political Conspiracy. p. 93
31 The Sydney Morning Herald ‘Coledale Conspiracy Case’ 17/10/1917

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reward]. There will be another thousand from the railway. I didn’t get anything out of the IWW [Sydney Twelve] cases; I intend to get something out of this.”  

Thorburn was tried and sentenced to three years hard labour. His claims about the detectives, who denied involvement in the frame-up, did not go any further. However the police had at the very least, it seems, planted incriminating cartridges in the hut the two accused Wobblies occupied. The cartridges, matching those from the shooting, were wrapped in an IWW song sheet. The distinct possibility that the shooter had come from their own ranks was not something pursued by the police. On the basis of the empty allegations (when the shooting took place Lowden was in Sydney) the two Wobblies were sacked, locked up and left out of pocket after legal costs. “After mature consideration”, it was decided the pair should receive no recompense.  

Who shot Alfred Green, and whether they intended to, remained a mystery.

The arrest of Kevin Kennedy and Fred Raison in America in July 1917, which ultimately led to Kennedy’s deportation and arrival in Coledale, was a sign of things to come shortly in that country. In September 1917 IWW halls across the United States were raided. Most of its leaders were charged with conspiracy to hinder the war effort, for by then America had entered the First World War. Although the IWW in the USA was able to hold out for much longer in the face of state suppression than its Australian counterpart, 1917 was the beginning of its end as a powerful movement. Many within the IWW had anticipated American entry into the war being used as a pretext for suppressing the movement. On the whole they were quite muted in response to America joining the war, at least in comparison to the Australian IWW’s stance; their fears were well summed up by Herbert Mahler—“the masters are

32 Turner, Sydney's Burning: An Australian Political Conspiracy. p. 94
33 Ibid.; The Advertiser, 25/12/1917
34 Stewart Bird, Solidarity Forever: An oral history of the I.W.W. p. 11

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undoubtedly looking for an opportunity to close down some of our halls, and if we do give them an excuse we should be sure to give them a damn good one”.

Speaking out too loudly against the war, they reasoned, was not it. The editor of *Solidarity*, Ben Williams, feared that by focusing its efforts on anti-militarist propaganda, the American IWW would be neglecting its mission of industrial organisation. Unlike in Australia, in America the Socialist Party was more vocal in its opposition to the war than the IWW. One explanation for this is that large numbers of the most devoted Wobblies, as many as 30,000, had escaped draft registration by fleeing to Mexico where they fought with Zapata and Villa. Not all Wobblies agreed with the ‘lay low’ approach to the war. In July 1917 Frank Little defiantly declared “either we’re for this capitalistic slaughterfest or we’re against it. I’m ready to face a firing squad rather than compromise.”

He did not compromise, and weeks later he was kidnapped and lynched in Butte, Montana.

Little is known of Kevin Kennedy’s time in Coledale, but after his stint there he moved to Broken Hill, where he worked underground in the mines. In 1918 he was working on the British mine, and in November he was caught up in a serious incident at the mine when a magazine exploded and a fire broke out underground. In January 1919 he had to appear in court over the incident, when the Government Inspector of Mines brought proceedings against the underground manager. The case was that Kennedy and another miner, W. Morris, had more explosives in their possession than

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37 Tyler *Rebels of the Woods: The I.W.W. In the Pacific Northwest* p. 117
39 Ibid. p. 248-249

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was required for the job, contravening the Mines Inspection Act. The proceedings were dismissed by the magistrate, William Le Brun Brown.\textsuperscript{40}

The mine at which Kennedy worked was a dangerous one. In January 1918 A. Peters was hit and injured by a rock and L. Fisher injured his back in a fall.\textsuperscript{41} In April a fire broke out at the mine.\textsuperscript{42} A week earlier a miner was injured by a falling machine.\textsuperscript{43} In the same month as the fire which necessitated Kennedy’s appearance in court, a worker had his leg fractured by falling timber.\textsuperscript{44} Two months later two miners were killed and a third seriously injured, and buried for several hours, by a falling stope.\textsuperscript{45}

Yes, the British mine was dangerous, but in the context of Broken Hill it was not unusually dangerous, for, as the local member Percy Brookfield told parliament in 1918, an average of 25 miners died each year at the Barrier.\textsuperscript{46} Collapsing stopes were, according to Brookfield, the result of scandalous company negligence—the mining companies at Broken Hill favoured the cheaper ‘open stope’ technique rather than the much safer but more expensive timber-supported stopes.\textsuperscript{47} Facing such dangers as a matter of course in their workplace, it is not hard to see why many miners were attracted to assertive movements like the IWW. Kevin Kennedy would have been well aware of mining health and safety issues, as his brother Herb been a union mine inspector during his time in New Zealand.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{40} Barrier Miner ‘Mines Inspection Act. The British Mine’ 20/1/1919
\textsuperscript{41} Barrier Miner ‘Accidents at British Mine’ 17/1/1918
\textsuperscript{42} The Argus ‘Fire at British Mine’ 9/4/1918
\textsuperscript{43} Barrier Miner ‘Accident at British Mine’ 3/4/1918
\textsuperscript{44} Barrier Miner ‘Accident at the British Mine’ 26/11/1918
\textsuperscript{45} Western Argus ‘Mining Accident’ 4/2/1919
\textsuperscript{46} Adams, The Best Hated Man in Australia: the life and death of Percy Brookfield 1875-1921. p. 181
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid. p. 181
\textsuperscript{48} West Coast Times 17/3/1909

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While not in droves, some Wobbly activists drifted towards the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), among them Tom Glynn and J.B. King. A few travelled to the Soviet Union including King and Tom Barker. While Tom Barker was in Russia he ran into an old fellow agitator whose acquaintance he had made in Queensland—‘Artem’. Artem, a Russian-Ukrainian radical whose real name was Fedor Sergeyev, had arrived in Australia in 1911 after escaping a Siberian prison camp. He became a prominent agitator in the Russian émigré community in Brisbane, but returned to his homeland after the February revolution in 1917.  

Sergeyev, together with the Australian ‘German’ deportee Paul Freeman, was killed in a crash of an experimental monorail in 1921 and he was buried in Red Square.

For most who attempted the transition from the IWW to the CPA, it was not an easy one. Their differences were perhaps best summed up by the veteran agitator Monty Miller’s comment on the USSR that “the less government we have the better.” Tom Glynn left the communists in 1921. Though he too had had hesitations since the start, J.B. King continued his flirtation with the communists for longer than Glynn. In 1935 the Sydney Morning Herald gleefully observed that King, a former advocate of the go slow, had been pronounced “‘a hero of the Five Year Plan’ by the Soviet for producing twice as much work as he was expected to do in his capacity as superintendent of a Russian gold mine”. He was also a ‘fast worker’ on the Moscow underground.

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49 Fry, Tom Barker and the I.W.W.: oral history. p. 36 His exploits have been portrayed in Thomas Keneally’s The People’s Train.
51 Quoted in Burgmann, Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia. p. 248
52 Ibid. p. 249
53 The Sydney Morning Herald ‘Sydney IWW Man Now a Fast Worker in Russia’, 4/1/1935
54 Walker, Solidarity Forever: A part story of the life and times of Percy Laidler. p. 129

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with the Communist Party.\textsuperscript{55} However, most Wobblies had been critical from the start. They viewed party politics as snake oil. Of the former prominent Wobblies, Charlie Reeve was particularly fiery in his condemnation of what he termed the ‘Comical Party’.\textsuperscript{56} While many Wobblies were critical of the Communists, the feeling was generally mutual.\textsuperscript{57} Burgmann argues that the Communists tried either to co-opt the IWW legacy (for instance seeking the blessing of Monty Miller on his death bed) or, more often, denigrate them as naive.\textsuperscript{58}

One figure who made the switch from the IWW to the Communist Party, but whose brightest years were firmly in the latter, was Lawrence ‘Lance’ Sharkey. Sharkey, one of the most significant figures in the Australian communist scene, was general secretary of the Communist Party from 1948 until 1965.\textsuperscript{59} He is perhaps best remembered for being gaoled for sedition, thanks to his 1949 remark that “if Soviet forces in pursuit of aggressors entered Australia, Australian workers would welcome them.”\textsuperscript{60} Although little is known of Sharkey’s early life, he was born on a farm west of Orange, and lived in western NSW until the end of the First World War when he moved to Sydney.\textsuperscript{61} In the bush, he worked as a pick and shovel man and a ring-barker.\textsuperscript{62} Later in life he stated that “itinerant bush workers drew him into the conscription struggle during World War I and into support for the Industrial Workers

\textsuperscript{55} Turner, \textit{Sydney’s Burning: An Australian Political Conspiracy}. p. 254
\textsuperscript{56} Burgmann, \textit{Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia}. pp. 262-263
\textsuperscript{57} Though not, apparently, from Trotsky who had a soft spot for the “real proletariat and real fighters” of the IWW \textit{ibid}. p. 247
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Ibid}. Chapter 15, “What Happened to the Wobblies?”
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{ibid}
\textsuperscript{60} “Australian Dictionary of Biography Online.” Sharkey, Lawrence Louis
\textsuperscript{61} \textit{ibid}

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of the World."\textsuperscript{63} Those itinerant bush workers may very well have been Tottenham Wobblies, for, at any rate, Sharkey was a close mate of Kevin Kennedy.\textsuperscript{64} When the pair conversed about Kevin’s North American odyssey, or his brothers’ struggles with the Tottenham Wobblies, and Roland’s untimely end, the story of Local no. 9—and the fire in the Kennedys’ bellies, not extinguished at the gallows—was helping to inspire the next chapter of class struggle in Australia.

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{ibid}
\textsuperscript{64} Peter Kennedy 10/9/2011

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13. Local no. 9: ‘The Australian Legend’ or ‘Devils’?

For I am a ramble-eer, a rollicking ramble-eer,
I’m a roving rake of poverty, and son of a gun for beer.

The IWW has sure got some live supporters and barrackers in the back country. Every hut and camping place tells the story of visits from IWW men.¹

This chapter argues that the Wobblies were both a continuation of, and a departure from, older traditions – they were a synthesis between bush radicalism and globalisation. The Wobblies of Tottenham were no aberration. They continued an earlier tradition of resentment of authority in the bush, though this was a more focussed resentment, through exposure to syndicalist ideas and to the experiences of the globetrotters who joined their ranks. The Wobblies were of the same ilk as the striking shearers of their parents’ generation in the desperate 1890s. In many ways they were the last expression of what Russel Ward argued was a radically egalitarian ‘nomad tribe’ of rough-living, rambling young male workers of the 19th century Australian bush. Such an assertion requires a re-examination of Ward’s *The Australian Legend.*²

Russel Ward argued that a distinctive ethos emerged among itinerant labourers engaged in pre-industrial work in the rural interior. The members of this ‘nomad tribe’ were almost exclusively white and male. This ethos evolved over the course of the

¹ *Direct Action* 5/2/1916

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19th century, beginning with the convicts and incorporating gold diggers, but it found its clearest expression, Ward argued, among pastoral workers.

*The Australian Legend* was not an attempt to write a history of Australia, nor a history of the Australian working class, nor even a history of the working class in the bush. It argues a radical spirit existed in Australia, particularly among the nomad tribe west of the Great Dividing Range, and seeks to explain its evolution. Ward lauded the characteristics he saw in this nomad tribe: mateship, egalitarianism and ‘stringy-bark and green hide adaptability’. Others since have been less awe-struck. In *A New Britannia* Humphrey McQueen is scathing in his analysis of Ward’s thesis. In particular he argues that the nomad tribe was characterised by a pervasive racism, which took two forms: frontier conflict with Aborigines and hostility towards non-white labour.

Ward draws on the English novelist Anthony Trollope’s *Australia and New Zealand*, which offers sketches of his time in the bush in the 1870s, including his son’s sheep station in western NSW. Trollope’s account of the nomad tribe can be seen as typical of those put forward in *The Australian Legend*:

> The bulk of the labour is performed by a nomad tribe, who wander in quest of work, and are hired only for a time. This is of course the case in regard to washing sheep and shearing them. It is equally so when fences are made, or ground to be cleared, or trees to be ‘rung’... They come and go and are known by queer nicknames or are known by no names at all. They probably had their wives elsewhere, and return to them for a season. They are rough to look at, dirty in

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appearance, shaggy, with long hair, men who, when they are in the bush, live in huts, and hardly know what a bed is. But they work hard, and are both honest and civil. Theft among them is almost unknown. Men are constantly hired without any character but that which they give themselves... Their one great fault is drunkenness.⁵

If one is to compare the 19th century nomad tribe and the Wobblies, whether one has praise or scorn for the ethos of the nomad tribe is less important than its employment and its material conditions, which were remarkably similar to those experienced by the IWW’s members.

In a 2008 article reflecting on the 50th anniversary of the publication of The Australian Legend, McQueen offers a commentary more measured in its tone than his earlier assessment.⁶ He contends that the nomad tribe should not have been identified so exclusively with the pastoral worker. Nor for that matter the contrarian stance of focusing on the urban worker. He discusses building and construction workers who were every bit as nomadic and adaptable as Ward’s pastoral workers, who “might when contracts were scarce turn farm hand (at smaller pay), miner, perhaps shearer, wood-feller…”⁷ McQueen no longer dismisses the legend of the nomad out of hand, but instead expands its membership base beyond pastoral workers, with the result that the Wobblies fit its mould. He affirmed this in his 2011 book We Built This Country: Builders’ Labourers And Their Unions, arguing “[building and construction

⁵ Ibid p. 10
⁷ ibid

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labourers] shared the shearers’ characteristics of drinking and gambling, mateship, independence and Irishness”.

Prominent in Ward’s characterisation of the bush worker is a pervading mistrust, if not loathing, of authority and police in particular. In comparing later bushmen with those of the pre-gold rush period, Ward contends “he was as incorrigible a wanderer, as profane a swearer, as firmly attached to the use of pseudonyms and almost as profoundly reserved in his attitude to policemen.” If one were to replace ‘bushman’ with ‘Wobbly’ the analysis would be no less true. The idea that the Wobbly ethos had similarities with the ethos of the ‘nomad tribe’ of bush workers described in The Australian Legend was briefly considered by Peter Rushton in his 1969 Masters thesis on the IWW in Sydney. “The Australian Wobblies—like Ned Kelly, the jolly swagman camped by a billabong, Peter Lalor of the Eureka Stockade, Private Simpson who brought succour to his mates, and Henry Lawson the “gumleaf poet”—manifested many of the attitudes and values of the Australian national culture-heroes.” Rushton argues “not only did the IWW recruit many of its members from amongst the descendents of these “nomadic tribesmen”, but the organisation itself manifested many of the characteristics of the folk-heroes”. The men who formed the bulk of the IWW’s membership were indeed of exactly the same cut—nomadic bush workers with an ingrained mistrust of authority and strong belief in egalitarianism. It

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8 Humphrey McQueen, We Built This Country: Builders’ Labourers And Their Unions Port Adelaide: Ginninderra Press, 2011. p. 13
9 Ward, The Australian Legend. p. 182
is perhaps understandable that Rushton did not take the comparison further, as after all, his work was an analysis of the IWW in Sydney specifically.\footnote{Rushton, "The Industrial Workers of the World in Sydney 1913-1917: a study in revolutionary ideology and practice."}

From the early days of white settlement the bush had a hold on the national imagination. Some saw beauty in a sunburnt country; to others, with the neatly arranged hedges and hosts of golden daffodils of England in mind, it was an object of terror worthy of Edgar Allan Poe or D.H. Lawrence’s \textit{Kangaroo}. For all this dreaming of majesty or terror, for the average worker the bush was also a much nearer and realistic prospect in Australia until well into the 20th century. At the turn of the 20th century, even though transport was much patchier and slower and the ‘tyranny of distance’ was greater than today, many workers were more inclined to head to the bush for employment, even if it was on a seasonal rather than a permanent basis, as McQueen noted.\footnote{McQueen, "Improvising Nomads:"; \textit{We Built This Country: Builders’ Labourers And Their Unions} p. 13} The land played a major role in the evolution of the nomad tribe. In frontier life the battle against the elements was never ending. A harsh, rugged, dry landscape coupled with isolation, meant that ‘stringy-bark and green hide adaptability’ was not so much a virtue as a necessity. In the bush by the 1910s, frontier life had essentially given way to more organised modes of habitation and work. However Tottenham, as a new, raw, and relatively isolated settlement still shared a number of characteristics with frontier life:

\begin{quote}
The flaunting flag of progress
In the West unfurled,
The mighty bush with iron rails
\end{quote}
Thus had ‘the roaring days’ been brought to an end in the bush argued Henry Lawson; but Tottenham’s roaring days were delayed, and so too was its tethering to the world, with the railway coming in 1916.

For those who worked on the land in the district, the environment was not quite the life and death issue that it had been to the pioneer generation, perhaps holding less significance for the Wobbly than it did for Ward’s nomad tribe. Nonetheless their conditions were tough, whether labouring underground, carrying sleepers for new railway lines, or sweating in a tin shearing shed in the ferociously hot Western Division summers. What Charles Reeve termed “the mud and dust holes” were their natural habitat.15

If one examines the generation before the IWW were active in Australia, those who came of age during the lean years of the 1890s, the importance of bush workers to the labour movement cannot be overstated. In Bourke shortly before the strikes of the 1890s, Ralph Bedford, a writer and mining entrepreneur among other things, concluded that “the great force behind the Labor Party [when ‘socialism in our time’ still seemed possible through Labor parliamentarians] was the bush worker; not the craft union of the factory”.16 The ‘Bushmen’s Official Proclamation’ laid bare the reasons for this – the bush worker felt abandoned by the powers that be.17 “Here in the bush we have no voice in the making of the laws and no share in the Government, we

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15 NSW State Records, 7/5598, 5/7/1914
17 Bushmen’s Official Proclamation’, 1891, in John Thompson, Documents That Shaped Australia: Records of a Nation’s Heritage (Sydney: Murdoch Books, 2010). p. 165

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are disenfranchised and denied our rights as citizens, we have only our unions to which we can look for justice and if our unions go down we are totally enslaved.”

This proclamation was issued to members of the Queensland Shearers’ Union and the Queensland Labourers’ Union during the 1891 shearers’ strike. It clearly touched on the same sentiment that would drive many of the Wobblies a generation later. Parts of the proclamation would hardly seem out of place in *Direct Action*:

> It is our toil that brings rich dividends to banks and fat incomes to squatters and profitable trade to great cities… the squattting companies dream of dragooning us into submission with hordes of police-protected blacklegs when we refuse to work under any conditions which the profit mongers who fleece us choose to draw up in some bank parlour.\(^{19}\)

Nor for that matter would Henry Lawson’s ‘Freedom on the Wallaby’ appear out of place in *Direct Action*. Like the ‘Bushmen’s Official Proclamation’ the Lawson poem was a direct response to the 1891 strikes:

> So we must fly a rebel flag,
> As others did before us,
> And we must sing a rebel song
> And join in rebel chorus.
> We'll make the tyrants feel the sting
> O’ those that they would throttle;
> They needn't say the fault is ours
> If blood should stain the wattle!\(^{20}\)

William Lane published ‘Freedom on the Wallaby’ in *The Worker* in 1891, and it was recited at the rebel strikers’ camps underneath the rebel flag to which Lawson

\(^{19}\) *Ibid.*  
\(^{20}\) Henry Lawson ‘Freedom on the Wallaby’ 1891
referred—the Eureka flag. The older Wobblies had grown up in this atmosphere. Herb Kennedy was after all a teenager in the 1890s. At the gatherings at Roland Kennedy’s hut or the navvy encampments, with defiant Wobbly songs drowning out the crows and magpies, the rebel atmosphere was largely the same.

This is not to suggest that Queensland shearers during the torrid strikes of the 1890s were directly comparable to the IWW, or that the IWW were the only true heirs of those who swore the Eureka oath. The radical rhetoric in the ‘Bushmen’s Official Proclamation’ was rarely translated into radical action. But even if the Wobblies of the 1910s and the shearers of the 1890s (or perhaps a better comparison is Direct Action and The Bulletin) were not ideological bed fellows, there clearly existed a radical sentiment among bush workers long before the IWW’s inception that the movement drew upon. That craft union action in the bush did not reflect such a sentiment does not discount its existence. In fact if anything, the moderation of unionism makes the emergence of the Wobblies more explicable as they drew on a reservoir of such sentiment from below. However the IWW, too, did not always translate its radical rhetoric into radical action.

In a 1916 letter, IWW member Mick Sawtell remarked, in what appears to have been a reference to the persuasive power of a match on a windy day, that “some of the Federal Senators have farms in this State. Nuff sed.” ‘Harvest Wasters’ was a term used by Wobblies to describe matches. Ironically, given it was the IWW’s supposed inclination to use ‘Bryant and May’ that led to the gaoling of some of its key leaders,

21 Thompson, Documents That Shaped Australia: Records of a Nation's Heritage. p. 165
22 Geoffrey Blainey commented that “Eureka became a legend, a battlecry for nationalists, republicans, liberals, radicals, or communists, each creed finding in the rebellion the lessons they liked to see.”
23 NSWSR, 7/5590
Wobbly shearers on no occasion resorted to such tactics as burning down shearing sheds as their parents’ generation had on occasion in the 1890s.\textsuperscript{25} Instead, in the 1916 shearers’ strike they used the more subtle and ultimately more effective tactic of ‘letting the blowflies win the strike’—not undertaking sabotage themselves, but exploiting the very real threat of fly strike, which is often fatal to sheep.\textsuperscript{26} The Tottenham district had not been immune to use of the match in the 1890s. Two workers on Harry Hutchinson’s property, near the small settlement of Lansdale, tried to put it to the torch though only succeeded in burning half an acre.\textsuperscript{27} A decade later Hutchinson and others shifted their businesses a few miles east to the new community of Tottenham; where as well as a store owner he would become an AWU agent. In the 1920s his store burnt down in a catastrophic fire which spread and consumed one side of the town’s main street.\textsuperscript{28}

How the IWW was able to draw on a pre-existing radical sentiment among bush workers is explained by a strong rural dimension to the IWW which hitherto has not received the attention it deserves in historiography. The Wobblies could not help but be shaped by these bush forces, given that so many of them were either from the bush, or ‘went bush’ in search of work, as Tom Barker (who, incidentally, worked on farms in his youth) clearly explained:\textsuperscript{29}

Membership of the IWW was denied to anybody but wage workers. The preamble of the IWW started with the memorable Marxian precept that

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{25} Svensen, \textit{The Shearers' War: the story of the 1891 shearers' strike}.
\textsuperscript{26} Fly strike, a serious problem in Australia, occurs when blowflies lay their eggs on sheep, the maggots then proceeding to eat tissue. A ‘flyblown’ sheep risks death if not treated. Shorn sheep are less prone to such an affliction.
\textsuperscript{27} Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal 14/3/1893, p. 3
\textsuperscript{28} Brisbane Courier ‘£10,000 Damage’, 11/2/1929; McCarthy \textit{Tottenham’s Heritage Walk} p. 3 There is no suggestion that this later fire was deliberately lit.
\textsuperscript{29} Fry, \textit{Tom Barker and the I.W.W.: oral history} p. 5
\end{flushright}
the working class and the employing class have nothing in common. The organisation was masculine. To a great extent they were of the migratory type. We had the Home Guard, from Sydney, but most of the members worked in the country, came into Sydney from time to time took out their card, and would take a bundle of papers and sell them wherever they went. Often they worked as miners until the shearing season came, then went up to North Queensland started to shear and followed the sun until they got to Victoria, which was quite a long time. They would come to Sydney to spend their money and see the lassies, then start and do the same again. The same applied to gold miners from the west. They’d come over and perhaps go to Broken Hill. Broken Hill was a strong IWW town. In North Queensland from Cloncurry to the copper belt the bulk of working people were indoctrinated or associated with the IWW philosophy. 30

Apart from highlighting the rural, roving nature of the IWW, Tom Barker hints here at another similarity between the Wobbly and the members of the nomad tribe—they were often young native-born men, generally ‘unencumbered’ by family. 31 This may very well have heightened the sense of camaraderie they felt among themselves. It had, arguably, added ‘tactical benefits’—for instance a single man would likely have far fewer qualms about volunteering to spend time in a gaol cell as part of a free speech fight, as so many did at Port Pirie, than would one with a family. 32 A single, broke, cold, hungry man might relish the opportunity. The Wobblies who took part in a free speech fight in Broken Hill in 1917, for instance, were all unmarried. 33 Moving from place to place could also help preserve anonymity, though police surveillance was effective, as shall be shown was the case with Arthur Graham. However, moving about had far more to do with the search for work than any cunning tactical

30 Ibid. p. 24
31 The circumstances of the Tottenham Wobblies support this. Herb Kennedy and Frank Franz appear to have been the only married Wobblies.
32 Direct Action 1/7/1914
considerations. As one Wobbly explained to *Direct Action* “we shearing men are a nomadic lot. We blow, as it were, wherever the wind of employment listeth”. That the IWW in Australia was composed of roving bush workers—“the unskilled worker who roved about the bush to mines, railway-construction works, to harvest the cane and grain or fruit of the farmers, or take casual employment in meat works or shearing sheds”—and that the tough but temporary nature of their work shaped the movement, was clear to Vere Gordon Childe.

By mid October 1916, with some of his old Tottenham comrades in custody, Arthur Graham and a fellow worker named R.J. Tickle—who according to police was “well known in this district”—were doing the beat in the Aberdeen area in the NSW Hunter Valley on bike and on foot, picking up odd shearing work. The only thing to distinguish this scene of two tramping shearers from any point in the preceding 80 years in rural Australia was the fact that these men had the eager eyes of the state shadowing their footsteps. From the authorities’ perspective, the trouble was that men roaming the back blocks with no particular destination in mind can be hard to keep tabs on. Nevertheless, the police were determined that “every effort will be made to locate Graham… and keep him under strict surveillance”. It must be remembered that Graham was not being sought for any particular crime. He had left Tottenham several months before Duncan’s murder. The mere fact that he was a Wobbly, and an articulate one at that, now meant that if he decided to go shearing it was the state’s

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34 *Direct Action* 23/10/1915
37 *ibid*

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business. Police in Ryde, Sydney, had already raided a premises there in which he had
briefly stayed, seizing property including literature and talking with his mother.38

The importance of the rambling bush worker to the Australian IWW was
acknowledged by Bertha Walker.39 She saw in this bowyang spirit the explanation for
the movement gaining more traction in NSW and Queensland than the southern
states—“it is clear that “direct action” did not thrive on Melbourne soil as it did in
Queensland and New South Wales… Victoria, the smaller state, did not have the
same conditions. The movement [in Victoria] was much more of a family… and far
more respectable”.40 Closer settled Victoria was not host to an itinerant workforce
comparable to NSW or Queensland. Timothy Rory O’Malley’s analysis of twentieth
century shearers reinforces this point, highlighting that the IWW influence in the
Victorian shearing sheds was all but non-existent, contrasting with the appeal of
militancy to the roaming shearers of Queensland and western NSW.41 Melbourne was
better suited to the staid socialist than the wandering Wobbly. The Hobart Mercury, in
discussing the IWW and ‘the go slow’, also noticed a difference in the northern states.
In their eyes, the go slow was more at home in NSW as this was the “happy hunting
ground of loafers of all kinds”;42 while the Brisbane Courier thought NSW and
Queensland constituted a happy hunting ground of “foul IWW parasites”.43

While the itinerant worker may have been attracted by finding his own outlook writ
large in the IWW, the movement also offered more tangible benefits to him. As Tom

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38 ibid
39 Walker, Solidarity Forever: A part story of the life and times of Percy Laidler. p. 128
40 ibid
42 The Mercury 8/2/1917
43 The Brisbane Courier ‘Loyalty or IWWism?’ 13/3/1918

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Barker explained, “migratory people looked for support when they came to a new place, and if they found an IWW branch... you could go there for friendship and help and also to get a job”. Arthur Graham had put out the call to unemployed in the city that there was a ‘sympathetic master’ willing to put them on in Tottenham.

It is perhaps not surprising that studies of the IWW to date have largely focussed on Sydney and the coastal fringe, when even Direct Action did not accurately reflect the rural nature of the IWW. Locals in the bush believed they were not given enough space in their own Wobbly mouthpiece. According to Charles Reeve they were jealous of Direct Action’s focus on Sydney. IWW Locals from the bush and from outside New South Wales urged greater space be given for their own content in the paper to boost local sales. Tellingly, when in 1915 Direct Action featured an article on the Local in the (now abandoned) bush town of Corinthian, the town did not feature in the same issue’s list of extant Locals. The Direct Action editors, with few resources at their disposal, were not abreast of developments in the countless small towns and farms across the continent. Until a Vandemonian Wobbly wrote to Direct Action, would the Sydney editors have heard of Linda, Tasmania? What has subsequent scholarship of the IWW told us of the work and lives of the Wobblies in that town—a “strong bunch of the boys” fighting the boss class in what is now a ghost town? Or the “many active members” at Wallerawang, NSW?

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44 Fry, *Tom Barker and the I.W.W.: oral history*. p. 34
45 NSWSR, 7/5590, 18/2/1916
46 Rushton, “The Industrial Workers of the World in Sydney 1913-1917: a study in revolutionary ideology and practice,” p. 75
47 *Direct Action* 15/11/1914
48 *Direct Action* 15/10/1914

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The IWW was, of course, not a solely rural-based movement. There were Locals of varying size in the major capital cities, and the Sydney Local was the most prominent in the nation. The work undertaken by city based Wobblies though, (and again, they often headed to the bush for work) also tended to be unskilled and physically laborious, and often not confined to the one location—they were construction workers, wharfies and seamen, transport workers or, overwhelmingly, simply ‘labourers’. The movement’s character was reinforced rather than modified by these workers.

Ian Bedford proposed that a large percentage of Wobblies had a bush worker background, and compared this with anarcho-syndicalists in Europe of the same period. The militancy on display in Barcelona, for instance, had much to do with the outlook of farm workers who had been transplanted into a newly industrialised setting. It was an argument made by Hobsbawm in regard to the social bandit, which more recently was applied by Susan West in her analysis of bushrangers in NSW between 1860 and 1880. The bandit, the bushranger or indeed the Wobbly (or at least their parents) tended to have been thrust from an agrarian world to an industrialised one, and their experiences in the former shaped their approach to the latter.

Much of the behaviour of the Australian Wobblies was less expressive of a refined ideology than it was of larrkinism. A perfect example is provided by a group of

49 Rushton, "The Industrial Workers of the World in Sydney 1913-1917: a study in revolutionary ideology and practice." p. 85
50 Bedford, "The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia." p. 45
51 Ibid.
Wobblies who attempted, half-heartedly, to make the journey from Sydney to Mildura to pick fruit.\textsuperscript{53} They were barely out of Sydney before they were broke, so at Picton they decided to ride the rails: “having run out of cash, and having built the railways, we decided to ride on them”. Rolling westwards, they relieved the train of its supply of beer and cheese. Faced with arrest, the group then turned to a little ‘direct action’. The police vehicle and the cells were both covered in IWW stickers. Not content with this, the Wobblies then engaged in some ‘sabotage’ of the police gardens – digging up the vegetables, cutting the roots off and replanting them. When this little sojourn came to an end they resumed their journey towards Mildura, only to be arrested again at Wagga Wagga.\textsuperscript{54} None of this behaviour would have surprised \textit{Direct Action}, which had earlier informed its readers that “the Mildura fruit cockies are in for a hell of a time this season”.\textsuperscript{55}

That group’s effort was rivalled by a large group of Wobblies who were travelling by train from Broken Hill to Sydney in 1914. This was no vacation. The unemployment situation in Broken Hill had become quite grim, and the “benevolent Labor Government [had] decided to provide a special train to convey 500 out of town”.\textsuperscript{56} Many of those on the train had been members of the rabble-rousing ‘Unemployed Committee’. The entire trip was one big riot. Shortly after refusing to pay the “Tin Gods” fares, the Wobblies had “taken charge” of the refreshment room. At one station the men climbed out the windows after the doors had been locked in attempt to restrain them. At another, a ‘Starvation Army’ meeting was being held – the Salvos “had a shock when 500 rebels flew off the train with their song books and started to

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Direct Action} 22/1/1916 \\
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Ibid} \\
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Direct Action} 8/1/1916 \\
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Direct Action} 1914

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hold an IWW meeting”. When the train stopped in Melbourne some of the men went walkabout and got lost. Their mates resorted to ‘sabotage’ to hold the train up until they returned. After acquiring a taste for sabotage their appetite became insatiable: between Melbourne and Sydney the train was halted a further four times by the Sab Cat. In the meantime, “the authorities started to feed the mob on shoddy tucker, but after burying a waiter with stale pies, the food took a turn for the better”.

The Wobblies in Tottenham displayed a similar irreverence by lampooning the town’s pomposities. Their actions were often little more than practical jokes, which mocked civic conventions. This strain of anti-authoritarianism had less to do with Marxian concepts of power relations than a larrikin spirit. Rushton asserts that it was the “boisterous good humour, comradeship, singing, and their unconquerable optimism” that drew recruits to the IWW rather than ideology.

Andrew Metcalfe’s study of miners on the northern coalfields of the Hunter Valley, focusing on the first 60 years of the 20th century, sees their larrikinism as a form of class struggle, and distinguishes it from the ‘respectable’ mode of class struggle. By the end of the nineteenth century the term ‘larrikin’ had lost its earlier street-thug connotations, thanks in large part to the ‘gum leaf’ poets. The qualities attributed to the larrikin were now synonymous with those attributed to the Wobbly and the nomad tribe. They include valuing of mateship, adaptability, suspicion of authorities and religion, and a weakness for alcohol and gambling.

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57 ibid
59 Andrew Metcalfe, For Freedom and Dignity: Historical Agency and Class Structures in the Coalfields of N.S.W. (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988). pp. 73-123

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Terrence Cutler also identifies the same itinerant and larrikin streak among meat workers in north Queensland around 1918-1919 in his analysis of the Townsville meat workers’ strike.\textsuperscript{60} Since 1916 there were quite a few Wobbly agitators among the meat workers, and though not a member of the IWW himself, one of the prominent agitators there was Pat Hickey,\textsuperscript{61} who, as with Herb Kennedy, had been involved in organising the Waihi strike in New Zealand. These meatworkers, too, were ‘ramblers, bohemians and nomads’:

The men who ramble from one place to another, from State to State, learned their roving habits through oppression, through unsuitable or unbearable conditions...Even today we find the nomad assisting to carve out the destiny of the more militant of our industrial associations. The strength of many union today is the result of the work of the rambler... What a difference between [the city workmen] and the average waterside worker, the meat worker, or the shearer or miner!\textsuperscript{62}

The larrikin mode of class struggle was often undertaken not so much with any tangible economic or political goals in sight, more as a method of defending their own self-respect in the face of bourgeois scorn. The respectable bourgeois, through placing such importance on things such as formal education, economic success and religious adherence relegated the poor semi-literate wage earner to not only the bottom rung on the economic scale, but also on the scale of acceptance. Rather than conform to those standards the larrikins rejected them out of hand and revelled in their own situation—“mocking respectable values as well as celebrating the very behaviour that draws

\textsuperscript{61} Sometimes spelt Hickie. Burgmann and Cain disagree over his attitude towards the IWW.
\textsuperscript{62} Cutler, "Sunday, Bloody Sunday." pp. 83-84

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bourgeois condemnation”.\textsuperscript{63} All of which mirrored exactly the Wobbly ‘Hallelujah I’m a Bum!’ sentiment.

One group among whom the IWW gained sympathisers and followers were railway construction workers, including at Tottenham. With the coming of the railways, navvies carried on the tradition of Ward’s nomad tribe. They moved from place to place as part of their work, which was physically laborious, but not of a permanent nature. They either had no families, or spent long periods of time away from them. They lived in ramshackle temporary constructions made of hessian bags, befitting the nomad tribe.\textsuperscript{64} The fear that hundreds of navvies created along the NSW north coast in 1916 was befitting a Viking invasion. Their reputation for IWW sympathy and embrace of sabotage that preceded them left shopkeepers in the area in fear of their shops being torched; townspeople worrying that their communities would be taken over or burnt down; and the company worrying their newly constructed tunnels would be exploded.\textsuperscript{65} It is entirely understandable that Arthur Graham and Roland Kennedy made a special effort to spread their message to the hundreds of navvies who arrived in the Tottenham district between 1914 and 1916.

A key tenet of the nomad tribe’s ethos shared by the Wobblies was a strong suspicion, bordering on hatred, of authority. As the public face of authority, the police expectedly bore the brunt of this loathing. It was considered a cardinal sin to inform or ‘dob’ on one’s mates, which is not to say it never happened. While Ward describes

\textsuperscript{63} Metcalfe, \textit{For Freedom and Dignity: Historical Agency and Class Structures in the Coalfields of N.S.W.} p. 77
\textsuperscript{64} Rushton, “The Industrial Workers of the World in Sydney 1913-1917: a study in revolutionary ideology and practice.” p. 85
\textsuperscript{65} See numerous files in NSWSR 7/5590. The Police were so alarmed by the stories about these navvies that detectives were dispatched to follow them.

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the bush workers as having a generally negative view of police, outlaws, on the other hand, were often celebrated. “In the eyes of the bush workers, and of a great many other colonists, bushrangers derived added prestige merely from being, so to speak, the professional opponents of the police.”

This was as true as anywhere for central-west New South Wales. Ward cites a ballad about the death in 1865 of the most famous bushranger from this region, Ben Hall, who was “cowardly butchered on the Lachlan Plain” by “the bloodhounds of the law…the cowardly blue-coated imps…who only found his hiding place from sneaking peeler’s pimps.” There are many other ballads and bush songs which he could have cited which reflect the same uncompromising view, such as ‘The Streets of Forbes’, the same streets, by the way, from which Jeanette and Michael Kennedy had come:

Come all you Lachlan men,
A sorrowful tale I’ll tell
Concerning a bold hero
Who through misfortune fell.
His name was Ben Hall,
A man of great renown,
Who was hunted from his station
And like a dog shot down…

These ballads were sung and remembered after the 1860s, so too an antipathy to ‘the bloodhounds of the law’ was never lost. By the 1910s, while the age of the bushranger had passed, it was not such a distant memory. It was little more than 30 years since Ned Kelly had met his maker at the end of a rope at Melbourne Gaol; and it was little

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67 Ibid. p. 155

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more than a decade since the rampage of self-styled bushrangers Jimmy and Joe Governor.69 It is all but impossible to ascertain with any accuracy what level of sympathy people like Ned Kelly and Ben Hall received from the public. McQueen claims Ward overstates the sympathy, though there clearly existed some. To this day Ned Kelly’s prominence in the national consciousness is unrivalled by any law-abiding leader. For those that did sympathise it is clear, as with Ben Hall, that what Ward terms ‘professional opposition to the police’ was prominent in their reasoning. His famous Jerilderie Letter was full of insults towards the police, such as the colourful assertion that a certain superintendent knew “as much about commanding Police as Captain Standish does about mustering mosquitoes and boiling them down for their fat on the back blocks of the Lachlan.”70

The Wobbly nomad tribe of the 1910s were just as hostile to the police as their grandfathers had been to the bumbling, ill-disciplined, arbitrary and often brutal force of the 1860s; after all, things had not changed too much, especially in the rural districts where the police were still perched atop horses. What would have particularly irked many of these ‘rough bush workers’ was the penchant of the police to assert their authority on matters which could be dismissed as ‘wowserism’—they were stringent on the ‘three sins’ of alcohol, gambling and bad language.

These contrasting attitudes of the police and the nomad worker were regularly on display in the streets of Tottenham. As we have seen, George Wann was arrested by constable Duncan for ‘language’, an event which was treated with derision and


70 Ned Kelly’s Jerilderie Letter, in Thompson, Documents That Shaped Australia: Records of a Nation’s Heritage, p. 144
mockery by the crowd that gathered. The Dandaloo police would routinely ride into Tottenham on the day in which these three vices would manifest themselves—miners’ pay day. One particular pub raid in October 1910 netted 20 prisoners in front of the Miners’ Arms hotel for playing two-up.\textsuperscript{71} Their sentences would likely have been similar to that of the four Dandaloo men in the same year whose crime of playing two-up resulted in them being gaoled for a month.\textsuperscript{72} The large numbers involved suggest these were far from isolated experiences. In March 1916 local resident and Wobbly Arthur Graham gleefully recounted in a letter singing and “getting merry” until “after eleven o’clock, when the local John came into the bar and called a halt, saying you’ve had a good time and have now ran 6 minutes over time—clear the bar and give the proprietor a chance to close the door.”\textsuperscript{73}

Arthur Graham was not ‘getting merry’ after eleven o’clock for much longer, as in June 1916 six o’clock closing of hotels was introduced. It was a civic triumph for the temperance movement, whose members were largely evangelical Christians and middle class women, or both as in the Woman’s Christian Temperance Movement. Geoffrey Blainey concludes that “the crusade against alcohol was the most powerful episode of women’s liberation in the country’s first century.”\textsuperscript{74} Against the backdrop of the war, and especially the Liverpool riot, the temperance message found a more receptive ear. But the typical member of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Movement and the typical labourer in Tottenham were from different worlds.

Declared \textit{The Navvy} on its front page:

\textsuperscript{71} Chase, \textit{Window on Dandaloo: a community on the Bogan river}. p. 77
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid. p. 79
\textsuperscript{73} NSWSR, 7/5590, 29/3/1916
\textsuperscript{74} Geoffrey Blainey, \textit{Black Kettle, Full Moon} p. 353

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Six o’clockers who have never swung a big hammer, or a pick and shovel; who have never turned out to work at 6 o’clock on a cold winter’s morning, three hours before breakfast time; who have never worked in choking dust and intense artificial or unnatural heat in summer, in tunnels or sewers, such people are not fit to dictate the conditions under which Australian workers shall drink.\textsuperscript{75}

Historiography since the 1960s has recognised women as being excluded from the ‘mateship tradition’, or as it was extolled by Henry Lawson, the ‘drinking mates’ tradition.\textsuperscript{76} The IWW have generally been considered as more open to women than other movements and sympathetic to female emancipation:

\begin{quote}
We’ve had girls before,
But we need some more
In the Industrial Workers of the World.
For it’s great to fight for freedom
With a Rebel Girl.\textsuperscript{77}
\end{quote}

While they were seen to be more considerate of women, this is largely myth. There were no ‘rebel girls’ among the Tottenham Wobblies and there were only negligible numbers elsewhere. In fact the famed Australian ‘Rebel Girl’ herself, Lesbia Keogh\textsuperscript{78} (later Harford) chose not to submit her poetry to Direct Action as it was removed from “the bush/worker ballad [and] satirical feel of much that was published”.\textsuperscript{79} Before her marriage to Pat Harford, who in 1916 had written to Jeanette Kennedy at Tottenham, Lesbia, a former convent girl, strongly disapproved of his ‘hobo’ lifestyle and felt he needed to settle.\textsuperscript{80} Women were every bit as excluded from the ‘drinking mates’

\textsuperscript{75} The Navvy 6/6/1916
\textsuperscript{76} Miriam Dixson, \textit{The Real Matilda: Women and Identity in Australia 1788 to the Present}. (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1999) p. 185
\textsuperscript{78} The American Elizabeth Gurly Flynn was also known as ‘the rebel girl’
\textsuperscript{79} http://www.takver.com/history/harford.htm
\textsuperscript{80} Burgmann, \textit{Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia}. p. 65

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culture of the Tottenham Wobblies in the 1910s as they had been from the drinking mates culture espoused by Henry Lawson. In Wobbly parlance abstainers from alcohol and campaigners in the temperance movement were called the “Cold Tea Brigade”.\(^{81}\)

The same ‘pub culture’ was seen among Wobblies across the country, from the ‘intoxicated soap-boxers’ in Broken Hill, to the Mount Morgan Local with its headquarters at the pub, to the ‘drunken rowdyism’ of Wobbly navvies on the NSW north coast, to the Adelaide De Leonists complaining of their drunken Chicago-strand counterparts.\(^{82}\) In Tottenham, where men outnumbered women two to one\(^ {83}\), and where religious observance was barely noticeable, it is unlikely the six o’clock closing would have been welcomed with open arms by the majority. Perhaps inevitably, in the following years in Tottenham there appeared on the charge books a plethora of ‘found on licensed premises in prohibited hours’ entries.\(^ {84}\) The Wobbly Charles Martin was among those repeatedly charged for drunkenness.\(^ {85}\) ‘Indecent language’ charges were just as common in the town, the scene for many of which was the pub.\(^ {86}\)

The Wobbly partiality to the demon drink put them at odds with many other radicals. It was not uncommon for socialists, communists and anarchists to be militant teetotallers. Partly this sprang from a belief that alcohol was a barrier to workers

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\(^{81}\) Rushton, "The Industrial Workers of the World in Sydney 1913-1917: a study in revolutionary ideology and practice." p. 285

\(^{82}\) Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia*. p. 93; NSW State Records, 7/5590

\(^{83}\) 1913 electotal roll. Given that some of the itinerants who were known to be in Tottenham aren’t registered on the electoral roll, the actual ratio is likely to be weighted even more heavily in favour of males.

\(^{84}\) THS, Summons and Charge book for Tottenham and Dandaloo, petty sessions 1918-1928

\(^{85}\) *ibid*

\(^{86}\) *ibid*
changing their conditions—that drowning their sorrows in alcohol was an obstacle to removing the cause of those sorrows, namely capitalist exploitation. At least this was the theoretical justification. In reality it had as much to do with concepts of respectability. Criticising drunkenness and gambling was just another symptom of the tendency of socialists and De Leonists to dismiss the Chicago strand Wobblies as ‘down and outs’ and ‘the bummery element’. Some communist miners in the 1920s saw anarcho-syndicalism as a sign of ‘immaturity and lack of discipline’. No doubt conservatives, the pious and the propertied would have agreed with this condemnation. The Wobblies, however, revelled in the ‘bummery’ tag—‘Hallelujah! I’m a bum!’—and in all likelihood the knowledge that the ‘respectable’ found their behaviour infuriating would have spurred them on. But the IWW did have a theoretical position on this issue. It argued that the boss, with his “wowserite countenance”, promoted subservience among workers in the form of Puritanism, while hypocritically not following this moral code themselves: “puritan morals are for us [but] not for the master class.” They pondered, if the boss was not prepared to turn the other cheek, why should the worker?

In 1916 when a Danish socialist deemed alcohol to be the chief source of woe among the working class, the IWW responded that “there are a thousand and one evils more dangerous to the working class than drink”. Olssen and Richardson noticed the same tendency in New Zealand. Those in the labour movement who advocated political reform were generally ‘active Protestants and prohibitionists’ who were appalled by

88 Metcalfe, For Freedom and Dignity: Historical Agency and Class Structures in the Coalfields of N.S.W. p. 142
89 Direct Action 6/1/1917
90 Direct Action November 4 1916
the behaviour of their hard drinking direct actionist counterparts. They give an account of Harry Scott Bennet, a prolific and popular Australian public speaker who spent some years in New Zealand, where his weekly lectures in Auckland were often attended by over 1500 people. At one such lecture he “keeled over before an audience, dead drunk.”91 As Tom Barker, who was in attendance put it, he was “suffering from that famous Australian complaint of being boozed.”92 While Barker was in New Zealand he admitted that after each edition of the Wobbly paper Industrial Unionist was produced “the next day we went on the booze.”93 James Wilson, “a great drunk” who was later executed for the murder of George Pappageorgi, took to sleeping off his binges on top of the Direct Actions in the Sydney IWW headquarters.94 Francis Shor observes that the IWW was attractive to “rough characters... [whose] tastes ran more to consuming booze than Bakunin and Beethoven”.95 Of course, many Wobbly autodidacts would have found Shor’s point patronising.

A Wobbly take on respectability is offered in a poem featured in Direct Action in June 1915 titled, clearly enough, ‘Respectability’:

You whitened sepulchre of Christian grace-
You saintly honoured, holy - hideous thing;
You silence truth with raucous gibbering
You hide your rotting sores with silk and lace
You lavish golden gifts of gold and place

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92 Fry, Tom Barker and the I.W.W.: oral history. p. 9
93 Ibid. p. 13
94 Ibid. p. 24
On whorish fools who praise you as their king-
Who crucify your foes while church bells ring
But blest be they who spit in your face!
Go, girt yourself with your dull panoply;
Make sharp with thorns the paths men travel in;
Upraise your blood-cry with infernal din –
You larva of the past – but, ah, for me
How better far the leprosy of “sin”
Than reek and rock with your inanity.  

Clearly the prevailing attitudes towards the police, the clergy and the squatter held by the Wobbly incarnation of the nomad tribe bore a strong resemblance to earlier decades. However, there had been some important changes which fostered the growth of the IWW in Australia. One was an increasing literacy amongst the working class because of compulsory primary education. This cultivated the dissemination of propaganda through books, papers and leaflets. The other was a spurt of globalisation, which was enabled by a variety of factors including dramatically improved communication technologies. By 1902 there was a cable reaching from Britain to Australia. In each eastern seaboard colony, there was a spread of transport networks from the 1880s, notably the exponential growth of railways and shipping powered by steam rather than wind. The same processes were occurring within Australia. By the end of the 19th century most major cities in Australia were linked by telegraph. Railways had spread across the continent. In a major engineering feat, a railway line was constructed over the Blue Mountains in 1876 enabling Sydney and the NSW

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96 Direct Action June 1 1915
97 Ward, The Australian Legend. p. 195
99 Clark, History of Australia. p. 192

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interior to be linked by railway.\textsuperscript{100} From the 1850s to the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century there had been a massive increase in shipping.\textsuperscript{101}

By the end of the Great War Australia’s isolation from the rest of the world had also ended. By the 1910s conducting business either nationally or overseas, or contacting family and friends was a relatively simple prospect, no longer beholden to expensive, protracted and often perilous voyages. Even in Tottenham people could post a letter or make a telephone call.

Surely this increased awareness of, and opening up to, the outside world played a key role in bringing about the one significant change in outlook between the Wobbly and his nomad bushman ancestor—the rejection of racism and nationalistic fervour. This occurred in two forms. One was the fact that increased globalisation—and the faster and more reliable methods of communication which generated this process—led to an exposure to a vast array of new ideas and theories, especially in the realms of politics and economics. The other was the fact that intricately linked with this globalisation was a freeing up of people’s movements and hence an increase in migration. Importantly, passports were not a requirement for travel to or from Australia in the years before the First World War. So the Wobbly was not simply exposed to ideas from America, Germany and Russia; he was exposed to Americans, Germans and Russians, at a time when there was a growing class consciousness internationally.

\textsuperscript{100} Cannon, \textit{The Roaring Days. Book Two: Life in the Country}. p. 499
\textsuperscript{101} Fitzpatrick, \textit{The British Empire in Australia: an Economic History 1834-1939}. p. 167
The IWW in Australia was a synthesis of two forces. One was the lingering egalitarian and anti-authoritarian impulse that had been forged in the convict era yet was still current amongst the unskilled male bush workers. The other was the influences of an unprecedented period of globalisation driven by new technologies that fostered the free movement of both people and ideas.

The Australian Legend, like all legends, can mythologise its subjects, and placing the Wobblies within the legend runs the same risk of simply mythologising them too. The dark side of the nomad tribe manifested itself in, for instance, the massacre of indigenous people at Myall Creek. The bond of mateship, or comradeship, often was a bond strengthened in blood. Yes, the Wobblies in Tottenham did share similarities with ‘Ned Kelly, the jolly swagman camped by a billabong, Peter Lalor of the Eureka Stockade, Private Simpson who brought succour to his mates, and Henry Lawson the “gumleaf poet”. But one could argue that the members of Local no. 9 also shared a strong link with Peter Stepanovich Verkhovensky and other characters from Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *Devils*.

*Devils* was written partly in response to the case in Russia in which a young student was murdered by a radical and in many senses fanciful group headed by Sergey Nechayev, who had been an associate of Mikhail Bakunin, Bakunin later rejecting him. In a “hitherto completely undistinguished little town” the group’s fictional counterparts, eager for revolutionary change, are seduced into believing that they are

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103 Also translated as *The Possessed*. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Devils* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2008).
part of a wider movement poised to overthrow Russian society, when in reality they are an irrelevant small town group.

There are interesting parallels between and Dostoyevsky’s fictional town and Tottenham. Both are small rural towns which provide the stage for a group of young men who, intoxicated by a revolutionary cause, are prepared to take another’s life. Not larrikins but murderers.

If one sees the Tottenham Wobblies as a continuation of Ward’s ‘nomad tribe’, then when on one September night when two or three Wobblies set out to shoot constable Duncan those particular Wobblies had abandoned that tribe. They went beyond a ‘healthy suspicion’ of authority and they shot a police officer dead, an act of no conceivable assistance to their cause. There was no serious motivation for either Kennedy or Franz to murder Duncan, with the scene at Wann’s arrest being an unlikely lead-in to “let’s shoot the bastard”. It was a nihilist, not a syndicalist action, and it was this senselessness that demands a comparison with Sergey Nechayev’s nihilism portrayed in *Devils*. In prison Roland Kennedy was stoic. At the gallows he simply remarked “goodbye boys”. He never showed remorse, nor on the other hand did he attempt to justify himself.

If we accept McQueen’s characterisation of Ward’s nomad tribe, that its brotherliness was overstated and its brutality understated, then perhaps the Wobblies of Local no. 9 belonged there still. Whether one sides with Ward or McQueen, the Australian IWW was not an aberration better suited to the American west, for a time it flourished west of the Great Divide. In their resignation to death, Roland Kennedy’s “Good-bye boys”
and Ned Kelly’s “Such is life” were not so different. What brought the pair to the gallows was not so different either.
Conclusion

The Tottenham Wobblies and their disparate associates were members of a substantial, and substantially overlooked, segment of Australia’s population in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The bulk of the population, not least in NSW, still lived outside the big cities, while primary industries, chiefly pastoralism, still dominated the economy. The population west of the Great Dividing Range was still disproportionately male, and it was still on the wallaby track. The rolling stone labourers of the bush lent a sympathetic ear to the IWW’s cries for rebellion.

The Tottenham Wobblies, especially the Kennedy brothers and Arthur Graham, were associates of and friends with a veritable who’s who of leading global Wobblies, including ‘Big Bill’ Haywood, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Tom Barker, and J.B. King. Yet they themselves have been all but forgotten, despite having done everything imaginable to insert themselves into the history books. Roland Kennedy and Frank Franz took up arms against the police, and paid the ultimate price. Herb Kennedy was at the forefront of New Zealand’s bitter Waihi struggle—after he was beaten out of that town he led the struggle in Tottenham. Kevin Kennedy rode the rails of America in search of the class fight—and found it against J.P. Morgan on the Iron Range; and was swept up in salacious stories involving German secret agents; Arthur Graham fought with fist and pen, and wandered the countryside with the police following his every move; Albert Krist sat interned at the German Concentration Camp but still dreamt of letting the sab cats loose. Stir in some dynamite and you have a compelling story.

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Herb and Kevin, if not the younger Roland, had a prominence within the movement that was not so apparent from without. At the time, the simple reason for the relative invisibility of Herb and Kevin to outsiders was the fact that they were in the back blocks, and not preaching in Sydney’s Domain or by the banks of the Yarra. From a later vantage point the shooting of Duncan may also have had much to do with it. The immediate reaction from other members of the IWW was shock, and the belief that it was part of a wider frame-up of the organisation. The IWW was not a movement of murderers; and so the absence of the Tottenham IWW in Wobbly memoirs, for instance, can be seen as resisting attempts to shackle their cause to the actions of Kennedy(s?) and Franz. This is understandable, because the shooting of Duncan and the dynamiting of the Mount Royal—were the latter indeed their handiwork—was not characteristic of the Australian IWW. Further, and unlike the case of the Sydney Twelve, Roland Kennedy and Frank Franz could not be treated as the innocent scapegoats of a class-biased and merciless system, unless, that is, one took issue with the use of capital punishment. And many did take issue, as evidenced by the vocal campaign for clemency. It was interesting then, that the unprecedented execution of a crown witness received little notice in the press other than from one newspaper, *Truth*.

The argument to the contrary—that the IWW was bloodthirsty, and Duncan’s murder was not uncharacteristic—was a reason why Tottenham and the murder of Duncan received so much contemporary attention. The Duncan murder was capitalised on by the state and the press. The timing meant that the shooting could be used to incriminate by association the Sydney Twelve in their dodgy trial, and in the court of
public opinion. Tottenham was also incorporated into the conscription debate—the public was informed that ‘IWW Assassins Want You To Vote No’. With a backdrop of the Great War, the IWW became the enemy at home, with ‘murderers’ a liberally bestowed title on the movement. Anti-IWW rhetoric was used to great effect in the elections of 1917 by the Nationalist Party.

That members of the Tottenham Local had the audacity to shoot a police officer—in his station, no less—can be interpreted as desperation, as callous bravado, or perhaps as drunken stupidity. The shooting came in response to (or at the very least against a backdrop of) a crackdown on the IWW and in turn helped to create an atmosphere in which that crackdown could be taken further. It was, inevitably, the final act of Local no. 9. Perhaps the attack on the police station would never have taken place had Arthur Graham remained in Tottenham, who for all his swagger did perform the role of an anchor for the Local. Of course, restraining influences don’t usually come in the grog-swilling, fist-fighting variety, but Graham was ideologically grounded and would have seen the senselessness and, in effect, suicidal implications of such an undertaking.

The IWW’s influence in Tottenham and surrounds should be looked at more in terms of propaganda than anything else. They ‘opened the eyes of the boneheads’ as Arthur Graham put it, even if they failed to change industrial conditions. Few large scale strikes or significant actions of sabotage which the IWW at Tottenham undertook, were associated with, or were accused of, met success. However, through their propaganda they won many local sympathisers, including the unlikely winning over of a gravel mining contractor to their view of the world. Their street meetings and
sing-alongs were invariably well attended, their radical literature was devoured. While the Tottenham Wobblies may have become outcasts in the job market they were anything but outcasts in the community.

That the IWW gained such an audience and felt so bold in Tottenham, in many respects an unremarkable town, shows clearly that the IWW was a powerful force west of the Great Dividing Range. The IWW was a movement that made history from below. That history was made by Big Bills and Barkers, but equally it was made by the forgotten navvies, shearers and miners in out of the way communities who do not get books written about them.
Timeline 1907-1917

1907

6th November: Tottenham proclaimed a village.

1908

The IWW in America splits. The De Leonist/Detroit faction supports engagement with the political process, whereas the Chicago faction supports ‘Direct Action’.

1909

Three month miners’ strike in Tottenham.

1911

Herb Kennedy leaves the New Zealand police force.

1912

Wood cutters go on strike at the Bogan River mine.

April: Herb Kennedy runs for the Mayor of Waihi, New Zealand.

May-November: Waihi miners’ strike. On the 12th of November Fred Evans is killed, Constable Harvey shot and wounded, Herb Kennedy beaten.

1913

The Chicago IWW, which favours direct action over politics, comes to dominate the movement in Australia.

1914

28th June: Archduke Franz Ferdinand assassinated in Sarajevo.

July: Roland Kennedy in contact with the IWW in Sydney.

28th July: Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.

31st July: Labor leader Andrew Fisher declares Australia will defend Britain ‘to our last man and last shilling’.

1st August: Germany declares war on Russia, France begins mobilising.

3rd August: Germany declares war on France.

4th August: Britain declares war on Germany.

17th August: Roland Kennedy joins the IWW.

5th September: Labor party wins the federal election, Andrew Fisher becomes Prime Minister

1915

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January: Acting Premier encourages a crowd of Sydney unemployed to go to Tottenham.

April: An outbreak of diphtheria and enteris fever in Tottenham.

22nd April: An IWW charter application form is sent from Tottenham with sixteen signatures.

25th April: Australians land at Gallipoli.

15th May: Direct Action reports that the Tottenham IWW, Local number 9, is formed, with Arthur Graham secretary-treasurer.

6th August: Police crack-down on IWW public speakers is approved.

September: The Mount Royal pumping plant is destroyed in suspected bombing. The gelignite explosion was allegedly an attempt to blow up the entrance to a shaft. The police later point the finger at local Wobblies but nobody is tried.

November: IWW songwriter Joe Hill is executed in Utah. Some of his ashes are confiscated by Sydney police.

26th October: Fisher resigns to become High Commissioner in London. William Morris ‘Billy’ Hughes becomes Prime Minister.

1916

January: Before departing for Britain, Hughes labels the Wobblies ‘foul parasites’ and declares ‘they must be attacked with the ferocity of a Bengal tiger’.

6th January: British Parliament votes for conscription.

20th January: Hughes in Britain until 31st July.

March: Direct Action publishes two articles by Tottenham Wobbly Arthur Graham.

March: Herb and Roland Kennedy sacked from the Mount Royal mine.

April: Farm workers strike at government wheat farm at Tottenham.

27th April: News reaches Australia of rebellion in Ireland.

May: Copies of Direct Action “selling like hot cakes” in Tottenham.

4th May: IWW leader Tom Barker sentenced to twelve months gaol for a cartoon showing a war profiteer drinking the blood of a crucified soldier. The IWW responds with threats of sabotage in Direct Action.

12th May: Irish rebels executed.

June: Arthur Graham is among nine people charged following a ‘riot’ in Tottenham. He is fined for assaulting two ‘scabs’ and subsequently leaves town.

1st July: Battle of the Somme begins.
August: A successful shearer’s strike in Queensland and New South Wales gains publicity for the IWW.

26th August: *Direct Action* publishes Kevin Kennedy’s dramatic account of a violent strike on the Iron Range.

30th August: Hughes announces his intention to hold referendum on conscription.

September: Frank Franz is summoned by constable McLean for riotous behaviour. Roland Kennedy, George Wann, Hugh McLelland sacked again for IWW membership. Frank Franz walks off the job in solidarity.

4th September: Hughes and supporters expelled from the NSW branch of the Labor party

20th September: Prominent Wobbly Fred Morgan skips bail and is never seen again.

23rd September: Arrests begin of members of the IWW on charges of treason or arson - the ‘Sydney Twelve’

24th September: Tottenham Wobbly Charles Martin arrested for possession of firearms.

25th September: Duncan arrests George Wann, a Wobbly of German heritage, for bad language and is jeered by a crowd of locals for doing so.

26th September, Tuesday. Duncan takes Wann to the police court in Dandaloo, and seeks Kennedy to summons him for indecent language and offensive behaviour. 9pm: Constable George Duncan is shot at Tottenham police station.

28th: Roland, Herb, Franz and two others are brought in for questioning over Duncan’s murder.

4th October: Tottenham branch of the Federated Mine Employees’ Association declares that it is “determined to fight conscription.”

12th October: Hearing in the Sydney Magistrate’s Court of the IWW Twelve begins.

16th October: Roland Kennedy and Frank Franz go on trial. They are sentenced to death on the same day.

17th: Railway line reaches Tottenham.

20th October: ‘Herb’ Kennedy tried and found not guilty.

28th October: First conscription referendum.

5th November: Everett Massacre.

20th December: Roland Kennedy and Frank Franz hanged at Bathurst gaol.

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